ENG

Presentation

Childhoods in times of pandemic and post-pandemic

Emma Gómez Nicolau
Universitat Jaume I

Elisabet Marco Arocas
Universitat de València

Restrictions on mobility, closed educational facilities and administrative failure to take an inclusive view in the measures introduced during the Covid-19 global health crisis highlighted the vulnerability of children in different contexts and regions, both urban and rural. Already existing territorial inequalities in socio-economic, cultural and educational conditions and in access to technology were amplified. In response, strategies of resistance also emerged in the most vulnerable areas. Children's daily lives were completely transformed as a consequence of the public health measures imposed on the entire population. In particular, the interruption of education and restrictions on access to and use of public spaces for play, sport and leisure were a blatant violation of children's rights.

Academic reflections on the impact of Covid-19 were not long in coming and, over the last few years, reviews and critical analyses from a range of disciplines have attempted to address and shed light on the way in which the pandemic changed – at least temporarily – the lifestyles, routines, spaces, times and experiences of children and adolescents. The sociology of childhood and other theoretical and methodological proposals from various disciplines that fall under the umbrella of 'childhood studies' have been analysing and reflecting on how societies responded to the needs of children in the pandemic, while also examining, through the lens of their own experiences, how children and adolescents played a central role in coping with the circumstances.

In 2020, at the start of the pandemic, the journal *Sociedad e Infancias* published its fourth volume, "*Las infancias en el foco de la investigación y vivencias infantiles de la pandemia*", which covered the initial findings and reflections that scholars of childhood had gathered, based on careful listening to the voices of children and adolescents in the circumstances they were living through. Also from the field of the sociology of childhood, in his analysis Iván Rodríguez (2020) described how the pandemic setting had become a breeding ground for new forms of adultist practices and discourses that normalise and legitimise forms of discrimination against the child population. Scientific research has reported on the impacts the pandemic had on children's health and well-being (Valero et al., 2020), especially in its intersections with diversity (Lillo-Navarro et al., 2023) or identity (Platero and López, 2020). Studies raising the question of the violation of children's rights (Corona-Caraveo and Pérez, 2023; Espinosa, 2020) have underscored the adult-centric nature of public policies and the limited role that governments give to children as subjects and citizens. In contrast, childhood studies researchers have highlighted the resilience of children and their creative capacity to adapt spaces to their needs (Freire-Pérez, 2021), identifying the importance of their participation in the design of public spaces. Other analyses also validate the capacity for learning in decentralised educational and care models, marked by a lack of in-person contact. These conclusions clearly highlight the need to incorporate interdependent approaches with community-based perspectives (Maestripieri and Gallego, 2022) in educational practice since, ultimately, the experience of the pandemic brought into sharp relief the glaring incompatibility between the ways we live, work and raise children in late capitalism and life itself.

In the field of scientific production, at times it seems that we have overcome Covid-19, that it is behind us. But at the same time, we cannot stop talking about, researching and analysing its effects. Some of the global changes ushered in by the pandemic have become structural in nature, and others could be consolidated in the near future.

This monographic issue of *kult-ur* sprung from a desire to contribute, at a more leisurely pace, knowledge about the pandemic and its impacts through situated analyses of processes in which children's agency matters. The articles in this issue fall under the label of 'childhood studies'. Over the past decades, various disciplines have developed approaches to the study of childhood, giving rise to this international and interdisciplinary field of research.

As Gaitán (2019) argues in the area of social sciences, this label does not fall within a discipline or sub-discipline; rather it applies to certain types of theoretical-methodological proposals in the study of childhood. This author draws on Martin Woodhead to summarise three key characteristic features of contemporary childhood studies: the first refers to childhood and explains the different ways childhood is socially constructed, which affects how it is studied and theorised; the second refers to children, highlighting the recognition of their status as subjects with agency and their role in society as a basis for research, policies and professional practice; and the third refers to the relationship between childhood and adulthood, assuming that childhood cannot be studied or understood without attending to intergenerational relations, namely how it is constructed in relation to other groups (Gaitán, 2022).

Àgora, the monographic section, opens with a piece by Maite Araya Barra, Alexander Salin Espinoza, Nicolás Acuña Contretas and Esperanza Cuadros Danyau titled "Between care and resistance: the popular school *El Sueño de Todos* and the construction of educational spaces in the southern zone of Santiago, Chile". The article describes and analyses the process in which a community constructed a popular education space in an informal settlement during the Covid-19 pandemic in a context marked by urban exclusion. The analysis centres on how participatory community dynamics generate care practices grounded in interdependence. The case study presented here involves community and participatory decision making throughout the process: from the physical construction of the school to the design of the pedagogical content and activities to be developed in it. Popular education is conceived as a space for care that encourages community engagement and promotes its capacity to provide collective care. The *El Sueño de Todos* school is an experience of resistance and community empowerment that emerges from the needs imposed by the pandemic in terms of lack of access to formal educational resources. Despite the constraints, building a popular school represents a project for the future that realises the collective dream of better living conditions for children and young people. The popular school is thus positioned between care and resistance, inviting us to think about responsibility as a political struggle from a community perspective.

In their paper "A huge, good apocalypse: towards a sociological use of children's storytelling in research on the effects of the pandemic", Iván Rodríguez Pascual, Sara Luna Rivas , Teresa González-Gómez and Mari Corominas Pérez propose a research process on children's narratives through the storytelling technique. The fieldwork consisted of seven workshops run in different parts of Spain in which 56 children aged between 7 and 14 created their own narratives. The research process is an example of how enquiry into childhood and with children requires methodologies and techniques specifically designed and adapted for research with them. The analysis of the narratives identifies both the emotional meaning of the stories the children created and the children's agency present in these narratives. In this way, the authors analyse the impact of the pandemic on children's lives and their representation from an interpretative phenomenological perspective.

In their study "Pandemic and post-pandemic, school and daily life of rural children in central Mexico", Norma Baca Tavira and Sandra García Gutiérrez also analyse children's experiences of the pandemic in rural Mexico through narrative techniques, in this case, conversation and drawing following the reading of a story. Rurality is conceptualised through diversity and hybridisation in an interconnection with urban socio-economic dynamics. The authors discuss aspects related to the existing gaps in rurality and, specifically, the digital divide and how it affected children's schooling processes. By capturing the differences between pandemic and post-pandemic life, their analyses highlight how childhoods show, through their subjectivity, the children's agency in learning processes using play in spaces where the limits between home and nature are blurred.

Constanza Pérez Ravanal and Carolina Aroca Toloza present their ethnography of a public square in Santiago de Chile in "Inhabiting public space: a right of childhood". The pandemic revealed how access to public and leisure spaces for children was seriously neglected. In this context of reflection on childhood and the right to the city, the authors designed a project for participatory play based on relational agency to encourage recreation and experimentation in early childhood in the public spaces in the city of Santiago de Chile. Taking a qualitative approach, they observed the interactions among the children who used the park, which is equipped with everyday objects to encourage symbolic and relational play. The results show that children re-signify the public space as a place of encounter and participation, highlighting their relational agency.

In the Stoa section, Joan A. Traver Martí examines the educational project of the municipal nursery schools in Pamplona with a focus on the concept of presence. His paper, "Being present and giving presence. The educational project of the municipal nursery schools in Pamplona", describes the central elements of pedagogical reflection in times of social acceleration. Presence – being present and giving presence – is understood to be fundamental for sustaining pedagogical practices based on care and full recognition of the other. Avoiding the imperative, attending

to moments as though they were scenes, experiencing slowed-down time and involving the community under a rationale of interdependence are some of the most thought-provoking aspects for re-visiting the practices of early childhood education that the author reflects on.

This issue closes with a piece titled "La Estrella Theatre, 45 years of history" by Lucas Sáez González, in which he describes the exhibition held from March to June 2024 in the Centro del Carmen Cultura Contemporánea (CCCC) in Valencia. He traces the history of the Fariza-Miralles family, and with it, the origin of La Estrella Theatre, a leading Valencian company in the world of puppetry. Based on the biography of Gabriel Fariza and Maite Miralles, the clowns Bombalino and Cuchufleta, founders of the company and their family, it recounts the origins of La Estrella Theatre, known as Sala Cabanyal, built in 1995 and still thriving today. The theatre fought against the urban redevelopment policies put forward by the city hall and the regional government, which proposed extending a major avenue to the coast and threatened the Cabanyal neighbourhood with the destruction of homes and the inevitable demise of the community. The text recounts the residents' resistance and struggle, which prevented the planned extension of the avenue and the demolition of more houses, eventually saving La Estrella. The company now has a second venue, La Petxina, which was born out of the uncertainty and confusion caused by the planned urban development. Both these venues embody in their proposals and their dynamics a political commitment to children and their protagonism; two venues that confronted the Covid-19 pandemic by reinventing themselves so they could continue to exist for and with children.

In sum, the articles in this volume contribute their grain of sand to the lessons learned and also to the social innovations that were put in place during the pandemic in response to the new exclusions and inequalities generated by the way the pandemic was managed for children, their families and their communities. Although the continuing outbreaks of coronavirus serve as a reminder of what happened during the lockdowns, the accelerated, productivist and extractivist lifestyles were soon reinstated in the 'new normal'. For this reason we call for the re-examination and rethinking of what was innovated and created at a time of collective effervescence when, as Fattore and colleagues (2023) explain, children's narratives expressed not only shared fear, but also solidarity, empathy and altruism.

Bibliography

Corona-Caraveo, Yolanda, y Pérez y Zavala, Carlos. 2023. "Infancias invisibles: la vulnerabilidad de niñas, niños y adolescentes ante la pandemia de Covid-19". *TRAMAS. Subjetividad y Procesos Sociales*, 33, no. 57: 323–350. Recuperado a partir de https://tramas.xoc.uam.mx/index.php/tramas/article/view/979

Espinosa, M. Ángeles. 2020. "Covid-19, Educación y Derechos de la Infancia en España". *Revista Internacional De Educación Para La Justicia Social* 9, no. 3: 245–258. https://doi.org/10.15366/riejs2020.9.3.013

Fattore, Tobia, Drake, Gabrielle, Falloon, Jan. et al. Disruption, Slowness, and Collective Effervescence: Children's Perspectives on COVID-19 Lockdowns. *International Journal on Child Maltreatment* 6, 393–413 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/s42448-022-00147-4

Freire-Pérez, Estella. 2021. "Infancia y Confinamiento. Prácticas Espaciales de Resistencia". *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad* 33, no. 2: 553-570. https://doi.org/10.5209/aris.69024

Gaitán Muñoz Lourdes. 2022. "Debates y desafíos en la sociología de la infancia ante una nueva era". *Política y Sociedad* 59, no. 3: e79783. https://doi.org/10.5209/poso.79783

Gaitán Muñoz, Lourdes. 2019. "Los estudios de infancia en España. Una introducción". En Gálvez Muñoz, Lina y Del Moral Espín, Lucia (dirs): *Infancia y Bienestar, una apuesta política por las capacidades y los cuidados*. Sevilla. Deculturas.

Lillo-Navarro Carmen, Robles-García Verónica, Quintela del Río Alejandro, Macías-Merlo Lourdes, Konings Marco, Monbaliu Elegast. 2023. "Impacto del periodo de confinamiento por la pandemia COVID-19 en España sobre la salud y la atención recibida por los niños, niñas y jóvenes con discapacidad originada en la infancia". *Fisioterapia* 45,no. 2: 74-83.

Maestripieri, Lara y Gallego, Raquel 2022. El impacto de la pandemia COVID-19 en la sociedad en el sur de Europa: el caso de la innovación social en el cuidado de la primera infancia en Barcelona. *Revista Española De Sociología* 31, no. 4: a131. https://doi.org/10.22325/fes/res.2022.131

Platero Méndez, R. Lucas y López Sáez, Miguel Ángel. 2020. "Perder la propia identidad". La adolescencia LGT-BQA+ frente a la pandemia por COVID-19 y las medidas del estado de alarma en España. *Sociedad e Infancias* 4: 195-1

Rodríguez-Pascual, Iván. 2020. "¿De invisibilidad a estigmatización? Sociología del adultismo en tiempos de pandemia". *Linhas Críticas* 26: e36364. https://doi.org/10.26512/lc.v26.2020.36364

Sociedad e Infancias. 2020. "Presentación. Llegó la pandemia y mandó parar…." *Sociedad e Infancias* 4: 1-3. https://doi.org/10.5209/soci.70365

Valero Alzaga, Erika, Martín Roncero, Unai y Domínguez-Rodríguez Antía. Grupo Confisalud. 2020. "Covid-19 y salud infantil: el confinamiento y su impacto según profesionales de la infancia". *Revista Española de Salud Pública* 94: e202007064