

# EDUCATION AND MEANINGFUL CONTEXTS: JUVENILE EXPERIENCES AND REPRESENTATIONS IN A NON-SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

**José Augusto Palhares**

University of Minho

Braga, Portugal

[jpalhares@iep.uminho.pt](mailto:jpalhares@iep.uminho.pt)

## Abstract

Our guiding principle is the presumption that education, in all its breadth and complexity, is only meaningful when it takes place in meaningful contexts of action, and so it cannot be narrowed simply to school space and time. This paper therefore suggests an approach that is more consistent with a *sociology of non-school education*, on the basis of which we try to understand the role of non-formal and informal learning in the construction of meanings of *juvenile experience*. For this we have brought to the discussion some research data collected from members of the scout movement, since this century-old organization, predominantly non-formal in nature, has developed its educational project on the basis of a belief that young people are actor-subjects in their own education. Critical consideration is given to the influence and place of the new and traditional contexts/institutions in the construction of citizenships and juvenile subjectivities.

## Keywords

Non-school education (non-formal and informal education); youth movements; meaningful contexts; scouting, juvenile experiences.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are no any accurate studies or indicators that contribute to the characterisation of the wide educational field from the sociological point of view. However, it is not difficult to admit that we have been witnessing the growth and expansion of processes, contexts and forms of non-school education, both in non-formal and formal contexts. If on the one hand this observation seems to give some sense and novelty to the proposals of Edgar Faure *et al.* (1973), namely those that lay the foundations for the project *educational city*, on the other hand it is also true that many social transformations occurred in the last four decades, as well as the concomitant development of sociological and educational thought led to the fact that the progressive visibility of non-school education was largely due to a radicalization of the idea of school *crisis*, sustained by several angles of analysis and made legitimate by the various frameworks of social experience. Even though the "deformalization of institutions" (Ibid.) has not taken place yet, as those authors intended, we have witnessed a reconfiguration of the educational field, not always with a very clear outline and sometimes even with contradictions.

There are many studies inspired by multiple theoretical models strictly related to schooling, with sociology of education having almost exclusively centred its attention on the formal teaching system, on school and schooling processes. However, as far as the non-school *sub-field* and its relation with school are concerned, there is a certain scientific underdevelopment, despite the consensus on the need to redirect the sociological *look* to other educational objects of relevant heuristic potential (see, among others, Stoer & Afonso, 1999; Afonso, 2001a, 2005; Duru-Bellat & Van Zanten, 2002). Our proposal for analysis is centred exactly on a framework of concerns of a more *holistic* nature and not so "centred on school" (see Correia & Matos, 2001), adopting as a fundamental presupposition the fact that young people in a context of non-school education take on the double role

of *learning actors* and *knowing actors*. As they undertake a project and they are builders/defenders of their own identities, we need to understand the ways, by which young people rebuild their life courses, readjust and recreate their references, and manage the heterogeneities of the social world, in a context of non-school education (see Derouet, 2001b).

Our thought is guided by shifting the debate to other less saturated spheres of educational knowledge, mainly to those that allow for other angles of analysis to understand the educational process globally, namely the search for answers to some issues raised when we cross the *social condition* of young people of today with the multiplicity of *sites* and experiences that the city offers them. As everyday life is so fertile in learning possibilities, which conditions drive young people to give them distinct meanings and values? How are the different experiences summed up and translated into the construction of youth identities and subjectivity? What is the underlying logic to investment and participation in the different non-school activities and how does this articulate with wider projects for education and citizenship?

In the second part of this article we privilege a non-school youth movement – scouting –, in as far as it is represented as a context where the issues structuring our thought intersect: school and non-school education, young people and their *social condition*, social experience and action. This centenary youth movement developed on the whole planet, supported by an *educational project*, which holds young people responsible for their own education. In other words, the scout is invited to be active in the discovery of life's personal and collective meanings in a logic of *collective citizenship* and democracy, which, in our opinion, is indicative of a process of *meaningful education* emerging from action and by action. The empirical information we use later in this article only arises for the purposes of critical thought (as well as exploratory) on some clues for analysis that this text will share. However, it still reveals expressively young people's *look* on the diversity of the worlds they live in, from a non-school educational context, which provides them with a detailed map of benchmarks for action.

## **2. A NEW CONSTELLATION OF YOUTH SOCIALIZATION SITES AND EDUCATION**

Independently of the function and position of non-school education in a more global educational framework (non-school education as an *alternative*, as a *complement* or as a *supplement* – cf., among others, Paulston, 1972; Brennan, 1997; Trilla Bernet, 1998; Rogers, 2004; Palhares, 2007), the focus on action allows for analysis and debate on the effects of non-school education at the level of meaningful learning, on the plan of socialization processes and spaces, on the domains of sociability and life styles, family education, school routes and paths related with the world of work, among other structural dimensions of the various youth groups. Nevertheless, to understand the meanings of juvenile experience at the various *sites* of non-school education, it is firstly necessary to analyse the pedagogical fundamentals of these educational spaces-time and consequently to question the relations established between the actor and the system. That is, given the diversity of situations and places, the voluntary nature of its members to participate, the less hierarchical and centralized structures, the preference for more active and participative pedagogy, among other aspects, the structural configuration of the contexts of non-school education seem to translate a different nature and dynamics of interaction with the field of action of young people. By transferring to this analysis the notion of “structure duality” of Giddens (2000), for example, we realize that structural constraints take on a smaller weight and importance than the possibilities of action, which are central to the unfolding of these educational processes. The less rigid, hierarchical, centralized and lasting structure presents a more fluid, incoherent and more dispersed and correlatively less constraining and imposing structure on the dynamics of action. On the other hand, by allowing the logic of action to go forward, the structure becomes more permeable to change and thus more malleable as far as its permanent capacity for regeneration/reconfiguration is concerned.

The way young people subjectively (re)build their social experience is, from the very instant, associated with the *social condition* of youth, as an aggregating situation of multiple senses and meanings (see Pais, 1993, 2001). Bearing in mind that this segment of the population is supposedly at a stage of transition to adult life – more and more problematic and subject to analysis, as we know –, and given the plurality of situations and contexts of educational potential that are part of the daily lives of these social actors, the sociological importance of the social experience to the development of the individual has therefore increased in many points of view. We would even go as far as to say that we are in the presence of a *stage of life* more disposed to *experimenting* the social or else, from another point of view, one could say that young people are those who are more involved in multiple formal and

non-formal contexts of interaction but, paradoxically, have a shorter experiential path in the management of the different logics of action.

Covering a wide range of domains, spaces and times, the universe of non-school education translates quite well the idea of *constellation* as far as the arrangement of logic, values, objectives and reference models circulating along the routes of young people's lives are concerned. If it is true that one of the most marked features of the recent transformations of contemporary societies lies in the accelerated change of *life styles* at professional and family levels – one should stress the progressive access of women to the labour market and the consequent redefinition of the nature of family functions and roles – even more obvious will be the transformations in the contexts of youth socialization and education. In fact, concomitant with the reduction of time of family presence in daily education of children and young people, the multiplication of possibilities and alternative situations of socialization emerged as an inevitable reality in the dynamics of the societies of *advanced capitalism*. Together with the reduction of the educational role of the family, the weaknesses and contradictions pointed out in the consolidation of the universal project of *school for the masses*, the crisis of youth employment, among other social dynamics, we have also been witnessing the progressive expansion of the *market* in the area of non-school education (mainly the non-formal type), trying to stand in and address new social needs, partly arising out of the recent reconfigurations of the interdependence between educational institutions/organisations. Other emerging places and processes of non-school education, such as *cyberspace* and the dynamic related with the political-ideological matrix of *cognitive society* (or *knowledge, information* or *learning society* among other similar terms), even though they are not only due to the *crisis* at school, they might, in the opinion of Afonso (2003: 43), “stress and deepen the *crisis* of that same School, mainly if they are replaced and controlled by economic interests at national and global level” (Ibid.).

Following the theories of Alain Touraine on the movement of *demodernization* in progress in globalized societies, we could even suggest that the expansion of the non-school educational *subfield* happens at the same time as the movements of *de-institutionalization* of family and school and consequently translates quite well the idea of *de-socialization*, since it contributes to the “growing fragmentation of the experience of individuals who belong simultaneously to several continents and to several centuries: the self lost his unity, became multiple” (Touraine, 1998: 16). In the Portuguese sociological panorama, Silva (2002) also wondered about the educational effects of a growing multiplication and recombination of socialization models on the construction of youth identity, warning about the possibility of significant discontinuities and disruptions along the tortuous course of social learning.

Between the two worlds that classically represented the main spheres of socialization (family and school) we have gradually witnessed the rise of a universe of education and training possibilities. However, this process shows some syncretism and has introduced some tension and contradiction in the course of action and intervention of the institutions that dispute the *field*. The proliferation of contexts of non-school education is intimately linked with the transformations occurred in the world of work and employment and with the emergence of new symbolic and ideological operators and of social mediation and, inevitably, with a political and daily repositioning of school, which brought about a new *geography* of actors, spaces-time, knowledge, standards, values, experiences, etc. The knowledge of the implications and effects of non-school on the development of children and young people still lacks depth of sociological analysis, despite evidence of the fact that the school as an institution still maintains its influence on the construction of the paths and education and training choices, in so far as these investments tend to be oriented towards (and have an influence upon) school performance of students. Very popular in the last forty years, the notions of non-formal and informal education cover nevertheless processes and educational practices that have long been acknowledged in the literature of the area (see, among others, Coombs, 1968; Paulston, 1972; La Belle, 1981, 1982; Radcliffe & Colletta, 1989; Trilla Bernet, 1998; Rogers, 2004), and have also been part of strategies of social distinctiveness for a long time. Besides the more utilitarian view of initiatives to occupy children's and young people's free time, what may constitute news is the conviction (or illusion) that such practices and processes constitute an investment with a return in terms of educational success. If we investigate their influence at school level, it will not be incorrect to admit that, given the diversity of supply, the inherent strategies of the various paths of education and learning differentiate themselves. And thus, this educational subfield ends up contributing to social and cultural reproduction as well, something that has been found out and confirmed in previous works developed in the areas in question (cf. La Belle, 1981, 1982; Afonso, 2003).

It is important to stress here that, for purposes of theoretical clarification, this new educational characteristic of the youth *condition* situated in a kind of cross-fire, crossroads, a *labyrinth* of multiple socializations, where discerning the various courses of action has become crucial to the management

of daily life. In this perspective we share the thesis of José Machado Pais (1993), when he claims that young people have become producers of their own daily lives, permanently reinventing solutions to deal with the multiple conditionalisms that they face in the “intricate structures [labyrinthine structures] of daily life” (Pais, 2001).

Jean-Louis Derouet also deals with this phenomenon when he mentions the loss of protagonism of family and school and the transformation of young people into actors of their own socialization, concluding that “sense has become the fundamental issue: how can children create a sense from the information they get at school and beyond?” (Derouet, 2001a: 29). In another pertinent analysis on the evolution of sociology of education, the same author, deals with the themes, the theories and paradigmatic references, suggesting that the base unit of this subject could be found again in the way the individual mobilises the different educational resources and modalities (school and non-school) with a view to building his identity: “Nowadays young people are important actors of their socialization and they build themselves, negotiating with institutions and with their peers as well, in the scope of non-formal modes of education” (Derouet, 2001b: 88).

From the beginning of their course of life young people experience social heterogeneity as a daily reality, as a multilogical universe that demands from the individual a permanent task of deciphering and subjective restitution of his senses. And it is in this line of thought that we consider that the classical notions of “primary socialization” and of “secondary socialization” proposed by Berger & Luckmann (1990) no longer cover the current complexity of sources, resources, times and socialization spaces that interpose and oppose the classical forms of *city* organization. Because of that, the *constellation* of socialization places / sites and of non-formal and informal education constitute a challenge to the investigator on the *field* of education, if he is really interested in understanding whether they are centred on reproductive and regulating logics or emancipatory and change logics (see Afonso, 2003).

Recovering the classical assumption (revived by Dubet, 1996) that the individual is never completely socialized, one could state that the *social condition* in which young people find themselves, drives them to the beginning of an unfinished socialization cycle. This assumption fits perfectly into the thought of Paulo Freire, namely when this author analyses the human being and education as a permanent exercise, stressing “his condition of historical-social being, continuously experimenting the tension of being to be able to be and being not only what he inherits but also that which he acquires, in a way which is not mechanical. This means that the human being, while a historical being, is finite, limited and inconclusive, but not aware of his inconclusion” (Freire, 1997: 18).

The fact that young people wander through different spaces-time of socialization and education, more or less formal and very often with divergent logics of action, constitutes nowadays an unquestionable feature of *late modernity*, and deserve a sociological investment about the thought of the individual in the (re)construction of his world. Thus, expressing the dimensions of heterogeneity, individual and collective subjectivity, young people’s thoughts about their life paths all require an analytical matrix, which is very close to a *sociology of experience*, such as it was maintained by François Dubet (1996). In the subfield of non-school education it would therefore be interesting to understand the way young people experience the tensions arising from their daily confrontation with different referential models of action – for example, religious, associative, recreational-cultural, sports contexts complementing school, leisure activities, among others –, how they integrate them subjectively into the construction of their relation with the world or also how they process the combination of multiple educational influences underlying these different contexts.

Seen as a central aspect to understand the construction of the social experience, the tensions experienced by young people represent an important link allowing for the connection of the individual to the system. In this particular case, it constitutes a way of debating the complex relationship created between young people and the established and establishing orders of which they are an integral part. The three logics of action identified by Dubet (1996) – the “logic of integration”, the “logic of strategy” and the “logic of subjectivation” – adequately represent the nature of confrontations and tensions experienced daily by young people. This juxtaposition of logics, often existing in the same educational context, requires that young people permanently decipher and analyse the guidelines for their individual and collective behaviour.

### **3. THE SCOUTING MOVEMENT AS CONTEXT OF NON-SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Trying to add some empirical analysis to the above mentioned proposals, we centred our attention on the Boy-scout movement, so as to promote the articulation of the set of problems referred

so far and driven by the following reasons: i) because this movement represents a paradigmatic field of affirmation of non-school educational modalities (non-formal and informal), and particularly because it constitutes a typically youthful space-time; ii) because of the impact of this youth movement at global scale (currently it has 28 million members spread by 216 countries and territories, and it is estimated, according to Tim Jeal, 2001, that over 500 million children, young people and adults have been part of the movement since 1907) and, in the specific case of Portuguese society, because it constitutes the biggest and most consistent youth movement (with nearly eighty thousand members among the three most representative associations); iii) due to the specificity of the educational model and of the associated pedagogical issues, seen by some authors as a precursor model of some progressive theories of education that appeared at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even though it has been recognised as “one of the biggest multicultural and multireligion nets for the education and action of young people in the development of a culture of peace, tolerance and solidarity” (Frederico Mayor, 1995), one notices that the academic and investigative patrimony in the fields of social and education sciences is scarce and even more noticeable is the absence of Robert Baden-Powell’s thought (the founder of the boy-scout movement) on education from the great contemporary educators. It is true that the evolution of this movement has not been indifferent to some investigators over a century, neither has the search for the meaning of its history been ignored. As there is not a group of works on the boy-scout movement and its founder – from which Rosenthal (1986) and Jeal (2001) should stand up –, mainly in the *field* of education, it is likely that there are still images and social representations that require sociological analysis and understanding. Besides some stereotypes and caricatures that remain to these days about the scouts, a more careful analysis on the dynamics of association would reveal that not only the movement has resisted the erosion of the number of members in other youth associations (student, political, religious, among others), but also in some countries there has been a positive trend of growth (see Gauthé, 2007).

The motto for the preface to the first *Scout Handbook* of “Scouting for Boys” (1908) was Baden-Powell’s concern (B.-P.), trying to understand the reason why the most enthusiastic considered the boy-scout movement “a revolution in education”. Although he is initially reluctant to accept this idea, after a few paragraphs and faced with the explanation of the characteristics of the movement, the author tends to admit it. Besides the explanation of the goals of scout education, what we would like to stress from this preface is the fact that we can see in this text the prelude to the current non-formal education, mainly as far as the representation of incompleteness that crystallises in the relation school-society is concerned. His educational proposals, that encouraged outdoor activities as the context of excellence of the boy-scout movement, where sometimes confronted with the model of school education and it was inevitable that they represented not only a criticism of the logic of operation of this institution and the type of citizen it promoted, but were also developed as the search for a space of assertion in the wider field of education. Thus, by stressing the importance of recreational activities in scouting as “a practical aid to education”, B.-P., in the above mentioned preface suggested that “[scouting] It may be taken to be complementary to school training, and capable of filling up certain chinks unavoidable in the ordinary school curriculum. It is, in a word, a school of citizenship through woodcraft”. Even though there is no space for debate here, we should not forget, that the critics of Baden-Powell have suggested that behind the pedagogical strategies of scouting there were concerns related to the signs of crisis of the British Empire, to the contradictions emerging from the industrialization and urbanization movement at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the decline of moral and of conservative values, to war threats and erosion of nationalism, among other reasons (see, among others, Springhall, 1977; Rosenthal, 1986; Pryke, 1998).

Presenting itself as *complementary* to school, scouting introduced, so to speak, one of the dimensions that nowadays tend to characterise non-formal/non-school education. However, B.-P made a point of stressing the educational differences between scouting and school, defining the goals of the movement on a more practical and experiential level: “It aims to teach the boys how to live, not merely how to make a living”. His main concern was to change the educational focus from a more individualistic, competitive, materialistic nature, the closest values to the school *ethos*, to a more social and collective nature, driven by the service for others.

Dedicated to the development of the “active citizenship”, B.-P. defended a scout education based on four dimensions: character, health and strength, handicrafts, serving other fellow citizens. And the *touchstone* of scouting methodology, in which and by which those dimensions were expressed, was the one that stated the *system of patrols*, i.e. a system that shows “each boy to see that he has some individual responsibility for the good of his Patrol. It leads each Patrol to see that it has definite responsibilities for the good of the Troop. Through the Patrol system the Scouts learn that they have considerable say in what their Troop does.” (Baden-Powell, 1977: 32). Knowing that boys (young people in general) have a tendency to group, B.-P. saw in these “fraternity gangs” and their

way of organization and leadership endless possibilities for education and learning. You needed to give young people “a smart dress and equipment”, appeal “to their imagination and romance” and engage them “in an active, open-air life” (Baden-Powell, 1976: 36). Basically, assigning responsibilities in the patrol, the spirit of collaboration and cooperation that emerged during the games, the activities and the various scenarios of scouting interaction, directed to common and shared objectives, were therefore valuable contributions to learn the meaning of democracy and democratic citizenship.

### 3.1. Education and contexts of action – representations of boy scouts

The study of scouting in the light of the theoretical contributions of the *sociology of experience* guides us, therefore, to the analysis of the processes of construction of youth experience, firstly driven by the pedagogical devices used in this context. However, as we know, even though young people find themselves at a crossroads of various socialization spaces, those processes do not constitute a reality divided into units, susceptible of an analysis which would also be cut into sequential and linear *slices*; on the contrary, the *flow* of action does not follow any sequential logic; its dynamics of interaction can only be perceived through its permanent interrelations (see Giddens, 1989, 2000). For this reason, the understanding of the courses of boy scouts presupposes that their study is not separate from the other contexts they are naturally involved in – school, family, the world of work, the area of leisure and free time represent crucial reference matrixes about which one should establish parallelisms, confrontations, relativise. Only from this perspective is it possible to debate the place and nature of this youth movement in the more global framework of education for young people.

The information on the table below comes from a survey divided into two different time frames. The samples (in 2001 n = 406; in 2007 n = 360) are composed of scouts between the ages of 17 and 23 (*rovers*), from the *Corpo Nacional de Escutas* – Portuguese Catholic Scouts, that took part into two national activities. Table 1 summarises the contribution perceived by these young people on the role that the different socialization contexts play in the development of their education/training. The analysis stresses generally the importance of the scouting context in this process, and it was mentioned in first place both in the ethical/moral dimension (side by side with the family) as in the relational dimension, scoring second in the intellectual dimension.

Table 1. Contribution of several contexts to the education/training development of young scouts – mean value of the answers in a scale from 1 (minimum contribution) to 5 (maximum contribution)

Institution/context	Intellectual Development (acquisition of knowledge)		Moral and Ethic Development (values)		Relational Development (social relations)	
	2001	2007	2001	2007	2001	2007
Family	3,93	3,98	<b>4,45</b>	4,37	3,89	3,85
Group of peers	3,27	3,60	3,15	3,43	4,28	4,27
School	<b>4,33</b>	<b>4,38</b>	3,23	3,67	3,80	3,98
Scouting	3,96	4,21	<b>4,45</b>	<b>4,42</b>	<b>4,60</b>	<b>4,54</b>
Church (catholic)	2,85	2,86	3,68	3,44	3,02	3,02
Club, association (sports, cultural, and others)	2,34	2,65	2,32	2,60	2,79	3,30
Media, TIC (TV, internet, radio, ...)	---	3,50	---	2,57	---	2,57

Source: Survey by Questionnaire to Rovers of Corpo Nacional de Escutas (Portuguese catholic scouts), 2001, 2007 – Cf Palhares (2004) [26].

However, if on the one hand this positive view of the importance of scouting for the educational and training course of the young people who took part in the survey is not independent of the nature of the experiences they live in this context of non-formal education in time, on the other hand one can find other interpretation clues in external factors to the movement. When we verify, for example, that school, one of the central institutions, only scored first in the intellectual sphere, and obtained a moderate score in the two other spheres, we are tempted to admit that the well-known *crisis* of the school model is even more acute on the ethical/moral and relational levels, which enables other instances of socialization (alternative and/or complementary) to occupy that place and establish themselves gradually as referential models of action.

Following this line of thought, we recover the ideas of young scouts on school and school education (see table 2) discussed in a previous piece of work (see Palhares, 2004), presenting a view of education which is not restricted to school and a vision of school which is not only linked to the teaching dimension. Even though school education is considered to be bookish and transmissive, school education still represents for young people a place where you acquire useful knowledge for professional performance, and they even recognise that teachers play a wide and significant role from

the point of view of education. But the most consensual representation of school reveals an institution with a deficit in the dimensions of citizenship, with an effect on its democratic capacity (items 10 and 12), on the levels of promotion of equal opportunities and difficulty of integration of the underprivileged and of social and ethnic minorities.

Table 2. School and school education in the opinion of young scouts (%)

	Strongly Approve	Approve	Undecided	Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove
1. The education practiced in schools no longer corresponds to the interests of young people today (n=396)	3,0	<b>37,6</b>	21,5	<b>35,6</b>	2,3
2. School is the most important institution of education existing in society (n=396)	9,3	<b>44,4</b>	9,3	33,8	3,0
3. School is particularly valued by young people as a place of conviviality and friendship (n=398)	7,8	<b>55,8</b>	15,8	19,6	1,0
4. The education provided in schools is mainly a transfer of the knowledge bookish (n=399)	18,5	<b>55,6</b>	12,5	13,0	0,3
5. Despite some opinions, what is learned in school is useful for the professional training of young people (n=399)	23,6	<b>62,4</b>	7,0	6,5	0,5
6. The school is an excellent place for learning democratic and participative values (n=398)	4,0	<b>37,4</b>	28,6	27,9	2,0
7. The global education of the young must consider other knowledge and other skills produced outside the school (n=399)	<b>62,2</b>	33,3	3,3	1,3	--
8. The social role of teachers is not only limited to the transmission of knowledge and its subsequent evaluation (n=397)	40,3	<b>46,3</b>	8,6	4,0	0,8
9. The school does not prepare adequately the young for the job market (n=398)	22,1	<b>46,2</b>	17,3	13,3	1,0
10. The school is the social institution that more promotes the equality of chances (n=399)	1,5	22,8	29,8	<b>39,6</b>	6,3
11. In general, teachers only give attention to the school knowledge	8,6	<b>42,8</b>	19,1	28,2	1,3
12. School contributes to the social integration of disadvantaged and ethnic and social minorities (n=397).	1,3	31,2	25,4	<b>35,3</b>	6,8
13. School and teachers play an important role in the education for the citizenship (n=397)	9,6	<b>65,0</b>	14,6	10,1	0,8
14. School promotes those who already have more opportunities in life (n=398)	8,8	<b>36,2</b>	27,6	25,4	2,0

Source: Survey by Questionnaire to Rovers of Corpo Nacional de Escutas (Portuguese catholic scouts), 2001, 2007 – Cf Palhares (2004) [26].

By giving a positive assessment to the knowledge acquired outside school and denying an active role of this institution for the democratization of society, we think it would be useful to get to know the views of these young people on the possible and / or desirable relations between school and scouting (see table 3). The general meaning of the answers is linked positively to the scouting model (and its possible efficacy), underlining the importance of this model for environmental education and, surprisingly, electing it as a reference in the pedagogical domain. Furthermore, in these answers one perceives that the scouting experience seems to create and enhance in these young people a stronger sense of belonging than school, well stressed in the *tendency to disagree* about propositions that debate the environment, the spirit and the originality of the movement: “school is a space of intercourse and friendship, which is more pleasant than scouting” (81,6%); “generally, the attitude of scoutmasters is an imitation of teachers’ attitudes” (80,8%); “on the whole, I think that my involvement with scouting impairs my school performance” (79,3%). In an *integrated perspective of education*, scouting tends to be recognised as one of the best prepared institutions at non-formal level, and therefore, according to the people surveyed, the articulation of the two institutions at educational level is thought to be desirable.

From the point of view of the main meanings of representations, namely valuing ethical, moral and relational values, evident in the way young scouts *look at* and interpret education and school nowadays, it is possible to conclude, according to Dubet (1996), on the presence of two prevailing logics in the domain of their guidance: the *logic of integration*, oriented towards the defence of values and ideals of identity and democracy and the *logic of subjectivation*, expressed in the way young scouts attribute a subjective sense to their own scouting experience, electing it as a space-time of potential educational and pedagogical value.

Table 3. School and scouting in the opinion of young scouts (%)

	Strongly Approve	Approve	Undecided	Disapprove	Strongly Disapprove
1. In general, teachers value the fact that I belong to the Boy Scouts (n=401)	2,5	<b>31,4</b>	<b>33,2</b>	28,4	4,5
2. School is a space of intercourse and friendship, which is more pleasant than scouting (n=400)	0,5	5,0	13,0	<b>62,3</b>	19,3
3. I feel that if teachers were so accessible and friendly as the scoutmasters I would like school more than I, actually, do (n=401)	14,2	<b>51,1</b>	21,9	12,0	0,7
4. My experience in the scouting allows me to be more successful in school (n=399)	13,0	<b>61,2</b>	17,8	7,8	0,3
5. I think that, in general, my involvement with scouting impairs my school performance (n=401)	1,0	11,2	8,5	<b>49,6</b>	29,7
6. Generally, the attitude of scoutmasters is an imitation of teachers' attitudes (n=400)	1,3	5,5	12,5	<b>56,8</b>	24,0
7. The education practiced in the school always include the pedagogical proposals of scouting (n=399)	1,3	16,0	<b>44,9</b>	32,1	5,8
8. The current society demands other modes of education (non-formal /non-school) and the scout movement is the youthful organization better prepared to make do it (n=388)	19,3	<b>54,0</b>	20,1	6,0	0,5
9. It would be desirable that school and scouting work together (n=400)	12,5	<b>43,0</b>	24,3	17,0	3,3
10. From the point of view of an environment education scouting largely supplants school (n=400)	37,5	<b>48,0</b>	9,0	5,5	--
11. School would have a lot to gain if it adopted the scouting pedagogical method (n=399)	8,0	32,6	<b>42,1</b>	16,0	1,3
12. School develops an education for the values that is more plural and open than scouting (n=400)	2,8	12,8	28,3	<b>44,8</b>	11,5

Source: Survey by Questionnaire to *Rovers* of Corpo Nacional de Escutas (Portuguese catholic scouts), 2001, 2007 – Cf Palhares (2004) [26].

In an environment marked by the advent and dissemination, at global scale, of values linked to individualism, competitiveness and individual performance, to mass consumption, the ephemeral, and flexibility (see Sennett, 1998), young people represent not only the segment of society which is the most vulnerable and permeable to these referential models of action, but in the societies of *advanced capitalism* (or *demodernised* societies), were also transformed into a privileged vehicle for dissemination of those values. The scouting movement emerges as a *world* ruled more by logics driven by *integration* and *subjectivation* rather than competition, performance and the cult of the individual, distinguishing itself by the belief in the educational potential of an active pedagogical method, that aims mainly at making the individual aware of values such as peace, solidarity, helping others, respect for the human being, duties towards *the other*, preservation of nature and animal life, the environment and ecology, among other significant values.

Given this scenario marked by forces in the opposite direction, the investigator has been faced with the challenge of asking about the ways young scouts integrate, manage and synthesise the tensions they are subjected to. Basically, we have once more appealed to the capacity of sociological analysis on the social effects of this particular form of non-school education. Or, still, inspired by Touraine (1998), we have tried to understand how the individual in a context of *demodernization* builds his own life story, his personal project; finally, how he lives subjectively the sense of laceration between two worlds: the world of economics, technical and instrumental rationality (system) and the world of culture, of lived identities (actor). This was the exercise we tried to do in the latest version of the above mentioned survey (2007), when we looked for indicators such as the ones in table 4, being able to conclude that – despite the methodological and epistemological precautions that the analysis requires – the young people surveyed see themselves as having a more valued image of citizenship and of social participation, reinforcing with their analysis the ideas of the scouting movement to which they belong.

And because subjectivity is built by the diversity of *social experiences* and by the meanings that the actor gives to and collects from his own action, scouting gives us the possibility of studying the various dimensions of reality from the *look* of these young people, as in their institutional framework they count on an educational methodology turned to the spheres of action inspired in the concept of *progressive self-education* (see Bureau Mondial du Scoutisme, 1999); or, if we prefer to use the words of the founder of the movement written at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, stressing one of his main educational principals: “the boy’s ideas are studied and he is encouraged TO EDUCATE HIMSELF instead of being instructed” (Baden-Powell, 1976: 36; capitals in the original). If we analyse this

excerpt from the work of Dubet & Martuccelli (1996: 13), it is possible to understand immediately why we decided to study this educational movement for young people (non-formal in character) in the light of the theoretical paradigms of the *sociology of action* and of *social experience*: “Actors socialise by means of various ways of learning, and constitute themselves as individuals in their capacity to combine their experience and becoming, partly, actors of their education. In this sense, all education is self-education, not simply an inculcation, but also a work on yourself”.

Table 4. Daily lives of scouts and non-scouts, from the representations of young scouts surveyed in 2007 – mean value of answers in a scale from 1 (minimum contribution) to 5 (maximum contribution)

	Non-scouts	Scouts
Practice of volunteering	2,32	<b>4,03</b>
Adoption of risk behaviours	<b>3,37</b>	2,92
Belief and religious practice	2,39	<b>3,77</b>
Activism in social causes and human rights	2,90	<b>3,86</b>
Membership of associations	2,85	<b>3,64</b>
Respect for the differences of gender, race and creed	2,86	<b>4,14</b>
Solidarity between generations	2,86	<b>4,12</b>
Ecological and environmental awareness	2,66	<b>4,10</b>
Civic and political participation	2,74	<b>3,38</b>
Consumption and dependence (alcohol and drugs)	<b>3,32</b>	2,76
Respect for the role of the State and the institutions of democracy	2,73	<b>3,14</b>
Care with health and well-being	3,34	<b>3,76</b>
Love affair/romance and affection	<b>4,12</b>	3,68
Valorisation of the school and the student <i>craft</i>	2,98	<b>3,54</b>
Respect for different sexual orientations	2,83	<b>3,43</b>
Centrality of family and domestic space	3,03	<b>3,68</b>
Sense of Justice	3,02	<b>3,89</b>
Drive safely, respect for the rules of the road	3,03	<b>3,43</b>
Individualism	<b>3,32</b>	2,95
Participation in the community	2,59	<b>3,88</b>
Peace promoting	2,78	<b>4,17</b>
Autonomy and Responsibility	3,00	<b>4,14</b>
Personal fulfilment through work	3,03	<b>3,91</b>
Recreation and Leisure	<b>3,59</b>	3,47
Confidence in the future	3,03	<b>3,98</b>

Source: Survey by Questionnaire to Rovers of Corpo Nacional de Escutas (Portuguese catholic scouts), 2001, 2007 – Cf Palhares (2004).

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## Résumé

### **ÉDUCATION ET CONTEXTES SIGNIFICATIFS D'ACTION: EXPERIENCES ET REPRESENTATIONS JUVENILES DANS UN CONTEXTE EDUCATIF NON SCOLAIRE.**

Nous assumons comme présupposé orienteur que l'éducation, dans son amplitude et dans sa complexité, n'est significative que lorsqu'elle a lieu dans des contextes significatifs d'action et que, pour cela même, elle n'est réductible, ni aux espaces, ni au temps de l'institution scolaire. Selon cette optique, nous suggérons, dans ce texte, une approche plus en conformité avec une *sociologie de l'éducation non scolaire*, à partir de laquelle nous cherchons à comprendre le rôle des apprentissages non formels et informels dans la construction des sens de l'*expérience juvénile*. Et, dans ce sens, nous mobilisons pour le débat quelques données de recherche recueillies auprès de jeunes appartenant au scoutisme, dans la mesure où ce mouvement centenaire, prédominamment de nature non formelle, a développé son projet éducatif basé sur la conviction que les jeunes sont des acteurs-sujets de leur propre éducation. Nous réfléchissons, de façon critique, sur l'influence et le lieu des contextes/institutions nouveaux et traditionnels dans la construction des citoyennetés et des subjectivités juvéniles.