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THE PRAXIS OF TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH: REVISITING PAULO FREIRE

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DANILO R. STRECK, SANDRO DE CASTRO PITANO, NILDA STECANELA
Connectivity: A Research Principle of Paulo Freire

ABSTRACT *The article explores the notion of connectivity, associated with the work of Paulo Freire, as a principle for research methodology. Research is conceived of as a way of pronouncing the world, where word and action (in Freire's words, the "actionword" (palavração), reading the world and transforming action, are in permanent creative tension. In the first part of the article, connectivity is identified as a dimension of the inter and transdisciplinary character of Paulo Freire's theoretical elaboration. The second part presents three practices that express Paulo Freire's influence in different situations: as a theoretical basis for the elaboration of a reference framework to understand the pedagogies of participation, as inspiration for a collective practice for the elaboration of a municipal atlas, and as a theoretical and methodological orientation to understand teaching practices. The theoretical reflection that follows seeks to synthesis with the concepts of territoriality and contextuality the role of reality lived as a space of inter- and transdisciplinarity. In the conclusion, this reflection is complemented by the conceptualisation of men and women as beings of relations.*

KEYWORDS *Paulo Freire, connectivity, transformation, transdisciplinarity, participation*

1. Introduction

For Paulo Freire, reading the world means pronouncing the world. Word and action come together in an inseparable and dynamic way in saying the authentic word that is also always an act of transformation of the oppressive reality. We find in Paulo Freire's work several ways of expressing

this relationship: theory and practice, action and reflection, saying and doing, among others. Perhaps the concept ‘actionword’ is the one that best expresses the idea that critical transformative action needs to be accompanied by the possibility of expressing oneself regarding the reality to be transformed. Without this word, action becomes mere activism and the word without action is empty.

We assume that research can be understood as a pronunciation of the world, a pronunciation that is always a collective act (Streck 2023). It is in intersubjectivity that human praxis is realised, as action-reflection. The concept of connectivity also comes from Freire’s linguistic repertoire and corresponds to this interrelation in the pronunciation of the world. The fact that Paulo Freire defined himself as a “connective boy” refers not only to his childhood, but to an attitude of dialogue with the other and with the world. We intend to explore the concept of connectivity in the context of inter- and transdisciplinarity which is present in Paulo Freire’s educational and investigative practice. The concept is also part of recent Action Research literature, highlighting the interconnectedness of the researched phenomena (Canto-Farachala/Estensoro 2020; Saines-Diaz 2023).

However, it is worth situating Paulo Freire’s contribution to the methodology of social research in a larger context of Latin America, where the idea of participation in the movement of society for justice, collective construction of knowledge and dialogue are premises shared by researchers from different areas. Orlando Fals Borda, a Colombian sociologist, refers to the disciplinary convergences that animated social scientists at the local, national, and international levels. “We were sociologists, anthropologists, economists, theologians, artists, farmers, educators, and social workers. It was a complex and diverse group, and some of its members had decided to abandon university routines, and to concentrate on alternative search” (Fals Borda 2010: 360). Later in the same text, he mentions still other approaches, sometimes marginal or unexpected, such as medicine, literature and music. All this, combined with community involvement in Fals Borda investigative practices, allows us to speak from a perspective that is both inter- and trans-disciplinary.

Another mandatory reference in this methodological field is the Brazilian popular educator and researcher Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, who, despite his original studies in psychology, develops participative research

with an anthropological perspective. Culture, as the scope in which research is carried out, is a space of relationship, solidarity, and trust for the generation of knowledge capable of understanding the world while acting on it to transform it. It is a difficult leap beyond the security offered by instruments or myself as an objective and empathetic practitioner. Participatory research has its objective substance in the extension of a primary act of trust. “Now I, who used to trust myself in the presence of another, trust the other in my presence. And no longer as a faithful and reliable donor of himself to me, among data, discourses, stories and memories, but as a co-participant of the shared creation of knowledge” (Brandão 2014: 45).

That is, although connectivity has one of its most eloquent expressions in Paulo Freire, it represents the desire for collective work and solidarity that includes research in the struggles for transformation and emancipation. In the first part of the article, we identify connectivity as a dimension of the inter- and transdisciplinary character of Paulo Freire’s theoretical elaboration. Data produced on Paulo Freire’s references, which are included in the book *Paulo Freire: uma arqueologia bibliográfica* (Pitano et al 2019), will be used.

Next, three studies are presented in which Paulo Freire is a reference, and where the search for inter- and transdisciplinarity can be identified. The first one describes an exercise of elaboration of a reference framework to understand the pedagogies of participation in a comparative perspective. The second one deals with the participation of teachers in the elaboration of a geographical atlas of a municipality in southern Brazil. The third study addresses a project in which, inspired by Freire, training and research complement each other in teacher education.

The Brazilian experiences are representative of the attempts to develop a very much needed culture of social and civic participation in the country. The authoritarian inheritance of colonialism, now enhanced by neoliberal policies, deserves attention from all the sectors of society. In this article we focus on education as an instrument for fostering connections to meet the challenges of our times.

Based on the above mentioned practices, we reflect on contextuality and territoriality to make it more explicit that it is in the world, with its concrete realities, that the interconnections between people and knowledge are realised. This argument is reinforced in the final considerations,

where connectivity is associated with the vision of the human being as a being of relations, with himself, with the other and with the world.

2. Paulo Freire and the transdisciplinary theoretical construction

Freire's connective being manifests itself through his epistemological stance, considered as a general conception of knowledge, including scientific knowledge. The dimensions of transdisciplinarity¹ can be perceived throughout his career, both through his writings and through the practice of educator and administrator, at the head of the Municipal Department of Education of São Paulo. The clear position in relation to the interdisciplinarity of the school curriculum can be highlighted as one of the main characteristics of his work as a public administrator, in the period between 1989 and 1991.

It is in the work *A Educação na cidade* that Freire (2006) explains, in detail, his planning, the structure of which was based on interdisciplinary teams. It is worth mentioning that he assumes this same methodological principle since the investigation of the generative themes, in the 1960s, demonstrating the temporal consistency of the interdisciplinary conception as a way of understanding knowledge. When describing the last stage of preparation of the educational programme, which "begins when the researchers, after the decoding in the circles, begin the systematic and interdisciplinary study of their findings", Freire (1987: 114) affirms and ratifies that the generative themes "must be classified in a general framework of sciences, without this meaning, however, that they are seen in the future elaboration of the program, as part of separate departments". Generative themes, for Freire, are topics that emerge from people's reflection on their reality, and function as starting point for pedagogical action.

In Freire, interdisciplinarity is perceived as a methodological process of knowledge construction by the different subjects, based on their relationships with the existential context, with reality, with their culture. And in the search for this dialectical interdisciplinarity process, two political and pedagogical commitments take place: the problematisation of the situation through which reality is revealed and the systematisation of knowledge in an integrated way (Calloni 2002:116).

In dialogue with Adriano Nogueira (1994) in the work *Contribuições da Interdisciplinaridade: para a ciência, para a educação, para o trabalho sindical*, Freire stresses that it is the very search for objectivity that demands the transdisciplinary understanding of reality. The totality of the real, explains Freire (1994: 20), is transdisciplinary: “Because understanding only occurs fully when one looks at the whole, it relates to the entire Real. Therefore, Adriano, I think that transdisciplinarity goes through analysis, which divides the Real. And, however, transdisciplinarity is concluded when the different disciplines re-totalize what has been divided.”

This transdisciplinary dimension of Paulo Freire, who regarded himself as connective since he was a boy (Mafra 2017), was confirmed through an investigation developed on his work, which resulted in a book, *Paulo Freire: uma arqueologia bibliográfica* (Pitano et al. 2019). The authors sought to identify the connections established by Freire with authors, people, institutions, experiences, and currents of thought present in his intellectual trajectory, understanding how they were incorporated, appropriated and articulated, thereby consolidating a set of intellectual roots. Collaborators from a large part of Brazil, scholars of Freire’s thought, participated in the research, and analysed each of the more than five hundred items found in his writings and developed them in the form of entries.

The compilation of Paulo Freire’s bibliographical archaeology reveals some facets that help understand transdisciplinarity in his practice. First of all, the number of names mentioned is striking. Among the more than 500 names identified are classical references from various areas of knowledge, but also the names of people with whom he lived at work or in the family, and with whom he learned to read the world. Besides the physicists Carlos Alfredo Arguello and Albert Einstein, we find Elza, his wife and literacy companion; theological professionals such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, Fernando Cardenal and Dom Hélder Câmara; social movements and political parties, such as the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) and the Workers’ Party (PT), in addition to many other names and institutions from various parts of the world.

Another aspect that deserves to be highlighted is the diversity of areas of knowledge with which he seeks to interpret reality and his action within it. Among the most mentioned areas of knowledge in his works are Literacy, Anthropology, Arts, Biology, Education, People’s Education, Philosophy,

History, Literature, Psychology, Sociology, Linguistics, and Theology. His eclecticism, however, is not instrumental, in the sense of using the ideas of consecrated authors to confirm his beliefs and arguments. As a rule, he engages them in dialogue as subjects who, as he does, propose to pronounce the world. Through dialogue, among encounters and disagreements, he builds his thinking, without ever giving up on authoring. Connectivity, as the concept is understood in this article, refers thus both to the range of the dialogue partners as much as to the respectful way of dealing with their ideas and practices.

3. The search for connectivity in three research practices

Freire's influence on research practices is often not explained or recognised, so much so that in Brazil he rarely appears among the references mentioned in the methodological bibliographies. The experiences reported below show Freirean influence in different situations. In the first case, Paulo Freire is evoked to organise a frame of reference in order to analyse the pedagogies of participation, specifically, the formation of citizenship, in different social and political contexts. In the second case reported, Paulo Freire inspires the collective reading of reality through the elaboration of an atlas of the municipality. The third report presents teachers collectively investigating their practice. In all three accounts, the pronunciation of the world, as a complex and multidimensional entity, challenges both to integrate disciplines and to transcend their limits in a more radical way. These are demands of the very inherent contextuality of knowledge, as we will discuss in the following topic.

3.1 Pedagogies of participation: a frame of reference for comparative and transdisciplinary studies

The project from which this report is derived aims to analyse pedagogical mediations related to participation policies in South Brazil, in dialogue with international experiences in Latin America and Europe. It assumes that the pedagogical dimension is essential for the participation foreseen in public policies and in the discourses for democracy to become effective, and for participation to be established as an educational principle for the formation of citizenship.

In Latin America, particularly Brazil, participation or lack thereof is deeply rooted in the colonial past (Streck 2017; Streck et al. 2017). Paulo Freire referred to this phenomenon as the culture of silence. He identifies two complementary dimensions in this culture. The first one is that it is identified as a historical process and not as destiny or fate. The second dimension refers to the “ideological reproduction of the dominant culture” which implies, on the one hand, a movement of self-protection, self-preservation, and survival, and on the other hand, implies the potential for rebellion (Freire 1977: 70).

In societies with great social inequality, it is difficult to speak of any kind of democratic participation. As well observed by Lynette Schultz (2012), we are faced with a dilemma. The elites have no interest in making room for effective popular participation, as this may jeopardise some of their privileges. On the other hand, the working classes have sufficient reasons to be suspicious of discourses of participation that rarely represent real possibilities for improving their well-being, from material conditions to access to good education and cultural services.

In other words, participation has multiple facets, and its understanding can be better grasped in a transdisciplinary and comparative perspective. We refer to the transdisciplinary character because it is not only about the dialogue between knowledge derived from academic disciplines, but also about the knowledge that Paulo Freire identifies as “of experience made” that characterises the knowledge acquired in everyday life (Freitas 2018: 423). The comparative character, in turn, allows us to apprehend the phenomena in their interconnectedness, as a set of relations, by using the language of Paulo Freire,² as a plot that perceives facts and practices within a weave of threads that give it meaning.

From Paulo Freire, especially from *Pedagogia do oprimido*, three basic dimensions that are constitutive of a pedagogy can be identified. The first is the ethical-political dimension, which for Freire is based on the potential of *being more* in terms of humanisation as a permanent process of becoming. Neither the world nor people have a definitive form, but there are historical conditions that value humanisation or the contrary, namely dehumanisation. Education, respectively pedagogy as an expression of the way education is articulated, is necessarily entangled in this social, cultural and political process.

The second dimension is epistemological. Since education necessarily deals with knowledge, there is no way to avoid at least the attempt to understand what knowledge and knowing are about. Paulo Freire's well-known concept of problematisation, as opposed to banking educational practice, synthesises his vision as a dynamic activity where the subjects dialogically pronounce their world, that is, engage in an action-reflection movement that at the same time transforms awareness and reality.

The third dimension is more properly methodological, which for Freire is not separated from the other dimensions. He repeatedly said that he did not invent a method of literacy, but rather that his intention was always to promote a way to relate to knowledge and the world so that people could assume themselves as subjects. This is how he proposes, for example, the investigation of local generating topics to teach, the replacement of traditional classes with culture circles, the understanding of the teacher as an educator-educatee, and the student as an educatee-educator.

The understanding of the pedagogy of participation presented above allows different points of entry and inputs to each dimension and to the pedagogy of participation in general. For example, a given study might focus on civics as a curricular component, such as maths or geography, but it might also choose social movements as a privileged research locus; it may focus on one age level or try to see political education as a lifelong task. The relevance of trying to integrate each of these particular elements within a broad understanding of participatory pedagogy challenges us to be aware of our own limitations and possibilities when conducting research on the topic in a way that is both transdisciplinary and comparative. Connectivity, in this case, refers to the complexity of citizenship education in a reality of multiple interconnections.

3.2 Participatory elaboration of didactic resources

In response to the growing demand expressed by teachers in the schools of the municipality of Canguçu-RS³, the group "Popular Education: Action and Research" developed a collective project, initiated in 2019, and through participatory research, with the objective of preparing a school atlas for the municipal education network. Focusing on the lack of professional practice with disciplines such as History, Geography, and Sciences, the project sought to promote, in a concomitant manner, teacher

training and the production of teaching resources, based on the principles of popular education, which emphasise the coproduction of knowledge from people's reality with the purpose of transforming this reality in the perspective of social and environmental justice.

As a didactic resource, the atlas has great relevance for teaching and learning school disciplines linked to the human sciences, such as Geography. In the process of building geographic knowledge, the atlas can be used from the early years of Elementary School, through the final years, as well as in High School. It represents a reliable and easy-to-access source and tool for handling of data and characteristics of the municipality, organised according to pedagogical principles. However, due to the local focus of the information contained therein, it is not easily found in schools. While textbooks bring together a broad collection of global and/or national data, the atlas specifically addresses the municipal (local) space, and the context experienced by subjects, students, and teachers. Therefore, its production depends on an effort to seek and gather contextual data and information, capable of portraying, with scientific depth and pedagogical intentionality, the municipality.

From the perspective of popular education, this effort needs to be guided by collective participation and production, involving all interested subjects, and so concretising processes capable of reflecting the effective protagonism of the subjects, whose hands are connected in a common goal.

The research group perceived in this demand a fruitful opportunity to carry out a formative process, linked to the elaboration of didactic material by the subjects themselves. Participation, assumed as theoretical and methodological foundation, encourages local knowledge and practices to be respected throughout the collaborative work, involving university teachers, schoolteachers, and municipal school administrators and technicians of the Municipal Department of Education, as well as scientific initiation fellows and members of the local community, together with about 20 other school teachers from the municipal education network.

In the development of the project, it was sought to adopt some conditions and premises considered fundamental for the participatory research (Franco 2014). Faithful to the principle of connectivity, we aimed to integrate researchers and participants; enhance the cognitive and affective mechanisms of the subjects towards self-training processes; assume

creative flexibility, evolving amid the unforeseen and emerging context; and also allow and stimulate in the subjects the ability to dialogue, both with themselves and with the particularities of their professional practices. These elements allowed us to better understand the characteristics of a participatory research project, while expressing similarities and differences with the academic/systemic traits that permeate and guide traditional research (Thiollent 1988).

One positive impact of the self-elaboration of didactic materials is the importance for teachers and students to better recognise and understand the material produced. That is, the subjects are protagonists: they are active and not just passive recipients of the didactic resource. This type of investigation entails significant learning, promoting both empirical and scientific knowledge. In addition, dealing with diverse groups of people, such as municipal teachers, education secretary, undergraduate students and university professors, makes the work even more complex and comprehensive.

Throughout this experience, access was obtained to issues of multiple interest in the field of teacher training and practice, emerging in the context of the project. For example, there was a significant dialogue between academic training and the area of professional activity, especially among teachers of Geography in the municipality. From an introductory analysis, it was identified that only 41.94 % have a degree in Geography, and 58.064 % have a degree in other areas, most of them (41.94 %) in History. The indexes explain the distortion between teacher training and practice, with emphasis on the area of knowledge analysed, the repercussion of which on professional daily life is complex and problematic.

In addition to the complementary issues to the project, it was noticed that, during the meetings, teachers from the municipal network and administrators brought themes to be included in the atlas, which, however, were not regarded as a priority issue for the researchers, students and professors of the university. Among them were religious communities and aspects of the Pomeranian culture, which symbolically and materially characterises the municipality. The meetings for the preparation of the atlas also allowed conflicts to arise that would probably remain silenced, and restricted to the subjective sphere, especially between teachers and municipal administration.

Approximately 40 teachers from various areas of knowledge, such as History, Geography, Science, Physical Education and Mathematics, participated in the process. It was observed that there was a great deal of alternation in the presence of these professionals, who had to, on their own initiative, seek replacements or exchange work with colleagues to be able to attend the project meetings. On the one hand, the alternation weakened the training proposal by excluding teachers from specific moments of contact with founding principles. On the other hand, it brought together professionals who would hardly have a similar opportunity to improve their knowledge in the area in which, even without training, they are required to work. Additionally, the project provided a different experience for everyone, with emphasis on the approximation of different disciplines, ratifying the connective dimension and promoting inter- and transdisciplinarity

3.3 Research in teacher education as a challenge to ‘think right’

The experience dealt with in this section of the text was developed with five schools of the education network in the municipality of Nova Petrópolis, located in southern Brazil, in the region of Serra do Rio Grande do Sul. It involved 142 elementary school teachers, three pedagogical advisors from the education department and eight teacher trainers from the University of Caxias do Sul.

Through an extension course – held over a school year, organised in collective face-to-face meetings, but also using interactions mediated by the tools of the Moodle Platform – teachers were challenged to educate from the perspective of observation, in order to reflect on what they considered to be the greatest challenges of contemporary education of teaching, and of pedagogical practices developed in the schools where they worked.

The development of the contents of the observation was triggered by a set of mobilising questions that made it possible to carry out a research project on what was experienced in each school, with teachers as researchers of their own practice and educational reality. On the horizon was the intention to promote the development of reflective skills in the teacher, as “teaching requires research,” according to Freire (2014: 32): “Researchers who are teachers do not have a special quality or a way of being that is added to their teaching. Inquiry, search, and research are part of the nature

of their teaching practice. What is needed is that, in their permanent training, teachers perceive and assume themselves as researchers, because they are teachers.”

In their continuing education process, from a training-investigation perspective, in partnership with the University’s teacher trainers, the collective of teachers, and the set of teachers and administrators from each of the five schools, entered a training process based on the premises of action research, of a pedagogical nature and in a critical approach, guided by Franco (2014). For this author, the potencies of action research, here taken as training-investigation, are in the double commitment: with the production of knowledge about the analysed social reality; and with its transformation in an emancipatory sense. Such training paths imply the rigorous construction of knowledge about the reality studied, characterising the dimension of research within the scope of training-investigation. But, at the same time, it implies the active participation of the subjects who live the analysed contexts, highlighting the dimension of formation.

Yet, as Demo (2015) points out, for research at school, used as a pedagogical tool, to become an everyday attitude, it is necessary to deconstruct the archaic idea that only special people, in special contexts, can develop research.

The challenge made to teachers and the collective of their schools to look at the daily life of educational practice and the problems that emerge from it culminated in the identification of a set of complaints, which focused on the following: the blaming of families for abandoning the formative processes of students; the labeling of students as disinterested in school life and lacking perspective for life itself; and the victimisation of the school and teachers for assuming more and more functions of the family, among others.

A long process of understanding the identified culture of complaint was triggered, through a problematisation of the complaints that emerged, in the search for theoretical and empirical arguments to understand the experience, this involving listening to the main actors of the pedagogical relationship, including teachers themselves, students and their families, as well as the school community.

The context of the pedagogical relationship shows the emergence of a close and genuine dialogue between the associated tasks: the collective of

teachers of a public school network and of each specific school; the role that each teacher plays in their discipline or class; and the relationships established with knowledge, with students, community or with the dimensions of what is conceived in the school's educational policies and documents.

As a result and as a process, it was possible to observe a beautiful movement of reflection-action-reflection, of deconstruction of first impressions, not only on the level of orality, but with the use of different languages and supports: in the discussion forums, in the activities developed in face-to-face meetings, in the text of the research project, in the instruments of data construction, in the systematisation of research hypotheses and findings, and in the change of attitude in the pedagogical relationship, to name a few. A progressive, but not linear, process of passing from naive consciousness to criticism, fueled by the exercise of deconditioning the look, and also by the theoretical foundation for interpreting the reality of educational practice, confirms the premises announced by Freire (2014: 39), since "the critical teaching practice, implicit in the right thinking, involves the dynamic, dialectical movement between doing, and thinking about doing".

From the first narratives to the metanarratives built into the process, in addition to the movement of leaving school and daily life soaked with value judgments, all of these were signs of the transversalities that nourish ascending criticalities, not in a dimension of rupture as Freire (2014) warns, but of overcoming, through a pulsating restlessness, guided by a critical curiosity.

The initial expectations, sometimes egocentric, to meeting the needs of each teacher, discipline or school, give way to a process of identification as a teaching network that connects with the meanings produced by the subjects who integrate the pedagogical relation, reinforcing, against alienation, the emancipatory character of transdisciplinarity.

There are important learnings from the process narrated in this experience, given that they promote gradual transitions from conceptions crystallised by the matrix of the traditional school and a teaching centred on teachers to an openness to dialogue, listening to others and to oneself. The distanced look at a practice marked by reproduction, through critical reflection, made it possible to develop another conception of the pedagogical relationship, through which teachers placed themselves as part of it and

not external to it. That said, evidence of connectivity can be observed in at least three dimensions: the first, challenging the naming of the word by the expression of complaints; the second, promoting awareness about the situation of oppression and self-oppression that were encompassed in the complaint and in the blaming of the other (families, students, managers); and the third, connecting with the possibility of liberation from initial conceptions, and so, linked to emancipation.

4. Contextuality and territoriality: the place of interconnections

Contextuality and territoriality are founding concepts that give form and content to the practices of popular education and participatory research methodologies that have Paulo Freire as a reference. Education, although not subject to a single definition, operates in demarcated logics that dialogue with and demand principles such as liberation, autonomy, and empowerment of the subjects. It is an education through which residents of the peripheral communities, the oppressed of the countryside and the city, can come to recognise themselves as historical and political subjects, capable of transforming their reality.

Freire bets on the context-place as a concrete instance of resistance. In his works the word 'context' appears in several forms: social, concrete, theoretical, real, borrowing, local, traditional, historical, life, pedagogical, immediate, cultural. Context can be understood as the situation in which a given dimension occurs, and its set of circumstances, which involves space and time. It refers to the where, and the when, promoting a comprehensive possibility through the analytical attitude of the subject. The research experience for the elaboration of the municipal atlas exemplifies the relevance of the context for the subjects, connecting belonging and their protagonism throughout the process.

Contextuality, in turn, corresponds to the context placed in the form of a condition in relation to something, the contextual condition considered in an argumentative or reflective approach, for example, in relation to a given phenomenon. As a kind of categorisation of the context, it involves the way of making it evident according to the ways in which the subjects understand, appropriate, and signify their own places. A specific existen-

tial situation experienced by the subject is situated in a certain context, and its analysis refers to contextuality as a category for analysis of experience.

Through the participatory exercise, the members of a group can build a new positioning, capable of leading to autonomous decision-making. It is an exercise that increasingly reinforces the skills aimed at transforming social power and the very conjuncture that keeps them oppressed. Thus, “all educational action is a process of discovery, creation and recreation of knowledge” (Jara 1985: 10) in which knowing constitutes an imperative to act, and this, an imperative to transform.

The territory used as a stage for political actions reveals different natures of social relations and is also linked to the experience of citizenship: “it is in the territory as it currently is that citizenship takes place as it is today, that is, incomplete” (Santos 2014: 18). In unequally served territories, whether rural or urban, this incompleteness of citizenship demands political action in organisational and/or spontaneous forms, which are configured from pedagogical initiatives illuminated by popular education.

In the context of this study, the educational actions articulated in the territories, based on the utopias that also constitute them, entail the conditions of possibilities (or denial of these possibilities) for the elaboration of the future. It is in this field of forces and exercise of powers that the announcement of another future is made, woven by denunciations, resistance and solidarity. After all, the territory is a place of dialogue and participation, of the protagonism of the subjects who live in it, forming it and being formed by it. Therefore, it is crucial to change the use and management of the territory, aiming at the creation of a new type of citizenship that “offers itself as respect for culture and as the search for freedom” (Santos 2014: 18).

Considering the context means to include all the conditions that interfere with a phenomenon, seeking to understand it in its radicality. The actions of the subjects, as “beings in a situation” (Freire 1987: 101) reflect the complex conditions of their context. To consider it as an analytical dimension is to categorise experiences, and their character of contextuality. In turn, territoriality more specifically involves material attributes and power relations related to a given space, the territory. As territories reflect specific spaces, inserted in larger territories, appropriated and used

under certain conditions of power, they emerge as a fundamental reference for popular education. As with the context, to consider the territory as an analytical dimension of a phenomenon is to assume it as a category, as a condition of the territories based on the relations that constitute and condition it, that is, its territoriality. It requires from the researcher the ability to establish and explore the human and environmental connections that make up a territory.

5. Final considerations

In this text we seek to identify the inter- and transdisciplinary character in Paulo Freire's work based on research methodologies inspired by him. We find in the notion of connectivity an adequate metaphor to express the dialogical character of pedagogical and investigative action, both inseparable in their praxis. For Freire, teaching and research are part of the same gnoseological cycle: "There is no teaching without research and there is no research without teaching" (Freire 2014: 32). Teaching without research means transforming education into a mechanical act, a simple repetition of what is already known, while research without teaching means disregarding its social and pedagogical role in the production, dissemination, and application of new knowledge.

Connectivity, in turn, refers to the conception of human being that Freire develops throughout his personal and professional trajectory. In *Extensão ou comunicação?* he confirms the "obviousness" – as he refers to the fact – that is at the centre of his understanding of the human being: "(...) that man, as a being of relations, challenged by nature, transforms it as his work, and that the result of this transformation, which separates from man, constitutes his world" (Freire 1975: 65). Thus, the world of culture, which extends to the world of history, is created. Then, in the same text, he explains that "intersubjectivity or intercommunication" are primordial characteristics of the cultural and historical world.

The fact of being challenged by nature, however, does not imply a utilitarian view of it. In *À sombra desta mangueira* this nature is poetically described as his first world. "My first world was the backyard of my house,

with its mango trees, fronded cashew trees almost kneeling on the shaded ground, jackfruit trees and *barrigudeiras*. Trees, colors, smells, fruits that, attracting several birds, gave themselves to them as space for their songs” (Freire 1995: 24). That is, connectivity is not exhausted in the intersubjective relationship between a human ‘I’ and a human ‘you’, but encompasses relationships with elements of nature, with memories of the past and with dreams of a more just world.

From this also derives the fact that the act of knowing involves the person as a multifaceted and complex whole. In reaction to criticisms that imply a lack of rigour and that his language is too affective, he argues that there is not a schematic and meticulous part and an inaccurate one that simply wants the common good of the world. “I know with my whole body, feelings, passion. Reason too” (Freire 1995: 18). This integrative way of knowing is represented by the frequency of the aesthetic as part of the investigative processes. Music, stories and movements are part of the investigative process and complement a view that both integrates specific knowledge of the disciplines and transcends them.

From Freire we learn that research and transformation go hand in hand. We also learn that transformation has an ethical and political direction towards social justice, solidarity, and a respectful relation with nature. Transformative research is a collective and dialogical process of action-word or word-in-action to pronounce one’s world to make it, as he puts it at the end of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1987), a place where it is “less difficult to love”.

- 1 In Freire, we don’t have a theoretical and practical distinction between inter- and transdisciplinarity. In this article we prefer the use of transdisciplinarity, using interdisciplinarity in contexts where the author himself refers to interdisciplinarity.
- 2 In the book “Pedagogy of Hope”, Paulo Freire (2008) explores the metaphor of the plot to understand personal experiences, the social, historical, and cultural context, and educational practice.
- 3 Canguçu is a municipality in the south of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, which has a population of about 56,000 people (IBGE, 2018), distributed in a territorial area of 3,526,253 km², with an extensive rural area. The municipal education network has 35 schools, of which 25 are distributed in the rural area (Elementary School) and 10 in the urban area, with a total of 5,500 students enrolled (2019), taught by 515 teachers.

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ABSTRACT *Der Artikel untersucht den Begriff der connectivity (Konnektivität oder Verbundenheit), der mit der Arbeit von Paulo Freire verbunden ist, als ein methodologisches Forschungsprinzip. Forschung wird als eine Art und Weise verstanden, die Welt auszusprechen, wobei Wort und Handlung (in Freires Worten: das „Handlungswort“ (palavração), das die Welt liest und die Handlung transformiert) in einer permanenten kreativen Spannung stehen. Im ersten Teil des Artikels wird die connectivity als eine Dimension des inter- und transdisziplinären Charakters der theoretischen Ausarbeitung von Paulo Freire herausgearbeitet. Im zweiten Teil werden drei Praktiken vorgestellt, die den Einfluss von Paulo Freire in verschiedenen Situationen zum Ausdruck bringen: als theoretische Grundlage zum Verständnis der Pädagogik der Partizipation, als Inspiration für eine kollektive Praxis zur Ausarbeitung eines Stadtatlases und als theoretische und methodologische Orientierung zum Verständnis der Unterrichtspraxis. Die anschließende theoretische Reflexion zielt darauf ab, die Rolle der gelebten Realität als Raum der Inter- und Trans-*

disziplinarität mit den Konzepten der Territorialität und der Kontextualität zu synthetisieren. In der Schlussfolgerung wird diese Überlegung durch die Konzeptualisierung von Männern und Frauen als Beziehungswesen ergänzt.

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