

**DOSSIER**

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

**Educational vulnerability and childhood: interfaces with the street in approximate with the school*****Vulnerabilidade educacional e as infâncias: enlaces com a rua em aproximação com a escola***

**Ranulfo Cavalari Neto<sup>a</sup>**  
ranulfo@usp.br

**Sonia Maria Dantas Berger<sup>b</sup>**  
soniadantas@id.uff.br

**ABSTRACT**

The article aims to discuss the issue of vulnerability, broadening its horizons and touching on educational vulnerability with a focus on childhood on the streets. It's important to understand that educational vulnerability is a factor to be considered in this scenario of protection and guarantees of rights, where thoughts and practices still remain colonizing. For this discussion, it's necessary to approach the dynamics of children and adolescent living on the streets in the urban context, from the perspective of the politicization of childhood. The problematizations of this article, arising from university extension and action research in the context of Niterói's public squares in conjunction with the praxis of social workers, come to contribute to other research practices that open the ears to listen to the voices that emerge from the streets, seeking to understand space as an *instrument* of real childhoods – within urban occupations, abandoned mansions, sheltered in tents and that play and produce life in the streets of the cities in which they occupy. The relations between teacher training, the school and the street urgently need other perspectives and practices, thus constituting childhood as political subjects. We warn that all transformations occur through and through the body. Looking closely at these bodies living on the streets can provide clues about forms of reception and pedagogical practices that reduce vulnerabilities, including education.

**Keywords:** Vulnerabilities. Educational Vulnerability. Street Children and Adolescents. Education.

**RESUMO**

O artigo tem como objetivo discutir a questão da vulnerabilidade, ampliando seus horizontes e tocando na vulnerabilidade educacional com foco nas infâncias na rua. É importante entender que vulnerabilidade educacional é um fator a ser considerado nesse cenário de proteção e de garantias de direitos, onde os pensamentos e as práticas ainda permanecem colonizadoras. Para esta discussão, é necessário se aproximar das dinâmicas da criança e do adolescente em situação de rua no contexto urbano, sob a perspectiva da politização da infância. As problematizações deste artigo, advindas da extensão universitária e da pesquisa-

<sup>a</sup> Universidade de São Paulo (USP), São Paulo, São Paulo, Brasil.

<sup>b</sup> Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

ação no contexto das praças públicas de Niterói, em articulação com a práxis dos e das trabalhadoras sociais, vêm para contribuir com outras práticas de pesquisa que destapem os ouvidos para escutar as vozes que emergem das ruas, buscando entender o espaço como *instrumental* de infâncias reais dentro de ocupações urbanas, casarões abandonados, abrigadas em barracas e que brincam e produzem vida nas ruas das cidades em que ocupam. As relações entre a formação docente, a escola e a rua precisam, urgentemente, de outros olhares e práticas, constituindo, assim, a infância como sujeitos políticos. Alertamos que todas as transformações ocorrem por meio e através do corpo. Olhar atentamente para esses corpos que vivem nas ruas pode dar pistas sobre formas de acolhimento e práticas pedagógicas que reduzam as vulnerabilidades, dentre elas, a educacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Vulnerabilidade. Vulnerabilidade Educacional. Crianças e Adolescentes em Situação de Rua. Educação.

## Introduction

To inaugurate our dialogue, aligning ourselves with the Freirian dialogical mode of interacting, producing, and sharing knowledge, and in consideration of Ayres (2014), we assume that there is a multiplicity of meanings and political uses for the analytical category of vulnerabilities. Here, the proposal is to focus specifically on some of these meanings, based on the connections that can be made to delve into the thematic field of processes of vulnerability in teaching and learning and/or educational vulnerability.

That said, we observe a trend of using the term ‘social vulnerability’ in the field of public policies aimed at populations living in situations of poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion. But who are these populations recognized as vulnerable? Why, by whom, and for what purpose are they classified as such? In this article, we will engage in a discussion about what can be considered vulnerability, with an emphasis on the field of children living on the streets (not excluding their families, including infants).

Specialized literature on the topic of vulnerabilities (Castel, 1998; Ayres, 2014; Costa *et al.*, 2018) asserts that individuals in situations of vulnerability are those with weakened citizenship, meaning that their basic rights are not guaranteed, making them the most susceptible social group to suffer harm, ranging from existential to moral issues (damage due to their weakened citizenship). Here, we emphasize that the nature of vulnerability is not inherent to individuals as an inalienable fate. This means that the presentation of favorable social conditions for the full exercise of their citizenship<sup>1</sup> (or the strengthening of their citizenship) can allow these individuals to overcome the situation of vulnerability in which they find themselves (São Paulo, 2021).

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the term “citizenship” carries different values depending on the worldview of the person using it. In this regard, Paulo Roberto Felix (2019) contributes by bringing to light that what underlies citizenship in modernity is the objectified social relations, contributing to the dynamics of capital development. Therefore, the goal would be “political emancipation,” as Marx names it. However, the current scenario presents a significant contradiction because social relations are mediated through commodity exchanges. In this text, we use the term to convey the realization of an emancipated society through enlightenment, including an understanding of its contradictions.

In this context, within the field of public policies, the discussion of social vulnerability needs to go beyond the analysis of poverty related solely to income. Ayres and colleagues (2003) point out three dimensions for addressing it: the individual, the social, and the programmatic. Therefore, when thinking and acting on these dimensions, individual interests are considered; as well as gender, social class, generational relationships (social); and the definition of specific policies, human and material resources (programmatic).

When we redefine vulnerability as an analytical category, it is also necessary to consider the current Brazilian context in relation to the political landscape. Due to ideological, moral, and values-based discourses, there are groups that undergo other processes of vulnerability, such as the LGBTQIA+ population, indigenous peoples, quilombolas, immigrants, among others. These discourses and behaviors encourage acts of violence in the daily lives of cities, increasing the vulnerability of these populations.

In the field of sociological studies on childhood, a historical review points to a continuity in the treatment of the issue. In other words, vulnerability and risk have always been closely connected, authorizing a series of interventions, including within the legal framework. The establishment and validation of the categories of babies, children, and adolescents as subjects with rights have gone through a history of significant control, discourses, and practices, spanning from the Minors' Code (1927) to the social movement advocating for the implementation of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (1990). The Minors' Code used the notion of "protection" combined with education, and its logic was focused on punishing the poor.

The idea remains very present in social imaginaries, including those who work in public health, social assistance, and education policies in Brazil. The school is seen as a space for protection and social transformation, as we will see later. For now, it is important to understand that educational vulnerability is a factor to be considered in this scenario of protection and rights assurance.

Thus, to advance in the discussions intended here, we always need to keep in mind the historical and social factors of colonization that make up the punitive logic regarding Brazilian childhood and poor families. We must not overlook the meanings and mediations produced and reproduced today. In line with the discussion on the field of Human Rights and education, Schilling (2015) argues that the right to education is an arena of struggle, where there are ongoing disputes over meaning, and it guides us to seek enlightenment through an understanding of contemporary dilemmas. To contribute to this proposition, we include in these dilemmas the occupation of public space, the competition for space and the urban (important categories in Lefebvre's reflections), and Brazilian social inequality under the capitalist system.

In general terms, Lefebvre considers that childhood is present in the streets of cities, playing, coloring, and asserting its existence in urban centers (Lefebvre, 2001). He also tells us that the city is a work of art, not just a simple material product composed of markets, squares, and so on. The city is, therefore, a mediation among various other mediations (practical-sensible reality). The production of unequal childhoods and vulnerabilities and the city are in complete mediation, as one can observe the socio-historical details laden with meaning and significance. "[...] Capitalism has been maintained through the conquest and integration of space. Space has long ceased to

be a passive geographical medium or an empty geometric medium. It has become instrumental<sup>2</sup> (Lefebvre, 2008, p. 153).

In light of some university extension experiences, encompassed within the framework of action research<sup>3</sup>, guided by the principles of Education and Popular Extension (Thiollent, 1986), we will conduct the text with excerpts, images, and drawings, along with reflections on the way of life of street children. The goal is to provoke and sensitize the education sector to broaden its understanding of the street as a potential space for education and learning, especially for those who inhabit this space.

Therefore, we hope to contribute to teaching, research, and extension practices that open their ears to listen to the voices and recognize the knowledge that emerges from the streets, seeking to understand space as an instrument for real childhoods within urban occupations, abandoned buildings, sheltered in tents, and playing and creating life in the streets of the cities they inhabit.

## **Methodological path of praxis-led action research: background and contextualization**

We have as the inaugural questions of the political-pedagogical proposal that guides our praxis, such as: what is the role of the university as a public social institution in the face of social injustices and structural inequalities present in Brazilian society, especially when experienced by girls and boys who undergo historical processes of vulnerability in our country? How can we ensure the scientific integration of academic production as a social work, in order to enhance the praxis of teachers and students committed to social transformation? (Cruz, 2017).

Therefore, based on the understanding that the defense of the guarantee of rights, legal frameworks, and the provision of services aimed at the social protection of children and adolescents involve students, teachers, and professionals from various fields of expertise, the extension project “Children and Adolescents in Street Situations and Institutional Shelter: Building Strategies for Emotional Territorialization” was born in 2017 in the city of Niterói (RJ). Furthermore, we aim to develop awareness activities through workshops and other participatory and playful activities in squares, shelters, and other places frequented by children, actions that contribute to building bonds between them and their caregivers/educators. From planning to implementation and evaluation, participatory activities are prioritized, recognizing and enhancing the knowledge and practices of everyone, including children – understood here as “active subjects” – as well as young people and adults. When it comes to the child and youth population, playfulness is prioritized and integrated into the activities (Mitre, 2006).

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<sup>2</sup> In the notion used by Lefebvre (2008), space serves as an instrument for interests, provokes illusions. The space that appears rational and evident requires deeper analysis. It is instrumental as well because it defines “arrangements,” manipulated by all sorts of “authorities.”

<sup>3</sup> Action research approved by the research ethics committee of the Federal Fluminense University Fluminense - CAEE 35424220.0.0000.8160/ Opinion 4.172.076.

When analyzing its historical development, one of its main outcomes is a monthly extension action held in a public square, initially named “Ocupa Praça” (Occupy the Square). This intervention is planned and executed in collaboration with the Youth Reference Team for Alcohol and Drug Use Care Actions (ERIJAD) and the Child and Adolescent Psychosocial Care Center (CAPSi), among other partners. Occupying the square has been an act of breaking the cycle of invisibility for those who live there, as well as a return to the original meaning of a square: a place for gatherings, affection, and diversity. Our methodological approach for creating this space involves attentive listening, a willingness to engage, dialogue, drawing, capoeira, music, workshops, and sharing available clothing for donation, cake, popcorn, water, juice, and anything else that is possible and we can create together.

Between 2020 and 2022, the recognition of the project by municipal authorities culminated in the approval of the action research project (AR) “Niterói - a whole city for all children, adolescents, and youth<sup>4</sup>”. From the field of Social Sciences, AR is considered a methodological strategy of applied social research that is associated with various forms of collective action aimed at actively and participatively solving a problem. It incorporates various techniques in its different research moments or processes, such as “collecting and interpreting data, solving problems, organizing actions, etc.” (Thiollent, 1986, p.25). In addition to continuing extension activities, action research aimed to produce a comprehensive situational diagnosis of municipal public policies for the child and youth population, develop training strategies for social workers operating in the Child and Adolescent Rights Guarantee System, and expand extension activities of political influence and access production in the territories through “Ocupa Praça: ocupa, cuida e brinca” (Occupy the Square: occupy, care, and play) and support for a comprehensive municipal campaign (Berger *et al.*, 2021).

Thus, through an expanded program in the areas of research and university extension, procedurally linked through the methodological strategy of AR and the ethical, political, and pedagogical principles of Popular Education and University Extension, we continue to address the worsening processes of vulnerability. We occupy places of high circulation and recognition by children, adolescents, and youth who consider public spaces as places of life, affection, and residence, believing in the territory they use as an alternative for affectionate, participatory, and democratic education and care. Occupying squares, hearts, and minds has made it possible to build other ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, and interacting with these actors as the children and adolescents they are!

After more than six years of research and action, we have accumulated knowledge and practices formed alongside and with these individuals. To share some reflections stemming from this powerful experience, we have chosen to develop the text based on two main thematic axes: a) Childhood in the streets and its relationship with educational vulnerability, and b) Playful bodies in the streets: from resistance to creation. We hope that the proposed narrative, both textual and visual, can invite teachers and educators who seek to move beyond their current positions towards a more politically situated praxis with the real children with whom we engage today.

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<sup>4</sup> The research was conducted with the support of the Municipal Government of Niterói, through an agreement with the Federal Fluminense University in the Applied Projects Development Program (PDPA).

## Childhood in the streets and its relationship with educational vulnerability

Considering the discussion of the multiple dimensions of vulnerability, we will delve into educational vulnerability here. The Municipal Education Department of São Paulo published a document in 2021 with the following definition of educational vulnerability:

[...] Educational vulnerability is defined as a set of situations that weaken, interfere with, or hinder the learning of babies, children, and adolescents due to the failure to meet their educational needs. This results in these individuals not having their right to development fulfilled in a dignified and complete manner, considering that education is a public, subjective, inalienable, and universal human right (São Paulo, 2021, p. 11).

Among the set of situations mentioned above, we want to highlight the violation of rights, such as the right to housing, freedom, respect, and dignity. These violations expose and emphasize that these rights also need to be realized and understood as educational needs.

Milton Santos (2009), in the same line of reasoning, questions the place attributed to education in addressing poverty. Merely having access to this right does not guarantee that their educational needs will be met, especially because these children are not heard. He also emphasizes that one cannot think of growth without structural transformations as a prerequisite. However, what we experience in Brazil is the antithesis of this proposal, as discourses advocating progress, especially economic progress, emerge at the expense of strengthening social rights.

Indeed, educational vulnerability is still a relatively underexplored topic in research. Therefore, we have chosen to focus on it, particularly in connection with the subjects considered “invisible,” real childhoods in street situations, who sometimes evoke feelings of pity and at other times feelings of indignation and danger within cities.

What is the role of the school in this context? Is the request for schools aimed at ensuring a right as a social protection service or as a means of institutionalizing the child’s body to remove it from the public space and minimize the effects of the formation of the Brazilian people, marked by racial differences and social inequality? The notion of simply moving a child from the street to a school as a solution to any identified problem is overly simplistic. This issue is far from being simple. The field of education should not be “outside” the lived reality of these children. However, educational public policies often do not include them; on the contrary, they often contribute to their initial exclusion (Cavalari Neto *et al.*, 2019).

In Image 1, we can see a group of students with musical instruments at the Juvenil Tia Ciata School. This school was an experiment in Rio de Janeiro in the 1980s, involving children and adolescents living on the streets. We provide the following excerpt to explain its purpose in more detail:

[...] Despite having lasted just over 5 years, it ended up demonstrating the fallacy and prejudice behind that label by enabling the schooling of the “invincible.” In fact, the school institution will only truly educate the “idle,” the “marginalized,” the Black population when it allows them to appropriate this space, making them the center of the process and owners of their own learning (LEITE, 1991, p. 23).

**Image 1:** Students at the Juvenil Tia Ciata Youth Education School - Rio de Janeiro.



**Source:** Coordination of Tia Ciata School (Leite, 1991, p. 52).

We bring the experience of the Tia Ciata School to the forefront as an example where those students were listened to in a humanized and transformative way, where children and adolescents could speak for themselves, enabling them to tell their own stories from their own perspective. However, unfortunately, in today's educational reality, the power to decide on the quality and type of education is not under the control of this population. We do not see active and democratic participation of children in educational spaces. The educational logic and its ideological framework are established based on production needs, in opposition to liberation

The politicization of childhood, as advocated by Castro (2008), stems from observations of a society from a societal perspective that shapes the field of childhood and adolescence through the representation of voices by adults. In her text, the author reflects on the issue of representation in spaces of power, such as conferences and educational spaces, and problematizes the fact that childhood and adolescence did/do not have a political voice in the legitimized instances of the political game. This representation forged through identification will always be insufficient for the aspirations and interests of this public.

Youth collectives have been confronting these marks with important questions, seeking to erode the established order. Especially concerning allegations of oppression and social recognition, they question the accountability of the state and problematize personal responsibility (the burden of individual destiny) in the face of the problems and adversities encountered in cities. It seems that here we find something akin to the denunciation and announcement movements worked on in emancipatory pedagogical processes of popular education, which potentially can pave the way for decolonial paths in the face of processes of educational vulnerability: "It is necessary first for those who find themselves denied the primary right to speak to regain that right, forbidding this dehumanizing assault to continue" (Freire, 2018, p. 109).

Aligned with the proposal to politicize childhood through emancipatory political-pedagogical projects, some researchers (Ramos, 2013; Ramos, Aquino, 2019) and the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) have been systematizing and disseminating their counter-hegemonic educational

practices with children and adolescents, based on the Pedagogy of the Movement. Through this pedagogy, they reaffirm collectivism, social struggle, resistance, and political organization from childhood onwards. In other words, they believe in “the participation of the child as a historical and rights-bearing subject in the context of the struggle for land” (Ramos; Aquino, 2019, p. 157).

Gobbi (2019) writes about children fighting for housing in urban occupations in the city of São Paulo and argues that it is not just physical survival that is at stake, but the right to other ways of living. Through these occupations, they seek to reclaim urban spaces that are at the center of disputes, especially by the real estate market. The presence of children in the street, in this researcher’s context, was made through drawings produced by children in urban spaces with chalk. With the presence of children at risk of being erased, they inscribe themselves in the public space, politically situated, showing passersby that, in some way, their marks contribute to new elements of everyday life. Here, we rephrase the researcher’s question in her text: whose lives matter?

In Niterói, the presence of children and adolescents in street situations is considered dangerous, as they are treated as “potential criminals,” and as a result, measures are taken in the name of public safety and justice.

An important discussion to be raised is the political use of risk for the regulation of the most vulnerable populations, creating the expression “children and adolescents at risk.” For this, we will use Foucault’s concept of biopower, as discussed in the work of Lemos, Scheinvar, and Nascimento (2014). The use of the term “at risk” is used to characterize space, territory, or specific social groups and segments of the population. It gained greater emphasis in the 1960s alongside technical-quantitative productions by American regulatory agencies. The concept considers risk as an adverse event and can articulate different types of harm, to be measured in order to mitigate future problems defined through calculations and statistics.

The political use of risk, in the name of social defense, has been implemented through the regulation of populations and bodies. The widespread inflation of risks aligns with the population’s demand for security because risk is associated with danger. Therefore, Foucault (2008) points out that security apparatuses are interconnected through sovereignty, biopolitics, and discipline. In the city of Rio de Janeiro, in 2014 and 2016, on the eve of mega-events, there were instances of forced removals of the homeless population (Rizzini, 2019). In other words, in the name of security, practices, referred to as social practices, are carried out to exercise control over bodies.

According to Castel’s analysis (1987), by minimizing risks, we are “investing” in childhood, especially in impoverished children who are considered “deficient” and “maladjusted.” Families and children become the primary concern of experts. Thus, a social protection for future dangers is forged because, in this analysis, it begins with the child “in danger” and with the adolescent who may become “dangerous.” In this perspective, those in danger need care, and those who are dangerous must be controlled and/or eliminated (Lemos; Scheinvar; Nascimento, 2014).

In this scenario, it is important to reaffirm the idea that we need to distance ourselves from the pitfalls of medicalizing and pathologizing conceptions of non-learning (São Paulo, 2021). Contributing to this assertion, the situation in which children and adolescents no longer see themselves within the school should be expanded. Perhaps by putting educational spaces in a realignment of their practices, often rigid and not very open to the numerous learning experiences that take place outside of it.

The practices have been functioning as a camouflage device for the problem, as the inclusion policies are limited to serving the excluded, with prevailing assistance proposals that include elements of moralization, blame, and guardianship (Nascimento; Ribeiro, 2002, p. 25).

There is a division between us and them. We are those who oversee, classify, diagnose, and produce practices about these individuals. The category “them” is initially filled with a distance that borders on labeling the other as incapable. To better understand these conditions, Baptista (2001) writes a fable about a boy who, the more he spoke, the more he disappeared without a trace. One research insight, given what has been discussed so far, is that we need to strengthen the daily claims of babies, children, and adolescents, break away from vulnerability and commonplaces, in order to listen to and address the social inequalities that contribute so much to this scenario of extermination of poor and peripheral youth (who live in the city centers and in rural areas).

The school, as part of the System for Guaranteeing the Rights of Children and Adolescents (SGDCA), provides more than just the right to education and food security. It facilitates the social protection of this population by providing access to other material resources, social interaction with diverse bodies and histories, and the learning of ‘world reading,’ as Paulo Freire (2018) used to say. We assert here that children and adolescents in street situations produce this world reading through other strategies in their daily (playful) *viração*<sup>5</sup> and their own resistance in occupying public spaces, where they are seen as *abject bodies*<sup>6</sup>.

We are not looking for magical formulas to reduce educational vulnerability; we are contextualizing social, historical, political, and pedagogical aspects of this vulnerability to the reality of street children. In the search for this initial understanding, what practices could be thought of with children outside the school walls? Can the social praxis of the city be incorporated into the school’s dynamics?

## **Playful bodies in the street: from resistance to creation**

During the games or workshops proposed in meetings organized by workers from the Psychosocial Care Network (RAPS), with the support of the extension project linked to the Federal Fluminense University (UFF), territories of existence were proposed in public squares of the city (previously lifeless and now occupied) with babies, children, young people, and adults. Many of them reinvented games, created new ways to play, and invited the adult audience present there to display other bodily tones, countering the fable of the gray, faded, and lifeless boy present in Baptista’s research (2001), which may represent, to some extent, their everyday life. These are small demonstrations of their guerrilla behavior of living (on the streets) and their relationship with the city as a place of coexistence. (GOBBI, 2019).

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<sup>5</sup> *Viração* is a concept used by Gregori (2000) that goes beyond the idea of simply surviving or managing in difficult circumstances. The term conveys the notion, as seen in her research with boys in street situations, that *viração* is more than just movement; it represents a persistent and ongoing communication with the city and its various characters.

<sup>6</sup> “Abject bodies” (Frangella; Rui, 2018) are neither subjects nor objects; they represent a sense of horror that arises from the relationship between the self and the other. This understanding reinforces a boundary between the self and the other, while these bodies also produce political and spatial effects in the urban space.

**Image 2:** Children and adolescents playing a treasure hunt game at Praça Vital Brazil, Niterói-RJ, 2018.



**Source:** Personal collection (2018).<sup>7</sup>

Image 2 brings the vivacity of a boy living on the streets within the concept of a treasure hunt game, along with other children. Clues were scattered in the square, and through this collective search, mysteries and riddles of that same territory were unraveled, with statements that had the potential to situate those children and adolescents in that territory. Solidarity was one of the aspects that stood out in the game, as some of the children couldn't decode the words yet, and other participants shared their knowledge, fostering a sense of collectivity to win the game together, each with their own skills and knowledge. At the end of the game, the boy in the photo, with great agility and dexterity, finds the 'treasure,' a jar of chocolates. Initially, he celebrates the discovery and makes plans with the prize. Then, he revises his plan and shares some of the chocolates with the children who were there, side by side with him. Minutes later, we find the same boy offering the chocolates to drivers of cars and motorcycles stopping at a traffic light very close to the square. The prize became a commodity/creation.

Children and adolescents living on the streets, exposed to the violence, risks, and vulnerabilities of the street, also experience a sense of community, belonging, and sharing with other living beings in the same territory, as exemplified in the situation of Image 1. In these cases, it is necessary to form a group to ensure protection, as a child on the street alone increases the risk, since what is seen is not a child but rather "a problem" (Oliveira, 2004). According to Vicentin (2016, p. 40), when addressing situations of isolation, discrimination, and prejudice, the collective is a quality, "[...] it is the power of mutual support that guarantees our connection with others: it allows us to invent different possible spaces of existence."

Pinazza and Gobbi (2014) state that the human exercise of creation is a daily occurrence and takes place either in pairs or individually. Many times, adults' perspectives on children's creations indicated that they were useless and without value; however, it is through this exercise that elements of the culture lived and developed by children are expressed. They also assert that the act of knowing

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<sup>7</sup> Photograph taken in 2018 during a public space occupation activity in Niterói, alongside RAPS workers, where children and adolescents were playing a treasure hunt game, discovering the spaces and forming different relationships with the territory.

and creating occurs simultaneously, thereby exposing desires, existential secrets, hypotheses, and theories. Therefore, the focus should be on the art of encounter, of eye contact, side by side, being physically available to listen, communicate, interact, and play with these individuals who inhabit the urban spaces of metropolises.

The economy of liberal society<sup>8</sup> has tasked the State with full responsibility for measures related to public and private hygiene, education, and the protection of individuals. The entire perspective of educational policy and the teaching-learning processes were and still are, in a certain way, aimed at the formation of human capital<sup>9</sup>.

In this discussion, it is important to bring in the ideas of Mbembe (2016; 2017), who problematizes contemporary violence and the ways in which a state of exception and/or a state of siege operate through necropolitics. What is the skin color of the children living on the streets? What is the skin color of Brazilian children sold into slavery in the 19th century? As a broader and more contemporary theory, Mbembe's reflections resonate closely with social phenomena occurring here in Brazil. The violence and extermination of Black people in Brazil are evident, statistically proven, institutionally executed, and, for the most part, morally accepted.

Through necropolitics, a technology of killing is perfected, and violence against the Black population becomes something acceptable and commonplace (Mbembe, 2016). In Niterói, such violent practices are witnessed against children and adolescents within a policy of death and extermination aimed at a specific social group, making it appear that the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) is not effectively implemented in practice. After all, how can rights be realized without changing the concrete living conditions of the working class, which has been historically oppressed and marginalized?

In 2022, we conducted an occupation in a public square to engage in dialogue with some of these vulnerable families. Most of them were former residents of the "Caixa Building" occupation, located in the city center, who were evicted in June 2019. They had either migrated to communities surrounding the city center or had gone to a Family Reception Institution in the same region. Many workers from the fields of Mental Health, Social Assistance, Solidarity Economy, and Culture, along with professors, students, and outreach workers from UFF, participated in this gathering. During this meeting, which had over fifty children in attendance, we provided paper, pens, crayons, and other materials. Together, we drew, and the children produced drawings representing their living situations. Below are three of these drawings created by children between the ages of six and 12 who played during the meeting in the square.

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8 Liberalism is a political, economic and social theory widespread in the 18th century, which laid the hand of freedom. Some important characteristics were: the valorization of laws, individualism and the valorization of free and, above all, the wide and free market competition. This quick note does not account for the complexity of the term, however, we highlight that the theory, through the laws, aimed to regulate social relations, affirming some logic, such as criminal, that so much influence on the ways of life of children and adolescents. One of his main theorists was Adam Smith (1723-1790). Later, the theory comes in a new garment, with the neoliberal version.

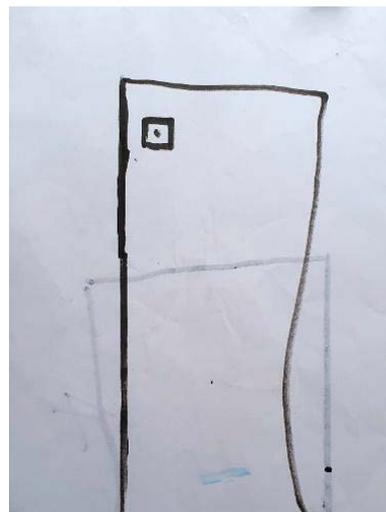
9 Human capital is a term conceptualized by some scholars and has a strong connection with work and production. Schultz (1961) defines 'human capital' as the amount of investment a nation or individuals make in anticipation of further future returns. In the educational field, the idea propagates in the 1960 and 1970, as an attempt to explain the phenomenon of inequality between nations and between individuals or social groups.

**Image 3:** Drawing of a dwelling.



**Source:** Personal collection (2022).

**Image 4:** Drawing created by Hiago



**Source:** Personal collection (2022).

**Image 5:** Drawing created by Pamela.



**Fonte:** Personal collection (2022).

In a recent study on children's relationships and different housing experiences (Queiroz; Pereira, 2020), it was found that children are an integral part of the formation of spaces. Housing, regardless of the context, is the result of individuals' relationships with the region, meaning it takes on the connotation of a collective struggle. At different scales, there are children fighting for the right to housing. There is no glass dome capable of isolating a child from what society is, and in this sense, we are all responsible.

In the drawings above, three representations of what would be their places of residence are depicted. Beyond what is on paper, that is, what the children wanted to show, it is important to consider what is not in these drawings. We will not propose psychological or psychoanalytical analyses here; the drawings are creations of these playful and creative bodies within the context of violence and extermination mentioned earlier, with the support of Mbembe and Foucault. In the

context of necropolitics, the only way out would be death; however, the thinker mentions at some point in the text that these colonized/massacred bodies also produced music, religious practices, dances, and other important cultural elements, bringing forth a significant paradox.

Pereira and Milanez (2022, forthcoming) offer reflections on the role of childhood in the context of war. In their text, the authors propose a political examination of childhood in different conditions of existence through the documentary “For Sama,” set in the context of the Syrian civil war. Childhood, represented by the baby Sama, symbolizes the certainty that the adults’ struggle is not in vain when documenting the horrors experienced in that reality. Furthermore, it was necessary to make the music louder than the bombs, but without romanticizing children’s playfulness in the face of catastrophes and the state of death.

Mendes and Vicentin (2021, p. 129) point out that “[...] children and adolescents can be recognized as political subjects who reject the tutelage and control characteristic of policies directed towards them.” The authors argue that services aimed at these individuals living on the streets need to move away from the logic of “rescuing” these lives and instead focus on creating something new. Thus, education and care are within the realm of nurturing as an ethics, transcending reason to reach the realm of the sensible, the place of inventiveness (Berger *et al.*, 2021). The extension practices and action research mentioned and expressed here belong to this concept of praxis, grounded in the territory and driven by, empathy and emotion.

One of the necessary debates in this theme is that of children’s co-protagonism in social transformation, situated in an adult-centric and patriarchal society (Mejia, Malaver, Pena, 2013; Morales; Magistris, 2019). According to some authors, child and adolescent protagonism cannot be individual; it needs to be socially valued by everyone. It cannot be achieved without constant vigilance of our own power (as adults); we need to support, collaborate, and create conditions for children and adolescents to take the lead in their struggles for human emancipation, side by side, without reproducing oppression or violence.

There is a motto that functions as a political statement within the work reported here with children living on the streets in Niterói, which is “it takes an entire city to care for a child.” In doing so, we draw upon the thinking of Vicentin (2016), who suggests that by collective action, we help break through fatalism, which in turn enhances our civic power and our capacity to be concerned about situations and take responsibility for the of others.

To formulate these reflections and this arrangement, it is necessary to look at oneself in relation to these bodies, which, according to Frangella and Rui (2018), constitute abject bodies. This understanding of abject bodies speaks to the ambiguous relationship between the body and urban space, a discomfoting relationship with these bodies. By focusing on the bodies of people living on the streets, these bodies are neither subjects nor objects but rather evoke a sense of horror perceived in the relationship between the self and the other. The relationship of exclusion, of non-place, carries the marker of the Black body not by chance, as Mbembe points out when discussing necropolitics.

The researchers also discuss the signs of abjection, the marks attenuated and transformed by the inhabitants of the street, adopting bodily tactics that work in their favor. This brings to mind the

guerrilla-like behavior of children and adolescents who also follow this order, sometimes bringing childhood marks into their interactions, and at other times demonstrating their skill and maturity in dealing with other issues learned in the “street world.” However, we must be careful not to homogenize these bodies; there is a heterogeneity of bodies and forms on the street. Considering the social, historical, cultural, and pedagogical contexts of the production of childhoods and precarious, marginalized, and/or exploited bodies can, on the other hand, help us identify creative and resistant ways of producing childhood cultures. Especially in the commonly hegemonic sense of a capitalist and racist society, there is often a lack of consideration for the possibility of there being subjects, voices, knowledge, and stories that are worth listening to.

It is essential to be cautious when thinking about childhood on the streets; there is no room for romanticization, as stated in the title of Vicentin’s text (2016) - “criançar o descriançável” (childing the unchildable) - and to not overlay the prevailing maxim that today’s child at risk is tomorrow’s dangerous adolescent.

We acknowledge our limitations and recognize in ourselves and our practices the imprints and captures of a social imaginary guided by the logic of capital and structural racism. Indeed, the topic is of great complexity, and the writing of the text reflects on (re)existences, the result of empirical observations and encounters with children and adolescents living on the streets. The daily exercise of being in the field involves creating openings in the borders we establish between ourselves and others, with the awareness that the politics of death is encircling and causing (Black) bodies to disappear.

The sensitivity of the playful bodies on the streets sometimes reveals escape routes (Deleuze; Guattari, 1996) that act as factors in an assemblage, leading to daily changes and creating more imprints and stories for the inhabitants/survivors of the street. They transition from resistance to creation, much like those who create escape routes to make sense of their reality through encounters with others in the relationship between the body and the city. Researching and working with this population means being unsettled in the relationships between individuals, society, and oneself because emotions that embody the experience emerge on the scene, such as discomfort, fear of state violence, and the certainty that the permanent state of lack – both material and emotional – is far from being alleviated.

The body is perceived, in contemporary times, as much more than an entity in which mechanisms of power and domination are inscribed but rather in a relationship constructed with other bodies, simultaneously physical, material, social, and political. Transformations take place through and via the body, with corporeal subjects as a fundamental means of this movement (Frangella; Rui, 2018).

### **Dismantle to build, has it not passed time already?**

The discussion developed so far focuses on the perspective of childhood on the streets, considering vulnerabilities, especially educational vulnerability, the politicization of childhood, and the representation of these bodies on the streets. With the aim of stimulating debates, we

seek to influence the training of future teachers through continuous education for those already working in the field and challenging the institutions that are part of the Child and Adolescent Rights Guarantee System (SGDCA). In this regard, as we approach the conclusion, we bring into the debate the perspective of educational vulnerability as not belonging solely within the school boundaries. We believe that practices carried out through workshops and other strategies in public squares with children living on the streets can contribute to reducing educational inequality both in practical and conceptual terms. The demands addressed outside the school context involve families and are intertwined with whether or not young children have access to schools and daycare centers. We hope that this text has contributed in some way to destabilizing the foundations of formal, colonizing education.

For such understanding, it is essential to make clear the researchers' limits as hegemonic bodies in the ongoing exercise of acknowledging the estrangements produced from the field. In this sense, the aim is to enhance the creative activity through research, bringing reflection alongside the children who assert their existence and presence in the world there. This should be done while considering, in the analysis, power relations and the intersectionality of social class, gender, race, and generation in the production and reproduction of the city. It all begins with the body as a social and political being.

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### **RANULFO CAVALARI NETO**

Doctoral student in Education, Universidade de São Paulo (USP), Mestre em Saúde Coletiva, Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil; Professor of Physical Education, Prefeitura Municipal de Maricá, Maricá, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

### **SONIA MARIA DANTAS BERGER**

PhD in Public Health, Escola Nacional de Saúde Pública Sérgio Arouca da Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (ENSP-FIOCRUZ), Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil; Associate Professor of the Departamento de Planejamento em Saúde do Instituto de Saúde Coletiva (MPS/ISC-UFF), Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

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