Socioenvironmental Mapping: a Participatory Methodology of Local Diagnosis involving Different Stakeholders

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Abstract

Social Learning contributes as a guiding proposal for the joint intervention of the local actors and dissemination of methodologies and collaborative activities in socioenvironmental diagnoses. Its principles are active involvement, consultation and public access to participation. Several participatory tools have been developed and have been applied within the principles of Social Learning, such as local socioenvironmental agendas, action research, role playing; world café, participatory monitoring of the streams and socioenvironmental mapping. This article presents the last one applied in different contexts and with different groups of social actors, always aiming to elaborate a participatory diagnosis of the place and reality to identify the wicked problems. Socioenvironmental mapping is a didactic-pedagogical resource used to reflect and rethink about the place. It contributes to elaborate a diagnosis of the local reality and it subsidizes the reflection on the forms of the land use and occupation and its implications for the quality of life of its inhabitants, fostering discussions, possibilities of actions to solve problems and conflicts to improve the quality of life in communities. The map is a product of collective and collaborative construction of the participants. It contributes to transform information into knowledge and establish a bridge between scientific and local knowledge. Consider the following procedures: a) the reality in which the individual lives and how he deals with his immediate environment and his understanding of it, as a starting point; b) the possibility of re-elaborating the individual's initial understanding of his / her place; c) the way to the development of different types of knowledge for the construction of more elaborate and more critical knowledge. We have applied this methodology with teaching formation, social control and conservation area with positive results of empowering the communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Social practices that promote citizenship constitute a privileged space for the development of social responsibility and voluntary collaboration. Within environmental governance, the concept of "Social Learning" (SL) opens a challenging space to develop learning processes in which those involved may learn about critical socio-environmental contexts characterized by environmental degradation (Wals, 2007; Jacobi, 2011).

It results in the development for the connection of different types of the problem understanding, creating inter-sectorial and interdisciplinary dialogues, as a basis to strengthen logics of cooperation.

Socio-environmental mapping → A didactic and pedagogical tool of diagnosis, planning and action that promotes the participation of different social actors in searching to improve quality of life and promoting social learning (Santos; Bacci, 2011).

Focusing on the development of activities directed to (re)cognition of place/environment and its problems

It is able to transform social and environmental reality.

Environmental mapping resulted in participatory, dialogic and interdisciplinary learning process
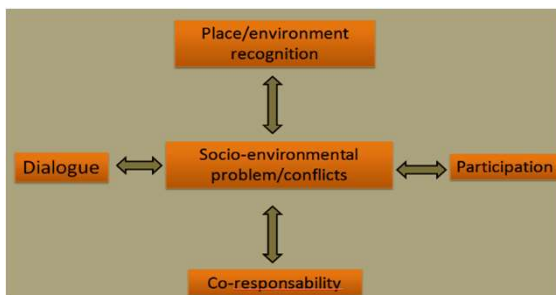
METHOD

Step 1 : elaboration of the mental map. Held before going to the field, it aims to rescue the environment conceptions of the participants / inhabitants, or rather reveal how they perceive the place.
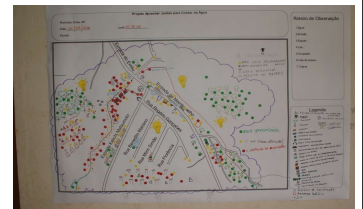

Step 2: elaboration of the local socio-environmental diagnosis through the "Register of Local Environmental Elements". It aims at surveying different socio-environmental aspects in the field for the diagnosis of local reality.

Local environmental elements to observe and register in the map			
rivers, creeks, lakes, flood areas	streets	health services	industrial and commercial enterprises	smell, odors, flavours, beauty
green or deforested areas	solid waste	leisure areas	geologic process (erosion, silting)	feelings, perceptions
civil constructions	risk areas	water supply	sewage networks	memories, ideas

Step 3: elaboration of the synthesis map. Participants discusses the socio-environmental maps, different perceptions and problems observed in the field.

Step 4: elaboration of the propositional map. This map is the result of the collective process of reflection and dialogue on local problems and conflicts.

EDUCATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

Socio-environmental mapping was used in Brazil in different places, with different social actors and purposes. In teacher training, in processes of social control in sanitation, in public managers training to water resources, in protection of geological heritage.

Participatory socio-environmental mapping is an important collaborative tool in political-pedagogical processes for the empowerment of communities. It is process and product of social learning.

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