

Raffaella Mulato (Italy): Workshops of Participative Planning with Children and Teenagers Educational Space and Urban Space, a Possible Interaction

Abstract

The project "Educational cities" was born in Barcelona some years ago: up to now many other European cities have agreed to a "Charter". This document emphasizes the role of the city as a learning environment of space, but also of relationship, of community, of active citizenship. I will not speak about this project, but my lecture will start from the two very words "City" and "Educational" and intends to reflect about their true meaning. I asked myself: "Is the city really an educational environment? If it is, in what sense? Or is it just the opposite?", that is the city reduces or denies its countless learning opportunities, attractive but dangerously deceiving like a siren song? Can the city promote the Salutogenesis or, on the contrary, it helps to weaken already weakened groups of people like children, teenagers, women, old people, foreigners? The system "adult and masculine city" seems to reproduce to its citizens the same dynamics adult-child in which the former is never available, because he/she never finds time and space to play, to listen, to be together, activating the frustrating "game" illusion-delusion. How can most of the space of a city be private, or reserved, or? How can public space be above all made of roads, meant just for cars? The city spaces are often planned and built-up regardless of the needs and wishes of the people living, working and studying in the city area.

Moving school' s central idea is to invert this trend, which is also the background and core of all the projects, technical advice, post graduation courses I have been involved in over the years. My lecture will develop the following topics:

- The concept of sustainability
- Learning environment: from the school to the city
- The city seen as an environment of participation and building of shared choices
- The scale of participation and the domains of participation
- The relationship between educational spaces and urban spaces and between teachers/trainers and planners
- The way children see the urban spaces in relation to their degrees of autonomy of movement and knowledge of the areas they live in

**WORKSHOPS OF PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING WITH CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS
EDUCATIONAL SPACE AND URBAN SPACE, A POSSIBLE INTERACTION**

by *Raffaella Mulato, Laboratorio Città*

"Education is dangerous, because it encourages the sense of possibility"
Jerome Bruner

"Time is the play of a child"
Heraclitus

"I would give wings to children, but I would let them learn to fly"
Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Introduction

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1. DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ENVIRONMENT.

Today everybody understands the meaning of the saying "the wing heat of a butterfly in Brazil can cause a hurricane in Florida".

A dramatic example is the tragedy of the great wave, the "tsunami" that at the end of 2004 hit a large part of the world across the Indian ocean for thousands km with more than 160.000 dead.

This natural event, and others as well, confronts us with the complexity and vulnerability of the world in which we live together with the necessity to assume the principle of responsibility, as individuals and as local and global community.

Many understand it is necessary to change our relationship with the environment: the crisis of the present model can be overcome by a sustainable development, starting from education. We often discuss too much on *what* to do rather than on *how* to do.

To get a sustainable development we must take into consideration two variables:

Time Variable: contradiction between the speed of transformations and slowness of their effects on environment.

Space Variable: our model, global and local, doesn't consider the impacts of our interventions on the environment.

Which strategies for sustainability?

There are 3 challenges to ACHIEVE sustainability:

1. the syndrome of the "boiled frog": a frog lives well in warm water and it slowly dies without realizing if the temperature of the water rises slowly... Being unable to see the slow lethal trends of economic and demographic development that can "boil" our civilization.
2. the "mental apartheid": the idea that man is separated from nature. We are within nature, a part of it, and cannot go on thinking that our actions do not cause uncontrollable consequences in the short or long run
3. the tragedy of "common goods": the irresponsible management of the free access resources. The concern for the common goods is essential for the balance of any system: natural, social, economic...

As a consequence when we talk about sustainability we have to think of two poles: the Ecological stability and the Quality of human life: social inequality is the core of the debate on sustainable development.

The objective of life quality will be achieved only if people and communities share common values sense of belonging, identity and if they are directly involved in the choices concerning them.

We have to restore an active citizenship!

One of the key stones of Agenda 21 is the **participation in "government" starting from local communities**: if we don't start from behaviours, that is from education, we will not have any chance of success in the policies for sustainability.

The city is a "privileged" place to meet the challenges of sustainability, build an active citizenship and improve the quality of our life. I would like to point out three fundamental aspects:

1. The city is a complex system, where, in a limited space human, economic, cultural, environmental resources interact. The ecological imprint of a city is much bigger than its very space : think of the input/output of resources as energy, matter, water, flows of information and communication. In this sense the city is the most meaningful indicator of the sustainability of the development , which means quality of living, moving, communicating, " being part of".
2. The city is given an important role as "educational environment": for the building of the identity, sense of belonging to a community/ies, chance to " get lost and find our way" (verificare con raffa) , to define our relationship with the world that is heavily influenced not only by family and school education, but also by the way of "living" a place we inherit, but we can also modify (as a consequence the city as an educational environment can affect the way we think the relationship between man and environment).
3. *City planning*, a subject dealing especially and above all with the government, transformation and development of the city and its area , has long been thinking over its own paradigms , following the failure or limited effectiveness of the planning tools up to now. This crisis has generated a very deep and different attention to processes rather than projects (at least for some professionals and experts). There is above all the need to study, interact, analyse thoroughly the relationship between city planning and education, between the way of living and thinking the space and the way to realize people's needs.

2. THE CITY: "GETTING LOST" AND "FINDING ONE'S WAY" HELP TO GROW

Children love hidden places, the "limes", the border line, getting "beyond". Exploring is written in our DNA. Growing up also means **to get free** from the consequences of "getting lost"; and learn **to find our own way**. Today there is a " getting lost" that is a sense of permanent abstraction as to one's life place" (Franco La Cecla, anthropologist).

The city becomes an "indifferent place" for the town dwellers who can't decide and change their own environment. They are only "users": architecture as a spatial lobotomy?

An example of how the city can become " stranger" to its dwellers is our capability to represent it: what is our "mental map" of the places we live in ? On what does it depend the way we represent it?

Once more we find an immediate reply through the eyes and mind of children.

Here are two *mental maps* of the journeys home-school of two children who move in different ways and some data concerning a high number of children of the primary schools of the city of Pordenone (italy) involved in a project of participation promoted by the local authority.

The road/street as a symbol

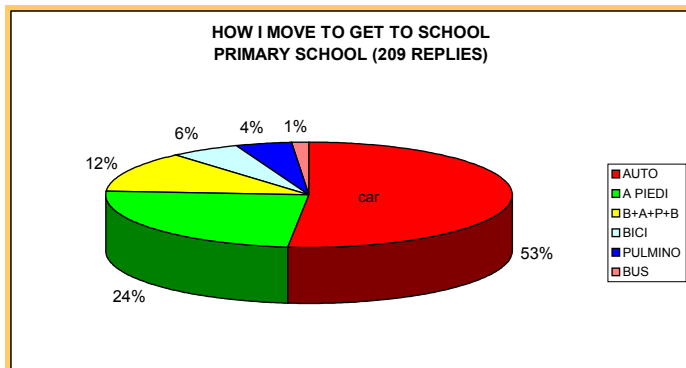


The road/street was an educational meeting place, where to play and exchange ideas.

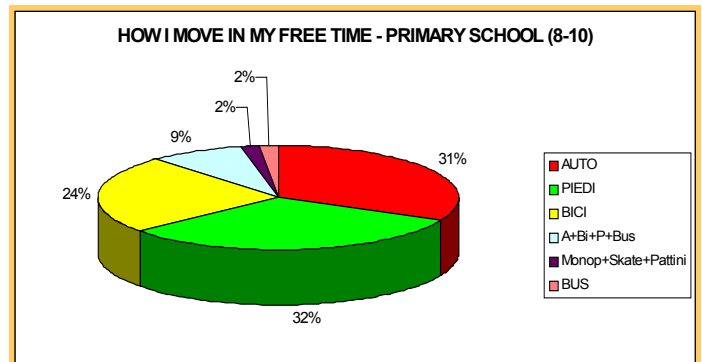


The road/street is now an "alien space", anonymous, dangerous for our children. Is it a **"non place"**?

AN EXAMPLE: City of Pordenone (IT): how children move to get to school and in their free time...¹



More than half of children get to school by car ... they not know the way!



Most children move by their parents' car in their free time, only one third move on foot to go to play or to see friends

A few considerations

The number of children who depend on adults for their "urban mobility" is very high;

Public means of transport have a marginal role;

Children and teenagers walk very little and this is reflected in their wishes.

The survey realized by the children of the primary schools of Pordenone involved in the project **TRACCE** in 2003 highlights data that are more or less the same all over Italy (even if there are worse cases) and witnesses the existence of denied spaces; the city is not "educational", it is a place/non place generally unknown. The "known" parts of the city are "islands" interconnected by roads/links familiar only to our means of transport.

"Getting lost" and "finding our way" has become a luxury we cannot afford. Children are the first to suffer from this "denial" and the consequences affect also their health and growing process.

¹ 2003, T.R.A.C.C.E. (Territorio Ragazzi Ambiente Comunità per una Città Sostenibile), City of Pordenone (IT) by Lucia Cibir, Lucia Lancerin, Raffaella Mulato

What children have said

The paradox: "If I can I cycle, but if there is too much traffic, I go by car not to breathe smog"

"I would like to walk to school, but it is too dangerous because of the traffic. Very few stop to let you cross!"

"I like cycling to school because it is faster, but, with my friends, I like walking because the slower we walk the more we joke"

"When I go to my friends' I feel safe and I can walk slowly, looking at the landscape"

"I would like to cycle... if only there were cycle tracks!"

"I like feeling free and in the open fresh air, the bike is the only mean I am allowed to use"

"I wish I could walk... if only the streets were safer and lighted"

TRAFFIC GENERATES TRAFFIC!

INSECURITY, DANGER

TIME, SPACE, SOCIAL RELATIONS

THE PLEASURE OF FINDING THEIR OWN WAY

ACCESSIBLE CITY?

OPEN SPACE AND MOVING AUNONOMY

SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE



From "non place" to "place" (?)



A group of people becomes a **community** when it develops a sense of belonging, when it can participate in the decisions, when it accepts a system of relations and values

Paradoxically a city dweller does not often care about the place in which he lives for the very reason **he lives there**. He/she cares about his/her own house and other places, usually private, to reach by private means of transport.

The attention of the city dweller is self absorbed and the adult loses, in the growing process the exploratory qualities of children. One of the opportunities of the local participated actions and of the workshops of participative planning with children is to develop again the interest and the capability **to see**.

Only interactive relationship and knowledge can generate new ideas and demands, because they **move** scientific and non ideological knowledge with a great benefit for city dwellers as well as for the professionals, educators, technicians, researchers dealing with the place and its inhabitants.

How do children move in the city?

Children move a lot, but they don't know anything of the pathways to go from a place to another.

Consequences: It is a *limit to the development* of their skills and competences of perception and representation of space, movement and autonomy. It is a "loss" of *affective, cognitive and relational "capital"*, in this sense the city can mis-educate. The city is no longer a place of experience and learning

What do children ask for?

Informal spaces **to give a meaning to according** to the moment and the way they are "lived". Children ask for simple things: the playground, the street ...

In the past the knowledge of the " outside world" was possible: from "getting lost" in front of the unknown to "exploring". Now "being out " has been converted into "being in"

Today children live in an organized world they cannot cope with and where they cannot find the "empty" space and time they keep asking for.

A city built for children (but for adults too) must be open, a place that can be explored, and develop a sense of belonging to a community.

3. CHILDREN AND PARTICIPATION. WORKSHOP FOR THE PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING OF CHILDREN.

Participation is the *way of life* of a community. Children play a key role in the processes of participation as "citizens that, helped to get to know their environment, will be more likely to take care of it in the future".

The Convention for the Rights of Children approved in 1989 acknowledges children as subjects of rights. The article 12 states the right of children *to be heard about all problems concerning them, to express their opinions and to be taken into consideration.*

3.1. THE SCALE OF PARTICIPATION².



Children/teenagers are the most photographed and less heard members in our society.

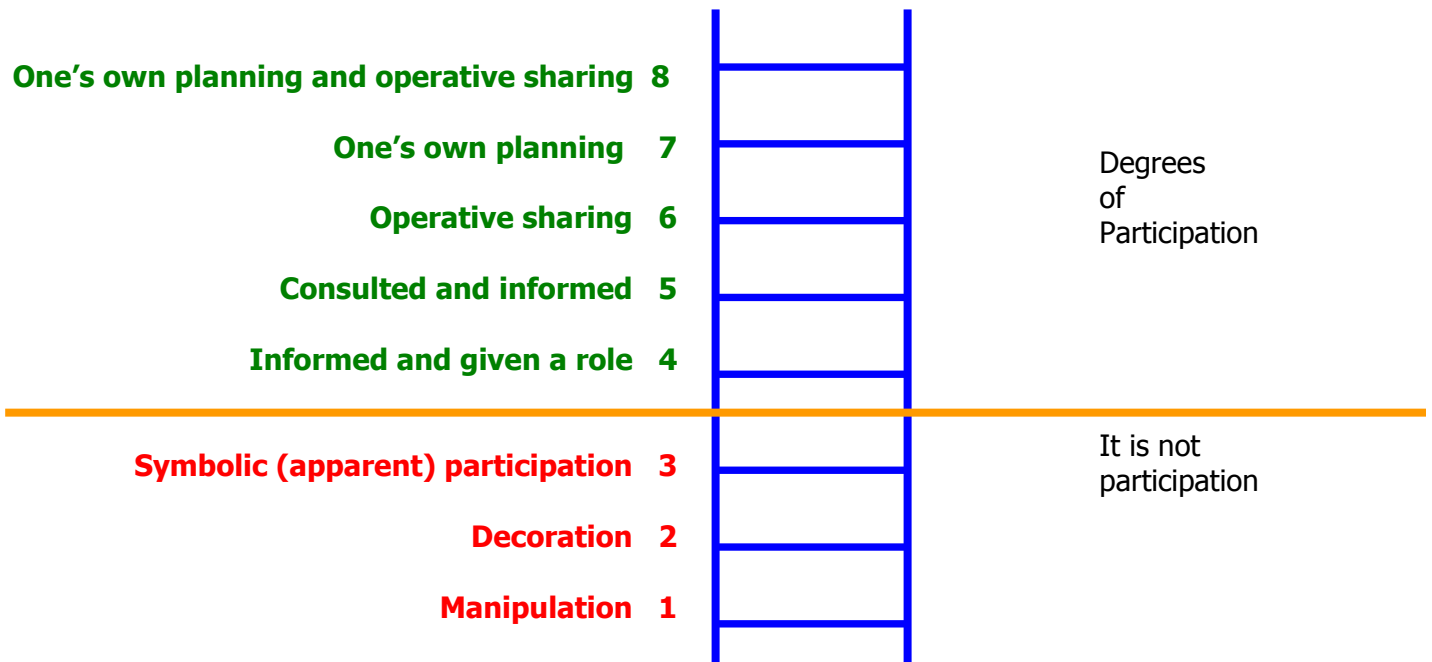
Their picture is **used** for purposes they are not aware of

There are projects where children are "**users**" (theatre, dance, ...) directed by adults

There are projects where children are **protagonists** and not only users

² The scale of participation is an "ideal synthesis" of the way of to take the process of participation (by Roger Hart and other)

Scale of participation



1. **MANIPULATION**: when the promoters of an action use the addressees for their own convenience (example: advertising or media use, interviews or "virtual" consultations)
2. **DECORATION**: when the planners of an action use children to reinforce an idea (example: advertising campaigns – also for social aims -, children participating in events without being informed and with roles decided by adults)
3. **SYMBOLIC PARTICIPATION**: when children are summoned as "witnesses" in seminars or public meetings (example: model "UNICEF – children's friendly mayor", children are requested to participate guided by adults)
4. **INFORMED AND GIVEN A ROLE**: when the different "actors" are informed about the objectives they are addressed to and have an active role in their realization (example: creative workshops, improvisation, environmental education; activities where children know what they do, why and with whom)
5. **CONSULTED AND INFORMED**: when the objectives of the projects are defined after consulting the children (example: initiative involving children; planning of places for children according to their needs)
6. **OPERATIVE SHARING**: when the planners define the general objectives, but the decisions are taken together with the addressees (example: projects for children/participative planning; children's councils)
7. **CHILDREN'S OWN PLANNING**: when the elders have the role of facilitators (bambini : children as planners: examples of this can be find in the Anglo-saxon/American world)
8. **ONE'S OWN PLANNING AND OPERATIVE SHARING**: when the children define the objectives since the beginning and the operative decisions are taken and put into practice together with the elders and with

intermediaries (example: projects *with* children: adults and children interact in the planning of workshops, school environment, journeys home-school).

3.2. THE DOMAINS OF PARTICIPATION³(by M. Francis and R. Lorenzo)

Mark FRANCIS and Raymond LORENZO, experts of participative planning, have started a critic revision on the theme of participative city planning and childhood, starting from their multi year experience on the field and from the theories and models of participation, which puts together the experiences of the two authors: american and anglosaxon on one hand, european (and partly italian) on the other. The passage below is an attempt of synthesis of the "structural" elements of the different "domains" of participation for children and teenagers.

The seven domains:

1. Romantic
2. Advocacy
3. Needs
4. Learning
5. Rights
6. Institutional
7. Proactive

1. Romantic Domain (origin: 60s/70s)

Children as planners: children define and create their future, with no aid from adults

key idea: children are the best planners and builders of the places for themselves

strong points: the *vision of the future* and the *environmental autobiography*, used in other processes of participation / A21 included)

2. Advocacy domain (origin: 60s/70s)

Planners for children

key idea: planning for children with their needs "advocated" by adult planners; interpreting and defending the needs of the weakest

strong points: the acknowledgement of specific needs

weak points: it has not directly involved children or other weak subjects

3. Needs (origin: '70s/80s - environmental psychology)

Sociology for children:

key idea: technical and scientific knowledge must assume (research) children's needs

strong points: has contributed to define the key principles to create children-oriented places

weak points: there is not direct involvement of children in the planning process

4. Learning domain (origin: '80s/90s - environmental education)

"Learning" the city:

key idea: the learning process is much

more effective if children are involved in educational projects as protagonists;

the experts teach children to "read" and understand the city and the environment

strong points: it has contributed to the increasing of green spaces for children

weak points: it hasn't changed the features of urban areas much

5. Domain of rights (origin: '80s)

Children as citizens:

key idea: Children have rights, must be protected and their participation in planning encouraged

³ M. Francis, R. Lorenzo, *The hypothesis of the seven "domains". An historical - critic account of children's participation in city planning*, "Paesaggio Urbano", 1/2003

strong points: International Convention for Children's Rights (ONU 1989); starting the Children's City Councils and Child Friendly Cities

Weak points: it accentuated more the rights than the needs in the urban environment

6. Institutional Domain (origin: '90s)

Children as small adults:

key idea: children can and must participate in town/city planning, but within the limits defined by adults

strong points: a number of experiences of children's participation in the process of urban planning

weak points: children as small adults, involvement with little attention to their needs

7. Pro active domain (origin: late '90s)

Participation with a vision:

key idea: planning with children. It joins together research, participation and action in planning. Both children and adults are active participants: participation is a communicative process producing shared ideas and real projects

Strong points: children are "real children", very different from how adults portray them. It promotes intergenerational relationships

participation is the core of communicative and learning processes

it is consistent with the new EU policies for sustainable development

Weak points: a specific training is requested

In everyday life a division as clear cut as the one of the seven "approaches" to participation does not exist; however it is important that we as educators and professionals understand what are the advantages and the limits of our models of reference. The proactive domain is the evolution of a work of research and experience we believe very interesting, because it can "translate", better than others, principles and values in real and potentially more effective actions.

As we have seen both in the scale of participation and in the seven "domains" it is important to "get rid" of the stereotypes, as well as of that "rhetoric of participation" of children too many still share.

In fact many experiences of local councils of children are still spoilt by the fact they give children roles and behaviours typical of adults. On the other side some adults assume childish attitudes, as it happens in relation to a lot of activities involving children, evidencing ambiguity and limited capability to make different forms of knowledge interact.⁴

⁴ An important crux of participation is its capability (or incapability) of generating new ideas, thus joining together the technical-scientific and non-ideological knowledge (in our life as children, adults, women, migrants...), seen as a learning factor in order to produce new forms of interactive knowledge and true changes.

Giancarlo Paba (University of Florence) synthesizes in three models the approaches to participative planning:

1. PARTICIPATION AS **POLITICS**: the "Advocacy Planner" is the central element. It originates from the perception of social inequality; focus on problems: **what** is more urgent than **how** (limit: separation between non ideological and scientific knowledge)
2. PARTICIPATION AS **TECHNIQUE**: the facilitator is the central element. **Procedures** are most important: the focus is on **how** rather than on **what**. The effectiveness of what we do is the central idea (limit/risk: reification of "cold techniques" and indifference to solve the problem. risk to facilitate the decision process, risk of manipulation)
3. PARTICIPATION AS **ART OF INTERACTIVE PLANNING**: the art of joining together **politics** and **technique**. Characteristics: a high degree of interactivity; hermeneutic "hearing" = capability of "drawing out" wishes and proposals at the end, and not at the beginning, of the process of participation. circularity of **procedures** and **problems**

OUR REFERENCE VALUES

INCLUSIVITY: equal opportunity of participation for all

SHARING: of objectives, method, actions

LISTENING: learning to listen in order to be listened

LOOK: learning to see and hear what the space and the environment tell us...

INTERACTIVE PARTICIPATION: stimulating the motivation for an active and voluntary participation

CREATIVITY: encouraging creativity and new ideas and proposals, getting rid of stereotypes

DEMOCRACY: taking on responsibility, acknowledgement of own and other people's rights

PARTICIPATION: DOMAINS, KNOWLEDGES AND VALUES AT STAKE

KNOWLEDGE/ VALUES	Scientific Knowledge	Knowledge of experience	Interactive Knowledge	Inclusivity	Sharing	Leasening	Look	Creativity	Interactive Participation	Democracy
	DOMAINS									
Romantic		●		?		●		●	●	
Advocacy	●	●		?	●	●				
Needs	●	●				●				
Learning	●	●	●	●	●		●		●	●
Rights		●		●		●			?	●
Institutional		●		●		?			?	●
Proactive	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

The matrix intends to make clear the knowledge and values at stake in the seven domains of participation and also highlights their limits and potentials.

The *romantic domain* focuses all the attention on non-ideological knowledge (the child as a planner), the adult facilitates the participation, but he/she has not an active role. It is not a form of inclusive participation, because it is addressed only to children, while all creative aspects are emphasized.

The domains of *advocacy* and *needs* highlights the importance of non-ideological knowledge, but the technical-scientific knowledge prevails, because it interprets the project with a limited participation of children. The focus is on observation, acknowledgement and "hearing" the needs.

The learning domain sees the city, the territory as the learning environment above all others. The focus is on the explorative aspects and also on the critic analysis of the surrounding environment; great importance is given to the aspects connected with "being able to see" and "being able to interpret".

The *domain of the rights* and the *institutional domain* are important in connection with the principles and the acknowledgement of the rights of children, (international chart of the rights of children, cities friendly to children, childrens's friend mayor, children councils), however the realized experiences have highlighted many weak points, often because of a lack of tools and inadequate and non structured methods together with the excessive importance given the form rather than to the content.

The *proactive domain* focuses on the basic idea of planning with and not for the children and it leads to the creation of methods,tools and pointing out of the values we have talked about up to now.

The conditions to start a process of participative planning are⁵: (R. Lorenzo)

- ✓ clearness of doing
- ✓ sustainability of the actions
- ✓ interpersonal communication
- ✓ a cognitive, practical and affective approach (head, hands and heart)

Participation implies:

- ✓ sharing by all actors, since the beginning, of the nature and aim of the process;
- ✓ adaptability of times, methods and tools to the personal and professional characteristics of the involved people and of the context in which the process takes place;
- ✓ improvement of existing skills and resources;
- ✓ involvement of the people in the analysis of the outcomes.

Characteristics of methodology:

- ✓ sharing of the aim
- ✓ adaptability of the process
- ✓ improvement of the resources
- ✓ involvement of the actors

People promoting and/or directing a participative process should:

- ✓ know and make clear the rules of the game;
- ✓ be able to acquire all information to get a complete picture of the situation
- ✓ know very well the aim of the project;
- ✓ have an access to the means of communication and know how to use them
- ✓ be able to prefigure the obstacles, take decisions and make choices
- ✓ be able to promote actions based on a planning competence
- ✓ take into account the different points of view and be able to summarize them in a shared synthesis

⁵ Raymond Lorenzo, city planner, lecture Post graduate Cours of IUAV University of Venice "Azione locale partecipata e sviluppo urbano sostenibile: pianificazioni interattive, Agenda 21 e Città dei bambini e dei ragazzi" a.a. 2004-05

4. EDUCATORS AND TOWN PLANNERS

7 reasons to kill each other or 7 reasons to talk together? What is the task of an educator? What is the task of a city planner or of an architect? How can they interact?

Some common routes

1. There is a strong relation between educational space and building/urban space
2. The knowledge linked to the experience of life is as important as technical knowledge
3. Hearing the others is a necessary condition for an active relationship with people and environment
4. Working with *is* more important than working *for*
5. A physical or mental space is always an element of learning
6. Any learning environment leads to a change (the land of "possibility")
7. Any action and change should envisage an ongoing evaluation.

“Laboratori di partecipazione e progettazione con i bambini e i ragazzi: spazi educativi e spazi urbani, una interazione possibile”

Qualche anno fa è nato a Barcellona un progetto denominato “Città educative”: molte città europee hanno aderito ad una “Carta” che sottolinea il ruolo della città come ambiente di apprendimento, spaziale ma anche di relazione, di comunità, di cittadinanza attiva. Non parlerò di questo progetto, ma il mio contributo parte da queste due parole, perché mi hanno suscitato e stimolato tante domande.

Mi sono interrogata sul significato di queste parole: “città” – “educativa”.

E mi sono chiesta: la città davvero è educativa? In che senso? O invece è “dis - educativa”, nel senso che riduce o nega le infinite possibilità di apprendimento che intrinsecamente possiede, come una sirena che con il suo canto incanta e illude i marinai facendoli andare alla deriva? La città può promuovere la salutogenesi o al contrario “indebolire” le già “indebolite” categorie cui abbiamo sottratto forza? E cioè i bambini, gli adolescenti, le donne, gli anziani, gli stranieri, ...?

Il sistema “città adulta e maschile” sembra avere nei confronti dei suoi cittadini un effetto simile a quello dell’adulto con il bambino, dell’adulto che si nega e che non trova né il tempo né lo spazio per giocare e ascoltare, per stare insieme, che il-lude e quindi de-lude.

Come è possibile che in tutto lo spazio che occupa una città, possano dominare gli spazi privati, o riservati, o dedicati? Che gli spazi pubblici dominanti siano le strade, percorribili solo in automobile? Che gli spazi che vengono progettati e costruiti siano spesso così sordi e lontani dai bisogni e dai desideri di chi in quei spazi vivrà, lavorerà, studierà?

Sì, è possibile. Ma è anche possibile invertire la tendenza. *Moving school* si muove su questa linea e così anche i progetti, le consulenze, i corsi post lauream che mi hanno coinvolta negli ultimi anni.

Proseguendo la riflessione dello scorso anno, che partiva dalle esperienze realizzate, che evidenziavano come “lavorare con bambini e ragazzi può costituire un volano importante per il coinvolgimento degli adulti.”

L’intervento sviluppa i seguenti argomenti:

- Ambienti di apprendimento: dalla scuola alla città
- La città come ambiente di partecipazione e di costruzione di scelte condivise
- La scala della partecipazione e i domini della partecipazione
- La relazione tra spazi educativi e spazi urbani e tra educatori e pianificatori
- Come i bambini percepiscono gli spazi urbani in relazione al loro grado di autonomia di movimento e di appropriazione e conoscenza degli spazi nei quali vivono