Conversations with Gert Biesta and Carl Anders Säfström

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Detail **"What remained"**, oil painting. Gustavo Gaggero

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Abstract

In the present article, we propose to talk with Gert Biesta and Carl Andres Säfströmfrom a manifesto of their authorship on the position they have about the school in the contemporaneity. We point out some ideas that are at the base of the works that we develop and in the current of research to which we are affiliated –research with the daily ones–, that is, educational networks and conceptual characters. Then, we present some positions that we understand as differentiated from those defended by these authors: the relationships between practices and theories, the articulations between educational spaces and times and the idea that the processes of 'teaching learning' happen all the time, in a movement which includes the "still is not" in the negotiation between "what is" and what "is not yet".

Keywords: cotidians; educational networks; educational spaces-times; learning-teaching processes; practices-theories.

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Resumen

En el presente artículo, nos proponemos conversar con Gert Biesta y Carl Andres Säfström a partir de un manifiesto de su autoría sobre la posición que tienen acerca de la escuela en la contemporaneidad. Señalamos algunas ideas que están en la base de los trabajos que desarrollamos y en la corriente de investigación a la que estamos afiliadas –investigación con los cotidianos–, es decir, redes educativas y personajes conceptuales. Luego, presentamos algunas posiciones que entendemos como diferenciadas de las defendidas por dichos autores: las relaciones entre prácticas y teorías, las articulaciones entre espacios y tiempos educativos y la idea de que los procesos de *aprendizaje enseñanza* pasan todo el tiempo, en un movimiento que incluye el "todavía no es" en la negociación entre "lo que es" y lo que "todavía no es".

Palabras clave: cotidianos; redes educativas; espacios-tiempos educativos; procesos de aprendizaje-enseñanza; prácticas-teorías.

In 2002, Nilda Alves and Regina Leite Garcia[1] wrote a text about the importance of collective guidance of academic work of students of PhDs, masters and grant holders of research *with the dailies*[2] (García and Alves, 2002). This text was about the experience that each one went through with the research groups they were coordinating, and it served as demonstrative synthesis of the way in which they researched and

included not only the guidance of academic work –articles, thesis, dissertations, works for congresses, etc.– but also the development of writing them and other works done collectively.

From there on, we have increasingly developed this process of making public, in collective texts, the way in which we investigate, our ways of thinking the research we carry out and the creation of *knowledge-meaning*[3] reinforced during research.

This type of writing has been changing according to the needs and the possibilities of the participants and the circumstances for the publications of the texts that are written. To do this research, for example, we started with the distribution of the texts that will be problematized (Biesta and Säfström, 2011), we read the texts individually and we made a long discussion of the texts as we tried to understand them from our interpretations, which we constantly discuss in the 'conversations'[4].

After the process of conversation between us, we decided the sections of the text that would be written by each of us so we can *talk* with the authors. Next, one of the authors consolidated the sections and a meeting to adjust the necessary modifications by mutual agreement was held. Lastly, the last consolidation of the text has been performed individually so later on, a last reading of the document is done in-group.

This encouraging process of 'thinking and writing together' is present in the group –in varied ways–, permanently. In some way, this is already an opposition to the evident way chosen by the authors we 'talk'.

The idea of *conceptual characters*

Everything discussed in these 'conversas' –that is to say, what goes on within the research processes, among the participants, as well as the 'trainees-thinkers'[5]of our everyday networks, the authors we read in the group and the ones who work in schools (teachers and learners)– is the material we use to *practice-think* about the movements of the research in which we are involved.

Working with narratives, pictures and sounds, which appeared during research processes, we hold these numerous 'conversas'[6] as *conceptual characters*, as defined by Deleuze

and Guattari (1992). In other words, we take them as the 'other' with whom we 'talk' continually, who asks us questions, who encourages us to *'think and do'* to let the thought occur and with whom we create *knowledge-meaning* with everything that we gather, organize and articulate when carrying out the researches with *the dailies.*

Deleuze did the same with the works and thoughts of the authors he worked with: from Bacon to Proust (Deleuze, 2007: 2003), exploring countless filmmakers (Deleuze, 1985), moving from Guattari, to Kafka (Deleuze yGuattari, 2014). Similarly, we also think about those artifacts –narratives, pictures and sounds– that come into sight in the 'conversations' that we expand in researches with the dailies. In this way, we understand the wide range of numerous artifacts that work in the development of educational networks and in their every day practices.

The idea of educating ourselves in multiple educational networks

To begin with, we know that it is important to explain that we work with the idea that we create multiple educational networks *in the dailies* and that we are a part of them. This idea has allowed us to comprehend that the curricular processes have incalculable connections with the multiple social ones as well as *'space-time'* *'inside-out'* of the schools. Thus, we figure out, that the possibilities of articulations that arise between these networks that debate the educational processes constantly, are numberless.

Consequently, it is unimaginable to think about school as the only educational *'space-time'*, just as any other educational network. We have thought, for this reason, the school processes as unquestionably related to the multiple educational networks. These connected networks, even though they have some independence, up to present time, are always *practical-theories* and could be called by these names: the *practices-theories* of the academic development; the everyday pedagogical *practices-theories*; the *'practices-theories'* of government policies; the collective *practices-theories* of social movements; the *practices-theories* of investigation in education; the *practices-theories* of artistic expressions; the *practices-theories* of the creation and 'uses' of media; the

practical-theories of the experiences in the cities (in the countryside or the routes).

Hence, thinking about school education needs thinking, in a connected way of all the educational networks that form human beings, mark in them and enter school *with* them.

Spaces-times of learning-teaching

We grant, from the start, the numberless possibilities of scientific conversation (Maturana, 2001) in which all of us can participate as an assimilating and significant part in the creation of *knowledge-meaning*, especially in education, since we figured out that human beings are all participants in various educational processes, diverse and numerous. All these processes and also the understanding of their existence and need, have developed changes that echo in our possibilities of manifestation, sensation, understanding, learning-teaching, by the most varied spaces-times of the different educational networks, permitting us to comprehend, extensively, the connections and articulations that their *trainees-thinkers* generate between themselves and between the *knowledge-meaning* that grow in those connections. Besides, they develop an understanding that in the researches and *with the dailies*, in numerous curricular questions, is not possible to create well founded *knowledge-meanings* without the active participation of the *thinking-trainees*, in all the *spaces-times* of relationships and connections. Consequently, Alves makes us understand that

> in this way, a great movement of the research with the dailies has been looking for ways of understanding that which we haven't been taught to "see": the conditions of the "knowledge-meaning" scheme in the daily nets. Thus, as the trainees of the dailies, the researchers in the/with the dailies, need to take advantage of the occasion, creating throughout the research process knowledge ('practices-theories') that help us understand what we are investigating in the very act of doing research, fighting all the time, with what we have incarnated of what we 'learn-teach' in the processes of training and in the processes with which we train other researchers, that is, what is, still today, hegemonic in the field of science. These research-

ers with the dailies need to be where no one expects, capturing on the flight the possibilities offered for a moment (De Certeau, 1994). We insist, then, that our struggle is not against someone, specifically, since as Santos reminds us (1995), the worst enemy is inside us. But we also understand, and we still insist on that, that seeking to articulate strategies in this field of struggle, which is that of research in education, we must also keep in mind, and at all times, that tactics is the art of the weak (De Certeau, 2012: 101) and that the arts are placed beyond the dominant rationality, playing with the emotions, which are permanently created, combining possibilities and giving rise to countless alternatives in trajectories that cannot be previously determined because they will always be different and diversified (Alves, 2010: 25).

From the aforementioned, we have travelled through different *time-spaces* in a bet to the creation of plural conversations in the sciences in which different possibilities of communication work, and articulating different educational networks, generating escapes to stabilizations and fixations of *knowledge-meaning*, creating multiple cultural flows, through the existence in the dailies we live, of a numberless of images and narratives of what is and what can be scientific.

In this way, we understand the importance of what was previously understood, only as *consumers* of scientific *knowledge-meaning* and that are also, in these networks, creators and signalers of scientific possibilities in the *uses* (De Certeau, 2012) that occur to what is produced in the considered *spaces-times* of the sciences.

Thus, the conversations created in the educational networks, are pointing out that all that is produced in *spaces-times* of the University is being occupied and even invaded by other "cultural worlds" and by the thoughts of other *thinking-trainees*, at least as regards the human and social sciences. These processes have been taking place for a long time and we can noticed them for their publicity in multiple *spaces-times*. In this way, the *knowledge-meaning* produced by the sciences are expanded, scattered, multiplied and stretched through the "conversations" in these new gadgets and their mul-

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tiples and diversified uses, by the numberless *thinking-trainees* within themselves.

Looking towards the daily as a net of changes and as a net in which different educational processes take shape and "occur" means observing the articulations which take place inside it, from the different connections formed, the relationships among its multiple and so different *thinking-practioners*, articulated in the different processes. The exchange ways in the nets, understood according to the perspective of human sociability, allow for the revealing of the horizontal changes that flow in the most different directions, without any particular centres, beginnings or ends.

In this process, we seek to underline the work with images and the respect to the dailies as *spaces-times* of permanent invention. With that, it has been possible to reaffirm that in the teaching practices there are always theoretical aspects that, even if unconscious, influence on their actions.
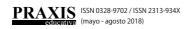
On the other hand, we understand that the teaching practices allow for the accumulation of *knowledge-meaning* that will engender theoretical nucleous about the pedagogic and the curricular. It is in this sense that we have preferred using the *practice-theory* expression

when we refer to what occurs in the educational *space-times*, including those of schools, in the teacher-learner relationships, in the pedagogical attitudes carried out in common. As regards this issue, Alves (2010: 15) claims:

> the theory does not stand outside, nor it can be seen as dichotomized, even less understood as following or prior to the practice. It is necessary to recognize that in the research in and with the dailies it cannot be possible to escape from the practice-theory unit, just as from its permanent criticism (2010: 15).

In this way, like Alves (2001), we understand that all the production carried out in research as collective work that includes in his authourship the ideas discussed by the participants of the groups of investigation that produced the knowledge made available to the public, such as the ideas of those who are related to the first in the processes of investigation made in the *spaces-times* of the educational networks analysed. That is to say, a work does not have its creation only connected to the creative subjectivity of its academic author. As regards this topic, Sousa Diaz reminds us that the creation takes place

"What remained", oil painting. Gustavo Gaggero

With the events of life, things, people, books, ideas and experiences inherent in ourselves, insensible even up to our developments and that trace a unique individuality. And this is done with all that not as subjective experiences, perceptions, affections and opinions of a self, but as pre-individual singularities, supra-personal infinitives, and, as such, shareable, "communicable", transmissible currents of life. It is always written, painted, composed with the multiplicity that exists in ourselves, with what each of us is, the creator subject is always collective, the name of the author is always the signature of a limited company (Sousa Dias, 1995: 104-105).

In relation to that and because of that, for Alves (2008) it is necessary to go beyond what we have learnt in Modernity and immerse ourselves in what we wish to investigate. Thus, with that way of thinking and perceiving what is happening, we are proposing other possible understandings, transgressing the common position that admits a single directive line, a single obligatory way. With this we want to point out that the development of the research with the dailies has been allowing –and increasingly demands– daily contacts and of different orders between universities and schools or other educational *spaces-times,* with their so many *trainees-thinkers.*

In this way, we understand that transformations in school processes –and also research about them– create the need of making a chart about its discussion with all the trainees-thinkers-teachers, students, administrative members, local community –which includes those responsible for the students, local business leaders–, social movements, educational authorities, etc.

The many 'it is not yet' in education

We begin with the epistemological and political principle that *it is not yet* is constituted in the negotiation blank between what *it is* (where positive value is attributed) and what *it is not yet* (where negative value is attributed). According to *Aurelio dictionary* in Portuguese, *ainda* (yet; still) is an adverb that might mean: "1. Up to now, until the present time; 2. Until then, until that time; 3. Until (present time)" (Ferreira,

2010: 28). In this sense, we glimpse the *it is not yet* like a possibility of stressing the dichotomy of what *it is* and what *it is not*. The 'space-time' (Alves, 2003) in the between-place, of the border (Bhabha, 2005). For us, the metaphor of the border is not restricted to the setting of rigid and immutable limits, because we conceive it as "a transitory place and, a border that unravels and moves forward" (Esteban, 2000: 2).

Santos (2003) allows us to think about the relationship between what *it is*, what *it is not yet* and what *it is not* from the departing point of the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergencies. According to the author, the sociology of absences aims at " to demonstrate that what does not exist is, in fact, actively produced as non-existent" (Santos, 2003: 786), while stating that "the objective of the Sociology of Absences is to transform impossible objects into possible ones, and from them to transform the absences into presences "(Santos, 2003: 786).

Regarding the Sociology of Emergencies, Boaventura (Santos, 2003) argues that Bloch (1995) proposes two new conceptions: No and Not Yet. "No means that something is missing and the desire to overcome that loss" (Santos, 2003: 795). Not Yet is "on the one hand, capacity (power) and, on the other hand, possibility (potentiality)" (Santos, 2003: 795). The sociology of emergencies extends the present and considers the future because they are built on the alternatives of the present. In this fashion, it becomes crucial to rethink our logic to contemplate the emancipatory potential that they have, understanding that the future will be built through plural and concrete possibilities and individual and / or collective actions.

The notion of *Not Yet* proposed by Bloch (1995) helps us to understand the *it is not yet* as the possibility of a new emergence. "The border becomes the place from where something begins to be present" (Bhabha, 2005: 24). The space in the border is the place where something new is constructed. "It renews the past, reconfiguring it as an 'in-between' contingent, which innovates and interrupts the action of the present" (Bhabha, 2005: 27).

We understand that it is necessary to break with the dichotomous modern tradition expressed by the relationship between what *it is and* what *it is not*, "that structures and names places of loss and impossibility" (Esteban,

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2000: 8), to incorporate the local *in-between* place of production of new meanings in which permanence and absence are discussing "(Esteban, 2000: 8). That is, to glimpse the possibilities that the *it is not yet* offers us.

In this sense, we strongly disagree with the perspective supported by the document "A manifesto for education" in relation to *it is not yet*. It is stated in this document that the *it is not yet* puts education in an unreachable place. On the contrary, we believe that a negotiation place of is a powerful zone, it is the place for possibility. Setting education in terms of what *it is* or what *it is not* impoverishes the sense of education, since school processes are still deeply marked by the logic of classification. The dichotomy between what *it is* and what *it is not* brings out the potential of the *trainees-thinkers* in everyday life and their processes in the creation of *practices-theories*, since they circumscribe those who *are not* to the place of loss, from educational processes thought in the logic of linearity, "making ignorance the only alternative to those who do not control valued knowledge" (Esteban, 2001: 17).

We reinforce the importance of the *it is not yet* because we understand, as well as Vygotsky (1998) that it is through the relationship with others that the learning-teaching processes occur in any of the networks that we establish and where we form ourselves and, therefore, schools. In this context, it is necessary to identify and create Zones of Proximal Development (ZPD), which define the distance between the current level of development, determined by the capacity to solve a problem without any kind of help and the information that a person has on his/her potential to learn, but he/she has not completed the process yet, ignoring his/her possibilities. Vygotsky (1998) affirms that an interpersonal process (among people) is transformed into an intrapersonal one (of the individual), from a series of events that occur throughout the development itself. In this sense, what *it is not yet* can be possible because of the relationship with all those who circulate in our networks. In order to make this tangible, we need to admit that the creation of 'knowledge-significations' always occurs in a polyphonic, plural and complete process, marked by social interactions that start from the equilibrium between the individual and the collective (Esteban , 2001).

Notes

Traducción al inglés: María Soledad Bonora; Patricia Muñiz; Mercedes Brusadelli (Grupo GIEEC-CIMED-UNMDP)

1 Emeritus Professor of Education at Federal Fluminense University to whom we dedicate this text *(In Memorian).*

2 Research current that is developed in many brasilian universities where we develop our works and in which "research *in/of/with* the dailies" or simply "with the dailies" was mentioned.

3 We believe that, when producing knowledge, we create, in the same way, meaning that supports it, shows the need for its existence, its scientific relevance, etc. These words are written together, in italics and in inverted commas to show that the necessary differences for the development of Modern sciences meant limits to the needs of research with the dailies, in the contemporary ones. Other terms will also be marked like this.

4 The conversations are called 'conversas' by Maturana (2001)- have been considered as the most important locus of research with the dailies. They expose that we are always willing to listen to the other's thought, respectfully, as 'legitimate other' (Maturana, 2001).

5 The perspective in which the dailies are 'practitioners' is in Certeau (2012). Oliveira (2012) agrees with Certeau and proposes these terms exactly as they appear in the text 'practitioners-thinkers'.

6 In the investigations with the dailies the 'conversations' ('conversas' in Portuguese) are understood as the 'locus' of the researches.

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