GOOGLE MY MAPS AS A CONDUIT TO CULTURALLY RICH LEARNING EXPERIENCES

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Introduction

The research aims to understand the potential of mobile communication, and how technologic events are part of our culture. Practices of in-service teachers with mobile devices and apps are analyzed to create an integrative project that intersects technology, communication, culture and the art in education. The research-training in cyberculture (Santos, 2019) is a methodology designed in the crossings between educational processes and scientific investigation. The context is always the teaching, not isolating teaching from research and extension, which means, when there is an educational ambience proposed by the teacher, they are researching the educational movements that happen.

The context of the study is the course “Teaching Education for Communication, Culture and Art”, offered by the Federal Institute of Rio de Janeiro in Belford Roxo campus, Brazil. Research participants are teachers from the Metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, specially from Baixada Fluminense in Brazil. The Baixada Fluminense region’s population is about three million located in the periphery of Rio de Janeiro. The region has a reputation of poverty, crime and social injustice. In this study there here were 52 participants in total, between 23 and 58 years old.

It’s up to the teacher to take experiences and repertoire to enrich the artistic and cultural knowledges of their students. In order to deconstruct the discourse that in the Baixada Fluminense there are no points of culture, one of the results of this study was to expose experiences in diverse educational contexts with schools, artistic expositions, memory institutions, cultural centers, patrimony, recognized cultural manifests as immaterial patrimonies, social movements and diverse public and private segments of the cities.

This study changed the teachers’ perceptions towards culture and to the value of the multiplicity of cultural expressions in Baixada Fluminense using Google My Maps (https://www.google.com/maps/about/mymaps/). From those experiences, one action have been designed: the collaborative map, with curation of educational webs in the cities of Baixada Fluminense in Google My Maps. Technology contributes to the sharing of narratives and guarantees the continuity of the learning experience itself and gaining new meanings.

This study addresses the teachers’ perceived lack of access to the cultural assets in Baixada Fluminense in particular in the peripheral regions of the city. The opportunities of

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1 This study was financed in part by the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brazil (CAPES - Finance Code 001) and in part by Federal Institute of Rio de Janeiro.
contact with the culture and art can occurred in many school visits and encouraged the teachers’ development of pedagogical practices that emphasize the diversity of cultures and multicultural communities.

**Research-training in cyberculture**

Research-training is a methodology created by Josso (2004) for the development of a “theory of education” (Josso, 2004, p. 213) in which people are educated in the use of the autobiographic approach. It aims at understanding the knowledge produced by the experiences of the subjects at implying, transforming, and getting to know themselves in the autobiographical work.

The research-training in cyberculture is a method that researches the/in cyberculture, as it triggers ambiances and devices which are correspondent to online education, trying to understand the phenomena in cyberculture. Inquietudes generate study questions, which are transformed into educational processes and research devices in order to meet the data that allows a better understanding of the object that one intends to research.

According to Josso (2004), the research-training is funded in the life stories as project of knowledge and education, whose methodological path is the narrative of life experiences and education for the understanding of the educational experimental processes which are affective and reflexive. Narratives of such nature are fundamental for the present research.

“The position of the research-training differs or not, and in what terms from the position of the occasional learner-researcher?” (Josso, 2004, p. 214) The researcher is not placed as a specialist or superior, looking down from above at the object of study; and the performer is not in a crystalized situation as a student, they learn and teach. Their narratives are valued in the same horizontality of the bibliographic analysis, providing plural understandings to the phenomena studies.

Thus, research-training in cyberculture (Santos, 2019) is created as a method of research that considers an intercritical intervention for education, allowing to be perfectly applied to the education of teachers. A research implied with the demands of education, with the eye that considers the practical knowledge of the social group in the institution routine more relevant than the “specialists that come from outside of the ambiance of the group, the community or the institution” (Macedo, 2010, p. 160).

The teacher-researcher is the one constantly thinking about their practice, as stated by Freire (1996):

> There is no teaching without research, nor research without teaching. These doings find embodiment in each other. While I teach, I keep on searching, re-searching. I teach because I search, because I asked and wondered. I research in order to verify, and verifying, I intervein. As I intervein, I educate and educate myself. I research to know what I don’t know yet, and to communicate or to announce the new. (Freire, 1996, p. 29).

One of the authors of this article is a faculty member at the Distance Education and Educational Technologies of the Federal Institute of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the instructor for “Teaching Education for Communication, Culture and Art”. Google My Maps was the technology used that made possible to create, edit and share personalized and collaborative maps online. As a repository for storage in the cloud, it allows the organization of different maps created or altered, with the addition of points, drawings, texts, photos and videos. It also allows teachers to save maps available on the internet, search for places, add favorite points and import maps based on spreadsheets.
Collaborative map in the Baixada Fluminense cities: curation of educational webs and urban micronarratives

Lefebvre (2010) ponders on the urban problem, contextualizing the industrialization processes close to the world urban centers. He reflects on how the working class was expropriated from the city context, removed to suburbs and peripheries or new cities, to give way to a sovereign elite. “As urban democracy threatened the privileges of the new ruling class, it prevented this democracy from being born. How? Expelling the proletariat from the urban center and the city itself, destroying ‘urbanity’.” (Lefebvre, 2010, p. 23). In this way, in addition to basic rights, urban awareness and creative capacity decrease significantly.

However, for Lefebvre (2010), the city is not determined, static, it is the object of constant changes. Since it is impossible to reconstruct the old city, it is necessary to promote the construction of a new one, to move towards a “new humanism” (Lefebvre, 2010, p. 108), with new human beings and praxis. Transformation is urgently needed, undoing dominant strategies with a revolutionary urban revolution contrary to what is set by the working class. "Only the social force capable of investing itself in the urban, in the course of a long political experience, can be in charge of carrying out the program related to urban society" (Lefebvre, 2010, p. 115). To think about this transformation, the present study is carried out and educating cities are presented as a possibility.

Canclini (2015) highlights the importance of the study of cultural patrimony as a space of fight and memory “even if the patrimony serves as a tool to gather each nation, the inequalities in its formation and the appropriateness demand to study it as a space for material and symbolic struggle among classes, races and groups” (Canclini, 2015, p. 195). Despite of the highlight to the necessity of such study for a wide comprehension of formation, such speech is not constantly seen in Brazilian schools.

In this project teachers mapped the educational possibilities of the periphery and pedagogical itineraries that could be traced and experienced by citizens. The term “mapping” refers to a human capacity, while a map is a graphic object. And collaborative means that the curation was accomplished by everyone working together. Teachers included points they visited, with photos, descriptions and educational proposals. Twenty-five points were included, such as community libraries, theaters, museums, cultural centers, schools, community entrance exams, coworking spaces and universities. See examples on Figure 1, 2 and 3.
Figure 1 – Screenshot of a collaborative map at Google My Maps [in Portuguese]

Source: produced by research participants.

Figure 2 – Screenshot of a micronarrative [in Portuguese]

Source: produced by research participants.
The relevance of the essay is found in the disclosure of educational webs (Alves, 2007) in Baixada Fluminense, an area that is out of the great axes of communication, culture, art and education in Rio de Janeiro, being justified by the need to share experiences and understanding how education happens in the cities in times of cyberculture.

The notion of urban micronarratives in hypermobility emerged from a gathering of readings, everyday experiences, and narratives of research practitioners. The term “micronarratives” (Jacques, 2012) does not refer to narratives that are small or diminished in value, but the narratives of ordinary practitioners in cities (Certeau, 1984), those who experience daily practices, tactics, uses and craftiness, with which they resist authoritarian mechanisms and dominant strategies.

These errant narratives are minor narratives, they are micronarratives in the face of the great modern narratives; they emphasize the issues of experience, body and otherness in the city and, thus, reaffirm the enormous power of collective life, a complexity and multiplicity of meanings that confronts any “single thought” or consensus, such as that promoted today by luminous media images and spectacular cities (Jacques, 2012, p. 20-21).

Jacques (2012) understands that in addition to experiencing the city, practitioners must transmit these experiences through their micronarratives, advancing from lived experiences, to shared, transmitted and collective experiences. To this author, the micronarratives can be realized in different formats: “artistic urban narratives – literary, ethnographic, photography, cinematography, musical, cartographic, etc. – realized by the wanderers from their experiences of wandering around town” (p. 30). Being with all the senses in alert, practitioners can share scents, sounds, looks, contacts, touches and different tastes, in individual and experimental meanings.
The notion of hypermobility was created by Santaella (2013), that says: “hypermobility is the physical mobility plus the mobile devices that give us access to cyberspace” (p. 15). It provides the creation of fluid and intersected spaces from the connection, in the displacements, in all daily spaces, in transit, at home, at school, in the cultural equipment in the cities (Martins; Santos, 2019).

In this way, we understand the space in agreement with Santos (1996, p. 63), who proposes the geographical space being “formed by an inseparable, solidary and also contradictory set of systems of objects and systems of actions, not considered in isolation but as the unique framework in which the story takes place”. Approaching walks in the city from the various possible interlaces, we explore contents not only directed to communication, culture and art, but to the knowledge of the different spaces, the different people, the different paths we travel, contributing to the citizen formation. The difference and the coexistence of multiplicity in cities is a power that cannot be forgotten to think about education, in this respect Rios (2012, p. 167) asks: “why build learning strategies with their backs to this universe that sticks together?”

The city has an educational nature, at every moment new educational scenarios are instituted in the complex urban plot and we need to explore this to promote other perspectives in education. Teachers can be artisans in the construction of the city as an educational space, proposing pedagogical practices in their educational daily lives, which include the school-city-cyberspace interface in their curricula. And also, from the perspective of their training and their willingness to learn and teach, as research practitioners did. According to Rios (2012), we cannot ignore the city experiences. In displacement, we observe, but also intervene, making proposals for pedagogical practices throughout the city, contributing to the resignification of education and the city itself, according to the micronarratives below.

Figure 4 – Example of teachers’ reflections

**Julio**: Google maps is a very intuitive tool for those who are already familiar with the virtual structure. I was surprised by this curation function, the user can make travel itineraries. The mechanisms of virtual georeferencing are extremely important, to work on the issue of urban, rural, local, global, gentrification, conurbation, territories, limits, networks and among other geography themes. I will contribute to the formation of new individuals who are not afraid of the new and different, in this way, subjects about art, culture and communication will be more palpable for different realities in which these devices can work. I visualize the use of this resource at the time of the execution of didactic activities, because in this way it will be developing new meanings for the elements that would be discussed in a classroom. Taking the city as an object, in which there is a cultural shock from different realities circulating in the same place, and from that we can learn more about the daily life and the development of solutions to different problems. In this way, contact with different cultures ends up expanding the individuals' world perspectives.

**Thais**: I believe that the use of the virtual space of the Google My Maps application was one of my greatest discoveries. I did not know this tool yet and I believe that, like the other colleagues, it effectively contributed to our training. The use of this type of technology that allows the insertion of "points" on the map, shows us how much we can be protagonists of our own cultural experiences. Places that, although public, are not popular and even unknown. From this, we can modify some teaching practices, both in the places where the classes we would teach would be held, and in the presentation of new spaces for students. I reaffirm the importance of this education outside of space, when I read Paulo Freire (1992) affirming that "the city is culture, it is creation, not only, for what we do in it and for it, for what we create in it and with it." We have a fundamental role in the environment of cities.

Source: produced by research participants.
From the teachers’ narratives, several themes were identified: intuitive interface, curation, diverse cultures in the cities, local, global, gentrification, conurbation, territories, limits, networks, and protagonists of our own experiences, creations in and with the city. In addition, the use of Google My Maps contributed to collaborative experiences that did not end with the project presented in this article. The general public is also an author and who is including points, micronarratives and experiences around the city.

Teachers in this study were inspired by practices gathered in Google My Maps and learned where to look for points of communication, culture and art in Baixada Fluminense to take their students without having to travel to the capital because of the teachers’ perceptions that there is no cultural richness in their cities and local neighborhoods. And equally as learning designers have responsibilities as agents of change (Yusop & Correia, 2014). The realization and opportunities to recognize and celebrate local culture and art encourages practices that emphasize the diversity of cultures and value of multicultural communities.

Some notions themes emerged from the teaching narratives: the recognition that time-space is eminently educational, continuous learning, and a pedagogy that allows an increasing approximation between what is taught and what is learnt.

Rios (2012, p. 172-173) points out that “once this pedagogical journey is crossed, perhaps we can also undertake our own journey, trace multiple itineraries and find in the most unexpected corners of the city that we inhabit, a scene that allows us to develop our poetical and pedagogical imagination”. When proposing pedagogical practices in the cities, the practitioners devised a course that goes beyond the limits of inside and outside school, proposing a practice that talks to the student in its complexity and completeness, whether to think emotions, or to think about the environment. They have proposed an effective action, in the territories where life happens, after all, the city is made up of those who inhabit it and those who inhabit it are also crossed by it, and to think in this way is to recognize the legitimacy of the knowledge produced in the different areas and spaces of life.

Paulo Freire (2013, p. 19) warns that “there is, therefore, no possibility of dichotomizing the man of the world, since there is no one without the other”. When proposing that the construction of knowledge occurs through confrontation with the world, Freire (2013) inspires us to encourage a curious attitude of the subject towards the outside, in a constant search for creating and transforming what is set. We learned from the transforming relationships between men and the world, in a bidirectional action, human beings are transformed in the relationship with the city, which is transformed from the new actions of these human beings, that is, both are transformed in this reciprocal and dialogical. Therefore, believing in education in cities is a necessity.

Opportunities for producing culture and art can occur during school days, in the classrooms, with didactic, paradidactic books and other sources of consultation made official by formal education institutions. However, nothing beats the feeling of belonging and experiencing the city, the experience of feeling, touching and being touched. This kind of experiences can help us to think of cultural heritage as a space for struggle and memory, with power to reinforce the importance of integrative learning.

**Final remarks**

We understand that education occurs from different time spaces, not just the school. From a multiplicity of productions, we learn and teach, expanding the possibilities and knowledge, occupying other spaces in the city. From this proposal, we recognize the existence of other educational spaces, promoting a meeting between different territories and education, originating urban micronarratives in hypermobility, in different formats: imagetical, text, mapping, among others.
In this study we comprehended the experience in the city through Google My Maps as an opportunity for learning and teaching, where culture pulsates, citizenship is expressed and technologies are created. Multiple reflections are raised from the teachers’ micronarratives, especially the importance of the school-city-cyberspace relationship. Teachers’ micronarratives express their sense of belonging to the Baixada Fluminense city, commitment to the collective and the need to learn or relearn how to reinvent the city that shapes and transforms its citizens.

The sharing of narratives guarantees the continuity and new meaning of their own experiences, stories to be told, so that the perception that “nothing ever happens here” that is often voiced about the Baixada Fluminense city might gain new meaning. The use of Google My Maps was critical to overcome this cultural misconception and contribute to culturally rich learning experiences that recognizes local neighborhoods as cultural epicenters. The proposal outlined in this article seeks to present some actions and teaching perspectives regarding education in the city. In a perspective of a training that comprises educational paths beyond the walls of the school, the city and its territories act as a reference for pedagogical proposals by interested teachers with the integral training of their students, connecting experiences from different areas of knowledge to everyday life.

We hope that the continuing education of teachers reported in this article will inspire other practices. Without intending to indicate recipes, we leave clues to captivate the reader for this subject that we consider to be of great importance. May more and better experiences happen, and other stories be told, so that speeches like "nothing happens here", which we hear about the education and culture of the Baixada Fluminense are reframed.

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