Children and adolescents experiencing homelessness — times, setbacks, and confluences in the processes of (dis) enchantment of childhoods

Crianças e adolescentes em situação de rua — tempos, contratempos e confluências nos processos de (des)encantamento das infâncias

Sônia Maria Dantas Berger[a]

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2311-5025
E-mail: soniadantas@id.uff.br

Paula Kwamme Latgé[b]

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1077-4873
E-mail: paulalatge@gmail.com

Filipi Dias de Souza Malta[c]

https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0697-2592
E-mail: filipidmalta@gmail.com

[a]Universidade Federal Fluminense. Instituto de Saúde Coletiva. Departamento de Planejamento em Saúde. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Saúde Coletiva. Niterói, RJ, Brasil.

[b]Associação Experimental de Mídia Comunitária – BEMTV, Prefeitura Municipal de Niterói. Niterói, RJ, Brasil.

[c]Centro de Reabilitação Ambulatorial e Domiciliar (CRAD), Prefeitura Municipal de Maricá. Maricá, RJ, Brasil.

Corresponding Address

Sônia Maria Dantas Berger
E-mail: soniadantas@id.uff.br
Address: Rua Domingues de Sá, 350/602– Icaraí — Niterói/RJ — ZIP Code :24.220-091

Abstract

Social issues related to children and adolescents experiencing homelessness and the vulnerability processes that impact their lives–violating social rights, impeding the construction of their histories, and denying the possibility of a future, as well as a past and ancestry–are themes addressed in this essay. The aim was to deepen theoretical reflections by engaging with contributions from the Sociology of Childhood, considering the intersection between racism, adult-centrism, and capitalism. The problematization of the generational marker in colonial legacy points to a fragile process of universalizing children's rights and demonstrates the insufficiency of legal provisions when social inequalities emerge, which contributes to the production of unequal childhoods. Regarding boys, girls, and non-binary children experiencing homelessness, and in contrast to a vision that renders them socially unviable and criminalizes their ways of life, this essay highlights the ethical-political aspects of the impact of their bodies-becoming-children in the territories, affirming the potential of the connection between play and subalternized cultures in their *gingante* and resistant ways of being. Considering the unprecedented possibilities that urgently need to be collectively envisioned and forged, this study advocates for the re-signification of vulnerable childhoods to ensure space and time for their existence as Subjects.

Keywords: Childhoods; Homelessness; Racism; Coloniality; Play.

Resumo

As questões sociais relacionadas às crianças e adolescentes em situação de rua e os processos vulnerabilizantes que incidem em suas vidas, violando direitos sociais, impossibilitando a construção de suas histórias e negando a possibilidade de futuro, como também do passado e da ancestralidade, são temáticas abordadas no presente ensaio. Buscou-se aprofundar reflexões teóricas dialogando com contribuições da Sociologia da Infância, considerando a intersecção entre o racismo, o adultocentrismo e capitalismo. A problematização do marcador geracional na herança colonial aponta para um frágil processo de universalização dos direitos das crianças e demonstra a insuficiência das determinações legais, quando entram em cena as desigualdades sociais, o que colabora para a produção de infâncias desiguais. No que se refere aos meninos, meninas e menines em situação de rua, na contramão de uma visão que os inviabiliza socialmente e criminaliza seus modos de vida, são destacados aspectos ético-políticos da incidência dos seus corpos-devires-crianças nos territórios que afirmam a potência da conexão entre o brincar e as culturas subalternizadas em seus modos gingantes e resistentes de ser. Diante dos inéditos viáveis que urgem serem sonhados e forjados coletivamente, aposta-se na ressignificação das infâncias vulnerabilizadas, de modo a ser assegurado espaço-tempo para suas existências enquanto Sujeitos.

Palavras-chave: Infâncias; Situação de Rua; Racismo; Colonialidade; Brincações.

Introduction

The debris of cities conceals vestiges of past times. Amidst stones, walls, and ruins, people living on the streets update the historical process of the social exclusion/inclusion dialectic within socio-historical contexts of social inequality (Sawaia, 2014).

Among streets and ruins, we encounter survivors or, as Luís Antônio Simas and Luiz Rufino emphasize: "'Living remnants,' disposable beings who do not fit within the hyper-mercantilized and normative logic of the system, where consumption and scarcity act as Siamese twins—each dependent on the other" (2020, p. 5; our translation).

Recognizing both the importance and the limitations of responses based solely on political and economic perspectives, Simas and Rufino invite the construction of interventions through the "enchantment of the world," with enchantment understood as an "act of disobedience, transgression, invention, and reconnection: an affirmation of life" (2020, p. 6; our translation).

There is no greater act of disobedience than the circulation of people who, without their rights guaranteed, continue to occupy streets, squares, and dilapidated mansion—denouncing with their bodies the innumerable forms of violence they have experienced. '*Gingante*[1]' bodies resist by affirming in life the violations suffered by their ancestors. After all, it is well known among those who work with people experiencing homelessness that each individual's history has ballast[2], foundations of generational segregation and subalternized popular cultures (Carvalho Nascimento, 2019), making it not uncommon to encounter different generations of the same family for whom the street serves as a place of existence. Moreover, if there is one aspect that invariably characterizes this population over time, it is that it is predominantly composed of Black individuals. results published in May 2020 in the report of the research developed within the

---

1 A theoretical-practical term coined by Simas and Rufino, articulating the movement of *ginga*—which, in capoeira, refers to the movements executed to distract opponents—with the movements performed by children living on the streets to divert oppressive forces.

2 Curiously, according to the Michaelis Brazilian Portuguese dictionary, ballast (*lastro*) means "any relatively heavy material, such as stones, metal, water, etc., carried in the hold of a ship or in tanks, to maintain its draft or improve its balance" (our translation). This raises the question: whose balance?

framework of the *Conhecer para Cuidar* (Meet to Care) project—a partnership between the *Associação Beneficente O Pequeno Nazareno* (O Pequeno Nazareno Charitable Organization) and the *Centro Internacional de Estudos e Pesquisas sobre a Infância* (CIESPI - International Center for Studies and Research on Childhood) of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio)—synthesize some data on children and adolescents in their trajectories between the streets, home, and care institutions; of the 554 participants in the study, 86% were Black or Mixed-race[3].

In this context, children and adolescents living on the streets are present, (re)existing and resisting the most barbaric forms of domination/oppression. Outlining Simas and Rufino's assertion that "existence is a communal principle" (2020, p. 14; our translation), one may infer whether, for these girls, boys, and *menines*[4] (non-binary children), resistance might be the only possibility for existence without erasing their own history.

In this sense, this study seeks to unveil the theoretical and conceptual articulations involving the child and adolescent population experiencing homelessness over time, aiming to reframe the intersection of the ethical and political dimension of suffering—considering affection as a political category—in light of the vulnerability processes experienced in their daily lives (Santos, 2021).

It is understood that the radical impact of time is amplified for children and adolescents as developing subjects[5], and that "expanding time is to go beyond appearances and to understand the multiple facets of beings and their connections" (Simas; Rufino, 2020, p. 18; our translation), while still questioning the hegemonic understanding of child development and socialization processes—generally based on Eurocentric knowledge and values that hinder the recognition of childhood as a social phenomenon (Qvortrup, 2011) and children as active subjects immersed in the society in which they live. In Brazil, there exist hybrid childhoods situated at the crossroads of Indigenous, European, and African childhoods (Profice; Santos, 2017).

It should be noted in advance that this work does not intend to provide a scoping review of the subject; rather, the study takes the form of an essay, connecting concepts—some already (in)corporated into experiences related to childhood—with theoretical constructs and praxis involving children and adolescents experiencing homelessness. This approach seeks escape from an instrumental rationality that proves fragile in light of the complexity inherent in the social phenomenon of producing unequal childhoods within the context of a patriarchal gender order (Saffioti, 2001), structural racism (Almeida, 2019), the oppressor-oppressed dialectic (Freire, 1983), and the coloniality of being, knowing, and power (Quijano, 2010) that mark their ways of life.

The choice of an essay format is based on the need for reflective depth, as well as on the fact that children experiencing homelessness are a phenomenon to be understood—not merely an object to be analyzed—as Meneghetti (2011, p. 324; our translation) suggests: "the essay allows for an attempt to understand the phenomenon in order to know the object, as well as to analyze the phenomenon itself to modify the understanding of the object."

And also:

The essay is the transcendence of the obvious, of everything that tends to become common sense,

---

3 Furthermore, according to the research: 73% were male; 73% were teenagers; 8% had children; 62% attended school; 45% worked; 71% have slept on the street; 96% had at least one official identity document; 48% performed physical activities; 62% maintained daily or weekly contact with their family; 54% had a good or very good relationship with their parents; 41% received or their family received some type of social benefit; 85% said they had already been victims of violence; 64% had tried or used drugs and 41% reported still using them; 62% went through foster care institutions; 61% said they had sex with people of the opposite sex; 58% used contraception; 9% suffered some miscarriage; and 32% considered themselves homeless. For more information, see https://www.ciespi.org.br/bases-bibliograficas-1047.

4 A term used to encompass gender diversity beyond the binary "*menino* (boy/man) - *menina* (girl/woman)," it also situates gender binarism as a form of domination and control over bodies rooted in the colonial process. As a dominant ideological construct, binarism finds its foundation even in the structure of the Portuguese language. Thus, the term underscores the importance of linguistic modifications in fostering alternative possibilities of existence.

5 Development is understood here as a continuous and permanent process that occurs throughout life, but which finds its amplification in childhood and youth, given the rapid physical, emotional, social, and intellectual transformations.

conventional thought. It is an attempt to overcome the relationship between time and space present in the rationalization of a reality. It is thinking about something that experiences the object in its multiple possibilities within a totality that does not need to present itself as fully knowable (Meneghetti, 2011, p. 325; our translation).

The time of being a child — and disenchanted childhoods

Considering that "the enchanted is one who has experienced traversing time and transmuting into different expressions of nature" (Simas; Rufino, 2020, p. 7; our translation), every child can be regarded as an "enchanted" being in transmutation over time. However, there are hexes[6] that contribute to the production of disenchanted childhoods, with disenchantment manifesting as a form of mortality, de-vitalization, or the erasure of life. What are the forces that erase certain childhoods? And which childhoods are being affected?

The processes of childhood erasure can initially be approached from the perspective of the Sociology of Childhood, especially considering that Childhood has only recently been recognized as a sociological field. Its significance has expanded only in light of a peculiar contradiction pointed out by Sarmento when he stated that "never before have children been the object of so much care and attention, and never before has childhood emerged as the generation in which indicators of exclusion and suffering accumulate exponentially" (2008, p. 3; our translation).

The paradox highlighted by Sarmento—in the opposition between care/attention and exclusion/suffering—indicates that while there exists a protected childhood, there is simultaneously a dynamic of neglect and exclusion. According to the author, the increased reflection on childhood is related to the recognition of children as rights-bearing subjects; however, despite this acknowledgment, "never before has the reality of children been so marked by unequal opportunities for development, by living conditions so extreme in their fundamental aspects, and by forms of cultural expression so mediated by the children's product industry" (Sarmento, 2009, p. 16; our translation).

What, then, are the social impacts of the legal recognition of children and adolescents as rights-bearing subjects?

In *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Axel Honneth, in the chapter "Recognition and Socialization: Mead's Naturalistic Transformation of Hegel's Idea," emphasizes:

If it is the case that one becomes a socially accepted member of one's community by learning to appropriate the social norms of the 'generalized other,' then it makes sense to use the concept of 'recognition' for this intersubjective relationship: to the extent that growing children recognize their interaction partners by way of an internalization of their normative attitudes, they can know themselves to be members of their social context of cooperation (Honneth, 1996, p. 78).

This dialogue on recognition allows for an articulation with the text *Nine theses about childhood as a social phenomenon* (1993), in which Jens Qvortrup presents ideas about childhood. Of particular interest to the present essay are thesis 6—"Childhood is, in principle, exposed (economically and institutionally) to the same social forces as adults, although in a particular manner" (p. 207; our translation)—and thesis 8—"Not the parents, but the ideology of the family constitutes a barrier to the interests and well-being of children" (p. 209; our translation).

The aforementioned theses align with Honneth's (2011) reflections by indicating an interdependence between childhood and the social forces governing adults—both economically and institutionally as well as ideologically—with the ideology of the family

---

6 A term used repeatedly by Luiz Rufino in his analysis. In an interview, Rufino states that the expression indicates a "kind of vital force." Interview available at: https://www.nonada.com.br/2024/01/luiz-rufino-tenho-dificuldade-com-quem-pensa-a-descolonizacao-como-um-passe-de-magica/.

representing an obstacle to the "best interest of the child."

The main problem that constitutes our family ideology–and which several project group members referred to as "familialization"–is that children, in explicit terms, are more or less the property of their parents; or, in less dramatic terms, they are, at the very least, subject to parental responsibility and, in principle, exclusively the responsibility of their parents (Qvortrup, 2011, p. 209; our translation).

How can we conceptualize the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights in light of the debate on autonomy and social belonging among developing individuals? Would legal recognition be sufficient to guarantee dignity?

In thesis 8, Qvortrup further asserts that "society only cares to intervene in exceptional cases, when children are in dangerous situations; following the concept that general responsibility for childhood is neither accepted nor contemplated" (2011, p. 209; our translation). And how should society's intervention be conceived when certain children and adolescents are commonly not seen as being in danger, but rather as a threat?

It is therefore necessary to navigate dialectically between the macro and micro relations established in this process so that we may advance toward Lúcia Rabello de Castro's proposal for the "decolonization of rights from the Global South[7], placing at the center of the critical discussion echoes of the colonial legacy in the face of a false process of universalizing children's rights, thereby demonstrating some limitations of laws in effecting meaningful and desirable changes in people's lives" (Castro, 2023, p. 27; our translation).

Along this path, it is by articulating postcolonial authors–among whom Kapur (2011) stands out–that Castro (2023) draws our attention to a certain intentional and discriminatory classification of the ways of life of particular populations in contrast to an idealized conception of development as a civilizatory ideal. In other words, "such universality has its dark side–the one of discrimination–because it validates a homogeneous and hegemonic mode of producing subjects, history, and society in which everyone will and should be assimilated" (p. 30-31; our translation).

Presenting articulations between philosophers George Herbert Mead and Friedrich Hegel, Honneth emphasizes that "insofar as legal relations of recognition are unable to give a positive expression to the individual differences between citizens of a community, they are still incomplete" (Honneth, 1996, p. 80).

Consequently, one might question what appears insufficient in the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights: are the individual differences diluted in the generality of the law? How can the singularity of each subject in their context be attended to?

The singular becomes even more blurred when the context is the street. There is a tendency to condense people and stories so that they fit within the social scene, the legal framework, and the responses of public policies, which are almost always fragmented. In this forced–and impossible–fitting, children and adolescents end up with their stories shrunk and segmented, thus becoming disenchanted. As Simas and Rufino outline: "Disenchantment sometimes annihilates, sometimes weakens, casting us into a continuous loss of vivacity that immobilizes and mutes our ears to the song of the bird of dreams" (Simas; Rufino, 2020, p. 16; our translation).

Time of the law — is dreaming allowed?

We face the challenge of confronting the unhealthy framework of the colonialist project which, since the turn from the 15th to the 16th century, has functioned as a machine of persecution, deterritorialization, and extermination of our Brazilian, Latin American, and Caribbean peoples–a

---

7 According to the author's description: "In light of the increasing processes of globalization, the term Global South represents the set of beliefs, attitudes, and practices critical of colonialism that form the agenda of a new world order–decolonizing not only at the epistemological level but also politically and economically (Grovogui, 2011). Therefore, here Global South is not understood as a southern point relative to a geographically fixed north" (Castro, 2023, p. 26; our translation).

project that materializes in necropolitics that vampirize biodiversity and diminish the potential of human infants (Tiriba; Guimarães, 2023, p. 231; our translation).

For more than 30 years, an international movement has been affirming the social rights of children and adolescents, internationally consolidated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and in Brazil by the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (Statute of the Child and Adolescent; 1990). This recognition has unfolded into public policies, services, and protocols across various sectors (Health, Education, Social Assistance), yet it does not necessarily consider the "best interests of the child," as children and adolescents are not always heard, remaining muted by adult-centric dynamics.

In the article *Desemparedar infâncias: contracolonialidades para reencontrar a vida* (Breaking down the walls of childhood: countercolonialities to reencounter life), authors Lea Tiriba and Christiana Cabicieri Profice point out that despite all this recognition, the knowledge of children and adolescents continues to be disregarded:

> While it is true that today the fields of Childhood Studies affirm children as fully social beings, the reality in Western societies is that they remain almost entirely ignored: proclaimed as beings sovereign of rights, yet subjected to an adult-centric order that disregards them as autonomous producers of culture and history (Tiriba; Profice, 2023, p. 90; our translation).

In that article, the authors employ the concept of "*emparedamento*" (enclosure; to confine within walls)—developed since 2005 and revisited in 2020—to discuss "the condition of imprisoning children within walls to which they are subjected in educational institutions" (2023, p. 90; our translation). On one hand, within the framework of school enclosure there is isolation and immobilization of children and adolescents, restricting their right to come and go; on the other, what becomes of children and adolescents experiencing homelessness when walls are absent? What might freedom be amid the debris of the city?

Between restrictive enclosures and wandering circulation, it is evident that both movements compromise the holistic development of children and adolescents, imprisoning equally those inside and those on the outside. It is a policy that immobilizes life—a policy of death—echoing the well-known Brazilian riddle: "What do you call a place where those inside never leave; those outside do not wish to enter?" the answer being the cemetery.

Today, there is a sepulchral policy of disenchantment of children and adolescents, and "the management of a life practiced in plural connections from a perspective contrary to diversity produces disenchantment: a loss of vitality that reifies the deepest roots of colonialism" (Simas; Rufino, 2020, p. 6; our translation).

To advance in this convergence between different disenchanted childhoods and to weave together responses—or uncover signs indicating where or how the hexes gain strength and how to "overcome such a demand that insists on lurking around us" (Rufino, 2021, p. 7; our translation)—we observe that both forms of childhood are subjected to a socialization model that includes schooling as a right, yet still operates within politically and pedagogically hegemonic projects oriented by the principles of a "banking" education (Freire, 1996) that serves capital:

> Necropolitics affect them from their earliest years in school, which, according to Althusser (1970), is one of the main ideological apparatuses of the State; by regulating and controlling the masses, it becomes an instrument of subalternation and training to adapt the working classes to the capitalist system. Tasked with the education of all Brazilian children, from 4 to 17 years of age, the school positions itself as both an instrument for transmitting knowledge and, simultaneously, for molding affective and corporeal orientations toward the world of work (Tiriba; Guimarães, 2023, p. 231; our translation).

Thus, in the face of such control, children react in different ways: some submit and follow the formal educational trajectory, while others rebel, resist, or refuse to submit—thereby becoming 'absconders'

from schools and seeking, in other spaces (including the streets for those living in urban settings), alternative possibilities for material, subjective, and sometimes collective survival. For now, we will leave in suspension the possibility of answering what kind of 'de-enclosure' might occur in these other spaces that children come to occupy. Among debris, ditches, shelters, and squares, what is the potential for encounters? What is the quality and intensity of the ties and affects mobilized?

In the 1980s and 1990s, the pioneering work of Ligia Costa Leite at Tia Ciata School, carried out over five years with children and adolescents then absconding from schools–not seen as delinquents, incompetents, or responsible for their "school failure," but rather recognized as "warriors" and "*invencíveis*" (invincibles)–managed to demystify labels and work on content situated in cultural resistance, based on the values of the Afro-Brazilian heritage embedded in their life stories and bodies full of 'ginga[8].' At a time when massacres of homeless children and peripheral Black youth were a reality (as they unfortunately remain today), she already aligned with what Luiz Rufino (2021) now identifies as the challenge of countercolonial educational practices, that is, education "as a force of battle and healing" (p. 6; our translation), which by placing at the center of its struggle the injustices produced by coloniality does not become "tied to any defense of human development and its civilizatory character based on a single logic" (p. 10; our translation). In Ligia's writings recounting this story of magic and invincibility, we find valuable hints and reflections:

> Thus, by choosing the invincibles as students, it was necessary to seek out the historical facts related to them and their apparent characteristics, in order to reach the point of their integration into society–of which they are an integral and inseparable part. It was known, *a priori*, that they did not emerge as they are today. [...] In fact, the *invincibles* have an origin that has always been denied, in the name of an egalitarian school of rights and content. Where does this heritage and magic that enable them to resist the system come from–and simultaneously cause the system to resist incorporating them, with their unique history and cultural context? (Leite, 1991, p. 22; our translation).

The author shares the entire process experienced with the then "street children," alongside school professionals and administrators, presenting photographic records, cartoons, and narratives of these unique and powerful adolescents. She demonstrates how, by understanding their realities and '*gingante*' bodies (full of *ginga*)–perceived as marginal by society yet re-signified via the recognition of the ancestry of their Black identities–they were capable of pursuing schooling, despite their time running short due to the subsequent dismantling... And she concludes with something that Paulo Freire's work had already pointed out and that today educators who advocate countercolonial epistemologies and practices also uphold: "The school institution will only come to educate the '*vadios*' (slackers), the '*marginalia'* (marginalized), the Black people, when it allows them to occupy that space, making them the center of the process and masters of their own learning" (Leite, 1991, p. 23; our translation).

This experience was, and indeed remains, inspiring for any service, program, or project currently dedicated to working with the homeless population and/or peripheral childhoods and youth, not exclusively within the Education sector but preferably from a more intersectoral

---

8 In the text "*Dialéticas da ginga: performances dos corpos subalternos em movimento*" (Dialectics of ginga: performances of subaltern bodies in movement) by Ricardo César Carvalho Nascimento (2019), there is a rich discussion about *ginga* that strongly recalls the ways in which these boys, girls, and non-binary children express themselves through their bodies. Consider the following excerpts: "The idea of dissimulation–hiding intentions, distracting, and disguising–is among the conceptualizations that pervade the concept of *ginga*, as asserted by the renowned Mestre Pastinha [...]. However, for many capoeira researchers, [...], it is impossible not to engage in a broader reflection that allows us to understand both the social and cosmological action of *ginga* within the realm of social life and its impact on the subjects who are touched by this ethnic-aesthetic expression of the African cultural heritage in the diaspora." [...] In our societies, the act of walking properly presupposes an erect physical posture–a firm, normative body. From the perspective of Christian religious ethics, walking is conceived as traversing paths of rectitude, social assertiveness, and spiritual propriety. Ginga, in contrast, subverted these logics of walking by envisioning alternative ways of transferring bodily weight in which what matters is not balance, but imbalance (p. 52-54; our translation).

perspective. However, it is important to note that among the contributions of those now engaged in this battleground of care for Brazilian childhoods, there is an urgent need for pedagogies that align more closely with the ethics of care (Boff, 1999), built across multiple territories throughout Brazil in a kinship relationship (Krenak, 2020) between "humanity and nature" (Cavalieri; Ordonhes de Mello; Tiriba, 2022, p. 177).

Among the inseparable premises of this countercolonial pedagogy ,which is necessary to prevent the erasure of original cultures and knowledge, are play and games, regarded as acts of liberation and decolonization:

> [...] existence is part of a playful nature [...] Play invokes a repositioning of being [...]. Play is not merely confined to a specific experience, but is a liberation subjected to the very aspects that constitute its act. For a world that invests in the domination and alteration of ways of using the body, in evoking memory, in feeling affection, in living community, and in weaving together sharing, play, as an expression of freedom of being, is an act of decolonization (Rufino, 2021, p. 70, our translation)

It is beyond the scope of this essay to delve into the vast theoretical productions on the category of play across the different fields of knowledge and practices devoted to the subject—from its conceptualization to the description of its functionalities, for example, in child development and the well-being of humanity. In the case of children, it is sufficient to recognize that it is via play that a child discovers the world, creating relationships and expanding skills. Moreover, especially for children made vulnerable by various forms of violence, oppression, or restrictions on the free exercise of their right to play, these factors can directly interfere with their cognitive and affective development.

Beyond the briefly highlighted values and functionalities of play, we affirm its potential as an act of decolonization (Rufino, 2021). In the case of children experiencing homelessness, we understand that both *ginga* and play are "invitations to freedom, to nature, and to life in collectiveness" (Cavalieri; Ordonhes de Mello; Tiriba, 2022, p. 186;

our translation). Accordingly, it is worth ensuring spaces for '*brincação*' (playification)—a term that, according to Elayne Batista (2016, p. 13), was a beautiful metaphor coined by Guimarães Rosa (1988) to express the freedom and exuberance of birds in the sky, that is, play as a movement that is, in essence, constitutive of the flow of a good life, something inherent to our nature and ancestry.

Between times and setbacks—circulation, maneuverings, and the ethics of care

Encounters with children and adolescents radically reflect the transitory nature of time. A few weeks are enough for transformations—physical, subjective, and affective—to become evident.

This brief character of existence, present in every living being, in childhood gains an urgency aspect, especially when vulnerability processes leave their marks on bodies and subjectivities.

Based on nearly a decade of experience working with children and adolescents experiencing homelessness—following their displacements and survival strategies in a large municipality of the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area—it became possible to identify a mismatch between the speed required for the production of care for vulnerable childhoods and public responses, which in various institutions and policies operate at a lag, with requirements that impede accessing and staying in services.

On the one hand, there is an enclosure of children and adolescents within educational institutions; on the other, we identify childhoods imprisoned on the outside, circulating between streets and institutions of shelter and social education.

This wall that divides the inside from the outside carries within its structure ancestral marks of exploitation and capitalist appropriation, in which private property draws the precise line defining who has the right to protection and who must fend for themselves in order to live.

Notably, the concepts of "*viração*" (maneuvering; to get by) and circulation were defined by Gregori (2000) to describe survival practices based on experiences of displacement, territorial and affective bonding and unbonding, as he observed the

trajectories of adolescents in vulnerable situations through life on the streets.

As highlighted in a previous article by Gonçalves (2018 apud Berger *et al*., 2021, p. 22; our translation) regarding Gregori:

> [...] circulation, in addition to describing mobilities between public and institutional spaces—including streets and both institutional and family shelters—in a process of maneuvering in the name of survival, also describes the pathways through the territories and primary socialization environments (familial and community of origin), in which, given the fragility of affective bonds and material resources, the practice of "*se virar*" (to get by) demands the expansion of these circuits and generates a movement of wandering throughout the city.

The wandering produced and this movement of disaffection have deep roots in enslavement and the colonizing logic, demanding for the effective production of care an ethical shift—one that is more welcoming and less regulatory—considering that the definition of protocols, flows, and criteria has functioned as a barrier to access.

To confront the open trenches of time, it is necessary to dig into the domains of land, property, and life, based on a new ethic founded on care that shares and on sharing that cares.

Shared care is only possible when grounded in collective rights, based on the space of common discourse and action, of knowledge that carries ancestral memories and collectivizes struggles against all forms of oppression, inspired by Community Feminism, whose main defender is activist Julieta Paredes.

As highlighted in the article "*A ética do cuidado nos processos de acolhimento de crianças e adolescentes: tramas, fios e conexões*" (The ethics of care in the processes of sheltering children and adolescents: weavings, threads, and connections):

> The "Ethics of Care," as a paradigm applied to public policies aimed at the social protection of children and adolescents, can contribute to overcoming a limited conception of social protection that relies more on philanthropy, hygienist principles, and

processes of institutionalization oriented by the logic of asylums, rather than on public policies that advance the guidelines of intersectorality, care, and comprehensive education, situated in the Brazilian social reality, side by side with a caring and antiracist city-society (Berger *et al*., 2021, p. 24; our translation).

Endless notes – spiraling time, play, and affective territorialization

> *For Rufino (2019), ancestry is read and lived as a politics that celebrates existence as a continuum and being as a communal exercise. For him, it is ancestry that nourishes us with its repertoire of healing in the face of scarcity, disenchantment, and colonial awe. In this sense, a child can be our ancestor [...]. Ancestry passes through our body-territory and, present in children, reveals the circularity of time and the inseparability of nature and culture, of us and others* (Cavalieri; Ordonhes de Mello; Tiriba, 2022, p. 180; our emphasis and translation).

The reflections presented here aimed, first, to contribute to the composition of a thematic dossier entitled "*Encruzilhadas da vida: população em situação de rua e direitos humanos*" (Crossroads of Life: Homeless Population and Human Rights), which seeks to shed light on the issues that permeate the lives of children and adolescents experiencing homelessness, from a critical perspective on the production of Brazilian childhoods situated within contexts of structural and historical social inequalities and injustices.

Along this path, the issue of "the disenchantment of childhoods" (Simas; Rufino, 2020) has been problematized by referencing the process of "coloniality" and its effects on the living conditions of children and adolescents—which generally manifest as rights violations and diverse forms of violence, many of which have already been widely addressed by researchers in the Social and Human Sciences, outlining profiles that portray these effects.

We seek to make visible the role of the generational marker in the colonial heritage and have chosen to primarily intersect racism, adultcentrism, and capitalism. Although we recognize that other markers—such as gender, sexuality, and territory, for example—are also of great importance within the complexity of the phenomenon of vulnerable childhoods that live or circulate between streets, occupations, and shelters, the specificities related to them have not been deeply explored here. This may be considered a limitation of the essay, which we hope can be better discussed in future works and/or in other chapters of the thematic dossier, especially regarding the dramatic situation of women and street-based maternities.

Thus, we justify the choice of skin-color/ethnicity, class, and generation as a theoretical and practical path that has potentially led us to delineate different processes of enclosure and 'de-enclosure' (Tiriba, 2005) of childhoods—especially those experienced by children and adolescents in situations of homelessness in their circulations and maneuverings (Gregori, 2000)—seeking to map intensities that affect their body-territories, either empowering and uplifting them or, conversely, saddening and disenchanting them, from an ethical and political perspective of suffering "that arises from being treated as inferior, subaltern, worthless, a useless appendage to society," that is, it "reveals the ethical tone of the everyday experience of social inequality" (Sawaia, 2014, p. 106; our translation).

Finally, we must not fail to highlight something absolutely fundamental to be made visible in the gaps of these encounters and misencounters, enchantments and disenchantments, timelines and setbacks—situated between real and imaginary worlds—and which can be considered one of the rights most frequently violated and trivialized in the recognition of children's ways of being: play! Rufino (2021), drawing on the work of the *curumins* as enchanted beings who "descend from the stars to plant play right here where we are," reminds us that it is up to our children to continue that cycle, giving "continuity to that planting" (p. 69; our translation), in the sense of ancestry present in the spiraling circularity of beings' development.

And it was precisely in the connection between play and subalternized cultures—as seen in the resilient, *gingante* way of being of boys, girls, and non-binary children experiencing homelessness—that we witnessed the potential of a "playful guerrilla" present in the "art that throws the body onto the battlefield, turns it into a weapon, and operates it as a healing balm for the violences and traumas that go by the name of vagrancy" (Rufino, 2021, p. 72; our translation).

The possibility of occupying squares and streets alongside people experiencing homelessness via play and playful activities has been one of the experiences of political engagement in the territory that teaches us something about "the importance of play as the primary condition for the possibility of creating a possible utopia" (Malta *et al.*, 2023; our translation). This represents a form of popular extensionist action, developed in partnership between workers of the *Sistema de Garantia de Direitos* (SGD – Rights Guarantee System) and the University, which was initially named "*Ocupa Praça*" (Occupy the Square) and later as "*Ocupa Praça – ocupa, cuida e brinca*" (occupy, care, and play)[9]. The intervention became part of an affective-playful territory, providing both individual and collective care and promoting the re-signification or "re-enchantment" of vulnerable childhoods, ensuring protected space and time for their singular existences as Subjects of Rights, thereby endorsing a conception of territorially and affectively grounded praxis (Cavalari Neto; Berger, 2024).

Therefore, it is urgent to delineate aspects of the political impact of these children's ways of being in the territories, from the perspective of a countercolonial gaze and a permanent movement to "force the sight and perceive the unseen: children, their presences, and absences, in different places and in their drawings and other expressive manifestations" (Gobbi, 2022, p. 37; our translation).

---

9 To learn more, among other publications, see the *Portfólio de Práticas Inspiradoras em Atenção Psicossocial* (Portfolio of Inspiring Practices in Psychosocial Care), an initiative of FIOCRUZ. Available at: https://portfoliodepraticas.epsjv.fiocruz.br/pratica/criancas-e-adolescentes-em-situacao-de-rua-e-acolhimento-institucional-construindo

References

ALMEIDA, S. L. de. Racismo Estrutural. São Paulo: Jandaíra, 2019.

BATISTA, E. K. P. Sagas educativas e brincações no Sertão de Extremoz. 2016. Dissertação (Mestrado Pós-Graduação) - Centro de Educação, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Natal, 2016.

BERGER, S. M. D. et al. A ética do cuidado nos processos de acolhimento de crianças e adolescentes: tramas, fios e conexões. *In*: RIZZINI, I.; COUTO, R. M. B. do C. (Orgs.). Entre a casa, a rua e as instituições: crianças e adolescentes em acolhimento institucional no Brasil. Rio de Janeiro: PUC-Rio, 2021. p. 21-42.

BOFF, L. Saber Cuidar: Ética do humano - compaixão pela terra. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1999.

BRASIL. Lei 8.069 de 13 de julho de 1990. Dispõe sobre o Estatuto da Criança e Adolescente e dá outras providências. Brasília, DF: Presidência da República, 1990. Disponível em: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l8069.htm. Acesso em: 30 jul. 2024.

CARVALHO NASCIMENTO, R. C. Dialéticas da ginga: performances dos corpos subalternos em movimento. Sociedade e Cultura, Goiânia, v. 22, n. 2, p. 45-59, 2019. DOI: 10.5216/sec.v22i2.58395

CASTRO, L. R. de. Descolonização e direitos da criança: uma introdução. O Social em Questão, Rio de Janeiro, v. XXVI, n. 56, p. 25-38, 2023. DOI: 10.17771/PUCRio.OSQ.62276

CAVALARI NETO, R.; BERGER, S. M. D. Vulnerabilidade educacional e as infâncias: enlaces com a rua em aproximação com a escola. Educar em Revista, Curitiba, v. 40, e88337, 2024. DOI: 10.1590/1984-0411.88337

CAVALIERI, L.; ORDONHES DE MELLO, T. de F.; TIRIBA, L. V. Notas de uma metodologia contracolonial teórico-brincante: encontros de educadoras e educadores a 'qual' distância? Revista FAEEBA, Salvador, v. 31, n. 66, p. 173-190, 2022. DOI: 10.21879/faeeba2358-0194.2022.v31.n66.p173-190

FREIRE, P. Pedagogia da Autonomia: saberes necessários à prática educativa. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1996.

FREIRE, P. Pedagogia do Oprimido. 13. ed. Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra, 1983.

GOBBI, M. A. Desenhar e ocupar: crianças na Mauá, Ipiranga e Prestes Maia. São Paulo: Instituto de Estudos Avançados, Universidade de São Paulo, 2022.

GREGORI, M. F. Viração - Experiências de meninos nas ruas. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000.

GROVOGUI, S. A Revolution Nonetheless: The Global South in International Relations. The Global South, [*s. l.*], v. 1, n. 5, p. 175-190, 2011. DOI: 10.2979/globalsouth.5.1.175

HONNETH, A. Luta pelo Reconhecimento: para uma gramática moral dos conflitos sociais. São Paulo: Edições 70, 2011.

KAPUR, R. Human Rights in the 21st Century: Take a Walk on the Dark Side. In: RATHORE, A.; CISTELECAN, A. (eds.). Wronging Rights? Philosophical Challenges for Human Rights. New Delhi: Routledge, 2011. p. 23-60.

KRENAK, A. A Vida Não É Útil. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2020.

LEITE, L. C. A magia dos invencíveis: os meninos de rua na Escola Tia. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1991.

MALTA, F. D. S. et al. Deixar a utopia ganhar a cidade: o papel da extensão popular e da luta pelo direito à moradia e à cidade na formação em saúde. *In*: SEMANA DE EXTENSÃO DA UFF, 28., 2023, Rio de Janeiro. Anais [...]. Niterói: PROEX UFF, 203. Disponível em: https://www.proex.uff.br/semext/criaPDF.php?trb_ID=362&ano=2023. Acesso em: 30 jul. 2024.

MENEGHETTI, F. K. O que é um ensaio-teórico? Revista de Administração Contemporânea, [*s. l.*], v. 15, n. 2, p. 320-332, 2011.

PROFICE, C. C.; SANTOS, G. H. M. dos. De grumetes a kunumys – estilos de infâncias brasileiras. História da Educação, [*s. l.*], v. 21, n. 53, p. 307-325, 2017. DOI: 10.1590/2236-3459/61054

QUIJANO, A. Colonialidade do poder e classificação social. *In*: SANTOS, B. de S.; MENESES, M. P. (Orgs.). Epistemologias do Sul. São Paulo: Cortez, 2010. p. 84-130.

QVORTRUP, J. Nove teses sobre a "infância como um fenômeno social". Pro-Posições, Campinas,

v. 22, n. 1 (64), p. 199-211, 2011. DOI: 10.1590/S0103-73072011000100015

ROSA, J. G. Manuelzão e Miguilim. 4. ed. Rio de Janeiro: José Olimpo, 1988.

RUFINO, L. Vence-demanda: educação e descolonização. Rio de Janeiro: Mórula, 2021

SAFFIOTI, H. I. B. Contribuições feministas para o estudo da violência de gênero. Pagu, Campinas, n.16, p. 115-136, 2001. DOI: 10.1590/S0104-83332001000100007

SARMENTO, M. J. Sociologia da Infância: Correntes e Confluências. *In*: SARMENTO, M. J.; GOUVÊA, M. C. S. de (Orgs.). Estudos da Infância: educação e práticas sociais. Petrópolis. Vozes, 2008.

SARMENTO, M. J. Estudos da infância e sociedade contemporânea: desafios conceptuais. O Social em Questão, [*s. l.*], v. XX, n. 21, p. 15-30, 2009. Disponível em: http://osocialemquestao.ser.puc-rio.br/media/v10n21a02.pdf. Acesso em: 30 jul. 2024.

SANTOS, L. M. C. Caminho das ruas, caminho das pedras: sinais de alegria nas violências contra moradoras de rua em São Paulo. 2021. Dissertação (Mestrado de Pós-Graduação) - Departamento de Psicologia, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2021.

SAWAIA, B. As artimanhas da exclusão: análise psicossocial e ética da desigualdade social. *In*: SAWAIA, B. (Org.). 14. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2014

SIMAS, L. A.; RUFINO, L. Encantamento sobre política de vida. Rio de Janeiro: Mórula, 2020.

TIRIBA, L. Infância, escola e natureza. 2005. Tese (Doutorado de Pós-Graduação) - Departamento de Educação, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro: 2005.

TIRIBA, L.; PROFICE, C. C. Desemparedar infâncias: contracolonialidades para reencontrar a vida. O Social em Questão, [*s. l.*], v. XXVI, n. 56, p. 89-112, 2023. DOI: 10.17771/PUCRio.OSQ.62303

TIRIBA, L.; GUIMARÃES, M. Infâncias, cuidado, liberdade, pertencimento: inspirações indígenas para uma pedagogia nativa. Revista Eletrônica do Mestrado em Educação Ambiental Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação Ambiental – FURG, São Lourenço do Sul, v. 40, n. 2, p. 230-249, 2023. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14295/remea.v40i2.15538