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Pedagogical practices in educational territories: the case of the School-Community Project

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Abstract: This article aims to discuss the pedagogical operationalization of the concept of educational territory as applied to the context of an urban community facing social vulnerability. The dataset was generated during the implementation of an undergraduate research project involving young people. From a theoretical perspective, the concept of territory is grounded in the Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) and in conceptual appropriations from Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, and Maria Laura Silveira in collaboration with Milton Santos. Data collection was based on a case study approach, using questionnaires, interviews, and discussion circles. Data generation occurred in two distinct phases: during the implementation of the project and three years after its conclusion, by which time some participants were already enrolled in undergraduate degree programs. Pedagogical analyses were developed based on reflections by Miguel Arroyo. It was concluded that participation in projects involving community transformation initiatives yields long-term effects regarding the continuation of education and the deepening of students' perceptions of the territory where they live.

Keywords: urban periphery education; humanities education; dialogic social intervention; educational territories

1 Introduction

Gohn's (2010) discussion regarding the relationship between formal and non-formal education focuses on the interplay between content and pedagogical space. For Gohn, the formal and the non-formal refer to the nature of the themes addressed in the teaching-learning process, as well as the distinction between spaces regulated by law and guided by specific educational documents - on the one hand - and educational spaces outside school walls where daily life takes place - on the other. Furthermore, according to the researcher, there is a third field - the informal - that permeates the other two, whose contents and learning practice sites are defined by specific sociocultural references and situated within the space-time of private life. This third field, therefore, is characterized by relationships within the household and those



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established in religious institutions, for example, where the content is grounded, among other aspects, in moral and behavioral principles. Finally, Gohn (2010) points to another dimension of space known as territory: the "territory of schools" and "[...] territories that accompany the life trajectories of groups and individuals outside of schools [...]" (Gohn, 2010, p. 17).

Regardless of whether the analytical focus of research lies on formal or non-formal aspects of education – whether in terms of content or spaces in their various combinations - it is widely accepted that these dimensions must constantly interact without one devaluing the other(s) (Afonso, 2001; Gohn, 2010). We thus conceive of these pedagogical relationships as being mediated by practices - whether traditional, such as a teacher's oral presentation to a class, or unconventional, such as a field class conducted in potentially pedagogical spaces beyond school walls. In any case, these practices take place within territories that can differ significantly, even when they occur within the same city.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research sought to discuss the concept of territory and its relationship with teaching. We began by examining how the concept is presented in the Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC), considering how this official document expresses the concept and indicates how it should be operationalized in the classroom. Subsequently, we explored its potential by drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Foucault (2011; 2023), Derrida (2003), Bourdieu (2004; 2023), and Santos and Silveira (2021), considering how these authors and their insights - whether directly or indirectly - contribute to operationalizing the concept of territory within the field of education. Empirically, we analyzed data generated during the execution of the "School-Community Relationship: Social Technologies in Pursuit of Social Emancipation" project, which was carried out between November 2018 and November 2019.

The project was a scientific research initiative involving seven students from the "Saturnino Rangel Mauro" State Elementary and High School (EEEFM) - located in a peripheral community within the Greater Vitória Metropolitan Region (the Nova Rosa da Penha neighborhood in the municipality of Cariacica). The project had the following objectives: to arouse young people's interest in research; to identify students with the potential to act as multipliers in research activities; to foster scientific education; to equip participants with the tools for research aimed at dialogic social

intervention (Santos; Sgarbi, 2019); to stimulate debate between the community and the school regarding curricula grounded in local reality; to map and create a database of social ideas suitable for implementation in the neighborhood; and to develop an action plan to be implemented in dialogue with both the school and the community.

The participating students received a scholarship from the Espírito Santo Research and Innovation Support Foundation (FAPES), with parental consent obtained for opening bank accounts and for participation in the project outside of regular school hours. Three years after the project concluded, we attempted to contact all participants but were only able to reach five of the seven¹. We organized a shared breakfast, with some participants bringing beverages and others food. The objective of the activity was explained beforehand, and we held a discussion circle. Four participants were present, and we interviewed one via Google Meet to gather data on the impact of the research experience on them within that context. As the young people had already reached the age of majority, an Informed Consent Form was read during the meetings, authorizing the audio recording that constitutes part of the records for the second stage of data collection.

The results of this theoretical analysis and data gathering are presented here to discuss pedagogical practices within formal education, in the dialogue between formal and non-formal spaces, in an urban periphery setting. We believe it is essential to understand the cultural, power, and social organization dynamics of urban peripheries across their multiple theoretical dimensions in order to support teaching initiatives.

2 Theoretical discussion: territories

Every teaching practice, whether in a formal or non-formal setting, takes place within a specific territory. However, the territory where the teaching practice occurs is not always perceived or developed as a pedagogical space. Often, the practice does not even engage in a dialogue with the territory in which it is situated.

Regarding formal education content - regardless of whether the setting is formal or non-formal - Brazil's primary document, the Brazilian National Common Core

¹ Attempts were made to establish contact via telephone - without success - as well as through social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. We also tried reaching out through other participants, but they no longer had contact with their former classmates.

Curriculum (Brasil, 2018), establishes that, at the elementary education level, the subjects of English language, geography, history, and religious education² must directly engage with the concept of territory.

At the high school level, this concept – in addition to encompassing the humanities, where it is traditionally discussed - is explicitly cited within the mathematics curriculum.

The skills outlined for the development of this competency [specific competency 2 for Mathematics and its Technologies] involve the mathematical knowledge and tools needed to develop a project aimed at answering questions - such as those concerning different geographic and/or social territories - and supporting conclusions about them (Brasil, 2018, p. 526).

In the field of human and applied social sciences, the term is frequently mentioned³. Among these references, particular emphasis is placed on the foundational concept presented.

Territory is a category usually associated with a portion of the Earth's surface under the dominion of a group and serving as a foundation for nations, states, and countries. It is a source of food, security, identity, and refuge. It encompasses notions of place, region, and border - and, notably, the political and administrative boundaries of cities, states, and countries - thereby functioning as an abstract framework for organizing reality. It is also associated with ideas of power, jurisdiction, administration, and sovereignty - dimensions that reflect the diversity of social relations and provide a basis for analytical interpretation (Brasil, 2018, p. 552).

In addition to explicit mentions, the document indirectly expresses dimensions of the concept, such as the contextualizations required by the competencies in the area of languages and their technologies, which relate to the production of meaning in discourse and the direct link to its locus. Thus, the material and symbolic dimensions of territories can be appropriated across various - if not all - formal education disciplines. Territory therefore emerges as a central category permeating formal content through a direct dialogue between formal and non-formal educational spaces.

Drawing on the potential of this concept as presented in the BNCC, we link it to the notions of *dispositif* and *counter-dispositif* (Foucault, 2011; 2023); hospitality,

² Specifically regarding the aforementioned subjects within the context of elementary education, territory appears as an idea or concept in the BNCC (2018) on pages 241 and 242 (within English language content); on pages 353, 354, 361, 365, 368, 376–379, 381, and 382 (within geography content); on pages 399, 419–421, 423, 425, and 426 (within history content); and on pages 437, 439, 446, and 447 (within religious education content).

³ It appears among the Humanities and Applied Social Sciences contents in the BNCC (2018), on pages 549 and 550, 552 and 553, 558, 561, and 563.

hostility, and hostipitality (Derrida, 2003); cultural, symbolic, and social capital (Bourdieu, 2004; 2023); and used territory (Santos; Silveira, 2021). In terms of research, we seek to understand the explanatory potential of these concepts regarding the empirical context under analysis. These concepts were mobilized to discuss teaching in a specific setting - urban peripheral territories - based on data produced by young participants in an undergraduate research initiative and their impressions three years after the project conclusion.

In Brazil, there is a significant body of studies addressing the Educating City (Cidade Educadora). In a systematic literature review, Alvarenga, Pereira, and Quaresma (2023) identified 35 publications on the topic across the Web of Science, Scopus, and SciELO platforms, covering the period from 2018 to 2023. However, as indicated by Chisté and Sgarbi (2019), there are closely related discussions using concepts such as Pedagogical Society, Educative Society, Educating Society, and Educating City, which would significantly increase this number.

However, these terms are predominantly used to refer to central urban spaces: museums, public squares, historic centers, monuments, and other symbols of the city. Yet, the perspective of educational territories - especially those involving schools in socially vulnerable areas - still requires further study and research, such as the work conducted by Oliveira and Saraiva (2015).

In this sense, our research is aligned with the principles of educational territories, conceiving them as a framework that challenges pedagogical practice to embrace peripheral territories inhabited by communities experiencing social vulnerability - and examines how this element permeates teaching-learning experiences. Thus, the aim is to imbue formal educational content with organic meaning, bridging the gap that often exists between that content and the student's lived reality.

Our theoretical framework - drawing on Foucault (2011; 2023), Derrida (2003), Bourdieu (2004; 2023), and Santos and Silveira (2021) - presents various points of divergence; however, it simultaneously opens up analytical possibilities applicable to formal education and the interplay between formal and non-formal learning spaces. This approach centers on pedagogical practices and the mobilization of the lived territory - that is, the territory perceived and experienced by individuals as an educational territory (a theoretical category). Beyond the aforementioned concepts and

authors, we seek to explore the analytical possibilities linked to teaching and the territory as experienced by students.

For Foucault (2023), the concept of territory is a construct inherent to the Modern State, rooted in the notion of sovereignty. National armies, for instance, are formed based on the territory they are meant to defend. People born within a territory come to be regarded as a population belonging to it. Consequently, the author argues, security mechanisms operate upon, beneath, and through the bodies that constitute this population. Ultimately, this concept enabled the emergence of a new conception of the people. Michel Foucault's primary concern is not, generally speaking, to discuss the concept of territory; nevertheless, it is through this concept that the power relations he sought to investigate unfold. It is also important to emphasize that the maturation of reflections on the power relations that circulate through spaces, together with the need to organize these relations and the forms of resistance they generate, leads us to introduce another Foucauldian category: the *dispositif*. Foucault (2011) argues that, through this term, he seeks to

[...] delineate, first of all, a decidedly heterogeneous ensemble that encompasses discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, and philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions. In short, the said and the unsaid are the elements of the *dispositif*. The *dispositif* is the network that can be established between these elements (Foucault, 2011, p. 244).

Thus, *dispositifs* are relations embedded in spaces - whether physical, social, virtual, or most commonly, at the intersection of these spaces. These spaces carry their own territorialities, statements, and narratives, which may vary in specificity depending on the required level of detail.

The *dispositif* is a category used to understand how a specific region of reality organizes its discourses, its power relations, and the ways in which subjects relate to themselves - in other words, the three major themes Michel Foucault investigated throughout his life. A *dispositif* typically carries a notion of truth and falsehood, of how to distribute subjects' bodies within a specific spatiality, and of the bodily organization of institutions, or even of cities or societies. It represents a way for subjects to deal with themselves, or the way they view themselves.

Dispositifs operate within a relationship containing elements that separate things. Agamben (2014) highlights the dimension of the sacred associated with

dispositifs. The author argues that “It would probably not be wrong to define the extreme phase of the development of capitalism as a gigantic accumulation and proliferation of *dispositifs*” (Agamben, 2014, p. 41). However, there are those who profane these *dispositifs*: “Profanation is the counter-*dispositif* that restores to common use what sacrifice had separated and divided” (Agamben, 2014, p. 45). Thus, for example, there are those who criticize capitalism, removing it from its sacralized pedestal.

Alvim (2022) highlights that forms of resistance or counter-*dispositifs* emerge through the process of properly analyzing these *dispositifs*.

[...] power and resistance are interconnected, framed by a certain impossibility of completely escaping from one another; yet, struggles refuse to participate fully in the functioning of the *dispositif*, opting instead to pervert, discredit, distort, or outright reject it - and, above all, to create in opposition to it. It does not seem appropriate to us to conceive of an *dispositif* without considering the destructive and creative affirmative nature of its lines of resistance. Resistances are immanent to the functioning of power; they act, at times, as political counter-responses - always multiple and decentered - leading us to believe that, without them, the *dispositifs* themselves would become static and, ultimately, empty. If the *dispositif* comprises a network connected by power relations, resistances can function as counter-*dispositifs*, insofar as they ceaselessly invert, refuse, reorganize, pervert, and recreate in opposition to the functioning of its relations of domination (Alvim, 2022, p. 75).

In light of this Foucaultian discussion, we pose the following theoretical question: is it possible to understand the relations permeating social life in Brazil's urban peripheries as a *dispositif*? What counter-*dispositifs* exist in these spaces? And finally, could the urban peripheral territory itself not be understood as a *dispositif* when viewed from the outside in, and as a counter-*dispositif* when viewed from the inside out?

It is argued that, based on the production of meaning and power relations, one can identify distinct territories characterized by relations of power and oppression, as well as resistance. Understanding these is fundamental to developing pedagogical practices that establish a dialogue between formal and non-formal educational spaces.

Another author contributing to a symbolic understanding of relations within a given territory is Derrida (2003), through his concepts of hospitality, hostility, and hostipitality. The author invites us to interpret the territory based on its relations, without any commitment to the administrative boundaries of a space. Territories, therefore, are constructed through processes of distancing and rapprochement that emerge from the

interactions among social agents in concrete situations. These relationships blur into one another to such an extent that they defy fixed, predetermined definitions. In this sense, observing how agents interact with one another may reveal certain predictable possibilities, yet it never yields a single, standardized pattern of behavior for community life within a given territory. In other words, at the level of specific detail, distancing (hostility) and drawing closer (hospitality) become intertwined, depending on the situation being analyzed.

Within this conceptual framework - which makes sense to researchers but often goes unnoticed in everyday interactions - hospitality (a key factor in the formation of an educational territory) can take two forms: conditional hospitality and unconditional hospitality. Hospitality that is contingent upon specific conditions and rules - to which the other party must agree in order to be accepted into the territory - is classified as conditional. Conversely, accepting the presence of the other without imposing rules constitutes unconditional hospitality. It is noteworthy; however, that these categories do not exist in a pure state in reality, given that rules for coexistence are inevitable; furthermore, within social collectives and counter-hegemonic cultural movements, the struggle is precisely for unconditional acceptance - particularly regarding identity groups, youth cultures, and gender relations.

Existing both as a concept and a lived reality, conditional and unconditional hospitality do not present themselves as a dichotomy, but rather as hostipitality (Derrida, 2003). The territory is traversed by singularities that can only be scientifically described and interpreted through detailed analysis. The interplay - at times conflictual, at others cooperative - between conditional and unconditional hospitality reveals the creative potential of collectives, as well as the production of stigmas that can contribute to the erasure of the communal life. Thus, Derrida (2003) invites us to read reality through the lens of deconstruction, allowing us to perceive how discourses are formed within and from peripheral territories - spaces situated at the margins of hegemonic thought. Interpreting the peripheral territory through the concept of hostipitality acknowledges the possibility of deconstructing stigmatizing discourses by shifting the agendas that oppress the community's creative potential - agendas shaped by economic and social inequalities.

Consequently, there is a dialogue between this concept and Foucault's (2011) concept of *dispositif*, given that hegemonic narratives generate power relations -

manifested, for instance, in the oppression of populations in urban communities and favelas - that permeate bodies and subjectivities. According to Alvim (2022), the counter-*dispositif*, which acts to subvert the system, finds an "analytical ally" in Derrida's (2003) deconstruction. From the perspective of applying these concepts to the configuration of educational territories and the pedagogical practices made possible through the dialogue between formal and non-formal spaces in support of formal education, the concepts of *dispositif* and hostipitality function as analytical tools for interpreting social relations in space, shaping and reshaping it.

We reiterate that the territory as understood through this theoretical conceptualization does not necessarily align with popular or community perceptions, particularly within urban communities and favelas. According to D'Andrea (2020):

Periphery is a complex of contradictions. The capitalist production of space allocated the cheapest land to the poorest people. Over approximately eighty years, peripheral territories were formed by a massive wave of migration involving Northeasterners, Black people, Indigenous people, poor white people, and immigrants (D'Andrea, 2020, p. 7).

Regarding the approach to territories - as opposed to neighborhoods or other administrative boundaries - D'Andrea *et al.* (2021) describe that "[...] the main objective [of this form of community self-description] is to stimulate political participation within the territories so that, by uniting territories around common goals, pressure can be exerted on macropolitics" (D'Andrea *et al.*, 2021, pp. 122–123). To achieve this, it is necessary to deconstruct stereotypes and strengthen social ties through educational, artistic, and affective processes.

Bourdieu (2004), unlike Foucault (2011; 2023) and Derrida (2003), methodologically establishes a more direct relationship between the material and symbolic dimensions. In 1986, during a conference at the University of San Diego (USA), he highlighted:

If I had to characterize my work in two words - that is, as is often done nowadays - if I had to apply a label to it, I would speak of constructivist structuralism or structuralist constructivism [...]. By structuralism or structuralist, I mean that there is - within the social world itself, and not merely in symbolic systems such as language, myth, etc. - objective structures that are independent of the agents' consciousness and will, yet capable of guiding or coercing their practices and representations. By constructivism, I mean that there is, on the one hand, a social genesis of the schemes of perception, thought, and action that constitute what I call habitus and, on the other, social structures - specifically what I call fields and groups, and particularly what are commonly called social classes (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 149).

The social shaping of urban peripheral territories - arising from the encounter between local experiences and a theory committed to social equity - holds the potential to transform them into educational spaces. From this perspective, the agents inhabiting these territories can come to understand the symbolic processes that generate relations of oppression. Armed with this knowledge, they can subvert the hegemonic logic of the circulation of power, thereby enabling a dialogue with the Foucault's (2011; 2023) concept of the counter-*dispositif* and the Derrida's (2003) notion of deconstruction. This social construction finds a significant element of analysis in the symbolic dimension, given that various types of capital circulate within the territory; among the most common are economic capital - the most visible of all - as well as cultural, social, and symbolic capital (representing a non-exact sum of the various types).

When specifically addressing social capital, Bourdieu (2023) writes that it is "[...] the aggregate of the actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 2023, p. 113). Cultural capital, as a component of social capital, follows the same logic. Thus, the common practices of mutual acquaintance and recognition in urban communities and favelas differ from those found in middle- and upper-class areas. Viewed through the lens of hegemonic social logic, the social and cultural capital accumulated in urban peripheral areas often yields diminished returns when displayed in non-peripheral territories. Even economic capital - which might define someone as wealthy within a favela - can have a negligible impact when its possessor moves through middle- and upper-class areas, revealing a conditional relationship.

Last but not least, Milton Santos - one of the most globally celebrated Brazilian researchers - bridges the symbolic, narrative, and material dimensions within the field of education, contributing to our reflection on territories in the broad sense, as well as on educational territories in the more specific sense we aim to address. It is no coincidence that the concept of used territory - popularized through the work "Brazil: Territory and Society at the Beginning of the 21st Century" (co-authored with Maria Laura Silveira) - emerges with considerable prominence in the BNCC (Brasil, 2018).

Borrowed from Santos and Silveira (2021), this definition of used territory is shaped by unequal power relations - which Foucault's (2011; 2023) concept of

dispositif helps to interpret - and within which hospitable and hostile discourses and practices are organized, merging into the concept of hostipitality (Derrida, 2003), and are continuously reinforced through a form of economy of economic, social, and cultural capitals, consolidated into symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2004). This capital, in turn, circulates within the territory and contributes to the creation of territorialities and markers through music, festivals, and leisure activities within cultural or power circuits (Brasil, 2018).

In “Brazil: Territory and Society at the Beginning of the 21st Century”, Santos and Silveira emphasize the material dimension of social life (2021). While it is difficult to reduce their work to theoretical classifications - given its autonomy and critical nature - it is possible to identify clear markers of historical materialism as the philosophical foundation of their reflections. For the authors, the “[...] used territory points to the need for an effort aimed at systematically analyzing the constitution of the territory. Since it is an entirely empirically verifiable proposition, it follows that the theory is thereby enriched” (Santos; Silveira, 2021, p. 28).

In light of this, Moraes (2013), who dedicated himself to researching the concept of territory based on books and articles published by Milton Santos, issues a warning and an appeal: “[...] it would be a great betrayal of Milton Santos’s legacy to freeze his formulations, turning his immense theoretical restlessness into sterile orthodoxy” (Moraes, 2013, p. 126). This statement challenges us to seek alternative ways of thinking about territory - not merely as an analytical category per se, but as an empirical formulation for thinking and acting within the realm of education. Guided by this theoretical reflection, we focus on the teaching of formal content through the interrelationship between formal and non-formal educational spaces, conceptualizing urban communities and favelas as educational territories.

3 Methodological pathways: how to approach the territory in practice

This research is characterized as a case study employing a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative instruments - a questionnaire with closed and open-ended variables - and qualitative instruments - such as discussion circles and interviews. It is longitudinal in nature, comprising two distinct stages: in the first, young people participated in junior scientific research activities as part of the "School-

community relationship: social technologies in pursuit of social emancipation" project; in the second, three years after the project ended, they were contacted to evaluate their respective participation.

The first phase - the scientific research component - was inspired by action research, as participants gathered data from other students at the EEEFM "Saturnino Rangel Mauro" school and subsequently organized an initiative in the surrounding area. This initiative stemmed from the data collection process, which used an instrument containing closed-ended variables - one of which asked students to identify the territory's main problems. Approximately 50% of the students from the morning and afternoon shifts participated in the study, totaling 374 respondents.

The execution of the junior scientific research project involved the following stages: 1st) Student selection: vacancies were advertised via posters displayed throughout the school, and candidate interviews were conducted, prioritizing 1st and 2nd-year morning-shift students, together with an assessment of time availability; 2nd) Theoretical grounding: this involved guided readings, text summaries, and discussions, as well as a technical visit to the Public Archive of Espírito Santo (APES) to locate documents that would aid in understanding the territory's settlement and development; 3rd) regarding data collection within the community, the team created a questionnaire using Google Forms to identify challenges, strengths, local leaders, and student perceptions of the neighborhood's history, which was administered to all high school classes, yielding 374 valid responses - approximately 50% of students across both shifts; 4th) regarding interviews, four local leaders - selected from those named by students in the questionnaire - were engaged, including a city councilor whose electoral base was in the community where the school is located; the focus was on the territorial issues identified by adolescents; 5th) during the action planning phase, we defined and planned an intervention for the neighborhood entrance (a highly visible spot with recurring waste accumulation) that addressed the community needs raised by various stakeholders; 6th) during the execution phase, about ten residents - motivated by the students - participated with teachers and the school principal; discarded tires were repurposed as planters for seedlings, and a banner was created to raise environmental awareness among residents who were present or passing by; and 7th) the evaluation of the action and the project as a whole was conducted using Google Forms to

understand the experience of mobilizing both formal knowledge and social action from the perspective of the participating students.

For the second phase, we sought to contact the seven students who had participated in the junior scientific research initiative. After about three years, we aimed to understand how the project - which sought to equip high school students with scientific tools to understand their local area and to encourage action based on the data produced - influenced their development and personal growth. Of the seven participants, we were able to speak with five: four took part in a discussion circle, and the fifth participated in a recorded interview via Google Meet. Both the interview and the discussion circle were audio-recorded in compliance with all ethical criteria established in the Informed Consent Form, which was read aloud and recorded, outlining the research benefits and risks as well as the guarantee of anonymity.

The conversation with these students allowed the recall of emotional memories and facilitated reunions, revealing how the project influenced their life paths and their relationship with their territory. The texts resulting from these interviews were analyzed using the content analysis technique (Bardin, 2011) and based on the analytical categories of "personal development" and "educational territory". The analysis was conducted with the aid of the MaxQDA software (version 2020), into which the discussion circle transcript was imported, with appropriate participant identification.

The analysis of quantitative variables centered on the relationship between school subjects and the students' empirical experience with the scientific initiation project, which concluded in 2019. Qualitative variables were interpreted through theoretical layers explored by the project coordinators, seeking connections between the student's experiences and their lived territory on the one hand, and concepts such as educational territory, *dispositif* and counter-*dispositif*, hospitality, hostility and hostipitality, cultural, symbolic, and social capital, and used territory, on the other.

4 Results and discussion

Against this backdrop, we present the results and discussion based on two phases of data collection: the first during the execution of the "School-community relationship: social technologies in pursuit of social emancipation" project, and the second three years after its conclusion. In both cases, the analytical focus was on the

participants' perceptions regarding the activities carried out, the experiences lived, and their impact on the territory and the individuals involved.

In the first phase, students surveyed local needs and the neighborhood's history, in addition to undertaking a dialogic social intervention (Santos; Sgarbi, 2019) that mobilized both the community and public authorities. As part of this initiative, they organized the cleanup of an area used for the irregular disposal of solid waste. Furthermore, they distributed leaflets, installed signs, and planted seedlings in an effort to transform the territory they inhabited. On the day of the event, approximately 60 people visited the site, including collaborators and those interested in the project. At the end of the research's first phase, an evaluation involving both quantitative and qualitative variables was conducted to generate data on the neighborhood's history and the dialogic social intervention; the aim was to map the dialogue between the school (a formal space) and the territory (non-formal spaces) and to explore the educational potential of these environments. The focus was to investigate the limits and scope of using spaces outside the school walls - that is, education in non-formal settings (Gohn, 2010). First, we asked which school subjects had supported the theoretical and practical activities during the project's implementation (Table 1).

Table 1 – Subjects that, according to the students, were related to the project activities⁴

Subject	Historical research (theoretical activity) Students who responded	Social intervention (practical activity) Students who responded
Portuguese Language	4	-
Chemistry	1	3
Geography	1	1
Sociology	2	-
Physics	2	2
Biology	2	1
Mathematics	1	2
Research Methodology	-	1

Source: Authors' elaboration (2019).

These responses demonstrate how a practical action, properly fostered within the school environment, decisively promotes interdisciplinarity, given that everyday life

⁴ Data produced during the junior scientific research project.

is far more complex than any single academic discipline. Research involving historical sources was linked to seven other curricular components, and dialogic social intervention (Santos; Sgarbi, 2019) to five - in addition to the research methodology itself, which was not part of the formal curriculum structure.

Knowing their own territory and transforming it into an educational space mobilized knowledge from disciplines such as Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, and Biology, thereby transcending the fields of the humanities and languages. These responses, therefore, demonstrate the potential of using the territory as a pedagogical element - particularly when considering the explanations young people gave regarding how the research-based activity aided their learning in other subjects.

I learned more about society and how it works, as well as how to conduct research. (E1. Lucas, 2019)⁵

Yes, because through the project we learned to improve our communication with others, how to write summaries correctly, and how to conduct research, among other things. (E2. Eva, 2019)

I really overcame my shyness about presenting projects. (E3. Pedro, 2019)

In general, the research process itself helped with learning across all subjects - knowing where to look for information, such as using Google Scholar. (E4. Samuel, 2019)

In an era marked by the proliferation of artificial intelligence, scientific know-how and research literacy can provide a significant advantage in the lives of young people, especially those from marginalized areas. Understanding local reality - often overlooked or replaced by the dominant media narrative, which typically portrays only the violent aspects of materially disadvantaged communities - contributes not only to formal learning (content-based education), but also to the holistic development of the individual. It is also worth noting that linking action and reflection creates opportunities for the exercise of praxis⁶ and the strengthening of agency⁷ among participants. To this end, teaching must be political and intentional. Learning through collective action was highlighted by Arroyo (2009), who states that: "Linking collective actions, knowledge,

⁵ The names used here are fictitious to protect the identities of the research participants. These are biblical names chosen by the authors, reflecting the strong Christian influence in the region under study.

⁶ The concept of praxis addressed here is the one proposed by Gramsci (1978), in which it is impossible to empirically decouple action from reflection when considering human activity; such a separation is possible only in theoretical terms, for analytical purposes.

⁷ In sociology, the concept of agency concerns the capacity to act. For a more in-depth discussion of this concept, see Hubner (2023).

and pedagogies entails recognizing the experiences and actions of these collectives - whether organized into social movements or not" (Arroyo, 2009, p. 1).

Given that collective actions are grounded in the concept of community, and that community represents the anchoring of social relations, as it takes place within a specific territory, we sought the participants' views on the relationship between school and community. After briefly introducing these terms, we asked: have these two elements combined - school and community - changed your perspective? Have they influenced your life and your choices? In what way? This is the space to reflect on how these two factors exert influence together, rather than in isolation.

Yes. Especially because those living in the community generally cannot manage both things simultaneously due to various other priorities, and having that contact helps one reflect on the matter. (E5. Miguel, 2019)

They really changed the way I see things; they completely influenced my life. It gave me a better understanding of the place where I live. (E6. João, 2019)

Yes. Because I used to view the school and the community as two separate things, but I don't see it that way anymore; I realized that the school and the community can indeed go hand in hand. (E1. Lucas, 2019)

The school belongs to the community and should be used by the community; it is a learning space where everyone spends a large part of their lives. School influences our lives. It is the place where we think about what we want for our future. (E2. Eva, 2019)

I think the school and the community need to be constantly connected because it fosters a better relationship - a certain harmony - and students feel good about it. It's wonderful to see a school event packed with local residents, families, and friends. (E3. Pedro, 2019)

It changed the way I see my neighborhood; I already viewed it as a violent area, but I began to notice other negative aspects - such as the trash problem, for instance. (E7. Maria, 2019)

Well... These two elements combined did change the way I see things, because the ideal is for the school to "serve" the entire community and help all residents in every aspect - such as by organizing courses for older adults, like sewing, cooking, or even crochet classes. I believe these two elements did not influence my life or my choices. (E4. Samuel, 2019)

The scholarship recipients' assessment tool revealed that educational practice integrating formal and non-formal spaces presents both limitations and potentials. Some students living in urban peripheries faced challenges - such as the need to work, among other personal issues - that affected their dedication to the project. These results highlight the unique realities of these students and the importance of considering such factors when developing teaching strategies. Thus, according reports, the school holds great potential to become a counter-*dispositif* (Alvim, 2022).

Maria's statement (E7, 2019) portrays the territory as a Foucaultian *dispositif*: living in that territory and being part of that community means being part of a reality marked by violence and illegal waste dumping. In this sense, the territory oppresses; from this perspective, the territory is also hostile (Derrida, 2003).

Eva (E2, 2019), on the other hand, highlights the school's potential to transform the territory. It is the locus where the future is envisioned. In this regard, Arroyo (2009) points to the movement of occupying the vast landed estate of knowledge. The author warns that we must develop "[...] strategies for the critical appropriation and re-appropriation of accumulated knowledge - whether through the school system, from basic education to university, or by opening up our own intra-collective and inter-collective spaces for knowledge production [...]" (Arroyo, 2009, p. 2). Eva and João emphasize that we should not view the school and the community as a duality if we wish to produce transformative knowledge. Despite extensive discussion on the subject, difficulties remain in achieving this merging of territories - school and community - within teaching practices. This difficulty arises from various factors: ranging from teachers' lack of time to prepare activities that bridge them, to the community's lack of interest in participating in the school's pedagogical life.

Specifically regarding the teaching profession, a challenge identified through observation was a lack of familiarity with the territory. To implement a proposal that maximizes the educational potential of these spaces, it is essential that education professionals have the opportunity to become familiar with the territory. That is, there is an urgent need for them to move beyond layers of reality that are inaccessible to common sense, particularly those shaped by narratives disseminated by the mainstream media. According to Bourdieu (2004; 2023), understanding the deeper logic of the social world requires immersing oneself in the specificity of an empirically grounded, historically situated, and temporally bounded reality. Only in this way can the abstractions generated by science be grounded. In this light, Samuel's account appears quite contradictory: despite claiming a shift in his way of "seeing things," he states that the experience he underwent had not changed his life. Up to that point, the knowledge he had gained did not translate into actual change in his life, as his empirical reality continued to be shaped by the material conditions to which he was subjected.

Theoretically, developing an understanding of the territory - whether viewed as an *dispositif* and counter-*dispositif* (Foucault, 2011; 2023); through the lens of hostility

and hospitality - be it conditional or unconditional (Derrida, 2003); via symbolic capital established through the dialogue between material life and internalized power relations (Bourdieu, 2004; 2023); or through power relations shaped by the flow of uses and the conditions of the production and reproduction of space (Santos; Silveira, 2021) - requires time. Yet, time is an increasingly scarce resource for professionals in municipal and state education systems across the country.

On the other hand, the scope and impact of these initiatives also merit consideration. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the data highlight the potential of work carried out in non-formal educational settings in dialogue with formal education, as students' curiosity often transcends the boundaries of specific academic subjects.

Regarding knowledge of the territory - which is fundamental for an education that transforms realities and fosters learning about the struggle for rights (Arroyo, 2003) - the stimulus provided led to shifts in how students perceived their community. With the exception of a single response attributing the change solely to an increased awareness of the neighborhood's negative aspects, the other responses highlighted at least two noteworthy points: an initial perception of lack of integration between the school and the community, and lack of historical and sociological knowledge regarding the territory they share.

Three years later, in 2022, we sought to contact the same students who had participated in the junior scientific research project. Of the five young people we managed to reach, four gathered for a discussion circle over a shared breakfast. The chosen place was the EEEFM "Saturnino Rangel Mauro" - the same school that had hosted the project three years earlier. Of the five young people contacted, four were pursuing higher education: one in nursing, one in production engineering, and two in Portuguese/English Language and Literature. For these young people, education represents a path to upward social mobility. When asked about the relationship between themselves, their parents, and education, several responses stood out:

My parents had high expectations for me because I have two older brothers who - well, they were already adults and weren't studying; both of them had 'sort of' dropped out of school. So, I'm the first one in the family to go to college. (E6. João, 2022)

[My parents] always told me to study, to get an education, and to always try to grow and improve; they always encouraged and helped me however they could. Especially since, generally speaking, higher education isn't something most people in my family have, but they understand that having an education

allows you to have a better life. So, even if they don't know exactly how to help, they helped with what they had. (E1. Lucas, 2022)

Yeah, my mom - since my dad died when I was very young, my mom has always provided great support. She was always very encouraging - whether intended or not - there was pressure because the boys hadn't graduated beyond the technical level - beyond high school, I mean (the interviewee begins to tear up). There was pressure on me to be the girl who would pursue further education and all that... So when I got married, she was really upset because, in her mind, I was going to get married and give everything up. I don't know why, but that's what she thought. Then, when I finally graduated from the technical program [high school], she even sent me a really lovely message, saying all sorts of things, that she was proud and so on. (E7. Maria, 2022).

The final response came from the young woman who did not pursue higher education. Marriage and starting a family, among other factors, contributed to her decision to discontinue her studies. Regarding the other responses, it is evident that the interviewees were the first in their families to access higher education. Therefore, it is also relevant to note the value their families placed on formal education.

When asked what they would highlight about the project three years later, the young people pointed out the following:

I think it was the action - the action we took in the neighborhood. Conducting the research, helping the neighborhood in some way, bringing people together... I think it was the action we managed to carry out, beyond just the research itself. (E2. Eva, 2022)

I would highlight the relationship with the community; to carry out the project, we had to have some contact with the community to get everyone involved. [...]. (E6. João, 2022)

For me, what deserves the most emphasis is the research itself - the methods we used to conduct it, the ways we organized things, the research process. [...] Looking for data on the neighborhood, the residents, documents, data collection - all of that. (E1. Lucas, 2022)

Before the project, I didn't actually know the neighborhood's history; I only learned about it through the project. (E6. João, 2022)

And it was very good because, like it or not, it opened up various issues - things the history teacher used to talk about a lot, and which always stick in your memory: "I'm going to leave here because the neighborhood is this way, that way, and the other." But how much has the neighborhood actually changed? You know, compared to when we were here before? The project was important to me because of that different way of thinking; after all, I managed to go to São Paulo thanks to the course and the project. It opened up various windows - new ideas, different people's ways of thinking - and even among ourselves here, we are very different. So, everyone has a perspective of the neighborhood based on their own reality... [The project] allowed us to discover the neighborhood's roots, because it isn't just a peripheral neighborhood that simply appeared and ended up the way it is. (E7. Maria, 2022)

This set of responses provides evidence of how participation interacted with the perception of the territory. The proposed dialogic social intervention (Santos; Sgarbi, 2019) reveals the capacity to reconstruct space through action. Nevertheless, a narrative of the neighborhood as a peripheral community defined by absence - a process that erases the territory's dynamic flows and potential - also emerges. This shapes connotations of what is hostile (and for whom the neighborhood is hostile) versus what is hospitable, whether conditionally or not. Derrida (2003) helps us understand this process by highlighting the interrelationship between hostility and hospitality - a concept we applied to the territory.

The desire for upward social mobility and to leave the peripheral neighborhood of origin is a recurring, though not universal, feeling among residents. Living in Nova Rosa da Penha acts as a device that organizes bodies, subjectivities, and institutional structures, particularly policing institutions; yet, there are those who subvert this device and highlight its positive dimensions (how much has the neighborhood changed, or how has these young people's perspective of the neighborhood shifted?). Learning about the history of settlement and resistance was crucial for the young people, opening up new discussions that went beyond the layers of reality presented by mainstream media - asking questions such as: what uses exist for the territory, and who uses it? What are the interrelationships between this specific territory and the flows of capital?

Santos and Silveira (2021) point to the need to explore these flows, and the BNCC suggests ways to do so as part of a necessary dimension of critical education. In this regard, Arroyo (2018) points out that:

When engaging with research, theoretical production, and the formulation and analysis of policies aimed at social equality through educational equality, political and pedagogical thought is compelled to confront a fundamental question: what relations of class, race, gender, ethnicity, and so forth, have produced the singular, hegemonic prototype-paradigm that designates certain groups as equal while relegating others to the status of unequal? What are the parameters of equality and inequality? Are they physical or corporeal parameters - based on color, race, or ethnicity? Parameters of rationality versus irrationality? Of morality versus immorality? Of culture versus a lack thereof? Of literacy versus illiteracy, or schooling levels and pathways? (Arroyo, 2018, p. 1101).

The history of a territory is deeply intertwined with its flows, contexts of inequality, and rationalities. According to Santos and Silveira (2021), these are the

elements that characterize the used territory. They also organize the distribution of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2004; 2023) and determine whether a territory is hostile or hospitable (Derrida, 2003). João's testimony reveals that inhabitants often lack knowledge of the territory's history - sometimes due to a lack of encouragement from schools, and at other times because of the negative image they hold of the place. Therefore, access to knowledge - especially critical knowledge - is an important step, even if not the sole determining factor. Furthermore, Maria's account (E7, 2022), in which she identifies a "different method of thinking" within her experience, resonates with Arroyo (2018); as it represents, in this context, an alternative form of scientific literacy and a counter-hegemonic rationality.

The data also indicate that dialogue between school and community, and between theory and practice, offers a pathway to opening up new perspectives for young people living in peripheral territories. While the data do not allow for the categorical assertion that the participation of these individuals opened up new prospects for building a future with greater opportunities, Lucas - one of the four students who continued their studies - highlighted that the exposure to research, methods, and the production process itself was the highlight of his experience. In a country marked by such deep inequalities, education is a key element of social transformation. Yet, not just any education: an education committed to transformation; an education that fosters preparation for transformative action.

5 Concluding remarks

This research does not provide sufficient data to generalize the results beyond the scope of the case study. Furthermore, the students who participated in the undergraduate research program already enjoyed advantages over their peers in the same area, simply by being able to join the project. In that same setting, there are students who - however much they might wish to - would not be able to participate in such initiatives due to prohibitive family responsibilities. In this regard, there is a need to strengthen structural public policies that enable greater participation in research and extension activities within basic education. Ultimately, the findings underscore the importance of the critical appropriation of knowledge and of fostering dialogue between school and community, as well as between theory and practice.

The BNCC is the primary normative framework in Brazil regarding content organization, and it introduces the concept of used territory (Santos; Silveira, 2021) for consideration across various school subjects. However, the implementation of this approach still faces limitations involving both teaching staff and students. From the teachers' perspective, a lack of time and a lack of familiarity with the space where the school is located are key factors. To understand this complexity and interpret the territory as an educational space in a counter-hegemonic way, this study found the following concepts to be powerful tools – alongside the used territory (Santos; Silveira, 2021): *dispositif* and counter-*dispositif* (Foucault, 2011; 2023); hospitality, hostility, and hostipitality (Derrida, 2003); and cultural, symbolic, and social capital (Bourdieu, 2004; 2023) - all analyzed through the pedagogical lens provided by Arroyo (2003; 2009; 2018).

Against this theoretical backdrop, the analyses highlight the pedagogical potential of dialogue between school, community, and territory, particularly in urban peripheral contexts. The junior scientific research experience demonstrated that educational practices linked to educational territories can foster processes of critical development and social belonging, while broadening the educational horizons of the participating students.

In light of these findings, the following question arises: Why has education in urban peripheries not made greater strides toward strengthening the relationship between schools and the communities they serve? After all, given that we learn constantly and everywhere - achieving better results when more stimulated to do so - approaching education through the concept of educational territories offers an effective theoretical-methodological path for an engaged educational approach, such as the one proposed by Arroyo (2003; 2009; 2018). Yet, for this to happen, the professional lives of teachers would need to be restructured. Currently, they are entangled in bureaucratic matters or consumed by increased teaching workloads at the expense of time for planning, research, or outreach activities.

At the same time, students also need incentives to participate in such initiatives. For adolescents and young people living in the urban periphery, life may necessitate an early entry into the workforce - during high school or even earlier. In this context, participating in a research project - which demands dedication both during

school hours and outside of them - might make it impossible for them to contribute to household expenses.

Further research - increasingly longitudinal in nature - is needed in the field of education, particularly regarding urban peripheries. There is also an urgent need to analyze the content covered in national exams and its potential relationship with local realities. There are numerous reports of curricula being shaped by tests that supposedly measure knowledge, often at the expense of valuing local realities. Integrating this content while respecting the ethical and political principles of working with peripheral urban communities requires creativity and time from teachers, as well as incentives for students that go beyond addressing their immediate, basic needs.

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