

International Congress: Education, land and nature
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EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

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"The school must not only adapt to the social environment but also transform it", and "education is the constant need to improve things"

Heike Freire

First of all thank you for having invited us, we are very excited to be here and share so many experiences around education, land and nature. We regret that we can not communicate with your language, good friends have helped us to do the translation to make our communication easier.

About us? Where we come from? What do we do?

We are a pedagogical couple and in everyday life. We share many moments and hobbies of making constant discoveries, now apprentices of gardeners along with the grandchildren and children of the school. When our grandchildren do not come to eat at home, one, among other pleasures, is to walk, listen and accompany the schools that invite us to initiate a change in their outdoor spaces.

For more than 40 years we have been teachers in kindergarten and primary school in different schools in the outskirts of Barcelona. From Rosa Sensat's Teaching Renewal Movement we have enjoyed the great wealth of discussions and training, traveling, receiving and sharing practices that constantly make us evaluate what we do and how we do it. We live in Torrelles de Llobregat, a small town about 20 km from Barcelona

We are teachers in love with our work who, retired, continue to accompany many schools where there is a group of people convinced that education is a fundamental right. A right that is earned from the school with the educational

community. We do it voluntarily, we only ask that you do not represent us any expenses and to be able to share and make known the experiences on the Internet.

We are treading on the realities that welcome, embracing initiatives, sharing all the talents and riches of cultural diversity that are weaving a school for everyone and for the whole world.

"Childhood and nature". All a journey that has always accompanied us in the making of teachers and now has allowed us to continue doing an investigation. For more than ten years, in the context of our project EL SAFAREIG (EL LAVADERO) (elsafareig.org), we are accompanying over two hundred schools in the process of transforming their playgrounds into a natural, educational, health and wellness environment .

Changes in outdoor space go hand in hand with pedagogical changes. Talking about spaces from educational approaches, which go beyond design and installation of game elements, is an opportunity for debate and reflection.

A slow dialogue that gives us tools to organize spaces friendly, welcoming, natural, simple, with criteria of sustainability, where children are the protagonists of their learning. Spaces of coexistence, of relationships, of life between the inside and the outside.

We are here representing many educational communities, sharing their processes. With them we can capture everything that happens when they transform spaces collectively, involved in an educational process in coherence with a concept of child, school and community. Experiences, open roads where each one makes his own journey from the co-responsibility. Many of the projects can be found in our blog EL NOU SAFAREIG (The New Laundry) with links to their spaces in the network. We are excited and hopeful because today we can be here bringing the voice of so many communities fighting for the change of the school we want for a more livable world.

Dream the playground, transform the school

"We, the adults, must do and should be concerned with two questions: the first, which we have all done, is the question: what world are we going to leave our children? We know that we have much to do to make this world be habitable.

The second indisputably important and essential question is: what children do we leave in the world? Will we leave children in the world capable of thinking and reflecting? Or will we leave children manipulated by a consumer society that will do what it will want?

Intervention of Philippe Meirieu in the 2nd Marta Mata, organized by the Àngels Garriga Foundation (Saïfores-Tarragona 2013)

The educational community

The school as a social fabric that creates bonds and belonging to a group, a people, a city that opens to the world. The school in constant construction, where space, time, materials and organization, speak for themselves of well-being, physical, mental and intellectual health, full of motivations for the people who live and coexist.

The demand for transformation of the outdoor spaces of schools poses challenges and many possibilities for creating a true network of relationships and social cohesion.

Spaces full of opportunities, of knowledge, to make possible a new vision and a new way of inhabiting them. Look and see with lenses that sharpen attitudes, the explicit and conscious values that we want to see. Shared views of knowledge that each contributes to a project to make the school a living space.

If the school and the parents come together in a collaborative, interactive culture, which is a rational and advantageous decision for all, because everyone draws more meaningful experiences, then one

understands how close and profound the pedagogy of participation is. And research. *Loris Malaguzzi in "The journey with the rights of the children"*

How are our playgrounds?

We have the retina full of memories, eyes that capture many moments lived in the schoolyard. These memories speak of a story and the eyes that look at them, too. Stories that each one can identify, where we recognize ourselves.

How are the realities of the outdoor spaces of the schools? What happens throughout the day? What do these spaces project? Why was born this need so common in so many schools from the smallest to secondary?

Walking, contemplating, listening at different times of the day, brings us many more questions. The outdoor spaces of the schools are a window open to the world. How do we look at these spaces?

From the schools of the smallest in which we find many fences, flower beds of rubber, abundant plastic material with bright colors. Booths, bicycles, buckets, shovels, roadrunners, a assortment of elements that does not help to create a relaxed atmosphere, to invent creative games or to find the necessary sensorial contact with the environment. We also find these materials in natural environments where the toys cover the whole stage.

Why do playgrounds have moved away from nature? Why are conflicts so many and varied?

In our country, most of the schools' courtyards respond to a traditional conception of education: a space for recreation time and for the practice of sport. Education is taught inside the school. This is a model or concept that has been transferred to the school of the smallest.

They are generally flat spaces, often of cement with a part of earth and some trees. The game they offer does not respond to the different roles and needs of children. Monotonous spaces, with few opportunities for play, in which children usually practice movement activities, agitation when there is free play and sports activities where no response is given to all children. Where conflicts often

occur and in some cases the abuse or harassment of the strongest, the most powerful who gets what he wants. There are beliefs that children have to solve and solve problems themselves. A problem that can lead to the emergence of bullying.

This reality leads us to find a new way of looking at and articulating these spaces with the idea of using the playground as an educational space breaking with its traditional conception. It is a challenge that leads us to change our point of view on the outside of the school. To consider that, if we transform it properly, it will become a more space, like the inner space. And therefore to include your organization in the educational project. And consequently, to reflect on this together with the entire educational community.

Starting a process

We need to stop, observe and undertake a process, a path accompanied by training to break the barriers of a school stuck in time. Recover the memory of old buildings or rural schools and the great wealth of their natural spaces.

Let us stop to give value to the potential of spaces that we have, that are of the town and that the local administration must rethink like another member of the COMMUNITY EDUCATIVE.

Think about what it means to find spaces where materials are nature itself. Spaces more thought like garden areas that provoke the pleasure of creating unforeseen situations and much anticipated music, theater, walks, talks, project constructions, orchard. Sensory spaces in which there are always changes and always refer to the stories that can happen.

We know of the difficulties involved in the changes in understanding learning from a global perspective, with flexible structures, respect for individual and collective processes that demonstrate a way of rethinking and living spaces in and out.

We have sufficient scientific and pedagogical arguments that show the great value of these spaces. We recover the great references and their principles that

tell us about the benefit of bringing children closer to nature. To name a few, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Krausism, Fröbel, Montessori, the sisters Agazzi or Rosa Sensat, the teacher who created the first forest school in Barcelona.

We have current experiences that are recovering and renewing these arguments. The experience of Mauricio and Rebeca Wild in Ecuador. The Danish and German experiences of life outside. The permanent call of Francesco Tonucci on the need for natural spaces for children. The city of Bologna that promotes the project "Education outdoors". The Associazione Bambini and Natura of Milan. And the fact that we are gathered here addressing this issue, shows us the great need to make life spaces possible, greener, more vital, more human.

Participation process

Each school is unique and unique. The process of transformation begins by becoming aware of where we start and where we want to go. Creating environments outdoor, for a more global, experimental, experiential education, heterogeneous groups, flexible schedules, makes us leave the area of comfort, and it becomes necessary to look for different strategies to be able to articulate outdoor space in a process of participation.

The observation, the welcome, the listening, accompanying the wills that flow from the demands of families, some teachers or children, who are opening a search path creating a group, a work commission. A commission that is finding tools to put on paper a project that is able to excite the team of teachers, families and those who manage the politics of the municipality.

Put on the table strategies to know the real feelings and needs of children. Observe what happens at the entrance and exit times. Can family members come in and out quietly accompanying children to the door of their classroom? How to make it possible to sit on a bench or talk to someone waiting for a child to leave?

Imagine places where families can make use of these spaces by organizing meetings, their times, sharing and solving incompetences of schedules, or even

changing roles, that mothers play football. To make diversified proposals to use these outdoor spaces in the many hours in which our climate allows us, responding to all interests and talents. Small observations that open the human knowledge of families.

A process that requires time, elaboration of criteria, ethical, aesthetic, economic, sustainable, environmental, with a possible maintenance. A global vision of structure to make small performances with simplicity, friendly, polysensorial, diversified spaces, delimiting zones, vegetation, trees, banks, platforms ... inviting to invented games and projects of small groups. Encounters and actions that generate us from different points of view to think, construct, live and listen to children in many different ways with coherence to the project we are developing, with the strength of the axes that accompany us: education and community.

Start acting

The questions, the fears, the uncertainty are conquering shared challenges that make us find answers in the values and knowledge of the community. Every time we are approaching to see this space with diversity of plants, trees, where to play means to learn. That the natural outdoor space is the result of an intense exchange between pedagogy, art and architecture. Concepts that should be the basis of planning. Spaces that do not incapacitate anybody and that are fruit of the own experience.

Simple questions at the beginning, knowing in depth what we want, open the dialogue with ways of doing and thinking.

How to create places where children feel safe and able to be autonomous?

How to create different environments outside: garden, garden, unevenness, forest, huts, corners, play areas?

How can vegetation help us create these spaces? What fauna will attract?

How to prepare the pavement for a sustainable plantation?

How to generate or take advantage of the slopes?

How will we get the necessary resources?

How do we learn to manage a group of people?

How to manage common sense to create spaces that offer risk education avoiding the dangers?

Little by little, these and other questions are creating the conditions to find the answers. In a community, in a natural way appear leadership. Leadership conscious, positive, who know how to delegate and trust in the possibilities of each group or commission. Raising the challenges that are presented.

The leadership that widens in groups that can show solutions to different problems that may appear, finding the complicity of other professional profiles of the world of education, architecture, gardening, who share the vision of these spaces in different ways, but with a more open vision focused on the needs of the educational community and the school of the 21st century. Parents and teachers are creating conditions to watch and see a new education built day by day

The process of transformation requires time, training, dialogue with all educational agents, human and economic resources but above all enthusiasm, finding ways that lead us to create spaces with beauty, health and well-being.

We would like to have space to explain the processes we are experiencing, with their obstacles and difficulties. Today, after more than ten years, we can see that many educational communities are contributing elements that confirm that creating spaces outdoor is a path of opportunities.

Dream the playground to transform the school

The outdoor space is a reflection of the life of the school. The result of the transformations that we are incorporating represents the individual and collective growth of the people who live and coexist.

The school is a space that favors finding ways to share art, culture, knowledge from different languages with the richness and nuances that a community contributes. Teachers are great coordinators of things that happen in and out of it and make them visible with documentation. Making possible actions that make us more coherent

Participation and research are two terms capable of collecting a good part of the most general conception of our educational theory, as well as of collecting the best requirements to initiate and maintain an understanding of cooperation between parents and teachers with the values it adds to the educational prospective of children. Loris Malaguzzi in "The journey with the rights of the children"

We want to end up with an image as a metaphor for the richness of participation and community search. Every stone is needed. Everyone contributes to transform realities that are no longer a dream.

Let's dream: Let's make living and active gardens for children. Let's transform the school!

Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to share our experiences.

VIDEOS RELATED TO THIS EXPERIENCE:

ESCOLA RURAL INFANTIL Y PRIMARIA DE MURA:

<https://youtu.be/Y3SNp4MEuPo>

ESCUELA INFANTIL Y PRIMARIA DE ALMUDEVAR:

<https://www.facebook.com/uncoleunailusion/videos/2132572613634503/>

EL PATI QUE VOLEM - ESCOLA INFANTIL Y PRIMARIA COLONIA GUELL DE SANTA COLOMA DE CERVELLO:

<https://vimeo.com/95966019>

ESCOLA BRESSOL MUNICIPAL 0-3 EL RAJOLET DE LES PRESES:

<https://www.facebook.com/carmecols/videos/vb.1441406789404974/1645115635700754/?type=2&theater>

ESCOLA BRESSOL MUNICIPAL JM CESPEDES DE SANT ADRIA DEL BESOS

(LLARG 7min):

<https://youtu.be/8rDwDDt-Ciw>

ESCOLA BRESSOL MUNICIPAL CESPEDES DE SANT ADRIA DEL BESOS (DE PATI A JARDI-LLARG 5min):

<https://youtu.be/ag9q41yY5Pk?list=PLI7q0gNu9snxMPXHqZHHA0zUfxX62jYX2>

ESCOLA PÚBLICA LA VITXETA DE REUS

<https://elnousafareig.org/2016/09/03/la-vitxeta-es-mou-pel-pati-escola-publica-dinfantil-i-primaria-de-reus/>