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Learning Activity and the "Schools for the Citizenry" of Porto Alegre in Brazil¹

Within this presentation, I do not wish to describe some exotic aspect of the topic, nor am I interested in promoting notions which relate Brazil to the Third World, carnival festivities, Samba or Olodum. Instead, I would like to introduce you to the unique experiment of „Escola Cidadã“, "Schools for the Citizenry" in Porto Alegre.

Situated along the heavily polluted Guaíba river in Southern Brazil, Porto Alegre is a Brazilian town with a population of about 2 million people. In 1940, there were still less than 300,000 inhabitants. Today, Porto Alegre is the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. At the present time, there are about 250 *favelas* in Porto Alegre with about 400,000 people. The majority of the students of the public school system grow up within this context.

Since 1989, Porto Alegre has been governed by the "Workers Party" (Partido dos Trabalhadores / PT) which, upon assuming government responsibilities, immediately introduced the practice of "Orçamento Participativo", a directly democratic budgeting program.

This form of direct democracy or, better, political democracy has completely changed the public organizations and institutions and their relationship to the community.²

Within this context of political democracy, the unique experiment of "Schools for the Citizenry" was initiated. At the moment, this involves 90 public schools with a total of 67,000 pupils and 4,000 teachers.

The municipal administration of Porto Alegre invited the University of Siegen to carry out a qualitative and participatory empirical study on the relationship between the forms of direct democracy and their realization in the "Schools for the Citizenry". To this end, the University and the city of Porto Alegre both agreed to a formal contract regulating their cooperation. At present, the first steps of this qualitative evaluation are being completed. – I will have more to say on this matter later.

Here, I would like to present a rather complex proposition, elaborate on it and put it into more concrete terms, and thus make it more plausible or more open to criticism.

1. The reality of the "Schools for the Citizenry", the pedagogical concept behind them, and its everyday realization constitute a form of knowledge in which the social and political reality of globalization has been comprehended with a rare clarity. In the way that the response to this process is defined and put into action, the process itself is simultaneously exceeded.
2. The "Schools for the Citizenry" reverse the traditional relationship between school and society. The traditional school equips individuals with the knowledge, abilities, and norms

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² The Porto Alegre democratic experiment is well known worldwide, acclaimed for both the efficient and the highly democratic management of urban resources it has made possible. The "popular administration" of Porto Alegre was selected by the United Nations as an example of urban innovations worldwide to be presented at the Second Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), which was held in Istanbul in June 1996.

which society considers to be essential in the sense that individuals require them in order to live in this society in the first place.

The "Schools for the Citizenry" are oriented to something that is still non-existent in society. This is expressed primarily in the utopian goal of enabling the students to become the subjects of their social relations. The "School for the Citizenry" is interested in enabling the students to comprehend the relationships in which they now live and to form the relationships in which they will live in the future.

3. In the entire history of modern schooling, I know of only two examples where something similar was attempted – to conceive of and realize a school oriented to something not yet in existence:

Gaspard Monge's "Ecole Polytechnique" during the French Revolution and the school institutionalized by Humboldt's Prussian Educational Reform. Both projects were concerned with the problem of enabling new generations to cope with their future world, their future work, and their future lives.

The "Ecole Polytechnique" was not only to provide technology and, in particular, mechanical engineering with a theoretical basis, but was also designed to contribute in a more general way to making social praxis as a whole more scientific. In "Descriptive Geometry", all issues concerning the applicability of a science are raised and discussed in close connection to the problems of their communicability. This educational establishment was to become the decisive factor in the industrialization of France.

Within the Prussian Educational Reform, the concept of "all-round education" functions as a political strategy for developing public schools for general education. This political strategy deals with the following problem: How can knowledge and, in particular, scientific knowledge be conceived of as subjectivity, that is, how can something general become real in the individual? The public school for general education became an essential factor for the development of civil society in Germany.

4. The novel quality of Porto Alegre's "Schools for the Citizenry" cannot be comprehended with the use of traditional categories of learning and instruction. With the "Schools for the Citizenry", learning and teaching at school are reflectively reorganized into a system of activity: Students, teachers, and parents all collaborate on a contradictory and conflict-laden process of transforming the school into a collective instrument of the community.

This complex of propositions will outline and structure the course of my presentation. As a first step, it will be necessary to briefly sketch the context of political democracy in Porto Alegre. The second step will be to present the conception and actualization of the "Schools for the Citizenry". Finally, I wish to consider in which respects the praxis of these schools represents a response to current processes of globalization. In my opinion, this question is identical to the question of whether or not the praxis of these schools can be described as expansive learning.

1. Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre in the Light of Spinoza's Concept of "Multitudo"

Brazil is a society with a long tradition of colonialist authoritarian politics. The predominance of an oligarchic, patrimonialist, and bureaucratic model of domination has resulted in a state

formation, political system, and culture characterized by the political and social marginalization of the lower classes, or their integration by means of populism and "clientelism", the restriction of the public sphere and its privatization by the patrimonialist elite. Brazilian society and politics are, in sum, characterized by the predominance of the state over civil society. At the same time, the national economy of Brazil ranks eighth in the world while exhibiting social inequalities to an extraordinary extent. According to a recent World Bank report, Brazil is one of the most unjust societies in the world. Brazilian society has the largest concentration of private ownership of land. One response to this situation is the largest social movement in Brazil, the movement of Peasants Without Land (MST) encompassing more than three million small farmers who carry out an extremely intelligent policy of land occupation and are confronted with unbelievable brutal reactions by the *latifundistas*.

In 1989, the Worker's Party (PT) gained control of the municipal government of Porto Alegre and won consecutive elections in 1992, 1996, and also at the end of 2000 with an absolute majority. Their most substantial reform measure, called "participatory budgeting" (Orçamento Participativo – OP), attempted to transform the „clientelist“, vote-for-money budgeting reality into a fully accountable, bottom-up, deliberative system guided by the needs of the city's residents.

This arrangement begins with the sixteen regions that compose the city. In April of each year, each region has an open "first round" general assembly. Moreover, there are also general assemblies for each of the 5 "topic-oriented forums":

- a) transportation and traffic;
- b) urban planning and organization;
- c) education and culture;
- d) health and social assistance;
- e) economic development and tax reform.

Within each region, a Regional Assembly meets twice a year to settle budgetary issues. City executives, administrators, representatives of community organizations such as neighborhood associations, youth and health clubs, and any interested resident of the city can attend these meetings. They are jointly coordinated by members of the municipal government and by community delegates. These assemblies are charged with:

1. reviewing and discussing the implementation of the prior year's budget;
2. setting the region's spending priorities for the coming year (health and social assistance, transportation and traffic, education and culture, and so on);
3. electing delegates and their substitutes to a city-wide body called the Participatory Budgeting Council (COP).

The priorities of these fairly large, infrequent regional assemblies are, in turn, set from below by many less formal "preparatory meetings" in which individual citizens, grassroots movements, and community institutions such as schools equip themselves for discussion in the regional assemblies.

The COP, a higher level assembly of citizens and officials, implements the decisions of the lower assemblies and designs a city budget accordingly. The COP is composed of two elected delegates from each region, two elected delegates from each of the five "topic-oriented plenaries" representing the city as a whole, a delegate from the municipal worker's union, one from the union of neighborhood associations, and two delegates from central municipal agencies. The group is engaged in intensive collaboration for the discussion and establishment of a municipal budget that conforms to priorities established at the regional level while still coordinating the needs of the city as a whole. Every September 30, the council submits a proposed budget to the mayor, who can either accept the budget or by veto remand it back to the COP for revision. In the latter case, the COP responds by either amending the budget or by over-riding the veto with a qualified majority vote of 2/3. (Santos p. 19; Funk and Wright 1998, 12ff.)

This brief sketch can only provide a skeletal description. It should be noted that the investment priorities are ultimately decided upon in a directly democratic way in the neighborhood assemblies. Thus, it is the people who rules. Elected bodies, such as the regional budget forums, the municipal budget council and administration, implement decisions. In this way, government becomes what it should be: the implementation of the will of the people.

Here, space is not available to discuss the problems and difficulties arising from conflicts between this form of direct democracy and representational democracy, which is still extant in Porto Alegre.

At this point, a few theoretical observations in summary form might serve as a transition to the educational experiment of the "Schools for the Citizenry" of Porto Alegre.

What is fundamental is the emergence of a new type of citizen, a new relationship between public and private spheres, constructed as a countercurrent to the capitalist modernization of Brazil.

The release from state tutelage, the renewal of the process of representation and establishment of interests, and the contradictions within the process of the formulation of priorities all express a demystification of politics and enhance the quality of democracy. Citizenship can no longer be considered only in terms of public works and services, because something more than simple responses is the matter in question here. What is at stake is a redefinition of politics itself and of institutions that formulate "responses" – public schools, for instance. Not simply an issue of "taking power", what these new citizens radically question is the mode in which power is exercised.

If we compare the changes regarding the priorities selected by the people within the last twelve years, we can notice an increasing capacity to move beyond a fragmentary, particularistic, localized conception of the city. Obviously, the capacity to view the public interests more globally, but still with attention to their empirical relevance, entails a learning process.

In the first years of the OP, the principal problems addressed were centered on regional demands and criteria; more recently key questions such as education, culture, and changes in the city's general plan have begun to be debated. Twelve years represent a very short period in comparison to the process by which the dominant classes have acquired this capacity for a global and general view.

The ethic that has developed, understood as a radical democratic rationality, is the fruit of a political self-education brought about by very concrete political issues. This ethic is also the outcome of a new type of organizational learning. The people enter into the process of OP because they have needs, and, very often, it is in discussing these needs that, in the midst of difficult and contradictory operations, they establish collective interests, discover causes and consequences, learn to speak, to listen, and to plan. Their actions produce concrete changes that improve their lives.

The collective consciousness of knowing how to be an agent of transformation on their streets and in their city is a fundamental tool through which this new ethical-political principle is forged, structuring a social and rationally designed solidarity.

And what does all of this have to do with Spinoza's concept of "multitudo"? I have been implicitly using it as the basis and perspective of my presentation of the processes and mechanisms of the OP in Porto Alegre. Spinoza develops the concept of "multitudo" in his *Theological-Political Treatise* and in the last three parts of his *Ethics*, in which he transforms ontology into a phenomenology of praxis: The potentiality of the "multitudo" is practically a mechanical resultant between the interaction of "individual potentialities". Accordingly, political society is not some order imposed upon individuals' interests and wishes from the outside; nor is it the conferral of legal rights on a representative with resulting obligations. Consequently, there is no division or dissociation between civil society and political society, but also not the slightest idealization of the state, should it even be the democratic state.

"Multitudo" (English/French: multitude) is that constitutive ability attributed to a community as the self-reflecting relationship of numerous individuals, of the masses to themselves. Spinoza employs the exquisite metaphor of the "intellectual love of God" to characterize this ability as a human praxis that becomes autonomous by means of the knowledge it develops about itself. Spinoza's thought exerted an extraordinarily strong influence on Diderot, Goethe, Marx, and Vygotsky.

2. The Development of the "Schools for the Citizenry" as a Collective Process

In 1988, there were 22 public schools with a total of 17,862 pupils in the city of Porto Alegre. The present figures are, as mentioned above, over 90 schools and approximately 67,000 students. During the first administration, a major priority was the introduction and preservation of minimal standards. Only during the second term of office for the „Aministração Popular“, that is, from 1993 on, did the practical work of the design and development of a new schooling concept begin.

The task consisted in the very establishment of institutional mechanisms which guarantee spheres for democratic praxis. The first step was to motivate teachers, students, and parents into propelling the democratic process themselves and to do so by reflecting on the praxis in the everyday school situation itself. To accomplish this, an extremely simple collective instrument for diagnosis was essential. It consisted solely of two questions:

What kind of school do we now have and what kind of school do we want?

Finding an answer to these questions was perceived as a collective task. Within the "school constituency", four theme-oriented groups per school were organized. These were primarily concerned with the following major issues: curriculum, school organization, evaluation procedures, regulations for communal interaction.

The discussion began in each individual school, was brought to the more general level of city/region by the representatives of the school, then followed a return of the discussion to the schools and the election of delegates, and, finally, the realization of a "constitutional congress", which developed those principles and fundamental guidelines for the network of public schools in Porto Alegre which in their entirety provided the experiment of "Schools for the Citizenry" with form and content.

The results produced with the use of the diagnostic instrument clearly indicated an extremely conservative school structure as the legacy of an authoritarian age. In particular, the results showed:

1. The school of the 70s was essentially characterized by expulsion, repetition, repression, and by a grading and evaluative system with a solely selective function.
2. The conservative structure was maintained and supported primarily by the organizational form and the function of the schooling institution. The organization of the school reproduces an imitative and non-critical form of work and production according to the Taylorist/Fordist model. The school's organizational basis consists in a system of verticalized power, in an extreme specialization of functions, in a division of labor into small segments, in a separation of the human subject from the object produced, and in an extremely individual control of fragmented knowledge related to the larger context of this production.
3. The relationships between the vertical levels reproduces ritualized and automated behavior. In view of the dilemma concerning conformity or expulsion, the individuals find themselves constrained by a strait-jacket.
4. The development of genuine knowledge is blocked, as is the perception of the relationships and principles which allow a universal view of reality.
5. This structure and organization is not capable of absorbing progressive learning or teaching techniques. In a sense, the organization of instruction is impenetrable, opaque. Whenever progressive approaches such as those of Piaget, Vygotsky, Wallon, or Freire were introduced, they immediately became theoretically impoverished and never resulted in a new praxis. The usual result was a technological perspective which crystallized as a modern, conservative pedagogy.

6. This type of school organization results in a dramatic isolation from the community and crucially prevents anything from being transformed into a praxis in which the human subjects' knowledge, abilities, and skills are durably effective in a socially dynamic context produced by the collaboration of all participants.

Using these findings as a starting point and in a similar process, organized in a comparable way, the following question was confronted: "What kind of school do we want?"

At the School Charter Assembly of 1995, guidelines for a reorganization of teaching and learning, as well as of pedagogical practice were formulated as three broad lines of action: the democratization of access to education; the democratization of school management, and the democratization of school knowledge.

The democratization of access to education means, above all, the concrete and practical realization of the student's rights and access to school and instruction. This is achieved primarily by the establishment of new schools and is also expressed by the significant increase in the total number of students. Other factors include extensive adult literacy campaigns, which reached their projected goal of reducing illiteracy to under 2% by the year 2000, and a reduction in the statistic records of truancy and repetition of the school year in elementary schools to a mere 0 to 2%.

The democratization of management transforms school management into a dynamic place for experimenting with and promoting politically conscious citizenship. The entire school community is engaged in transforming education by means of radical forms of participation. The drafting and definition of proposals for school administration and pedagogy is based on four initiatives: the **School Councils**, which are the highest body concerned with discussion and deliberation of school-related political, administrative, and pedagogical issues. In the school councils, parents, students, teachers, and staff are represented in equal number; the **individual nomination and direct election** of principal and vice-principals, which takes place every three years and ensures the direct participation of the school community in the selection of those in charge of implementing the school's plans of action; the **quarterly apportionment of funds**, which is managed by the School Council and by the principal, enhancing the school's autonomy and the quality of facility maintenance and pedagogical action; and **participatory budgeting and planning**, in which we found the same complex structure as on the level of the city as a whole. Also within the city, educational outcome plans are devised. The Municipal Conference on Education, which takes place every four years, establishes and assesses the guidelines for public education; the Municipal Council, the democratic body representing the community, defines and enforces these guidelines.

Within the process which could only be referred to above, a plan of instruction in educational stages was devised as the structure of general instruction. The pedagogical conception behind this plan guarantees a democratization and socialization of the development of knowledge within every individual school.

The democratization of knowledge is implemented by doing away with classes divided into years and replacing them with educational stages. This democratization is concerned with mobilizing all human subjects and relevant spaces so that everyone is engaged in learning. Instruction in stages completely reorganizes and alters the traditional temporal and spatial conditions in the school. Everyone engages in learning if his or her specific rhythms and times are respected, if the spatial conditions of the school exhibit dimensions which provide possibilities for access to knowledge.

According to age, the students are divided into three respective stages every three years. The first stage is organized with children between the ages of 6 to 8, the second stage with students between 9 and 11, the third stage with students between 12 and 14 years of age. Thus, the years of elementary school are expanded to nine, rather than the mandated eight, without the usual disruptions, repetition, and exclusion resulting from non-promotion. Groups are formed according to students' age and knowledge. Students whose age does not correlate to their stage are placed in progression groups, which aim at promoting advancement and integration into the stage which corresponds to the student's chronological age. Students with learning disabilities receive assistance at a learning laboratory on a schedule that does not interfere with the other classes.

The student's experiences in everyday life in the community are the starting point for all of the school's work. This is the basis for the theme-oriented complexes which articulate the pedagogical planning for all subjects in the curriculum. The traditional structure of disciplines is negated. The conceptualization of the theme-oriented complexes is based on the theoretical work of Vygotsky, Dawydow, Wallon, and Piaget.

As a result, the school is able to interact with its community and with social reality, thus strengthening the relations between traditional and scientific knowledge. When a new school is being established, the future teachers are trained to do ethnographic research in and around the region in which the school is located. I participated in a project in which the teachers were exploring all the different forms of knowledge practiced in the everyday life of the people, forms of religion and superstition, the material conditions of work and life, the structure of families, and so on. The teacher group used these results as the basis of a curriculum organized according to theme-oriented complexes.

Here, I would like to conclude this brief description of this reality. I have mentioned none of the problems, difficulties, and conflicts involved in this process, for instance, contradictions between new and old schools: The whole new structure is realized only if the school community democratically accepts the new perspective. In any case, all of the new schools established by the municipal administration are required to commit themselves to accepting the new model and structure of the "Schools for the Citizenry".

3. Conception and Praxis of the "Schools for the Citizenry" as a Response to Current Processes of Globalization

Currently, the diagnosis of "globalization" can meet with approval everywhere one looks. For there has been constant talk of the necessity of thinking on a global scale, constant assertions that environmental problems are global ones, that capitalism is global and international by nature. The catchword "globalization" is well-suited to an ecological worldview, to a Marxist worldview, to a postmodernist worldview, and to an economic one in any case. The current, somewhat irritated discussion displays telltale signs of rhetoric.

In the attempt to comprehend globalization, it may be more appropriate to raise questions, to specify difficulties and dilemmas. In my view, one of the major difficulties consists in encountering antinomies, opposing and counteracting tendencies etc. which are not complementary, are not mutual prerequisites of their own comprehensibility and thus cast no light on the problem.

Results of recent empirical studies of the structural transformation of childhood, youth, and school in Germany and other European countries (Zinnecker/Behnken) indicate a fundamental change in the way the internal and external cohesion of our society is produced. This becomes especially obvious in the alteration of the everyday life-world and popular culture.

At present, a globalized economy is developing quickly and without noticeable resistance into a sort of ultimate criterion. Economy is no longer considered to be one functional system among others. With the progressive economization of society, various sub-systems appear to lose whatever form of self-determination they may have had previously, in this way perhaps similar to the course of European history, which is actually the result of a long historical process.

The most prominent symptom of this development seems to be the convergence between economy and culture. Today, mass media culture is in a position to directly intervene in the economic process and actually does so. Just as a result of the sales of merchandising products (dolls, T-shirts, card games, computer games, etc.), *Star Wars*' director George Lukas made a net profit of 1.5 trillion dollars.

Our children and our youth are the delighted consumers of this industry. They spend their pocket money on symbolic participation. Participation in what? In my opinion, in the world in its entirety, in a global world. This situation could call F. Jameson's perhaps most productive concept to mind. With the "political unconscious", Jameson examines dominant material visualizations as projections of real social relations (Jameson 1981; 1992; 1993).

Along with the economical rescission of social differentiation, social communication in the broadest sense of the word is also changed, that is, all of the forms of producing the internal and external cohesion of society are changed. In this respect, the "new media" play a crucial role. All of the old media such as writing, signs, tones, and pictures have been "renewed" by the possibility of their integration into that "universal machine", the networked computer.

The "new media" display an enormous sensitivity to the unnatural, arbitrary structure of signs and symbols, of cultural forms of expression, of emotions or, put briefly, to the essential

elements of human culture. This does not, however, by any means already make them into expressions or symptoms of new social forms. On the contrary, they dissolve the traditional forms and functions of culture as an aesthetic medium of interaction for the social life-world. It seems that in doing so they also considerably weaken the normatively binding potential of everyday life.

This sketch consists more in suggestions and estimates than in a presentation of globalization as already comprehended with regard to its essential characteristics. Michael Hardt and Toni Negri make claim to exactly such a presentation with their concept of "Empire (2000)". Using this concept, they describe the dimensions of the globalized market, which produces its political unity by means of all those attributes that have always characterized sovereignty: by military, monetary, communicative, cultural, and linguistic power. The military power is derived from having a huge arsenal of weapons at one's unlimited disposal. The monetary power is based on the existence of a hegemonic currency to which the entire financial world is subject. The communicative power is displayed in the triumph of a cultural model that articulates itself in a single, universal language. This dispersion of power is supranational, global, and total.

But by concerning themselves primarily, indeed, almost exclusively with this dispersion of power, Hardt and Negri only discuss the extensive new forms of instrumentalization and exploitation pertinent to life's intellectual and affective expressions. The contradictions of this process only become perceptible if, at the same time, the current changes work is undergoing with the tendency to non-material work are considered with reference to its systematic nature and, above all, to its new quality – for instance, as the interconnection of intellectual, affective/emotional, and techno-scientific activities which are increasingly being realized in complex networks of collaboration, in the integration of maintenance and service into all areas of production, in computerization etc. Engeström and his group of researchers in Helsinki undertake the scientific investigation of work processes. They do this with the use of a general concept of activity as a systemic formation (1999, 9-20). The success of this undertaking demonstrates the fact that, at present, work presupposes a highly developed totality of various actual types of work: "Thus the most general abstractions only arise under the conditions of the most extensive concrete development, where one aspect seems common to many, indeed, to all. At this point, it ceases to be conceivable only in particular form" (Marx, *Grundrisse*, Berlin 1953, 25). If Marx assumed that work was the basis of all human history, then he may have been mistaken, not because with this assumption he went too far, but, rather, because he did not go far enough.

Scientifically comprehending a social totality in today's world seems to meet certain limitations which are unfamiliar to art as a form of knowledge.

Stanley Kubrik's latest film is set in the metropolis of New York, which – in this film – contains all of the elements necessary for an outright emblematic illustration of a globalized society and its values. Noticeable in the wretched chaos of a prostitute's room, where she receives her customers, is a sociological reference work entitled "Introduction to Sociology". As the story progresses, it becomes clear that the prostitutes are the only characters who demonstrate something in the way of "scruples" in their relationships to other persons. Their humanity is expressed by their fragileness: They are on drugs, die of an overdose, sell their

bodies, contract venereal disease. To put it briefly: They risk their own existence in a concrete and material way. Their exchange of money for sex, which is regulated by the market, is based on a reality that can be explicated using sociological criteria. The prostitutes actually allow themselves to get involved with what's known as "real life". The affluent society with its imperative of consumption confronts the individuals with a world of images that signifies nothing except itself, a world in which everything, even human beings, have become transformed into objects.

However one might describe globalization, it certainly presents a new and complex problematic for the individuals. Its social context is characterized by acute contradictions such as the individualization of living conditions and circumstances and, at the same time, a standardization, normalization and patterning of individual behavior the likes of which has never been heard of before. Our children and youth respond very sensitively to this drama and reflect it in a variety of forms of their behavior.

On the whole, current research on childhood and youth illustrates numerous distinct tendencies, some of them quite diffuse, in very diversified areas:

1. Parents, schoolteachers, and other educators are currently engaged in intensive work on the *generation of individual autonomy* as a conscious, self-reflecting act of the individual, as the development of a conscious self-concept. But these efforts come into conflict with a *pedagogical permeation*, that is, with an increasing structuring and control of young people's daily lives guided by pedagogical intent.

2. At the same time, the *generation of autonomy* displays the other side of the coin with its *privatization and dissemination of therapeutic operations*, that is, its neglect for phenomena of a systematic nature such as politics, society, or the external world.

3. Pronounced forms of a *reflective self-concept* on the part of children and adolescents are accompanied by a process of *fictionalization of reality* within their social life-world, a process that lets the individual become an imitator of life-styles prefabricated by the media.

These contradictions demonstrate an insecure, groping and searching everyday behavior of individuals and social groups attempting to adapt to some sort of "constraints of modernization". But in my opinion, exactly these contradictions also articulate a process in which something novel is developing.

In Brazil, the articulation of this process is more direct and more noticeable. Why is this so? Here, those extensive new forms of instrumentalization and exploitation accompanying globalization appear in more open and undisguised, but also more brutal ways than in Europe. In response, democracy is currently taking on an entirely new meaning as control over the political conditions of the reproduction of social life. The efforts to establish this new meaning of democracy exhibit an unexpected variety and intensity. For example, the "landless" movement is currently the largest social movement in Latin America. Those

farmers driven from their land as a result of the stipulated economic requirements of globalization occupy the deserted estates of the *latifundia*, begin to cultivate this land in cooperative networks, and, in the process, devise new forms of production, distribution, and, not least, of schooling and instruction. At the same time, they are adamant in their refusal of what the government, in its desperation, seeks to offer them: to become the legal proprietors of small parcels of land. To them, land ownership is an obsolete legal category.³

How do Porto Alegre's "Schools for the Citizenry" present a response to globalization?

At first glance, Porto Alegre's public schools exhibit constituent parts common to schools in general: students and teachers, a curriculum, an evaluation system, an institutionalized and organized structure, etc. None of these "Schools for the Citizenry" is an alternative school like those to be found in Summerhill, Tvind, in the regional community homes of the German pedagogical reform, in Israeli kibbutzim, etc.⁴ However, all of these traditional aspects of schools are "sublated" to a fundamentally new quality.

The context of political democracy, the concrete and practical relation to the community, transforms these schools into collective instruments. In the process, knowledge and its social functions, the relations between learning and teaching, and the role of the teacher are all radically changed.

By way of the simple context of direct democracy, the individual school is reflectively reorganized as a system of activity. This can also be described with a strict use of Engeström's perspective as learning through expansion and as expansion, that is, as "expansive learning".

This might become somewhat clearer if we make a short comparison to schools based on community education in England, the U.S.A., and Germany (cf. the summary in: Göhlich 1977) and to forms of learning and teaching which Lave and Wenger have presented and described as "situated learning" and as "participation in communities of practice" (1996).

Despite the many significant differences among "New York City-as-School", "Berlin-Stadt-als-Schule", Flint, Philadelphia, other community schools in the U.S.A., and the multicultural district schools in England, the schools based on community education do exhibit some common features. The issues involved concern:

1. making the school available to the city district, that is, providing the district with the opportunity to make use of the school's spatial, material, and temporal resources;
2. optimizing the use of the municipality's or the district's resources for school purposes;

³ With Brazilian students, I have done some biographically oriented case studies on individual women in this movement. In the dialogical interviews (Bakhtin) conducted in the course of these studies, we utilized the relationship between inner speech and external speaking (Vygotsky) as an analytical instrument.

⁴ They are more comparable to the Barbiana school in Tuscany, where a Catholic priest, Don Lorenzo Milani, has been practicing a particular educational concept with his students since the 1960s (cf. Bichsel 1970).

3. developing multicultural activities (offering advice and opportunities for discussions; offering learning activities and information to parents; offering leisure-time activities and multicultural curricula).

Lave and Wenger are concerned with research on learning as participation in communities of practice. They have demonstrated that this is particularly effective: a) when participants have broad access to different parts of the activity, b) when there is abundant horizontal interaction between participants, and c) when the technologies and structures of the community of practice are transparent. Engeström goes further and suggests comprehending school itself as a community of practice and can demonstrate impressive examples that lead to changes in schools and instruction, to better learning achievements, to altered methods, etc. (cf. Engeström 1966; Miettinen 1990; Moll and Greenberg 1990).

All of these approaches, as important and significant for a reform of school and instruction they might individually be, remain confined to the level of changing, developing, and improving schooling and instruction methodically or technically, that is, of compensating for the encapsulation of the school. For me, the radicality of the "Schools for the Citizenry" consists in the transformation of the school into a collective instrument of the community. By doing so, all of the participants transform the school into an activity system as a specifically reflective process.

To conclude, I would like to employ a concept introduced by Engeström to interpret some observations and findings of our empirical study, which is still in its first phase.

Up to this point, in our survey of participants in the "Schools for the Citizenry" involving individual teachers, school collectives, parents, members of the school administration, assessors, etc., we have raised two questions: "What do you consider to be the goals of the project 'Schools for the Citizenry'?" and "Which role do you think you play with regard to these goals?".

We have received more than 300 very detailed, non-standardized replies which we are now in the process of analyzing. We have completed some portraits of individual schools and conducted narrative interviews with individual teachers, with groups of teachers, and with students. We are planning an exhibition of films and photos on the "Schools for the Citizenry" made by a European photographer working along the lines of "perception of the Other" in collaboration with an indigenous photographer from Porto Alegre. We would like to transform this exhibition and our analysis of our survey into a collective instrument of all of the participants with whom we will be planning the next step of the evaluation. To this end, it will be necessary to organize an interdisciplinary European team of scholars.

One common element crystallized in all of our observations and findings: As different as all of the individual phenomena are, they all display some qualitatively novel property.

At the beginning, a fundamental contradiction consisted in the experience of the dichotomy

between the practice of direct democracy and traditional school practice. Four years were required to transform the two questions (*What kind of school do we now have? What kind of school do we want?*) into a collective instrument for the analysis of the old type of school and the development of the new type. What was subsequently developed, constructed, and realized as the new school, transformed school into that self-reflective process already mentioned or, more exactly, into school as a system of activity. In an exemplary fashion and with reference only to certain aspects, I would like to demonstrate this in a few "flash exposures" or, better, miniatures which, at first glance, all seem to relate only to the internal sphere of the school.

Theme-oriented Complexes as Curricular Organizers Mediate Between the "Common Sense" of the Community and Scientific Knowledge

Instruction in stages dissolves traditional units of classes divided into years and thus forms of knowledge organized around discrete disciplines. Instead, instruction is organized according to "theme-oriented complexes". In an extremely complex and self-reflective process, the teachers of a school develop and work out these theme-oriented complexes.

I would like to mention two examples: "Neusa Brizola" is a totally new school which is located in an entirely new settlement composed of municipal housing units equipped in a very rudimentary way: asphalt, already completed houses, electricity, and running water. The inhabitants of former *favelas*, living under conditions that are more than precarious and hazardous to their health, decide to move to the new settlement. Some months before the new school year begins, the teachers of the district's future school undergo training as ethnographers so that they can systematically gather information about living conditions, forms of knowledge, cultural practices, ways of life, and family relations – to obtain a basis for the theme-oriented complexes of the first stage. One teacher described this investigation into "common sense" from her perspective as follows: "We are dealing with all of the dimensions of the life of these residents, including their superstitions, their dreams, their yearnings, their projects, their expectations – anything that's a topic of their public discourse. In addition, we are interested in the contradictions, in incoherencies between dream and reality, between the real and the possible, between their actions and their words, between their perception of reality, their self-perception and their everyday behavioral patterns." The teachers were able to record such statements as: "There is an Indio cemetery near here; the spirits don't want the people to stay here"; "There was enough work for everyone in the *favela*, here, there is nothing to do"; "We can't make any alterations to these houses"; "The Residents' Association does nothing"; "The children used to be able to walk to the traffic lights – here, there are no traffic lights"; "We're glad to have water, electric lights, and a school here". During the course of a long process, the teachers attain the first theme-oriented complex: "The resettlement from the *favelas* to the area of Cavahada". On the basis of this complex, individual areas of knowledge (formations surrounding such concepts as "identity", "work", "space", "time", "quantity", "social relations", "power", and "citizenship") are developed and conceptually structured.

On the basis of its ethnographic studies, another school located in a *favela* district into which the police no longer dare to go and where drug dealers are important and stable authorities is working out its first theme-oriented complex as "The Individual's Lack of Participatory Consciousness". This is then used as a starting point to systematically develop and structure

those conceptual formations corresponding to this district, which, of course, are different from those mentioned with respect to the first example.

Evaluation as a Social Process

One principal would like to introduce this new conceptualization into her school step-by-step starting with the first stage. She explains the principles, the concepts, and their concretization to us. Dawydow would be delighted: according to her explanation, in the final analysis the goal is to enable the students to evaluate their own learning processes and their results. But why does evaluating have a social quality? Her answer: evaluation includes seeing oneself in the eyes of all of the others. She emphasizes very strongly that this does not mean seeing oneself in the eyes of others, but, rather, learning to see oneself in the eye of the community. She then goes on to outline how especially parents can become concretely and practically involved in this process.

She introduces the first steps in the form of a festivity for the children. After a few opening remarks by the principal, all of the participants, children and adults, are asked to line up opposite each other. With gestures, the children imitate the silhouette of the adult opposite, then, the reverse takes place. The basis of these gestures consists in respect and affection. Evaluation begins by forming an image of the person opposite with affection and respect. This entire ritual may seem rather odd to a European, but is straightforwardly enjoyable for the participants.

The Contradiction between Difference and Equality

In all of the protocols recording the instruction process, the relevancy, importance, and domination of emotions and affects is noticeable – along with the great variety of forms in which these are articulated by students and teachers.

An amazing amount of reflection on and consciousness of this phenomenon becomes apparent in the course of conversations with teachers: As teachers and students, we differ in age, knowledge, experience, and in many other aspects. This difference cannot be denied or repudiated; it is a reality. But it can only become productive if, at the same time, absolute equality is realized during instruction, if students and teachers encounter each other as human beings. In this respect, they are equals. This equality is generated on both sides and is articulated by means of emotions and affects.

The Relationship between Learning and Teaching:

The students only learn if, at the same time, they can teach. This applies particularly during the first stage. The students have a place that makes this possible and addressees of this teaching, especially the teacher, who thus becomes a learner. We are especially interested in the various forms by which this simultaneity of learning and teaching is realized, particularly as far as the children are concerned.

Instruction Focused on the Teacher

While visiting classes, we have often encountered teachers whose instruction cannot be described in categories that are taken for granted both in our teacher training and in our everyday schooling. These teachers do not primarily teach some content which they have didactically prepared, structured, and partitioned and with the use of certain methods transmit to the brains of the students. Instead, these teachers in Porto Alegre practice the content of their instruction. Their effectiveness does not result from what they do, from their professional techniques and methods, but, rather, from what they are. They personify knowledge content and, at the same time, an attitude; they are a sort of model for a dynamic unity of knowledge and a personal attitude towards knowledge. Normally, the students are very interested, probably not so much in the person of the teacher, nor in the content, but, rather, in this fascinating unity of knowledge and attitude. Thus, a math teacher no longer simply instructs in mathematics; he practices mathematics in the classroom and allows the students to participate in this practice. Is it possible that this teacher implicitly, and definitely not consciously, reflects in his person something that relates to the community and its relation to knowledge, to the school and its relation to knowledge? Is it possible that these students not only learn mathematics from their math teacher, but also ethics? Do the students implicitly learn here that the application of knowledge is never only a pragmatic-technical problem, and instead, always also an ethical one? The social relation of humans to knowledge encompasses the basis and starting point for questions such as: Whom does this benefit or whom does it harm?

The school projects in Porto Alegre have grasped the essential core of this socialization. Instead of the privatization of public education they realize a return of public education to the community. In the process, the teachers develop in practical, real, and concrete ways something new: Education is not providing information, skills, and abilities that are considered necessary; education is participation in culture. Education has an obligation both to the personal development of the human subjects and to social change.

The school's task does not exhaust itself in training efficient skilled workers, efficient engineers, or efficient dentists. Rather, it should qualify young people to become *citoyens* who can understand and grasp the world in which they live and can change it. The school can only begin to take up this task if it itself becomes a collective instrument of the community, a system of activity in which students, teachers, and parents are all subjects of this activity.

The starting point for these schools is the community, real, practically active people, their lives, and thus the people who produce social relations. Their starting point is what the people feel, think, do, imagine, desire – which are all individual social practices of the people of the community. But these schools also return to their community. The object and the outcome of this activity system relate to the community, but now at a new level.

The everyday realization of this practice reveals something of a general nature. Currently, the form of a collective and reflective self-organization is a necessity for any type of social praxis. Spinoza calls this form "the intellectual love of God". Presumably, this necessity is based on

the fact that expansion is not some arbitrary form of child's play, but, rather, an existential need.

One question that remains unanswered for me is: Does this form develop from the internal contradictions of the particular activity system? Or, in the light of the traditional school: Does this form develop from disquiet, from internal conflicts, from the dissatisfaction on the part of parents, students, or teachers? The never-ending history of educational reform, the never-ending history of attempts to overcome the encapsulation of the school, seem to imply at any rate that this does not suffice.

At the conclusion of my presentation, I would like to return to the beginning and alter the title. It should now read: "Practical Work on a New Conception of Democracy as Expansive Learning – The Example of Porto Alegre's 'Schools for the Citizenry'".

(Translation: Thomas La Presti)

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