

# An Ecosystemic Framework to Develop Critical Socio-Cultural Learning Niches in the Contemporary World: Advocacy, Public Policies, Research and Teaching Programmes

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Trying to solve isolated problems without addressing the general phenomenon (the paradigms of development, growth, power, wealth, work and freedom embedded at institutional, cultural, economic and political level), is a conceptual error: instead of dealing with the “bubbles” (segmented, reduced issues), the ecosystemic approach defines the problems inside the “boiling pot”, considering the “world-system”, with its boundaries, structures, techno-economic paradigms, support groups, rules of legitimation, and coherence.

Anthropogenic views do not distinguish between the whole of the human beings and the destructive action on nature and culture of the political and economical establishment: powerful lobbies, deeply ingrained in the public administration, favour mega-projects with intensive use of resources; formal education, more technology, democracy, can not redress the asymmetric power relations (political, economic, educational and social) that prevent a critical participation of the major part of the population in the public sphere.

The ecosystemic approach highlights how worldviews, values and perceptions affect communication, advocacy, public policies, research and teaching programmes, it reconceptualises roles and drives, in view of the role of the four dimensions of being in the world (intimate, interactive, social and biophysical), as they combine, as donors and recipients, to elicit the events (deficits and assets), cope with consequences (desired or undesired) and contribute for change (potential outputs).

Quality of life, well being, socio-ecological, aesthetic and ethical values, the development of a moral and cultural meaning of the existence, natural and built environments, citizenship, peace, cooperation, empathy, tolerance, coexistence, respect, are essential aspects of being in the world; they result of the interplay, the mutual dependence and the adequate equilibrium between all dimensions of being in the world, that should be promoted altogether, to support each other to live better in a better world.

Instead of taking current prospects for granted and project them into the future, the definition of desirable goals and the exploration of new paths to reach them is pointed out; in the socio-cultural learning niches, heuristic-hermeneutic processes can generate awareness, interpretation and understanding beyond established stereotypes and preconceptions; meanings are shared in a performative context, in

a state of resonance, awareness, interpretation and understanding, in a new “semiosphere” and in a new performative context.

The ways of being in the world can be unveiled by heuristic-hermeneutic processes: intermediary objects, selected to catch the eye (curious things, seeds, shells, bottle caps linked by a string), are presented to the participants, who register whatever comes to their minds in a non-identified piece of paper, subsequently distributed out of sort and read aloud by all participants, who share and analyse their perceptions from a thematic (“what” is at stake), epistemic (“how” to define the phenomena), and pragmatic (“whom, when, where”) point of view:

- 1) Thematic aspects refer to the content, to the emphasis and inclusiveness of the statements in view of the dimensions of being in the world;
- 2) Epistemic aspects account for the structure of thought, for the subject-object relationships (constructivist; common sense; dogmatic);
- 3) Pragmatic aspects refer to the circumstances, agents, places, timing (actions, strategies, instances, policies and practices).

Thematic analysis refers to contents, to the emphasis and inclusion of the different dimensions in the statements:

- intimate dimension: values, feelings, core beliefs, commitments;
- interactive dimension: affiliations, , allegiances, partnerships, leadership;
- social dimension: political, economic, social, cultural institutions, mass-media;
- biophysical dimension: vital needs, environment, territories, artifacts.

Epistemic analysis reveal different forms of subject-object relationships:

- appropriation: alteration of cognitive, affective and conative processes;
- dogmatism: reduction to logical categories, frozen schemes of thought;
- dependence: reliance on exterior authority to qualify own experience;
- compliance: abiding to pre-established beliefs, preconceptions).

Definition of problems should overcome segmented public policies, reduced academic formats, market-place interests and mass-media headlines; the ecosystemic approach favours the development of societies that invest in each other rather than in mega-projects, it extends to environmental problems, quality of life and the state of the world a conceptual framework that includes ontological and epistemological issues, how worldviews, values and perceptions affect advocacy, public policies, research and teaching programmes.

About the Author:

André Francisco Pilon, along his career, held the positions of Associate Professor, University of São Paulo; Psychologist, São Paulo’s State Court of Justice; Director, Ministry of Health; Editor-in-Chief, journal *Academus*, Collaborator, *Journal da USP*. Academic Background: Masters of Public Health Education, University of Puerto Rico; Doctorate (and Post-Doctorate), University of São Paulo. Affiliations: International Academy of Science, Health & Ecology; UNCCD Science-Policy Interface; EuroScience; World Alliance for Citizen Participation: IUHPE; WSSCC; Center for Healthy Cities. Areas of Expertise: Environmental Sciences; Education; Ecosystems; Urban Studies, Politics, Economics, Social Sciences; Psychology; Ethics, Public Health Education; Journalism.

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