

## SCHOOL AND TERRITORY: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION FROM TEACHERS

**Edier Hernan Bustos Velazco<sup>a</sup>, Jaime Duvan Reyes-Roncancio<sup>b</sup>, Orlando RiañoMelo<sup>c</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>Facultad del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia. E-mail: [ehbustosv@udistrital.edu.co](mailto:ehbustosv@udistrital.edu.co)

<sup>b</sup> Facultad de Ciencias y Educación Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia. E-mail: [jdreyesr@udistrital.edu.co](mailto:jdreyesr@udistrital.edu.co)

<sup>c</sup>Facultad del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia. E-mail: [oriano@udistrital.edu.co](mailto:oriano@udistrital.edu.co)

### Abstract

This article presents the research results on the relationship between territorial context and secondary school teachers' academic practices in Bogotá. The methodology consisted of designing and applying a Likert-type questionnaire, and the subsequent analysis implies categories associated with the idea of territory. The results show that the teachers establish connections between the legal, political, cultural, and social fields, recognizing the lived territory. Teaching practices acknowledge the context of the institutional actors, even when there is a low dynamization of the relationship with the families of the territory and the institutions that make it up.

**Keywords:** territory, teaching practice, context, diversity, resilience.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. The spaces appropriation of material and symbolic material

Bogota D.C., which belongs to the Andean region of Colombia, has been immersed and permeated by the events of violence in the country (Bello 2008) and the current Venezuelan political conflict, making it a place of arrival for those seeking a new future due to its geographical location, it is status as the capital of Colombia and the centralization of power.

For that reason, state, Bogotá is a multi-ethnic and multicultural city, immersed in differences, inequalities, and inequities (Santamaría, 2015), which entails multiple responsibilities for the district administration, among them education, and this purpose, the Capital District has 1257 schools, located in 20 localities of Bogotá<sup>1</sup>

These educational institutions (EI), in addition to their modernized infrastructure, are spatially related to other territorial divisions of their localities and surroundings. We find leisure and recreation, recreation parks, mechanical amusement parks, sports arenas, shopping centers, public libraries, and natural places like wetlands, rivers, lakes, and parks.

Inquiring about the teacher's interest in the territory as an environment or as a physical space (Bustos 2015, Tocarruncho, Bustos & Reyes, 2021) let will know about their teaching strategies and the possibilities that the school in which they work enables them to address encounters with local actors with this honest and possible territory from the utopian perspective (Bozzano 2017) of creating this dream territory from mutual socio-cultural interaction.

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.datos.gov.co/Educaci-n/LISTADO-COLEGIOS-BOGOTA/qijw-htwa>

### **1.2 Historical and spatial characteristics**

Recognizing the Territory as a scenario of multiple interactions and social construction (Bustos, 2015) leads us to reflect and see the IE as scenarios of knowledge exchange and cultural interaction and, with it, discussion on the events in time and space that converge to recognize different phenomena; social, cultural, natural, economic, which have generated traces and imprints on the actors.

For this research, we are in Bogotá (the capital of Colombia), where the current territorial organization shapes the events and icons in its history; its ancestral Muisca indigenous settlement, later the arrival of the Spanish, and with it the change of habits, customs, and cultural practices.

Then, because of the different armed conflicts, deterritorialization emerges (Pérez, 2018), and as an effect, the influx of other social actors comes from the different regions of Colombia. However, they do not arrive empty; on the contrary, they bring a socio-cultural burden and the idea of territorializing a foreign space.

Actions resulting from this deterritorialization have become a challenge for the district administration and, thus, the centralization of political and economic powers in Colombia. In this sense, the construction of new realities, identities, and dreams becomes a challenge for the school as a scenario *per-seof* social representation, which invites us to study in-depth and interpret the tensions originated by (Foucault, 1988) the intention of power, force and authority present in the different educational practices.

### **1.3 Relationship with social actors**

The school is a *per-se* scenario of articulation between the different actors that culturally constitute a territory they live in. That invites us to reflect on the different experiences generated by the territorial life histories of the actors.

In this sense, and the case of Bogotá, the capital of Cundinamarca County and Colombia, a meeting place of multiple cultures where aspects such as the following stand out:

(a) configuration of identities in the territories, it is understood from all the cultural and social interrelationships between individuals and with it (Geertz, 2003) from the design of networks of meanings, respond to particular issues that raise cultural differences.

(b) social action is a configuration of meanings and identity, which in the framework of territorialities reveal the relations between human groups that share, construct and configure forms of communication "of the individual and of the group with the universe, which is an inheritance, but at the same time a re-learning of the profound relations between man and his environment" (Santos, 2000, p. 278). In this sense, Hernández & Vargas (2012) find that the idea of environment comes from a diversity of cultural nuances in the Territory, where "imaginaries are strongly rooted in everyday practices and experiences" (p. 196);

(c) cultural appropriation of nature as territory refers to the school and its unavoidable link with cultural practices. Thus, school as a territory becomes a scenario to the extent that the academic community integrates into its cultural life through the actions of objects of representation and attachment as a symbol of belonging;

(d) critical action is associated with recognizing the participation of multiple actors that enable deconstruction and thus awareness as an aspect of tension and the generation of academic alternatives to the institutionalized hegemonic.

Consequently, actors who suffer these vicissitudes are resilient, seeking to adapt to other already configured territories where the school acts as a bridge from the critical training and, with it, the need to raise awareness in the development of identities adapted to the new contexts of life from recognition and respect for the other and sustainable development.

That is manifested in family strengthening by solving problems involving violence, land use, and the usufruct of natural and mineral resources.

In this sense, researchers such as Fals (2000) and Boisier (2007) converge in stating that the territory contains a community and that this will historically find in it a reference to its identity, given that it is there (Saquet, 2015) where they establish all the conditions of life and use of natural resources. Thus, the actors and territorial dynamics will constantly influence economic, political, social, cultural, leisure, and academic activities.

Therefore, the school as a territory implies identifying institutional and educational policies that seek to accept, recognize, internalize, validate, and respect cultural diversity. With this, the school is also a territory from the political scenario by establishing concrete actions with state provisions in education and recognizing the importance of all its culturally diverse actors (UNESCO, 2010).

However, the tensions between socio-cultural roots and state norms must be investigated to contribute to the meaningful construction of territoriality, understood as "the interaction between ecosystems and culture, which includes its organizational forms, available technology, economy and symbolic production" Motta (2006, p.12).

## **2. Methodology**

The research involved the design of a Likert scale ( $\alpha = 0.843$ ) applied to a population ( $n = 31$ ) of practicing natural science teachers in 19 locations in Bogotá. The teachers are part of the Graduate program in education (Master), emphasizing Natural Sciences and Technology at the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.

We organize the analysis of the quantitative information according to the theoretical categories: a) Material and symbolic appropriation of space (Environment where schools belong), b) Historical and spatial characteristics, c) Relationship with social actors (link with external actors), d) Relationship with social actors (link with external actors), e) Resilience in the face of de-territorialization (Usually in public schools, foreigners, displaced people from different regions of Colombia), f) Institutional and educational policies in the front of accepting, recognizing, internalizing, validating and respecting cultural diversity.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

Firstly, the multiple-weighting (Likert) questionnaire made it possible to map, using QGIS free software, the territorial location of the educational institutions in which the 31 teachers surveyed work (Figure 1).

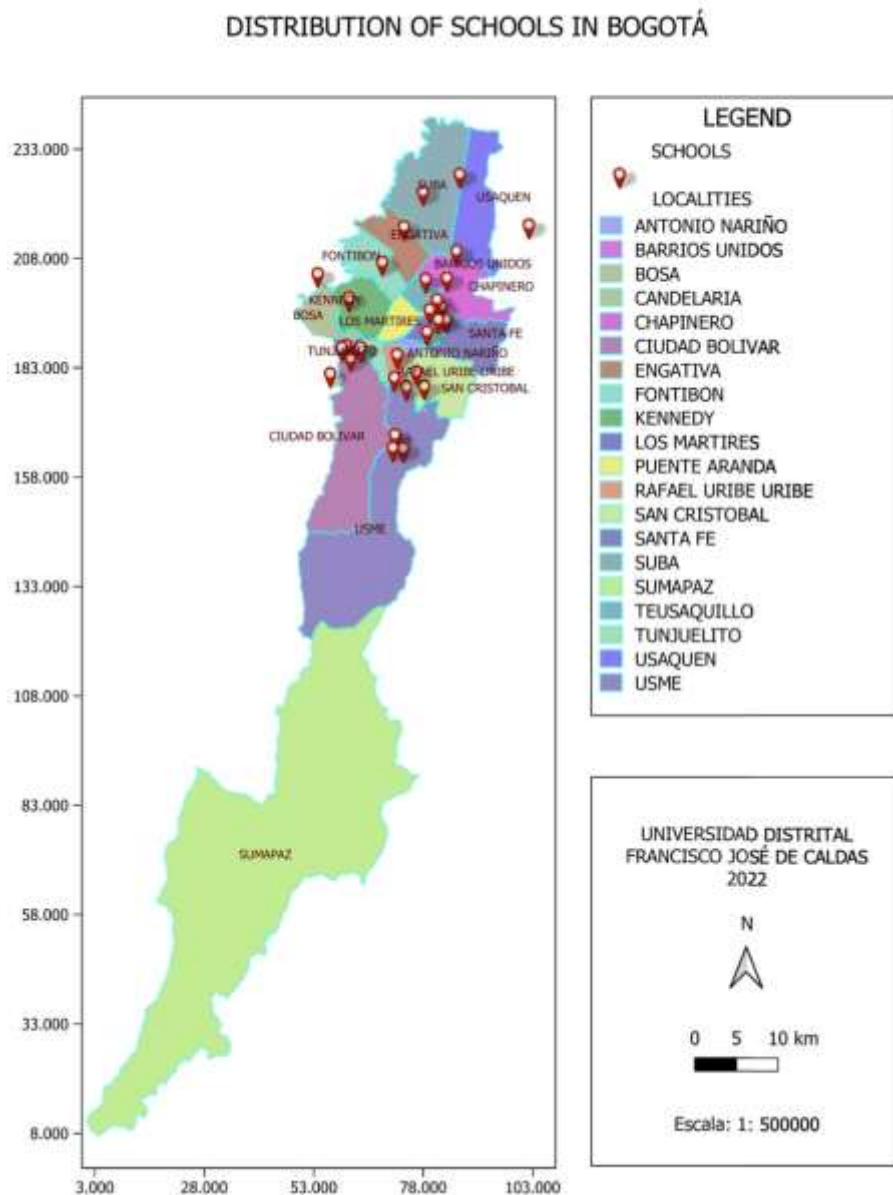


Image 1. Bogota D.C. Schools where surveyed teachers work.

Source: own

The schools are from the 19 localities of the Capital District, with at least one school representing each locality.

### 3.1. Material and symbolical appropriation of spaces

61% of respondents take the community into account in the curricula. 22% are neutral towards this possibility. However, 70% of the respondents report incorporating relationships with the inhabited space in their teaching strategies. 61% of the respondents use the school as a meeting point to discuss community

problems in their classes. A further 22% of the respondents were neutral in this respect. All in all, the teachers surveyed show a level of material and symbolic appropriation of the space in terms of incorporating it into their curricula and analyzing the community's problems to which the school belongs.

The inhabited and transformed space (Bustos & Molina, 2019) acquires territorial meaning for teachers and their practices. It implies understanding the acts related to the cultural experiences embedded, validated, and recognized in the territory.

### **3.2 Historical and spatial characteristics**

60% of the teachers relate their classes to the institutional historical context; it is essential to note that 22% of the teachers are neutral. However, 75% of teachers agree that they plan concrete actions in their classes towards institutional improvement.

Also, it should be that 81% of the teachers state the development of links between the students' life situations and the actions of the teaching activity itself.

That shows good favorability for this category where the teachers surveyed consider in a concrete way the institutional history and its dynamics within their classes, also involving the experiences of their students. Most of those surveyed favor the development of these activities in which teachers contextualize their immediate environment (school) with classroom activities.

In this way, territorial history (Bustos & Molina, 2019), understood as those events organized in time and space, include experiences, the elaboration of judgments about reality, participation in socio-community life (Bozzano, 2012), the interpretations and constructions of those real, lived and dreamed territories that give meaning to the day-to-day of the teaching action.

Therefore, we will refer to this socially constructed territory related to historical-cultural dynamics at different levels or "varied scale - micro, meso, macro - were actors - public, private, citizens, others - set in motion complex processes of interaction - complementary, contradictory, conflictive, cooperative, supportive - between systems of actions and systems of objects" (Bozzano, 2009, p.146).

### **3.3 Relationship with social actors (links with external actors)**

Thus, in this category, the teachers surveyed were neutral (36%) to agree (42%) with establishing connections and integrating with other population sectors in their classes. However, some respondents stated that they do not consider these social sectors in their categories (NGOs, productive industry, others).

These results indicate a low level of favorability for this category. In this sense, it is considered advisable in future research of this kind to consider strengthening relations between the school and social actors, as this will allow the construction of higher levels of belonging and appropriation of the actual territory (Hernández & Vargas, 2012), considering the establishment of networks and alliances with organizations and institutions in the territorial context (Ochoa Ninapaitán, 2018).

### **3.4 Relationship with the realities of the territorial context**

75% of those surveyed consider the territorial context of the community as part of their pedagogical proposals. 51% are interested in including the analysis of environmental projects involving the Zonal Planning Units (UPZ), where the educational institution belongs. 80% consider their students' experiences and the ecological contexts of the territory in their classes, both in didactic strategies and pedagogical activities and projects.

All in all, this category is favored by the respondents, which means that the teachers recognize the importance of environmental dynamics and with it the sustainable relationships in the territory (Fals, 2000; Boiser, 2007), understanding that the communities configure identities in their dynamics that give them a sense of appropriation.

### **3.5 Resiliency is the way to confront de-territorializing.**

Given the territorial conditions linked to the Colombian armed conflict and excessive violence, we refer to these situations as an "abandoned territory." (Haesbaert, 2005), which typifies resiliency as a way to build themselves from de-territorializing.

Therefore, de-territorialization alludes to the nostalgia generated by the abrupt and violent departure of a community from this socially constructed territory and, with it, the uprooting of customs, relations with their ancestors, community life, relations with the fauna and flora, and countless thoughts, relations, and feelings that are left behind.

Given this, in this category, 66% of the teachers surveyed consider it essential to develop strategies that allow students to articulate with the territory in which they live. However, 47% of the teachers do not work with families in de-territorialization. 81% of those surveyed favor self-recognition activities with their students through interaction in class. In this way, territorialization processes emerge resiliently, converting a new natural space into a humanized space. Aspects that allow us to interpret here are that "all de-territorialization comes with re-territorialization, where de-territorialization has the virtue of removing space from the physical environment, while re-territorialization is accompanied by re-territorialization updates it as a social dimension" (Ortiz, 2002, p. 37). These situations make teachers' activities for the educational community dynamic and transformative.

### **3.6 Educational policies for cultural diversity.**

50% of the teachers surveyed expressed a high appreciation of the influence of their institution's policies in favor of collaborative work. Likewise, 52% of the teachers agree with recognizing the establishment of diversity policies and valuing differences.

These results coincide with 67% of the teachers surveyed stating that the institution's administration is committed to respecting diversity. In this sense, the teachers of the schools in Bogotá and the Bogotá region in this case study recognize that there must be plans for social construction articulated between the different actors in the school as a territorial scenario. Bogotá today (Bustos & Molina, 2019) is understood as a territory of convergence of mestizos, Afro-descendants, Roma, and indigenous people, mainly from the Muiscas as an original people located in indigenous reservations in the localities of Suba, Bosa, Engativá and Rafael Uribe. (see image 1) However, displaced families from the EmberaKatío, EmberaChamí, Nasa, Sikuaní, Guambiano, Kankuamo, and Uitoto communities are also replaced, including indigenous people from Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia, as well as the displaced Venezuelan population.

## **4. Conclusions**

The categories with the greatest favorability in the social construction of the territory-school link are the relationship with the realities of the territorial context, the historical and spatial characteristics, and the material and symbolic appropriation of the space.

With medium favorability are the categories: resilience in the face of de-territorialization (usually in public schools, foreigners, displaced people from different regions of Colombia), and institutional and educational policies in the front of validating and respecting cultural diversity. Moreover, a low favorability was in the relationship with social actors (link with external actors).

Teachers, in their practices, link students' experiences with the context in which they live, making it possible to consider the institutional history and teaching practices at a micro-level. Here, resilience in the face of de-territorialization presents two main features: on the one hand, teachers develop self-recognition activities with their students to a large extent, but work with families is scarce.

Although teachers recognize the institutional interest in the subject of diversity, there is a medium sense of recognition of regulations on the individual level in this respect.

Concerning the relationship with social actors, understood as officially constituted organizations and institutions, it is necessary to delve deeper into research projects aimed at dynamizing such relationships, given the scarce links expressed by teachers.

## 5. References

- Bello, C.** (2008). La violencia en Colombia: Análisis histórico del homicidio en la segunda mitad del Siglo XX. *Revista Criminalidad*, 50,1, pp. 75-84. Recuperada de: <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/crim/v50n1/v50n1a05.pdf>
- Boisier, S.** (2007). *Imágenes en el espejo. Aportes a la discusión sobre crecimiento y desarrollo territorial.* Toluca, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México.
- Bozzano, H.** (2009). *Territorios reales, territorios pensados, territorios posibles. Aportes para una teoría territorial del ambiente.* Buenos Aires: Editorial Espacio.
- Bozzano, H.** (2017). Territorios posibles y utopías reales: Aportes a las teorías de la transformación: Inteligencia territorial y justicia territorial. *Arquetipo* (15), 71-91. En *Memoria Académica*. Disponible en: [http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art\\_revistas/pr.10574/pr.10574.pdf](http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/art_revistas/pr.10574/pr.10574.pdf)
- Bustos, E. H.** (2015). Tendencias investigativas en territorio y su importancia en la formación de profesionales. *Revista Le Bret*, 7 . Bucaramanga, Colombia: Universidad, Santo Tomás, pp. 261 – 279. ISSN: 2145-5996.
- Bustos, E & Molina , A.** (2019). Concepciones de territorio en profesionales de las Ciencias de la Tierra. *Colección Tierra y Vida.* Universidad distrital Francisco José de Caldas, p. 205. <https://editorial.udistrital.edu.co/contenido.php?id=1237&f=6>
- Fals, O.** (2000). El territorio como construcción social. *Revista Foro*, 38, 45-51.
- Foucault, M.** (1988) El sujeto y el poder... *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, 50, 3, pp. 3-20. Recuperado de: <https://perio.unlp.edu.ar/catedras/cdac/wp-content/uploads/sites/96/2020/03/T-FOUCAULT-El-sujeto-y-el-poder.pdf>
- Geertz, C.** (2003). *La interpretación de las culturas*, Duodécima reimpresión, Editorial Gedisa, S.A. Barcelona, España.
- Haesbaert, R.** (2005). Da desterritorialização à multiterritorialidade, anais do x encontro de geógrafos da América latina, Universidade de São Paulo, 6774-6792
- Hernández, Y & Vargas, G.** (2012). Imaginarios sobre amenazas y gestión del riesgo urbano en Bogotá, Colombia. *TERRITORIUM*,19, PP 185-200. Recuperado de: [https://www.uc.pt/fluc/nicif/riscos/Documentacao/Territorium/T19\\_artg/T19\\_Artigo\\_21.pdf](https://www.uc.pt/fluc/nicif/riscos/Documentacao/Territorium/T19_artg/T19_Artigo_21.pdf)
- Motta, N.** (2006). Territorios e identidades, centro de estudios de género, mujer y sociedad. *Historia y Espacio*, (26), 91-109.
- Ochoa Ninapaitán, H.** (2018). *Participación de los padres de familia como corresponsables de la educación de sus hijos en una institución educativa del Callao.* Lima: Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola.
- Ortiz, R.** (2002). *Otro territorio. Ensayos sobre el mundo contemporánea.* Universidad nacional de Quilmes. Convenio Andres Bello.
- Pérez, M. E.** (2018). De la desterritorialización a la reterritorialización en el acceso, uso y regulación de recursos socio-ambientales: caso de las provincias de Almeidas y Sabana Centro (Cundinamarca, Colombia). *Revista Eleuthera*, 18, 31-57. DOI: 10.17151/elev.2018.18.3.
- Santamaría, S.** (2015). Desigualdades sociales, ¿inequidades espaciales? Análisis de la segregación sociorracial en Bogotá (2005-2011). *Revista Colombiana de Sociología*. 38(2), pp. 67-92. Recuperado de: [http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0120-159X2015000200004](http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0120-159X2015000200004)
- Santos, M.** (2000). *La naturaleza del espacio, técnica y tiempo. Razón y emoción.* Barcelona. España: Ariel.
- Saquet, M. A.** (2015). *Por una geografía de las territorialidades y las temporalidades: una concepción multidimensional orientada a la cooperación y el desarrollo territorial.* (Biblioteca Humanidades, 36). Ensenada, Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación (UNLP - FAHCE). <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-460050>

**Tocarruncho, F., Bustos, E., & Reyes, J.** (2021). La escuela rural, un espacio socialmente construido de posible resistencia territorial: miradas del territorio desde el papel de una docente rural. *Territorios*, (44 Especial), 1-27.

**UNESCO** (2010). Declaración universal de la UNESCO sobre la diversidad cultural, Adoptada por la XXXI Sesión de la Conferencia General de la UNESCO el 2 de noviembre de 2001. *Revista Praxis*, pp. 64-65.