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GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT AND FIELD OF POSSIBILITIES FOR THE GEOGRAPHICAL READING OF YOUTH

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Abstract

This article aims to bring the concepts of geographic context and field of possibilities into the public debate, as contributions of geography to the reading of youth experiences. It is based on an extensive bibliographical survey in the field of geography and sociology written in English, where there is a long tradition of addressing youth. From these contributions and in tension with the ways in which the relationship between youth and place has been thought about in the Anglo-Saxon world, the text first differentiates itself from unpromising approaches and then seeks to delineate the two concepts in an inseparable way. Finally, it presents a reflection on method, to think about how the geographic context and the field of possibilities in which young people weave their lives can be studied and described.

Keywords: Geographical Context, Field of Possibilities, Youth Experiences.

Resumo / Resumen

CONTEXTO GEOGRÁFICO E CAMPO DE POSSIBILIDADES PARA A LEITURA GEOGRÁFICA DAS JUVENTUDES

O artigo tem como objetivo trazer para o debate público os conceitos de contexto geográfico e campo de possibilidades, como contribuições da geografia para a leitura das experiências de juventude. Parte de extenso levantamento bibliográfico no campo da geografia e da sociologia de língua inglesa, onde há uma mais longa tradição de tematização da juventude. Com base nestas contribuições e em tensão com as formas como se tem pensado a relação entre juventudes e lugar no mundo anglo-saxônico, o texto primeiro se diferencia de abordagens pouco promissoras e depois busca delinear os dois conceitos de forma indissociável. Por fim, traz uma reflexão de método, para pensar no modo como podemos estudar e descrever o contexto geográfico e o campo de possibilidades em que os jovens tramam suas vidas.

Palavras-chave: Palavras-chave:Contexto Geográfico, Campo de Possibilidades, Experiências de Juventude.

CONTEXTO GEOGRÁFICO Y CAMPO DE POSIBILIDADES PARA LA LECTURA GEOGRÁFICA DE LA JUVENTUD

El artículo pretende traer al debate público los conceptos de contexto geográfico y campo de posibilidades, como aportes de la geografía a la lectura de las experiencias de la juventud. Parte de un extenso estudio bibliográfico en el campo de la geografía y la sociología en inglés, donde existe una mayor tradición de tematización de la juventud. A partir de estos aportes y en tensión con las formas en que se ha pensado la relación entre juventud y lugar en el mundo anglosajón, el texto primero se diferencia de enfoques poco prometedores y luego busca delinear ambos conceptos de manera inseparable. Al final, trae una reflexión sobre el método, para pensar una manera en que se puede estudiar y describir el contexto geográfico y el campo de posibilidades en el que los jóvenes trazan sus vidas.

Palabras-clave: Contexto Geográfico, Campo de Posibilidades, Experiencias Juveniles.

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INTRODUCTION

Age may have been the last social marker to gain some visibility in Brazilian geography and has not yet received the same attention as racial and gender markers. Although this is also true for English-language geography (Valentine, 2003; Punch, 2020), especially in the United Kingdom, the field of geography of youth is more consolidated, with a series of books and articles published, both in the journal Children's Geography and in several other journals such as Environment and Planning, Cultural Geography, Place, Gender and Culture, etc.

The raw material to produce this text comes from bibliographical research in these journals, where we sought to understand how the geography of youth in the Anglo-Saxon world has reflected on the relationships between young people and place. The journal Youth Studies was also part of the survey, where our attention was focused on the way in which the spatial dimension has appeared in the sociology of youth. Our purpose was to seek support for the development of the concepts of geographic context and field of possibilities, as a contribution from geography to the reading of youth experiences in the contemporary world, especially in the Global South, considering that, on the "dark side of modernity", youth studies need to be more materialistic, sensitive to spatial differences and to neocolonialism (Cooper, Swartz and Mahali, 2019).

Through these concepts, we want to understand how individuals, in their geographic situation, places they often go, in their circulation, in their spaces of sociability, places of formal and informal education, in their encounters, in the lives that connect them, are affected by and participate in what is circulating more broadly in society, responding to the impositions on their space and time, in the "process of becoming", throughout the course of life.

This is our basic geographical question, and although it is not necessarily an original question in the geography of youth in the Anglo-Saxon world (although not posed in the same terms), we believe that the field still lacks a broader theoretical elaboration that could offer a common vocabulary for the verticalization of reflection (Smith and Mills, 2019; Valentine, 2018)[1] and produce more satisfactory answers. Part of this gap stems from the fact that the field, instead of producing its own theories, has resorted to the macro sociological theories of the new modernity (Valentine, 2018).

FIRST APPROXIMATION

As a first approximation, context derives from the Latin "contextu" which means fabricated, past participle of "contextere", which means to weave, to intertwine. In its most modern sense, context is defined as "a set of interrelated circumstances from whose fabric a certain fact or situation can be inferred…".

According to the dictionary meaning, context refers to a set of circumstances that lead to a certain event, statement or idea that can be fully understood and assessed, that is, as a field of possibilities. Thus, context and field (circumstances) appear, subtly, as synonyms or at least as inseparable, although there seems to be a certain primacy of context over field. And the resulting event is like a final result, without having any impact on the context where it originated.

In the scientific field, it is also possible to find the term circulating in texts from other social sciences and humanities. Who has never heard of historical context (Barbosa and Rego, 2017), or social context, or even that in order to understand a text or discourse it is necessary to know its context (Grillo, 2023)? However, in the survey we conducted, we found a limited set of texts focusing on the debate about the meanings and significance of the word context. In other words, although its use is widespread, the term is rarely problematized.

An exception is Plowman (2016), who seeks to conceptually define context to think about the situationality of research on interactions between children and new technologies. Based on communication studies and computer science, the author refuses to think of context as synonymous with situation, setting or location, as separate from the subjects and their interactions, that is, as a simple container for interaction, which remains unchanged despite it. For him, being contextual is both a property of objects and individuals, and a result of their interaction. Thus, the scope of contextual characteristics cannot be defined in advance and outside the interaction that constitutes it. It is not

something that is simply there, but is actively produced and maintained in the course of activity. It is something that people do.

For the notion of geographic context that we are seeking to construct, these initial ideas offer some guidelines that point both to directions to avoid and circumvent, as well as promising paths for developing the argument.

First, the Latin meaning of the term, linked to the act of weaving and interweaving, is particularly important to our argument, as it favors the use of the metaphor of weaving, both to think of context as emerging from the relationship between warp and weft, and to think of our work of narrating geographic contexts as a craftsmanship of tracing threads, forming unusual figures in the weaves between biographies and fields of possibilities.

Second, we also reject approaches of exteriority and fixity to think of context as inseparable from action and interaction. However, we differentiate ourselves, or at least add to this reading, the notion of field of possibilities, as a kind of dialectical pair, which allows us to capture the historicity and situationality of the geographical context in movement.

Furthermore, when we think of a concept of geographic context for the field of geography of youth, to follow life courses, we diffuse the notion into a plurality of singular contexts and fields, produced by different social subjects, whose overall vision would be given by an inductive and at the same time dialectical reasoning, between the singular and the universal (Lukács, 2018), as we will bring out at the end.

Our concepts also seek to be "artifacts" appropriate to our time and space. We think of concepts that can reveal how fields of possibilities materialize in the biographical trajectories of young Brazilians who, in the midst of a "turning point" (Telles, 2006), with growing uncertainties experienced at this stage of life regarding the directions they will take, are being disputed between the world of precarious work, conservative churches, the world of crime and youth cultures that articulate some resistance (Turra Neto and Alves, 2022; Marques and Turra Neto, 2024). What makes certain life trajectories possible and makes others unfeasible? How do some young people, in the field of social interaction, make important connections that allow them to escape the clutches of the far right that is growing in the country, manifested in social media, but also in religious spaces and even in schools? And how can we reverse this harmful influence, considering that the values propagated by this political trend find fertile ground among those who feel left behind in the face of accelerated social and economic change?

These are questions that drive the need for a theoretical elaboration, which offers a possible interpretation of this entanglement between a world in turmoil and individual biographies, charting their spatialities, but which can also be a guide for practice, which offers us elements to participate, from a geographical perspective, in the dispute for youth.

In this effort to develop the concept, we will differentiate geographic context from concepts with which it could easily be confused, such as place and geographic situation, as well as problematize the idea of "place effects", which is one of the ways in which the relationship between youth and place has been thought of. Next, we present the conception of youth that guides our conceptual construction. Only then do we present the ideas of geographic context and field of possibilities in an articulated manner. Finally, we have some considerations of a methodological nature, as developments of the conceptual proposal.

WHAT IS NOT CONTEXT OR UNPROMISING APPROACHES.

Does the geographic context have a local scale? Do neighborhoods and places of residence define what the geographic context is for youth experiences? Is the geographic context just another name for a geographic concept that already exists, that of place?

Perhaps from a perspective that takes it as an unproblematic given, the answer would be yes, the geographic context is of the order of the proximal, the localized or the place (in a more sociological sense of the term). In this approach, the place would be an already given context that serves as a means and condition for the relationships that one seeks to study, which would, to a certain extent, result from

it. The challenge consists of drawing a picture of the historical moment, in terms of economic, political, urban and local life changes, from which one could deduce the constraints on the processes of transition to adulthood and even on the intersectionality between gender, class and race in the lives of young people (McDowell, 2002; Nayak, Bonner-Thompson, 2022). In this approach, the place would practically be reduced to a given, a limit that constrains identities and actions, something that is imposed on the subjects who inhabit it.

The influence of Bourdieu's thinking on this way of thinking about the relationship between young people and place is clear, given his expression "place effect". For Bourdieu (2008), there is an inherent violence in the order of things, a form of action of social structures through their inscription in physical spaces. An idea that sees young people living in impoverished areas as prisoners of a "collective misery" that would weigh on them as a "fatality". In these areas, "... the miseries of each individual are redoubled by all the miseries arising from the coexistence and cohabitation of all the poor and above all, perhaps, from the effect of destiny that is inscribed in belonging to a stigmatized group" (Bourdieu, 2008, p. 85 - emphasis added). Young people in these conditions would have difficulty breaking the cycle of disadvantage, tending to reproduce the miseries of previous generations (MacDonald, Shildrick and Furlong, 2020).

A problem immediately appears in this approach: the assumption that the lives of young people are locally circumscribed, practically anchored to the place. A mistaken strategy of location that, by situating them in their places of residence, in order to be able to study them, ends up confusing this location with the total context of life, losing sight of the mobility, the transits and formative processes that occur in many other places, or the forces that cross the place and that make the experience of youth a multi-localized experience (Clifford, 2000).

The idea of "place effect" has the merit of approaching broader social and economic changes from the specific colors of the place and helps to think about how localized young people, depending on their gender, race, and social class, will be affected differently by them (Holloway, 1998; McDowell, 2002). Considering the variation of "place effect" depending on social markers would, however, lead to another problematic idea, that some subjects would be more susceptible to being affected by localized structural factors than others, and that some would have more power of agency than others. For those who are "powerless" to act, the place weighs like an inexorable destiny.

Another problematic assumption underlying the effects of place is that it is up to young people to simply respond and act, without having any control over these, or in whose composition and existence they have no participation. The subjects' capacity for agency is seen as what will free them from the context, not as what constructs, weaves, mobilizes, and reworks it for action.

We believe that the geographic context can be of the proximal order, certainly involving it, but not necessarily limited to it, either because it is not the result of unidirectional influences on individuals from the place of residence, the neighborhood, or the city, or because it can also be woven into the transits and wanderings, through the circulation and even migration of young people. In this sense, the geographic context can also become multi-localized, without defined borders, and cannot be delimited a priori in a neighborhood, a city or even a region. To use an image from Deleuze and Guattari (1995), the geographic context would be of the order of the rhizome, not of the tree - a branching web of growth lines that ebb and flow with each attempt to be delimited.

This is not to deny that "place effect" exists, but rather to think of it as just a part of what could make up an initial field of possibilities through which young people weave their means of existing in the world. Thus, if there are effects at work, they do not always remain the same and are reconfigured by the actions of the subjects in their life courses and may not only be from one place, but from several.

The idea of "place effect", therefore, reflects the way in which place is operationalized in a certain sociological tradition and for us it may constitute a trap that we must avoid[2]. The concepts of geographic context and field of possibilities that we are imagining may be more promising for thinking about the entangled webs that constitute and are constituted by youth experiences, without limiting them to a locality.

A CONCEPT OF YOUTH FOR THE GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT.

In a previous text (Turra Neto, 2015), we argued that the full experience of youth is related to two powerful images that have been historically linked to this age and phase of life and that have ended up defining it: on the one hand, a phase of life of preparation for the future and, on the other, of enjoying life together with other young people. It is in this ambiguous temporal orientation (to the future and to the present) that the youth experiences of specific young people are developed.

Although these images appeal to young people of all social classes, in different places, their full realization has still been denied to a significant portion of young people. If this way of experiencing youth seems to be a widespread condition in wealthy western countries (Wyn and Woodman, 2006), perhaps in Brazil it is still a privilege of class, gender and race. Our concept of youth, therefore, carries within itself an evaluative dimension. And, as geographers, sensitive to space, we can say that such an experience has its spatial variations, being unevenly distributed between places, so that there are young people who need to move between spaces, as a way of accessing what appears to them as images of youth. Images that are globalized from the urban world of the Global North (Farrugia, 2016; Brown, Scrase, Ganguly-Scrase, 2017; Forsberg, 2019).

Our concept of youth is in tune with those authors who defend a more holistic perspective on youth, which brings together the economic approaches - of transition (oriented towards the future) - and the cultural - of youth cultures (oriented towards the present). Authors recognize that youth groups connect young people's lives to one another and have the potential to trigger turning points in biographical trajectories (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006), as well as being important in the constitution of a certain cultural capital (Hörschelmann and Schäfer, 2005; 2007). Groups can lead to networks of relationships in which information circulates, whether regarding access to jobs, prospects for continuing studies and choosing careers, but also to prolonged engagements with leisure cultures, informal and even illegal activities (Gunter and Watt, 2009).

Studies that focus solely on transition processes seek to understand how young people negotiate aspirations and future projects amidst the circumstances in which they are inserted, with the resources they have available, in the neighborhoods in which they live. Ultimately, the research seeks to understand the weight of social structures, and even the “place effect” (Bourdieu, 2008), in the constitution of their biographies and what their power of agency is.

As we have already said, if such structures have not ceased to act, it is very likely that they do not act today in the same way as they did throughout the 20th century. It would be "... a mistake to define class, or gender and race, as processes that remain stable", which is why it is important to ask how such markers of inequality are acting in contemporary conditions (Woodman and Wyn, 2015, p. 1408).

In this same vein, Coffey and Farrugia (2014) argue that the actor cannot be seen either as having agency, or as a passive result of structural forces, since agency is produced in the course of practices, in the face of the constraints encountered. The biographies of young people, their identities and decisions are shaped by and contribute to a constant production of their social environment. There is no prior structure on which there would or would not be possible agency. Structure and agency co-constitute themselves in the process.

Furthermore, greater sensitivity to spatial variations shows that the social structures in which young people become or will become active depend on where they are. In other words, it is in the face of ongoing social changes in a situated reality that certain social structures become more visible and imposing for certain young people, but may remain obscure for others (O'Connor, 2015).

Thus, if we agree that it would be a mistake to predefine class, race and gender as stable structures, since institutional adjustments, public policies, economic and political changes, can reposition or make the structures operate differently in relation to the past (Woodman and Wyn, 2015), it would also be a mistake to imagine the geographic context as a structured set, formed by a tangle of localized economic, political and cultural processes, which would explain by themselves the spatial practices, projects and life trajectories of young people. Young people today, with more information circulating, without linear and predefined transitions, without structural determinations having the power to format all dimensions of life and without places being bearers of an inexorable destiny, participate in

the constitution of both their geographic context and their field of possibilities. Both concepts must be open to this "relational fluidity", to better encompass the global experience of contemporary youth - considering transition, sociability and economic and cultural perspectives.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT AND FIELD OF POSSIBILITIES FOR THE STUDY OF YOUTH EXPERIENCES.

If context is a web woven by the actions of social subjects themselves in their life courses, what would be its constitutive elements, those that provide the initial warp for life courses to be woven and produce designs of particular geographic contexts?

The answer to this question presents us with a dilemma, because if we agree that structure and agency co-constitute themselves in the process, then tracing the structuring axes as a prior warp for the web of lives could be a waste of time, because it would not be possible to know in advance which threads of the warp will be articulated by the instituting action of context or which will impose themselves on the subjects' actions. On the other hand, if the definition of geographic context should be guided by our conception of youth, between transition and sociability, we have here a guideline for thinking about the concept capable of capturing it. In this sense, we believe that there is an initial and irrefutable raw material common to social subjects, from which they plot their lives.

A first set of factors can be considered as "spatial order", or spatiality. Based on Harvey's (2015) conceptualization of space, it is possible to say that this order involves geographic position and geographic situation, a question of absolute space and relative space. However, the geographic context would be a question of relational space. Something that contains and is defined in its relationship with others. Processes do not simply occur in geographic space, but define their spatial framework. For the author, the important thing is to consider the dialectical relationship in which relational space, as well as context, does not dispense with geographic position and situation, without being confused with them.

Thus, geographic position and situation offer an entire structure of spatial order, with location, materials in flux, proximities and distances, accessibility, with the roughnesses inherent to the social production of space (Santos, 2006). An order that young people manage, establishing relationships of mobility, identifications and differentiations, connections and ruptures, according to the resources they have, the social markers they carry and the ways in which, throughout their lives, they are more or less mobilized by these markers, at the same time as they reconfigure how they relate to this very order. The factors of spatial order offer, among other things, the initial "where" in which the field of the possible is constituted for its geographic context.

The spatial order is also made up of demographic factors and the unequal distribution of resources between places, which mean that small municipalities, for example, are experienced by young people as places of isolation, lack of exposure to modernity and even a limited experience of youth, in comparison with metropolitan urban spaces, from which their references emanate (Brown, Scrase, Ganguly-Scrase, 2017; Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison, 2014; Farrugia, 2016).

Another set of factors is that of broader structural forces, which become singular when they come into existence in a specific time and space, that is, an "economic order" (which refers to the set of productive forces that organize the local labor market) and a "social order" (which reverberates in the differences and inequalities of individuals in a localized "social space").

Among the broader structural forces, the participation of schools and educational and curricular policies is undeniable, with their "abstract universalism" (Nayak and Bonner-Thompson, 2022), which imposes itself on localized young people from their earliest childhood, proposing values and aspirations for the future, but also producing stigmas and marginalization (Gulczyńska, 2019). Schools, however, do not exhaust all the ways in which the state participates in the institution of youth in society and in its variation between places. There are a series of norms and public policies or even other cultural and educational institutions that make up the set of factors of "political order".

Schools, together with the family and the "communities" of the adult world (neighborhoods, churches, sports associations, etc.), place young people in a "generational order" that is also sensitive to

variation between places. It acts as another thread in the initial fabric that is imposed on young people, in their aspirations for the future and in their practices of sociability, stimulating certain youth groups and future projects, while distrusting or condemning many others (Hopkins and Pain, 2007; Visser, 2020).

The youth groups present in public spaces, in online networks, in meeting times and spaces, are factors of the "order of sociability"[3], which also take part in this initial fabric. Between proximity and distance, with their potential for engagement, for the creation of relational networks, as an unfolding of their previous socialization processes and with consequences for their relationships in institutional and family spaces and their aspirations in the present and future (Winton, 2005; Gunter and Watt, 2009), the youth groups present in the horizon of possibilities of young people participate in the creation of their geographic contexts and can promote "turning points" and even ruptures in relation to their trajectories.

(Hutchison, 2011).

In short, we can think of the geographic context as a "polyrhythmic set", in the sense of Lefebvre (2023), formed by these diverse intertwined orders, with their processes, elements, structures of disparate speeds of movement, between repetitions and differences, between the cyclical and the linear, the macro and the micro. Rhythms that can even carry arrhythmias.

In this polyrhythmic set, the space produced has a different duration from that of other social structures. As a result of processes and modes of action of the structures, spatial forms carry intentions into the present and future that may no longer be acting (or at least not in the same way) in the "social space" (Bourdieu, 2008). In other words, old modes of functioning of social structures continue to act through space, which in a past moment gave them a certain materiality (Santos, 2006).

It is with this world, which is presented as anteriority, that biographical trajectories will enter into flux (Latour, 2012). Ultimately, therefore, the geographic context is the result of the way in which the subjects, from this initial warp that stands before their horizon of possibilities, construct and order the world for themselves, negotiating and extending the field of the possible, while at the same time being ordered by it. As Ingold (2012) states, the world opens up to its inhabitants; to inhabit it is to join the process of its formation. The geographical context is the result of the way in which young people joined the process of forming the world, constituting it for their youth experience.

And if this polyrhythmic set is not static, it is important to reinforce its multi-localized and extroverted character. As we have already said, the unequal distribution of resources in geographic space forces young people to move and even migrate (Langevang and Gough, 2009; Cooper, 2023; Forsberg, 2019). Those young people who live in a geographically marginal place tend to imagine their futures, at least in part, as extroverted, in a subjectivity that articulates multiple spaces (Farrugia, 2014; Farrugia, Smyth and Harrison, 2014). Therefore, the geographic context must be thought of as leaking in multiple directions, in movement and with articulations at various scales.

This is the kaleidoscopic image of what is the open and polyrhythmic geographic context, and if we have here the initial threads of a warp as an opening of a field of possibilities as a starting point for biographical plots, we can then ask the question of how we think about the dialectical relationship between context and field, which we consider as inseparable.

A possible answer comes from thinking through assemblage, as developed, among others, by Delanda (2005) and Delanda and Cox (2015). These authors, when discussing Deleuze's ideas on spaces of extensivity and intensities and actual and virtual, point to the idea of "space of possibilities", an important interpretative key, both to advance from Velho's (2003) initial ideas of field of possibilities, and to think about its relationship with the geographic context.

Space of possibilities is a realist idea, which replaces explanations based on general, immutable and transcendent laws of nature. It is closely anchored in the possible states of phenomena, dynamics and processes that already exist. It is a virtuality that explains how something emerges, for every entity has emergent properties, which grow and gain existence from interactions.

Anderson et al (2012), based on Delanda, differentiate the properties and capabilities of the components of the assemblage. The former are given and known, the latter are open and unpredictable. Capabilities are related to the properties of the elements in interaction, but are not reduced to them, since they also depend on the properties of the other elements. Therefore, they cannot be known a priori, since

they depend on the game of interaction in order to be effective. The world is open and we cannot say in advance what will emerge from current interactions, since there are multiple levels of emergence.

The concept of space of possibilities reveals the difference between properties and capacities, between extensivities and intensities. Both are real, but properties are always current, while capacities/intensities are only current when they are exercised; most of the time they are "virtual" (potential), they point to the becoming. The idea of virtuality is useful for expressing the real existence of the field of possibilities, as intensities that emanate from the elements of the set, but that are not yet current and may even never become so. An existence that is not yet being exercised and, in being so, produces the geographic context and extends the (new) field of the possible.

In these terms, the field of possibilities has nothing transcendent about it. It is a space of intensities. Possibilities function as "attractors" that guide real/current processes toward some result (Delanda, 2005). The field of possibilities is always immanent, based on the current geographic context, which, in turn, is permanently updated by the courses of life. Geographical context, field of possibilities and life courses thus form a trialectic, a plot in permanent formation[4].

CONTEXT AND METHOD

In terms of method, we return to the etymology of the term, where the metaphor of the plot is found, which inspires us to think about how the context can be studied and narrated. We believe that the context appears, takes shape and is brought into existence as it is described. In this sense, when we follow life trajectories in their plots with the world, we order the entanglement between the warp and the threads of the biographies, producing the plots in images of context. The description as a narrative plot does not simply present what it describes, be it places, landscapes or geographic contexts, but also participates in their constitution, that is, "...the very act of describing configures geographies" (Zusman, 2014, p. 145).

In the same direction, both Latour's actor-network theory (2012) and assemblage thinking avoid situating the explanation in a dominant and prior logic, external to the interactions that constitute the set and its movement. This does not mean renouncing the role of socio-spatial structures, but understanding how they function in action and in the here and now (Richmond, 2018). A structure that is at the same time ephemeral (Ingold, 2012) and that can only be achieved as a moment of movement and as a provisional set.

These propositions are in line with Martuccelli's (2004; 2023) proposed method of the sociology of the individual. Like this author, we believe that the investigative process must reach the general "structural order" in action at a certain time and place. In this sense, the configuration of common geographic contexts for different biographical trajectories can be placed as a horizon, as a point of arrival for the investigative process. For Martuccelli (2004), the objective of the research should not be to collect different cases. Only the set of biographical trajectories accessed by the research can offer a general picture of what, at a certain time and space, was a field of possibilities for the production of life contexts. The search for a general order in what is common to the majority cannot overshadow, on the other hand, the singularities that escape, after all, order is also made of what is external to it.

In Martuccelli (2023), there is a certain perspective that looks at what happened, or what led to this point, a movement that leaves traces and that can be reconstructed. And this will be possible and even desirable to be done when empirical studies address generations of the past, to reconstruct past fields and contexts.

However, to capture the lives of today's young people, in their movement to envision futures, outline projects and put them into practice, Ingold's (2012) proposal is more worthwhile, which proposes a reading close to that of the artist and the craftsman, who gather and combine different materials, redirect their flows and try to anticipate what may emerge. The path of the method, in this case, is to look forward, to the lines of becoming.

It is in this sense that, when we guide the research to reach the contexts and fields that act or acted and were constituted, we are working with a "concrete thought", in the sense of Lukács (2018), first by the researcher in its initial weaving, then the subjects, when narrating their lives, begin to compose with the researcher their singular plots, and, finally, by the thought of synthesis, as a relative universality for

a certain time and space. Thus, fields and contexts, whether individual or common and more general, are plots created by many hands.

CONCLUSION

The strong influence of sociology in the field of youth studies tends to place the explanation in a "place" other than space, even when it comes to the work of geographers. Therefore, there is a lack of not only greater attention to the spatiality of the youth condition, but also a theory of spatiality or, more specifically, the geography of youth, so that we are not always dependent on hegemonic sociological theories. We need to build concepts, a common repertoire, without this obviously closing off the geography of youth to dialogue in multiple directions.

We avoided approaching context as something external that would explain the experiences of youth in time and space. An idea that the context would be a scenario for action, whose design is made in advance in order to be able to trace the specificities of economic, racial, gender relations, in groups of friends, with the family, which affect transition processes and practices of sociability. An approach that reduces geography to the mere location of social phenomena, with the place where they occur having little role in the explanation, beyond singling them out.

We believe that the concepts of geographic context and field of possibilities are a contribution from geography that not only provides anchoring and concrete specificity to the various orders of factors in the fabric, but also brings the very materiality and immateriality of the space produced as a central explanatory dimension.

We also believe that this is also a contribution of youth geography to human geography in general, proposing the expansion of its conceptual tools for reading the world. A conceptual alternative, based on our science, to face the challenge of addressing the way in which the entire world is present and realized in individual existences.

Finally, it is possible to say that there are still many blind spots, inconsistencies and unresolved issues in the proposal that we bring to the public debate, such as the question of how concepts could reveal and criticize socio-spatial differences and inequalities. Certainly, empirical research will be able to test these ideas, and open debate may advance or even reject them as a good path to a valid interpretation of contemporary youth.

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NOTES

1 - It is of note that of the material selected for the production of this text, which includes more than 70 scientific articles, only a small part is dedicated to reflection and theoretical work. The vast majority of the texts (50 articles) refer to empirical research, mainly case studies. Of the 24 theoretical articles found, only 7 were in journals in the field of geography.

2- Used in the geographical tradition, place gains other meanings, such as Massey's “global sense of place” (2008), without being confused with the concept of geographical context. This debate goes beyond the scope of this text.

3- Although they can be situated in the social order, the generational and sociability orders are highlighted as being central to the experience of youth.

4- I thank Célio José dos Santos for drawing my attention to this aspect.

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