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CHILD URBAN MOBILITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF HOME-SCHOOL COMMUTING TO CHILD CITIZENSHIP

MOBILIDADE URBANA INFANTIL: A IMPORTÂNCIA DO TRAJETO CASA-ESCOLA À CIDADANIA DA CRIANÇA

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ABSTRACT

Child urban mobility is a fundamental right. This is experienced on a daily basis through the home-to-school route. It is through mobility that children engage with their community and establish their citizenship. Accordingly, the objective of this study was to understand how children's lived experiences on the home-school route contribute to the development of their citizenship. Utilizing an ethnographic study in a socially vulnerable neighbourhood in Recife - PE, it was deduced that the completion of the journey independently strengthens the ties of identity and community belonging, demonstrating active citizenship in terms of city participation. Conversely, it was observed that the rights of urban mobility for children are not respected, with automobility taking precedence over pedestrian traffic, and the infrastructure being in poor condition. Notwithstanding, children seem to be unaware of their rights.

Keywords: Child citizenship; Home-school commuting; Urban mobility; Pedestrianism; Urban ethnography.

RESUMO

A mobilidade urbana é um direito da criança. Ela é experimentada diariamente através do trajeto casa-escola. É através da mobilidade que as crianças participam da comunidade onde vivem e tornam-se cidadãs. Neste sentido, o objetivo deste trabalho foi compreender como a experiência vivida por crianças no trajeto casa-escola é importante à construção de sua cidadania. Assim, através de um estudo etnográfico num bairro de vulnerabilidade social em Recife - PE, pôde-se considerar que a realização do trajeto com autonomia fortalece os laços de identidade e pertencimento à comunidade, observando uma cidadania ativa, no que se refere à participação na cidade. Em contrapartida, percebeu-se que os direitos de mobilidade urbana das crianças não são respeitados, a automobilidade é central e impõe-se frente aos pedestres, a infraestrutura é precária e as crianças, entretanto, parecem desconhecer seus direitos.

Palavras-Chave: Cidadania da Criança; Trajeto Casa-Escola; Mobilidade Urbana; Pedestrianismo; Etnografia Urbana.

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INTRODUCTION

During an unpretentious walk around the neighborhood, a child exercises, recognizes the people around her, meets her peers, has contact with nature, and can enjoy the sensation of being in the fresh air by feeling the sun on her skin and the wind on her hair. This kind of experience promotes identification with the space and the community they integrate (CERTEAU, 1994).

Although urban mobility is a child's right (BRASIL, 1990; 2005; 2016), the experience of wandering the streets has become rarer to Brazilian children, especially to those who live in urban cities of large- and medium-size (RNPI, 2015). Urban fear (BAUMAN, 2009), the accelerated lifestyle and the transformations western cities have been going through are making daily activities like walking to school less frequent (FREEMAN, 2006). These factors are leading many families to privilege motorized vehicles as the main transportation mode of their children and by restricting their outings to closed spaces (RNPI, 2015).

In most cities, the preferred mode of transportation is private motorized vehicles. For this reason, automobility is at the core of contemporary societies (SHELLER; URRY, 2000; URRY, 2008). This, however, is a reality that must be changed (RNPI, 2015). Besides the enhanced risk of accidents and longer traffic jams — due to the concentration of transport on a single mode —, private motorized vehicles are extremely pollutant when compared to other modes such as subway and train, or even hybrid buses — not to mention social exclusion, a consequence of mobility priorities in the public space destined for a private mode of transportation and the separation of the individual from the environment they inhabit, taking into account that by using cars the individual loses direct contact with the neighborhood and the city they reside (BARCZAK; DUARTE, 2012; NEUMANN, 2011; SHELLER; URRY, 2000; URRY, 2008;).

In the face of urban mobility challenges, mobility itself has become a priority in the planning of cities. In Brazil, law no. 12.587/12, known as "*Law of Urban Mobility*", determines to municipalities the task of planning and executing actions that prioritize non-motorized modes of transport and services of collective public transport (BRASIL, 2012). Over the years, the excessive emphasis on automobility has made legal interventions necessary for the emergence of improvements in mobility through other modes of transport — cycling, waterway and walking, for example — as well as improvements in the already existing ones — such as buses, trains and subways.

By virtue of the contemporary complexities imposed for people to appropriate the space of the cities, it is assumed that the current nearer contact children have to these spaces is when they commute to school; something that is expected of all children, daily. They live the city when the journey between destinations is made through active transportations, such as walking/pedestrianism, as they experiment the cities through urban mobility, an action that consolidates their belonging to the city (CERTEAU, 1994). In the cases which the circulation is made through automotive modes, it favors the "unbelonging" and/or the estrangement of the space (SARMENTO, 2018).

The idea of citizen and the right to citizenship emerged in Classical Antiquity, when the city represented communitarian unity. Thus, the word "citizenship" derives from the word "city" and it is in the public space of cities that citizens meet to claim their rights, their citizenship. It is through mobility, among other means, that children participate in the community they reside. In other words, they occupy their space in the city. They appropriate their right to the city and, therefore, constitute themselves as citizens.

Still, Brazilian urban inequality — the huge unevenness between the urban spaces occupied by the richest and the poorest — is permeated by the large economic and political power inequality that occurs in societies that privilege some peoples to the detriment of others (VILLAÇA, 2011). In Pernambuco, a state in northeast Brazil, more than 60% of children from ages 0 to 14 live in households with an income of less than half the minimum wage, and more than 280,000 children from age 0 to 17 live in *favelas*, where the social vulnerability creates countless issues. In Recife, the state's capital, a major part of the population lives in inadequate conditions of urban well-being [1] (RIBEIRO, 2016), approximately 500,000 people — a third of the municipality population — lives in *favelas* — vulnerable urban areas — equivalent to more than 60% of the territory. The urban structures of these spaces were built, for the most part, in a spontaneous and disorderly fashion (MVM, 2020).

As a consequence of this consideration, comes the lack of attention to child urban mobility, mainly for those who live in socially vulnerable neighborhoods, the neighborhood of Fundão in Recife is an example. In view of this, this study aims to understand children's experience of walking their home-school routes and how this experience influences the construction of their citizenship. To achieve this, the theoretical field of citizenship and child urban mobility were explored in sections 2 and 3 of this paper. Additionally, in section 4, we drew on an urban ethnography recommended by Jirón and Gomes (2018), which yielded a rich and detailed description for the ethnographic analysis regarding, in section 5, "community participation," and in section 6, "children's right to the city in urban mobility." This approach enabled us to sketch out, in section 7, the concluding considerations.

CHILD CITIZENSHIP

In the classical sense, citizenship was an association of adult men, in the *Polis* — the city-state of ancient Greece — who came together to make decisions. All male citizens who participated in the governance were, in principle, considered equal. The classical citizenship was based on social classes — it was open only to aristocratic men — and on races, as interpreted at the time — excluding foreigners from citizenship (COCKBURN, 2013).

In historical terms, the citizen *par excellence* was the adult man. Women, foreigners, slaves, and, in essence, children, were not considered citizens. In this conjuncture, it could be mentioned that the latter were "projects of citizens" or "embryonic citizens" (SARMENTO; SOARES; TOMÁS, 2006).

In the mid-20th century, Thomas Humphrey Marshall, a British sociologist, developed in "*Citizenship and Social Class*" (1950) — a seminal work on citizenship principles — the concept of citizenship based on this set of three dimensions: civil, political, and social. He associated the development of citizenship with each of these dimensions raised and validated in different centuries: the civil rights established in the 18th century; the political rights in the 19th century; and the social rights in the 20th century. The author considers that it is through historical construction that the idea of citizenship is established.

Civil citizenship manifests itself in the fundamental rights necessary to the freedom of the individual, that is, it manifests in the possibility of free thought and expression, and in the right to property and justice. Political citizenship enacts the political rights of the individual, being able to

[1] Based on the Urban Well-Being Index (IBEU), generated from IBGE's 2010 demographic census data. The concept of urban well-being that bases the aforementioned Index comes from the comprehension of what the city should provide to people in terms of material conditions of life to be provided and used collectively. This index is composed of five dimensions: urban mobility; urban environmental conditions; urban housing conditions; attendance of urban collective services; urban infrastructure (RIBEIRO, 2016).

exercise its power through candidacy and/or election. The concept of social citizenship defends that every individual has social rights that include, for example, education and health. It also refers to the right to live civilly, according to society's standards — to participate in it as a member of the community, to have one's rights respected and perform duties (MARSHALL, 1950).

According to Marshall's (1950) concept of citizenship, all individuals should be recognized as equals, as should their right to participate in the society they integrate. The concept is not adequate for child inclusion because it conditions being a citizen to the social status of adults, which means to spontaneously exclude children and youngsters (BALLESTEROS, 2016). Currently, there have been plentiful discussions on child citizenship and, as a result, there are a number of meanings and perspectives that conceptualize it. It is common to encounter citizenship associated with rights, duties, nationality, and participation (DELANTY, 2000).

For Jans (2004), child citizenship is the observation that children really do take part in society — an argument based on James and Prout (1997) and on Qvortrup (1993) — and that they determine the environment — in turn, an argument based on Corsaro (1985). Thus, children only receive the status of full citizens when citizenship means participation and involvement with society.

The concept of child citizenship as we understand it today is quite recent because the emergence of children citizens is the result of multiple achievements. Over time, these achievements attributed rights and duties to children, who have come to be seen as individuals in the society they belong to and are capable of active participation (PEREIRA, 2017).

Active citizen children are the ones who participate in and are capable of changing their worlds, taking into account that citizenship is one form of participating and engaging with society (BALLESTEROS, 2016). To Roche (1999), participation is key to their citizenship, which is, above all, the result of social integration.

To participate and engage in society, it is imperative that children experience the city. It becomes impossible to address citizenship without simultaneously addressing the right to the city — to be in/use/occupy the city is a *sine qua non* condition for citizenship. The one belonging to children will be discussed here in virtue of city appropriation through urban mobility in the home-school commuting.

CHILD URBAN MOBILITY

Since the 20th century, the expansion of automobile traffic has propelled the urban infrastructure to the construction of new roads and other routes (SHELLER; URRY, 2000; JACOBS, 2011) and the transformations of cities, making the daily activities excessively distant, and, consequently, the population highly dependent on the artificial transport systems (FREEMAN, 2006). The relevance of the global automotive industry proves the consistency of this mode of transport (CORDEIRO; MELLO, 2018). In Brazil, for example, it is estimated that in 2050 the light vehicle fleet will reach 130 million units, resulting in a motorization rate of approximately 1.6 inhabitants/vehicle (BRASIL/MME, 2014). As a consequence, the cities have been governed to attend the demands of those who own cars (URRY, 2008).

Associated with this is the population clear preference for individual transportations, intensifying a not so recent characteristic cultural trend of individualism (DIÓGENES *et al.*, 2017). It must be recognized that automobility attributes status to car owners and associates them with a range of different concepts, such as speed, security, professional success, and freedom (SHELLER; URRY, 2000).

The perception of automobility as the exclusive solution to daily commuting depends on the perpetuation of the belief on unlimited technological progress and its own reproduction — strongly aligned with the Cornucopian thesis (MELLO; SATHLER, 2015), note, — as well as in practices and in colonialist and militarist principles rooted in the techno cultural project (FURNESS, 2013). With a stronger critical sense, the invasion of automobiles and pressure from the automobile lobby convert cars into a disruption for urban and social life (LEFEBVRE, 2001).

For adults, the most common form of daily mobility is probably the commute to work. To spend long periods in traffic is natural for most inhabitants of Brazilian major cities. Fact commonly associated with the hardships of contemporary life. They spend hours immobile in cars or other collective vehicles in long traffic jams when commuting to their daily appointments. In this context of contemporary mobility, little is discussed on the commuting of children when they are submitted to urban centers (MÜLLER, 2018). The journeys home-school and school-home are the most frequent form of daily mobility for the child. Therefore, it is undeniable that automobility also affects children. And when urban mobility is done through automobiles, it favors the "unbelonging" and/or the estrangement of the space (SARMENTO, 2018).

In the case of child mobility, researches performed in European contexts indicates a decrease in children's freedom, which leads, by extension, to a decrease in autonomy and free transit, and to a lack of recognition of the geographic space of cities by these children (SABBAG *et al.*, 2014).

In Brazil, Müller *et al.* (2018) explored the case of two public schools in the Federal District, where only 4% of children walk to school, while 57% live more than 20 km away, and, for that reason, must use automotive means. Cordeiro and Mello (2018) studied the representation of a neighborhood in Recife made by children through their drawings. As a result, they identified that children from private school networks of Recife are losing close contact with the city because they don't walk it, they have no mobility autonomy and their circulation is almost purely automotive. The few children who walk every day to school share a different spatial perception of the neighborhood where they live; some manage to observe the social space in addition to the built one by noticing the living spaces of people in the neighborhood.

At a time when cars have priority in urban spaces (JACOBS, 2011; SHELLER; URRY, 2000; TONUCCI, 2005; URRY, 2008), mobility difficulties faced by pedestrians on the streets are notorious. In urban centers — as Recife — there are many poorly designed, excessively small, uneven, bumpy and dirty sidewalks, that are also subjected to uses such as parking for motor vehicles, these are just a few obstacles that arise when walking along public roads. If this is troubling for the elderly, adults, and youth, it is worse for children, especially small ones. As an aggravating factor, unstandardized and poorly maintained sidewalks — depressing gray "carpets" — are uninviting to walks under the hot sun.

Children are not exposed indiscriminately to the city. They conquer their mobility slowly. At first, children walk the routes accompanied by adults — dependent mobility — and, step by step, they gain confidence to walk without the presence of a responsible person — independent mobility (O'BRIEN; TRANTER, 2006). Their autonomy is gradually conquered, until they build, adequately, notions of space and time. To cross streets, for example, it is necessary to think about the distance to go to the other side and to calculate, even if unconsciously, the time it will take to cross depending on the flow of vehicles and pedestrians (SILVA; FREZZA, 2010). The first journeys are small and controlled, but gradually they increase until children understand the inherent "dangers" and are able to make

sensible decisions in the face of unexpected events — such as a car that does not respect pedestrian signals and crosswalks at a moment where the traffic light is on for pedestrians to cross.

The independence of mobility is gradually achieved. It depends on the child's maturational development, as well as the experiences where they live the city within interaction contexts (NETO; MALHO, 2004).

Every country handles the initiation of children's mobility on the city streets in a particular manner (PREZZA *et al.*, 2005). In some countries, such as Switzerland and France, there is a kind of social protection network for children and, at a very young age — at ages 5 to 7 — children tend to go to school unescorted. Such differences are related to cultures, the understanding of what are communities, and the organization of public spaces in each country (PREZZA et al., 2005). In São Paulo, Brazil, for example, there are some movements to encourage children to walk from home to school, such as the "walking bus", which is a system that encourages parents, family members, guardians, and volunteers to take children to schools in a safe and alternative way. In this system, children are led on foot, walk in pairs, and are encouraged to wear clothes that allow them to be seen from a distance. Two volunteer monitors are responsible for everyone's safety during the journey, basically sharing two responsibilities: one goes ahead and has the function of being the "driver" and another goes at the end of the queue to be the "supervisor".

In neighborhoods where parents feel they belong to the community, where they know the routes within and have good relationships to the neighbors, there are greater opportunities for their young children to move around with certain freedom. In these conditions, parents and children consider the streets that surround them to be safe (PREZZA et al., 2005; RAMOS *et al.*, 2021). In certain contexts, children who reside near parks and/or who have easy access to leisure activities outside their own homes, such as at friends' homes, move around more comfortably and safely (O'BRIEN *et al.*, 2000). In any Brazilian urban center, the main activities performed by children who enjoy similar autonomy are linked to studying and playing (RODRIGUES *et al.*, 2007).

While adult mobility generally means getting from one point to another in the shortest time possible, children's mobility is an itinerary made up of many intermediate points — and, in a way, "misaligned" —, as important as — or even more so than — the final destination (TONUCCI, 2005).

It is undeniable that, by way of mobility, children participate in the community in which they live (O'BRIEN; TRANTER, 2006). Therefore, when they overcome the restrictions imposed on people their age, they appropriate their rights to the city, and it is expected that they become participants in the community and, perhaps, active citizens.

URBAN ETHNOGRAPHY OF HOME-SCHOOL ROUTES

Children's mobility experiences on the home-school route were examined using ethnography, which, according to Magnani (2002), is a suitable research methodology for understanding urban phenomena. This approach aims to acquire profound and detailed knowledge about the individuals studied (Clifford, 2002; Emerson, Freetz, Shaw, 2013; Restrepo, 2018). To apply this methodology, we utilized the technique of participant observation. Through participant observation, the researcher situates themselves in a natural setting for a specified duration — typically, long-term — with the aim of investigating, experiencing, and representing the life and social processes that occur therein (Emerson, Freetz, Shaw, 2013). Consequently, the researchers applied this technique and accompanied the children on their journey from school for approximately one month (after initially identifying

them via a questionnaire on urban mobility). The researchers composed field journals, which were transformed into rich and detailed descriptions concerning community participation and the child's right to the city in urban mobility. These can be observed in detail throughout the course of the article. Ethnography can be defined as the description of what people do, from their own perspective. In other words, ethnographic studies are interested both in practices and in the meanings they acquire for their practitioners. The articulation of these two dimensions is undoubtedly one of the crucial aspects that help to highlight the ethnographic perspective and scope in relation to other types of description. Thus, what an ethnography seeks is to contextually describe the often complex and specific relationships between practices and meanings for specific peoples about something in particular (RESTREPO, 2018).

From an ethnographic point of view, it is possible to approach peoples' daily experiences by following urban commuters' routes and trajectories, based on a movement approach, which enables the description of mobility and circulation experiences (JIRÓN; GOMES, 2018). Along the way, the ethnographer attempts to observe the various modes in which commuters make sense of mobility and circulation. This involves observing the body and its emotions, the materiality and the physical spatial environment, the other commuters, the strategies and tactics adopted, and the meaning attributed to each spatiality addressed (IMILAN *et al.*, 2015).

To accompany individuals on their usual routes reveals a map of journeys in different contexts, in which the most significant contacts are perceived, as well as the relationships of everyday life in the city. The importance of researching with previously unthinkable "partners" is highlighted, fostering various experiences (MAGNANI, 2002). This argument reinforces the relevance of working with children (MARQUES *et al.*, 2017) — although one is aware of the challenges caused by the differences between adults and children (CORSARO, 1985) — as they establish unique relationships with people and places, thus expressing means of acting, thinking and negotiating with the rules and possibilities of their city.

Ethnographic interpretation and analysis begin after the writing of the "field diary" — a report that describes experiences and observations that the researcher had when intensely and engagingly participating of the researched phenomenon. A dense description of the findings of the entire field diary is redacted in order to close the processes (EMERSON *et al.*, 2013).

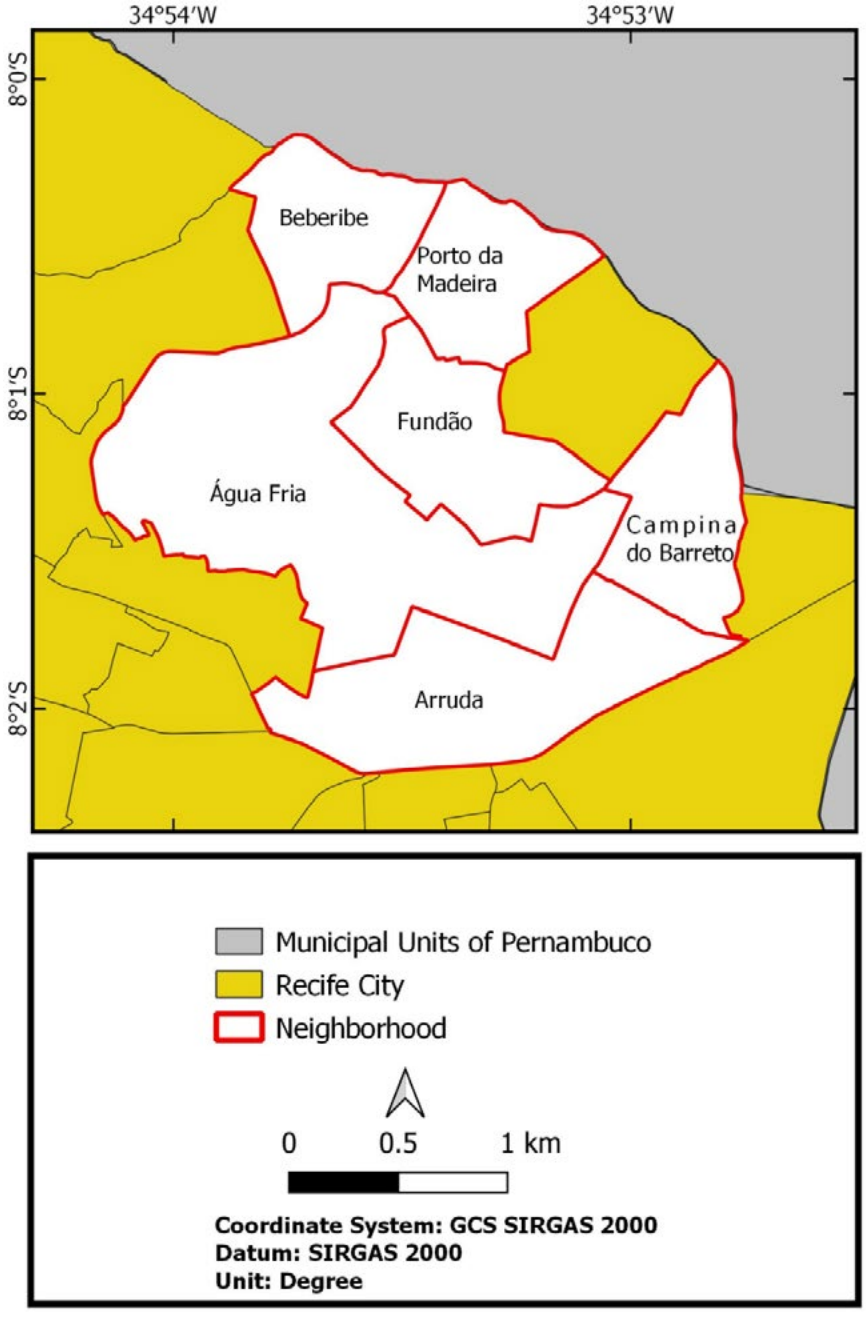
This ethnographic study on the home-school commuting was produced in a public school unit in Fundão, a neighborhood that integrates the 2nd Political-Administrative Region of Recife, *RPA Norte*, located in the peripheral ring of the city of Recife, an area in which poverty and social inequality are aggravated (ARAÚJO; ARAÚJO, 2005). Its population is 8,132 inhabitants, with 26.62% of the population aged up to 17 years (PMR, 2020).

Before the ethnographic monitoring, 188 surveys applied to students of the sixth grade were initially collected — with prior authorization from school administration and board of ethics and research — to be identified: where they reside, modes of transport used in the home-school commute, and child's mobility autonomy.

Sixth grade students were chosen because they are, on average, 12 years old, age at which the *Child and Adolescent Statute* (BRASIL, 1990) regulates that children must be protected by their guardians.

The 188 children surveyed — the students of the referred school — mostly live in the neighborhood where the school is located — Fundão — and in the two neighboring ones — Água Fria and Campina do Barreto. See Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Disposition of neighborhoods where most students reside



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It was found that the most used mode of transport for home-school commuting was walking, followed by bus, car, motorcycle, bicycle, and school van — see Charts 1 and 2.

Chart 1: Departure - Going to school

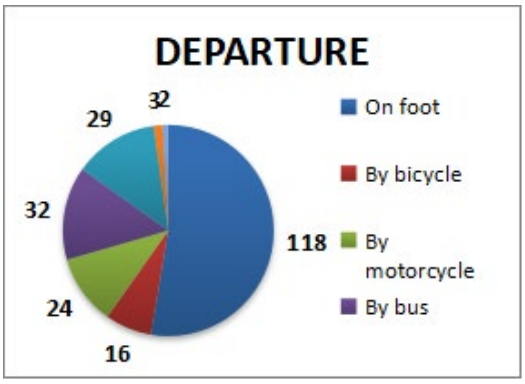
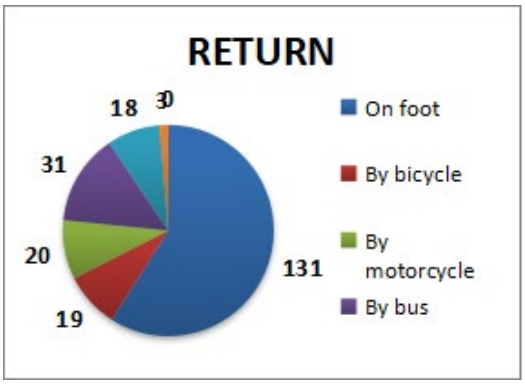


Chart 2: Return – Going back home



Notoriously, the main mode of transportation to and from school was walking[2]. However, the surveyed school was a traditional public school and students live in its surroundings due to the state school enrollments system that is based on proximities. This way, with rare exceptions, students lived near the school unit — roughly in a proximity radius that allowed them to execute their tasks on a human scale, a condition that favors walking as a mode of transportation.

This ethnography was produced based on the children who walk the home-school route, more specifically the ones who lived in the neighborhood of Água Fria. But, as the objective of the research was also to identify and describe the participation of children in the community surrounding the school, it was decided to observe them exclusively doing it alone — with autonomy.

In regard to mobility autonomy, it was observed that almost half the children who walk to and from school were already commuting alone.

The surveyed children have an average age of 11,3 years, which justifies, in part, the fact some of them still walk the route escorted — they are in a transition period from dependent to independent mobility.

In particular, the child monitored in the field of this research already has the autonomy to transit the streets and avenues of Fundão neighborhood and its surroundings. Thus, these children were systematically observed for about a month — April 2019 —, at which time it was possible to draw considerations about the appropriation of the city through mobility and, consequently, citizenship.

PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY

Therefrom, after the children were identified through the application of surveys at the school unit, they were observed in the field, after leaving school, for a period of approximately 1 month, for 2 to 3 times a week, and, later, some were escorted on the way from school to their homes. During the ethnographic observation, field diaries were redacted for the elaboration of the richly detailed description of the field, as illustrated below.

The research was attentive during the process of systematically approaching the children involved. After receiving authorization from the school board and administration, the researchers were introduced — by school staff — to the students in every group of the sixth grade, when the surveys were applied. At this moment, the children were informed they were to see the researchers for a period of time in the surroundings of the school, observing and photographing them on their routes.

[2] The values from Charts 1 and 2 are different because the children could choose more than one commuting mode from and/or to school.

On that account, the teachings of Whyte (2005) were followed, they recommend an intermediary in participant observation, as to assemble researchers and the researched to ask questions about the intentions of the former with the latter as the studied community. In addition, the research was approved by UFPE's Board of Ethics and Research board under report 4,484,305.

Thus, during field observations on the participation — interaction — of the community on the route taken by the children, the researchers were immediately recognized by them, who often asked to be photographed, in order to appear more actively in the field research — a fact that facilitated their interaction with the researchers and to accompany them home.

Most children are truly participative in the neighborhoods of Fundão and adjacencies. They move with property and autonomy on the home-school commuting. They appropriate the space, occupying side streets, school sidewalks, and opposite houses to talk and play. The school street seems to be their central meeting space, with the presence even of those who miss classes — normally they stay in front of the school, waiting for their friends on the way out, so they may come together.

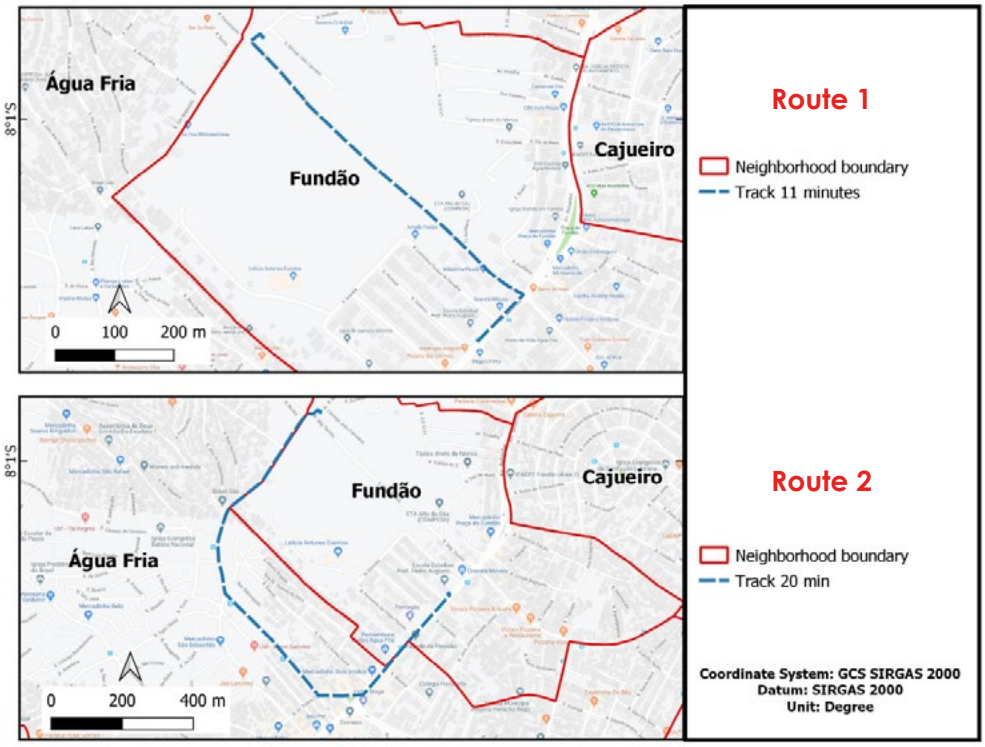
They have substantial contact with traders in the areas they walk, especially with the owners of candy and popcorn stands. They shop, they talk — act as though longtime "colleagues". This fact makes their commute safer, as, according to Jacobs (2011), the importance of the normal presence of adults on dynamic sidewalks cannot be overlooked.

They supervise the children and incorporate them into society while occupy themselves with their own activities. This restricts the approach of strangers to the community, who are aware of the area residents. It is also necessary to understand this attitude of "supervision" as a mechanism to teach the fundamental principles of urban life. It is a lesson learned through living.

They normally commute in groups and very slowly, although they are not infrequently at a temperature of 30°C at midday in Recife — a common time schedule for the end of classes —, exhibiting they feel comfortable and safe in their routes. We reiterate that it is quite an exception to see them walking alone. The groups are not properly "closed", so it is generally composed of 4 to 5 members. It is common, when commuting the same route, for a late child to run, hurry and/or shout for classmates to wait for them, so they can tell their colleagues and/or ask something related to school — because the recurring subject is this: what happened at school on that day and in previous days — and then become part of the group, many times, for a few moments. There are invariable children within the groups, but they tend to mix during their commute each day and form new dynamics. These factors — such as mobility on foot and the possibility of interacting with people in the community — reinforce children's bonds of identity and belonging to their public spaces.

Finally, it was found that children living in the same location — children who were close neighbors — did not always take the same route. When we started to accompany them home, it was understood that some were following different routes. Some of those who live at the Água Fria bus terminal, or in its proximities, pass through Alto do Céu. While others take the route along Beberibe Avenue to the Água Fria Center, and then continue to the terminal — see Figure 2.

Figure 2: Routes 1 and 2 to the Terminal de Água Fria



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Route 1 as observed in Figure 2 is considerably shorter — a 750-meter course completed in 11 minutes — as route 2 — a 1600-meter course completed in 20 minutes. The reason why some of the children take the longer route is that, according to them, it offers more security. In this sense, we verify they prioritize the level of safety of the routes and weigh risks and opportunities.

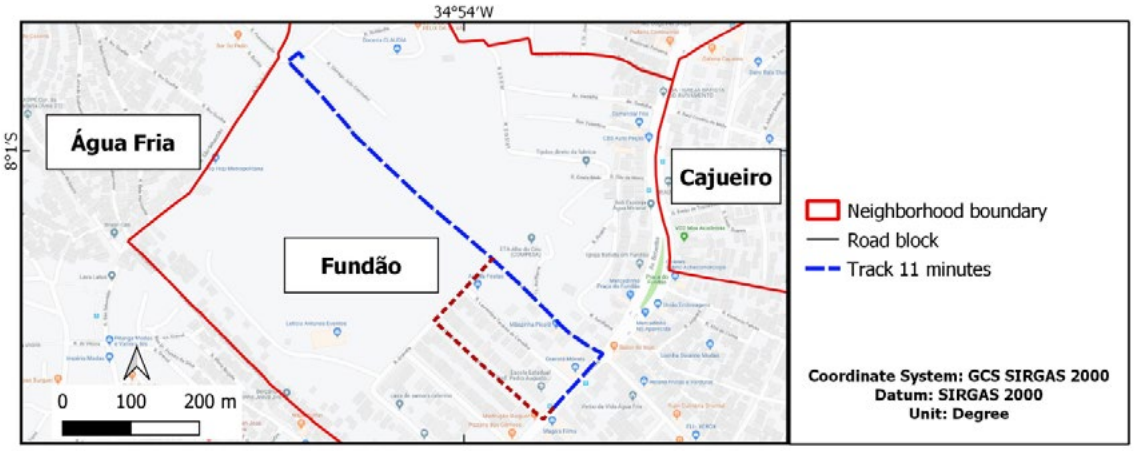
In any case, children who take the shortest route do not think there are at any risk. On the contrary, they feel free to go through whit it since they know the place, feel safe, and belong there. For certain, they have never witnessed anything that suggested insecurity on route 1. Children that walk route 2 are not authorized by their parents to follow on route 1. Their parents do not consider it safe. Therefore, neither do they.

Dávila and Arantes (2016) deal with the urban imagery of fear in Latin America, which mixes real violence and the subjective perception of society, becoming a way of living in the contemporary city — this way consolidating itself as a space of temerity. In the case of children who walk route 2, part of the urban imagery — unfounded or not — is present in their perception of the route back home.

Some details must be presented about route 1, in Figure 2: in fact, the children who walk it do not do it exactly in the way shown by the blue dotted line. They go through it making a detour at an improvised staircase, as shown by the path in red, in Figure 3.

This is what Certeau is discussing when he says that "[...] practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen [...]; their knowledge of these spaces is as blind as that of embracing lovers" (1994, p. 23). Therefore, it is the walker who determines their routes, not necessarily taking the routes that were planned for such purposes.

Figure 3: In red, variant to route 1



Design: Estevão Lucas Ramos da Silva (2019)

Intriguingly, climbing the alternate staircase is not easy. Thus, children use their vitality to overcome it without much physical strain — see Images 1, 2 and 3.

Image 1: Path leading to the stairway — view from bottom to top

Image 2: Children climbing the stairway

Image 3: New path stairway — view from top to bottom

This ethnography provides, through intersubjective encounters with the children, access to some experiences and notions of belonging to the city through their home-school commutings.

CHILD URBAN RIGHTS IN URBAN MOBILITY

In the observations made during the home-school commutings, it was noted that children's rights to the city are not respected. In front of the school, there is a crosswalk without traffic lights, but children rarely cross the avenue on this crosswalk because of intense car traffic along this road at high speed and do not give them priority to cross, even when children crowd the sidewalk in front of it. Those who take the risk usually take the opportunity to cross when there is no flow of cars and still drivers do not respect them, even if they pass through the crosswalk.

Below, the sequence of Images 4, 5, and 6, presents a blatant example of a child being forced to run to avoid being run over by a motorcycle, even though she is in the crosswalk without traffic lights, where vehicles would necessarily have to give her priority.

Image 4: Child starts crossing after bus passes crosswalk

Image 5: Child on the crosswalk, crossing avenue

Image 6: Child obliged to run to the sidewalk avoiding the motorcycle

It was observed that there were no obligatory signage and protection for pedestrian circulation, even when there is an obstruction on sidewalks or passages they go through. This was verified when accompanying the children on part of one of the routes to the terminal of Água Fria. There, they came across a sidewalk clogged with garbage — see Image 7 —, which also had a very unpleasant odor of decomposing animals — a fact that they indicated to be recurrent in the area. Thus, when cars pass, the children line up in the free corner of the street, where there are no signs of obstruction of the sidewalk or protection for pedestrians.

Besides having their rights disrespected — since they are not prioritized when crossing the pedestrian crosswalk — and the obstruction of sidewalks with garbage, the routes they walk do not have traffic and speed control — which could offer security against being run over — or policing against urban violence.

Image 7: Sidewalk obstructed with garbage

The school present in this ethnography is located on Avenida Beberibe, a road with high traffic of motor vehicles. However, children leave the school through a side door, on a quiet street — that is, not directly facing the avenue. They, who commute from home to and from school to home along the Avenue, always walk along the sidewalks and cross the crosswalk. However, they do not do so in the crosswalk exactly in front of the school because it does not have a traffic light and, as observed previously, drivers do not respect the priority of pedestrians — see Image 8. Thus, children cross the

avenue 100 meters before or after this point, where there are crosswalks with traffic lights — see Image 9.

Image 8: Lack of use of crosswalk without traffic lights, in front of school

Image 9: Use of crosswalks with traffic lights

We could observe that when the commuting is not made along the avenue, but through the less crowded streets, the children do not usually walk on the sidewalks or in line. They walk in groups, playing, running. There, they don't seem to be too concerned about vehicular traffic.

As a result, it is evident that children's rights to the city through urban mobility are not respected in the home-school routes around this school unit in Recife. On the busiest avenues, where there is adequate infrastructure, there is no traffic education for drivers to worry about pedestrian children within a radius of proximity to school units. On the side and less busy streets, there is no adequate infrastructure, therefore, they cannot walk safely without taking unnecessary risks on urban roads with greater traffic, and they are forced to walk further to cross the crosswalk. On less busy streets, they have to walk down the street, because the sidewalks are obstructed.

DISCUSSIONS

The experience lived by these children in their home-school commuting is, to a large extent, responsible for their participation in the neighborhood of Fundão — where the school unit referenced in this study is located — and in the other neighborhoods in its surroundings; it is also responsible for their recognition of neighbors — such as colleagues with whom they study and proprietors of commercial establishments along their routes.

Such facts mean that the socialization of children in the city is strongly affected by their mobility in the home-school commutes. It is assumed that carrying out the journey with autonomy strengthens the bonds of identity and belonging to the community, an active citizenship can be observed in terms of participation in the city.

As for the children's right to the city, we observed that in the school surroundings their right as pedestrians is not being respected. Automobility is central and imposes itself prior to the pedestrians. On the other hand, infrastructure is precarious. The children, in turn, strictly speaking, seem to be unaware of their rights.

Apart from the presuppositions, awareness is fundamental to Unicef's "Convention on the Rights of the Child" (UNICEF, 1990) that attributes that States have the obligation of turning their principles and dispositions "widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike". It is recommended to include Human Rights as a subject and disclose the "Convention" in schools' curricula is a primordial action.

The promotion of media campaigns is, for example, a way to educate pedestrians — children included — and, mostly, for drivers to recognize and respect pedestrian rights — and, in the case of the school unit referenced in this research, especially when the crosswalks do not have traffic lights. It is paramount to comprehend that the poor practices witnessed by children may be incorporated as principles of their urban lives and may be applied when they, too, become drivers.

Finally, it is urgent that Brazilian municipalities initiate — or continue — a transformation that involves the establishment of a paradigm: treating public spaces as a priority place for people, guaranteeing, in particular, children's right to the city, especially in socially vulnerable neighborhoods as the one studied in this research, where most children are pedestrians on home-school commuting.

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