

## Travelling to learn and learning by travelling. Educational Strategies at advantaged social Argentinian schools

### *Viajar para aprender y aprender viajando. Estrategias educativas de sectores aventajados de Argentina*

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#### **Abstract**

*The article explores the repertoires and meanings that educational agents give to journeys in the institutional projects of their schools, considering that these organizations cater students that most certainly could travel on their own. In this sense, the basic proposition guiding this analysis is based on the fact that, due to the processes of universalization and school massification, educational institutions develop strategies of institutional differentiation to “capture” their public, and in those strategies, school trips take a fundamental place. Through a qualitative work nourished by interviews with institutional agents in international schools, that is, schools that adhere to the International Baccalaureate (IB) program or are binational institutions, where their degrees are valid for a second educational system, we study the main advantages and benefits represented by the inclusion of school trips in the curricula of these institutions. The analysis is complemented with institutional documents.*

#### **Keywords**

*School, international education, institutional differentiation, school trips.*

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### **Resumen**

El artículo indaga los repertorios y significados que los agentes educativos le otorgan a los viajes en los proyectos institucionales en sus escuelas, teniendo en cuenta que se trata de establecimientos a los que concurren alumnos que podrían realizar esos viajes por sus propios medios. De esta manera, se sostiene que, ante los procesos de universalización y masificación escolar, surgen proyectos de diferenciación institucional que intentan “captar” públicos a través de diferentes estrategias, siendo los viajes uno de sus puntos centrales. A través de un trabajo cualitativo que se nutre de entrevistas a agentes institucionales en escuelas internacionales, es decir, escuelas que adhieren al programa del Bachillerato Internacional (IB) o bien son institucionales binacionales, con una titulación válida para un segundo sistema educativo, se indagan las principales ventajas y beneficios que representa la inclusión de los viajes en la currícula de estas instituciones. El análisis se complementa con documentación institucional

### **Palabras clave**

Escuela, educación internacional, viajes, diferenciación institucional, competencias educativas.

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## **Introduction: School massification and the new inequalities**

The expansion of compulsory education, in the extension of coverage and years of mandatory nature, is a policy agreed by all social and political sectors, often anchored in the narratives of the “example” of advanced countries that have high levels of educational levels in their populations and with equally high standards of living and development (Saravi, 2015). In the Latin American continent, however, this expansion has not been developed homogeneously and itself over preexisting exclusions or inequalities - levels of household income, geographical location, educational environment of the home and belonging to ethnic and/or native groups, only to mention some advantages and disadvantages on the same processes of inclusion (Mayer and Núñez, 2016). These inequalities do not disappear because vast sectors of the population have been “included” (Saravi, 2015, p.11). In other words, the tendency to massify the secondary level, while sustaining the longings for inclusion and the constitution of more egalitarian societies -desires and postulates processed through education- does not eliminate social inequalities, but rather, on the contrary, in the continent in general and in

Argentina in particular, it tends to generate mechanisms for the development of new forms of social differentiation (Narodowski, Moschetti, & Gottau, 2017, Mayer, 2012).

In Argentina, the increase in enrollment at the middle level that manifested from the mid-twentieth century onwards (Southwell, 2011), and that has intensified since the nineties with the laws that establish the universalization and compulsory nature of secondary education<sup>1</sup>, has its correlate in the creation and development of circuits and educational fragmentation. Braslavsky (1985), warned in the eighties that along with the “democratization” of the education system, there is a segmentation of it from the creation of educational opportunities that promote the breakdown of the educational monopoly in minority sectors. This process is deepened and modified in the nineties with legislations that point to the universalization of secondary education and has its correlation in the transfer of segmentation to educational fragmentation (Tiramonti, 2004 and 2008), a phenomenon related to certain ideas of what is a “good school” and the consequent diversification of the offer that supposed a growing expansion of the private sector.<sup>2</sup>

The process of privatization, or the development of the private subsystem, predates the rise of neoliberal discourses in the region (Morduchowicz, 2001). Although between 1940 and 1950 the private sector reached the lowest rate of schooling in its history, between the years 1950-2015 there is a process of sustained and progressive growth of enrollment to reach 30 percentage points. To this contributes a series of modifications introduced at the end of the 1940s in terms of regulation, financing and ratings that pave

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- 1 With the aim of guaranteeing equality of learning opportunities, supporting policies to improve the quality of education and strengthen scientific and technological research, the Education Financing Law 26,075 of 2005 established an increase in investment in education, science and technology by the National State and the 24 jurisdictions, until reaching in 2010 a 6% participation in the Gross Domestic Product. Then, in 2006, the National Education Law (No. 26.206) was passed, replacing the Federal Education Law. The same, among other important aspects, orders the educational system in four levels (initial education, primary education, secondary education and higher education), establishes the modalities of education and establishes the compulsory nature of the system from the age of four years.
  - 2 Within the investigations there is consensus in affirming that, just as the universalization of basic education was the great transformation of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the second half of that century witnessed the tendency to universalize secondary education. In this sense, the analysis of Braslavsky (1985) pointed out the existence of segments that were shaped by differentiated circuits. The educational legislations introduced in the nineties and the reforms that derive from them -as well as from other social processes- will refer to the concept of fragmentation, as a loss of unity and then, of a burst field characterized by pro-ruptures, discontinuities and the impossibility of moving from one fragment to another, as well as the loss of unity and common references.

the way for this growth (Morduchowicz, 2002, Narodowski, & Andrada, 2001). In this regard, Gamallo (2015) argues that since the 1990s, when the name of “publicly-run public schools” has been incorporated into national legislation, private schools are more and more similar to public schools.<sup>3</sup> There is also the transfer of school management to the provinces - started in the seventies - and a system of social polarization and educational massification is consolidated, with an increasingly polarized system.<sup>4</sup>

In this sense and recognizing the higher levels of autonomy of private institutions in relation to those of public management (Morduchowicz, 2002), the former has greater margins to delimit their institutional project. In other words, although the institutions suppose a system of own rules and norms that intervene in the skills of the educational agents, the institutions, be it of the type of management scope that they are, are not reducible to the unthinking reproduction of such norms. Schools are spaces of struggle and power dispute (Ball, 1989), where thanks to the greater margins of autonomy of the private sector, projects can be deployed that distinguish the institutions of this sector. In this framework, many schools associated with the middle and upper middle sectors develop different trips as part of their curricula, which could be divided into two large groups: solidarity and volunteer trips, on the one hand, and academic and educational trips on the other. In the case of the first group, these are trips related to vulnerable communities in the country, as a culmination of solidarity initiatives that take place throughout the year: raising funds and resources needed to improve the institutions of these communities, providing food and clothing, among others. Students travel to the selected community and develop tasks to “help” their well-

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3 In this regard, Morduchowicz (2002, p.114) argues that along with the deepening and consolidation of state assistance and equalization, a clear expansion of the private sector emerged, in which the schools of that subsystem began to “resemble” the public ones, by enabling them to issue titles, the equalization of salaries and teaching careers, which had an effect on the enrollment, even when it was not established as a quasi-market.

4 In this sense -and supporting the idea of the sociological component of the population as a predominant factor in the choice of privately-run schools-, as of 2003, with the recomposition of the socioeconomic fabric, there is a sustained increase in private enrolment (Gamallo, 2015) in absolute terms greater than the public one, particularly in the most privileged sectors. In this sense, the analysis of Elias (1983) makes it possible to argue that, in the face of greater closeness and functional dependence of one group on the other, historically advantaged groups generate new forms of distancing - and differentiation - to operate on those possible contiguities. In other words, in the face of processes of increasing enrollment and entering new public schools, there is an increase in institutional differentiation (Southwell, 2011, p.53).

being and re-composition, such as painting a rural school. Those related to the second group consist of trips mostly abroad, linked to the educational proposal of the school, such as travel to countries of the second language taught in the institution. In many cases, the schools propose exchange stays of three to six months, where students attend part of their last year of high school. In other cases, it is about short stays, often of no more than a week, of cultural immersion.

This article aims to investigate and reflect on the role and place of travel in school. Although the movement of both groups are analyzed, the article focuses more on the academic or educational ones, considering them a central axis of the curricula developed by these institutions.

In this sense, and for the purposes of this work, we will refer to displacements or trips in an indistinct manner, as part of a constellation between movements, meanings, experiences, rhythms and practices (Cresswell, 2008), in addition to considering the movement at the center of social realities. The physical movement of people that implies an origin and a destination entails a set of phenomena that circulate as a satellite over the subjects, their interactions and meanings, perceptible from the individual level and also from a society scale (Mayer, & Catalano, 2018)

## **Methodological approaches**

This study is based on qualitative work in five schools, four of them in Buenos Aires and one in Misiones, within the framework of research that analyzes the schools that adhere to international education programs, either because they are binational institutions, that is, that belong to a second educational system, in addition to the Argentine one, or they are schools of the network of the Organization of the International Baccalaureate (IBO), with headquarters in The Hague that certifies the validity of the baccalaureate worldwide through its Diploma Programme (DP) of the International Baccalaureate (IB). The main objective of the project is to analyze the ways in which international education (Resnik, 2012) develops, influences the determination of institutional projects and the establishment of a curriculum and job of a student (Perrenaud, 2006).

In this sense, within the framework of a qualitative theoretical-methodological strategy, during the years 2016-2018, twenty semi-structured

interviews were carried out with educational agents of these institutions (professors, coordinators and managers), understood as those in which there is previous planning about the topics to be discussed but that can be modified during the course of the interview itself. The research involved a descending strategy, that is, from the places with the greatest power down, beginning the interviews with the institutional authorities -authorities and active members of the directive commissions when pertinent- and then interviewing teachers and assistants.

The interest in investigating the diversity of institutional agents refers to the need to approach the perspective of the actor in its context, abandoning the “unique” point of view in favor of the plurality of coexisting points of view (Bourdieu, 1999), related to the place that is occupied in the institution and with the own work and institutional trajectory. The interviews should be understood as the framework of a joint theoretical elaboration in which there will not necessarily be total agreements or similar advantages; but interpretations that did not exist before the relationship (Saltalamacchia, 1992). In relation to our methodological design, we agree with Saltalamacchia when he points out that the individual is a place of “knotting” a determined set of social relations (1992, p.38), therefore it is very important to approach the knowledge of the trajectories of the actors as observable of the relational systems in which they are inserted. In this sense, we believe that each unstructured interview can be considered a true testimony of the situation experienced by the interviewee. As Saltalamacchia (1992) argues, by definition, every interviewee is an actor of the narrated events: he lived it and, in his story, he interprets it, both from material or symbolic interests that organized his participation, and by cognitive instrumentalities. Then, the data provided must be evaluated or considered, incorporating that construction.

The field work was complemented with observations of classes and school events, analysis of current and historical documents and web content of the institutions in question, which have a strong component of group travel framed in their educational and institutional projects.<sup>5</sup>

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5 The interviews were unstructured, understood as those in which there is prior planning about the topics to be discussed but which can be modified during the interview itself. In them, the trajectories of the actors were investigated and deepened to learn the changes in their structural position and the development of their social experience, trying to capture the particular political beliefs and sensitivities of these individuals. We are interested in approaching the perspective of the actor in its context, abandoning the “unique” point of view in favor of the plurality of coexisting points

## Schools for insertion into the world

In an interview with representatives of one of the analyzed schools, when we asked him about the contribution of belonging to the different educational networks provided by the German agencies for education abroad, he told us:

What the PASCH<sup>6</sup> Program allowed us was to insert ourselves in the world. From it we have developed an exchange program with a school in Germany and with a university with which we are making an agreement, but it opened the doors in general. It modernized us.

The General Director of School B, this time in Buenos Aires, also refers to these possibilities:

We are an Argentine school. We accept everything to be it [he says, referring to the regulations]. But we are a bicultural school. The kids travel to Germany, they stay in family homes and then those kids come here. There are also

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of view (Bourdieu, 2000). As is logical, the researcher contributed her analytical tools to the interviews, her training in the analysis of situations and a perhaps more global knowledge about the process; knowledge achieved both through the previous study of secondary sources and other interviews. But, once in the relationship, that baggage is only one of the inputs. The interview should be understood as the framework of a joint theoretical elaboration in which there will not necessarily be total agreements or similar advantages; but interpretations that did not exist before the relationship (Saltalamacchia, 1992). The repertoires of the institutional agents interviewed were comprehensively addressed, that is, taking into account the specific contexts within which they are developed. From our perspective, every social actor in narrating a given situation produces it. Regarding our methodological design, we agree with Saltalamacchia when he points out that the individual is "... a place of" knotting "of a determined set of social relations" (1992, p.38), so it is very important to approach the knowledge of the trajectories of the actors as observable of the relational systems in which they are inserted. In this sense, we believe that each unstructured interview can be considered a true testimony of the situation experienced by the interviewee. As Saltalamacchia (1992) argues, by definition, every interviewee is an actor of the narrated events: he lived it and, in his story, he interprets it, both from material or symbolic interests that organized his participation, and by cognitive instrumentalities. Then, the data provided must be evaluated or taken into account, incorporating that construction.

- 6 The PASCH Program, for its acronym in German which means "The schools, partners of the future", interconnects more than 1800 German schools or with strong presence of the language in the world. The schools that belong to this initiative enjoy several benefits, both for their agents -such as pedagogical training in Germany and in their countries of origin, participation in world congresses-, and student exchanges and volunteer opportunities for the students of the member schools. The PASCH is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, which supervises and finances this and other programs related to German education abroad.

German professors [like the General Director himself] and we celebrate the German festivities, for example the Day of German Unity.

Several authors elaborated (Castells, 2000, Urry, & Lash, 1998), based on the changes inherent in the processes of globalization, different analytical tools that allow us to think about space not only in terms of proximity -and territoriality- but in a relational way: space does not exist only because of its materiality, as a co-presence, but also -and mainly- as a cluster of relationships between individuals, groups and institutions that come into contact, not only in concrete or physical terms but also virtually ( Beck, & Beck-Gernsheim, 2001; Sassen, 2007). These discourses manage to overcome the dichotomy between the local and the global as global experiences arise from specific local instances, where travel occupies a fundamental role in the definition of being considered and perceived, modern and cosmopolitan schools. Of course, in order to be considered in this way, other dimensions must be added to mobility. However, when we stop at this axis, it is interesting to analyze what dimensions these temporary displacements represent for the institutional proposal. These schools are highlighted by high monthly fees, so it could be said that a large part of the families that send their children there can afford to do so. While this may be true, the truth is that the meaning of travel with family or friends is different from that of educational trips. The institutional group trips acquire nuances that family or leisure do not seem to be able to contemplate and that we will describe next.

## **The trip as a mode of transmission of “values”**

In a document, to which most of the analyzed schools adhere, the educational trips appear as elements of the curricula, on the one hand, but also as tools of transmission of values on the other. In particular, academic-educational trips are proposed as an alternative to the *trips of graduates*, which students take a few months before finishing high school as a closure of their compulsory education.<sup>7</sup> These trips are usually characterized

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<sup>7</sup> The “graduates’ trip” is an end-of-studies or promotion trip, which in Argentina is usually to the Patagonian town of Bariloche, in the province of Río Negro. Since its foundation, the province has been established as a destination for student tourism, especially since the 1950s when it began to receive contingents of young people. This popularity -and tradition- was increased in the seventies when a television program brought together students in a competition of diverse games and the prize



by adventure tourism activities and nocturnal outings with exposure to “alcohol” and other substances that alert schools and parents. A document signed by several of the analyzed schools establishes the concern for trips of this type, and the need to replace them with others that do not expose students to the “excesses” and “consumption” of addictive and toxic substances, as stays in family homes where they would not be present. The proposed and developed option consists of replacing these trips with others that combine learning with recreation and that are carried out as institutional representation. It is not only about visiting and knowing new places, but about doing it as a student of the school institution. This often translates into a dress code, which may even include the use of the uniform during the trip.

Beyond this, the truth is that this institutional representation also supposes a dress code, codes of conduct that would refer to certain values proper to the school -which are previously agreed- and that are requirements to be able to travel. In this sense, educational trips do not only imply a transmission of values through the sites and memorials that are visited, but also a prior agreement of the modes of approach to them. Circulations not only serve to perfect certain knowledge but also to mark the distinction with other social sectors through behavioral expectations: students must demonstrate, the previous months through their participation in organizational meetings that they can make the trip.<sup>8</sup>

## **The trip as a pedagogical innovation**

Secondly, these trips involve the improvement of certain competences (Perrenaud, 2000)<sup>9</sup> complementary to the school day, in particular, although

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for the winning team, consisted in the trip to Bariloche. At present, more than 100 thousand young people per year come to this town to celebrate the end of the educational cycle and although it is true that it continues to be the main destination for this purpose, many students choose others, including international ones, such as Cancun.

- 8 Although we extend ourselves in this point, it is interesting to highlight the disparity of existing criteria between the schools regarding the previous selection or not of the students who travel. Several of the analyzed schools leave these trips free to the decisions and possibilities of families, while others include in their high fees the costs of travel to promote their universalization. In others, selection criteria related to academic performance continue.
- 9 Perrenaud (2000), identifies a competence as an ability to act effectively in a defined type of situation, a capacity that is based on knowledge, but is not limited to them. To deal with a situation in the best possible way, we must generally make use of and associate several complementary

not exclusively, when it is a journey linked to the practice of a second language, which is learned at school. According to the principals of the interviewed schools, the experience is key to learning the language. In the words of a Principal, as they are not families linked to the taught second language -in this case German-, exchanges and trips are necessary and enriching:

They travel there and then come the kids from the school where they were in Germany. Here there are also many teachers from Germany, so German is heard all the time, but it is not the same as being there.

Here circulations are highlighted as a *pedagogical innovation*. The educational trips are promoted and highlighted in the informative and admission meetings -and from the initial level- with the families that wish to send their children to these institutions, as a differential in pedagogical and teaching terms, as opposed to traditional classroom formats. Language - and culture - are lived, walked, enjoyed. In addition to being able to listen to the different native accents and the diverse origins, students can read, speak and listen in a variety of registers, including informal ones - usually absent in school everyday life and textbooks - emphasizing communication language, which leads them to increase the vocabulary. According to this, the trip is an extension of the curriculum: it becomes a mobile classroom that, from an informal environment, deepens and complements what has been done in the “conventional” classes. This extension of the curriculum is not only idiomatic, but also refers to skills and other knowledge related to the “general culture” that define what is an “educated” person and identity (Beech, 2009). According to the Director of International Relations of one of the schools:

They travel or are starting to come German students here and have contact with another culture. For the past three years, instead of going to Bariloche on a trip of graduates, they go to Europe, [fundamentally to Germany] and they see another society, another culture, they go to the tomb of Bach, to the house of Goethe. In fact, we are the first Argentine school to have visited his home.

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cognitive resources, among which are the knowledge. The latter, in the common sense of the word, are representations of reality, which we have constructed and compiled according to our experience and our training. Almost every action sets in motion certain knowledge, sometimes elementary and disseminated, sometimes complex and organized in networks. The competencies that manifest these actions are not knowledge per se; they use, integrate, mobilize knowledge.

On the other hand, something that an educational trip evidences, is a change in the ways of relationship between teachers and students. Although it is not the only space where these modifications materialize, they do allow to observe in an emblematic way different approach way institutionally delineated.

In these schools, students are prepared to take exams. Elsewhere (Larrondo, & Mayer, 2018), we have referred to how, due to this, the teaching role is transformed to that of a coach who prepares his class to be evaluated by another. In the different interviews with educational agents of the institutions in question, the promotion of a socio-affective link in the teaching role is reported, which, although it focuses on the transmission of contents and development of the curriculum, develops other facets linked to post-traditional formats of the exercise of the role, such as contact through emails and sharing lunches to converse in the second or third language of the institutional curriculum. Ziegler and Nobile (2012), call this process as personalization, as an accompaniment and relatively permanent follow-up that establishes a pedagogical link in favor of schooling, in different ways according to the socioeconomic strata. For the case that occupies us that containment is done to invigorate the young student and empower him. The trips are an opportunity for this, insofar as the teaching role is transformed into a trip coordinator, with whom different moments and situations are shared, such as air travel, meals, visits to places of interest, which are then transform into anecdotes and can strengthen and contribute to personalize the student teaching link, beyond the dynamics of the classrooms and the school.

## **The trip as an institutional credential**

Due to the high tuition of these institutions, it is legitimate to assume that most of the public to these schools can make similar trips by their own means. However, we will argue that the valuation of a trip or educational exchange acquires another relevance in the educational trajectory first and in the professional and professional biography afterwards: the displacements consist of a value in itself (Mayer, & Catalano, 2018). In this sense, the trips act as a kind of certification of “quality” and distinction of the schools. Nogueira (2004b) argues that, on the side of families, these trips are not only to consolidate privileged positions, but also to distinguish them from other social sectors. The same can be said at the institutional level, since

travel acts as an alternative proposal, which although it implies pedagogical innovations, also - and fundamentally - implies the production of agents endowed with a determined social competence, related to the expectations of how to behave in society, derived from specific experiences of international circulation, which both schools and families consider legitimate for their children (Nogueira, 2004a, p.60). These forms of circulation, which are transformed into guarantees of “quality” and distinction, are extended to agreements with universities abroad, where it becomes essential to have a second and third language management. This does not mean that students continue their studies abroad. On the contrary, the authorities of the analyzed schools affirm that, in general, the students who do not come from *nomadic* families (Resnik, 2012) “will not study abroad, but those who are of other nationalities”, but these agreements continue the line of quality certification to which we referred above:

We are now working on an agreement with a university in Germany, which if the students want to study there and do not have enough level, they provide them with leveling courses. And if when they finish, they cannot study there, they come back and they have the highest level of German, which is going to serve them here for their working life.

These same skills are valued for future job placement, since their acquisition is highlighted in the curriculum and in possible job interviews and act as knowledge that will allow them access to better positions. This, in turn, is linked to the particular proposal of cultural diversity promoted by these schools, since through the proposed modes of circulation, certain cultural exchanges are promoted over others.

In their analysis of educational reforms, Beech and Barrenechea (2011) argue that there are discourses -which are later materialized in institutional practices and projects- that can be encompassed as “pro-market education”. Although for these authors in Argentina this perspective did not have the same insertion as in other countries of the region due to the dynamics of the actors involved such as the unions, elsewhere (Larrondo, & Mayer, 2018) we have analyzed how the margins of autonomy to which we refer to the beginning of the article allowed the development of these trends in the private management subsystem. With regard to this issue, it is important to point this out, since, although the laws currently in force promote cultural diversity, they do not quite specify what they refer to it. However, it can

be inferred that the diversity to which the regulations refer would be more regionally oriented according to the public policy guidelines from which these laws are based.

In this sense, it is legitimate to assume that the proposals for approaching “other cultures” and the cultural diversity promoted by these institutions, have an *instrumental* sense oriented to the world of corporations and companies, to the detriment of other experiences of contact with the “diverse”. Mitchell (2003), argued that, under similar formats, multiculturalism was turning to ways of using culture for economic purposes, hence the instrumental sense to which we referred: exposure to “other cultures” and “intercultural dialogue” that tend to promote these institutions are those valued in the business world (Resnik, 2009).

Here it is pertinent to incorporate the analysis of Beech (2011) regarding the uses of cultural diversity and its resemblance to the concept of sustainable development, which recognizes the shift from a perception of cultural diversity of a more humanistic sense to a more economic one. In times of uncertainty and individualization (Beck, & Beck-Gernsheim, 2001) processes derived from globalization, diversity is thought in instrumental terms, going hand in hand with discourses and practices related to the economy and the knowledge society.

The cultural diversity that is valued is that which would allow the preservation or improvement of a position, stratifying cultures and looking for a relationship with those identified with instrumental use, to bring students closer to forms of citizenship framed outside national borders, remitting to the currently surrounding concepts of global citizenships (Paz de Abril, 2007). This position assumes that even when necessary, the idea of border limits can generate exclusion and subordination, which must be overcome through premises related to the school’s adaptation to the current world, which includes a vision of global and cosmopolitan citizenship, that, although it does not deny the local, tries to amalgamate contents of the national with diverse cultures, valued and worldwide hierarchized, leaving aside those that are not.

## **The trip as an extension of the local**

Throughout the article, we have already given several examples of how the trip works as a mobile classroom space, where institutional objectives

can be expanded, although not in a unique way, while it is privileged. In this sense, to the “values” that these circulations assume to acquire, other aspects that are highlighted are added as an instrument of socialization. The lines above also described the opportunity to establish ties *in* and *from* another place with institutional authorities, but it is also an opportunity for particular socialization among peers.

Students “see the world” so this is expected to spark interest in future travel. The eagerness for new itineraries is usually enhanced when students verify that they can relate to the language, so in addition of being a “test” that certifies the “quality” of the institution, it is also an incentive to continue traveling, which as we developed it in the previous section, it is something valued and desired. Secondly, different teachers in schools state that travel acts as a way of “seeing other cultures” and adapting to new routines, from which attributes such as flexibility, adaptive capacities and tolerance to uncertainty emerge:

So, it's good that they travel, see other cultures, things that are good and others that are not, that not everything can be planned, or everything can go as planned.

Here we find again, capacities and attributes that are valued positively in the workplace. The aforementioned skills, along with others such as intercultural sensitivity and intuition, are taken into account by teams of national and multinational companies, understanding them as *soft skills*.<sup>10</sup>

The trips involve exposure to other environments, the acquisition of a broad perspective of the world and communication with other nationalities. Here, the domain of a second language plays a double role, of communication with an alternative linguistic community, on the one hand, while it is the gateway to another form of conception and understanding of the world on

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10 Soft skills are the correlate - and complement - of what the business world calls hard skills. While the latter refer to the specific skills that a person is acquiring throughout their education and work, as specific skills of their field of dialogue and development, and are translated into qualifications and accredited knowledge, soft skills refer to those who serve to put into practice what has been learned: not only are they related to formal education, but also to non-creditable knowledge, which is learned in different areas of life. Here we highlight certain attitudes and “values” that are expected to be put into practice in everyday work. Among the skills of this most valued group, are the ability to work in groups and communication skills, hence we rescue the importance of travel in strengthening both, but especially in the second.

the other. Therefore, much of the multicultural proposal of these schools refers to communication skills for transnational interaction, seeing cultural diversity as the engine that generates cooperation and collaboration between people (Resnik, 2009). This would be consistent with the plans of the international agencies, on the one hand, but also with the projects of each school, which hold that the modern and 21st century world presents new global challenges, and that diverse knowledge tools are necessary to connect with “others”. Thus, the Working Community of Argentine-German Schools (AGDS, for its acronym in German), states: “At school he learned German, English as well. But most important, he learned that his education has no borders” (AGDS, 2006).

This implies the awareness that the world is bigger than the community in which one lives, but at the same time the idea that the world is a handkerchief and that, beyond the differences, students can recognize themselves in their Foreign peers. Thus, a common goal in these schools seems to be to understand the other in their similarities and differences, and to perceive themselves as a “responsible member of their community and a global citizen” (Bhavnani, 2013, p.4). Here the concept of *global mentality* takes a fundamental place (Doherty, Luke, Shield, & Hincksman, 2012) which is set as an explicit objective of the institutional projects and international education programs in which schools are inserted, which support that this opening is necessary for the new generations and citizens of the 21st century (Bhavnani, 2013). Under this concept, it is understood the need of people who perceive that their perspective of the world is not the only one, and that they can exchange views and references of the world with others, so the learning of second and third languages occupies an essential place to engage the communication. In this framework, travel is an essential element to enable experiences in different ways of being and organize social life. In this last point, a remarkable axis in the global mentality is associated with social problems that do not have “borders”. There, socio-environmental issues emerge. Again, travel is not the only way to inculcate sustainable practices and habits, but to see them in operation. As one teacher says: “there [he says referring to Europe] the streets are clean. Now at school, waste began to be separated in the way it is done there: there are three trash cans here.”

Among many of its aspects, the global mentality is associated with problems and issues which have no borders and where the environmental issue occupies a fundamental place: the idea of being a global citizen

concerned about cross-border issues materializes, in an emblematic way, around axes related to the environment. Following what the professor says, but also from the observations made in the analyzed schools, this is not only about replicating practices - in this case recycling - of the Western countries, but also looking for channels that allow collaboration in the sustainability of the world. The narrative of the “example” of the advanced countries appears not only as an emulation of their practices, but also as a consideration of global problems that go beyond the border limits, but that have an impact and a local dimension.

### **Shrinking distances (and increase others)**

Throughout the article, we have analyzed the ways in which travel tries to generate an approach between societies for future exchanges, as well as the transfer of policies, practices and discourses (Ball, 2012). At this point is where more differences are found among the projects related to solidarity travel or volunteering, that we described at the beginning of the article, and educational trips. The trips of the second type - educational and academic - promote the encounter with the other and a learning through the societies that are visited. As we saw in several of the mentioned fragments, the proposed learning is reciprocal or mutual, since they know peers (students) abroad with whom they live or perform different types of activities and local youth can realize that they have a lot in common with others from different latitudes (Mayer, 2009). In turn, in many interviews emerges the idea that you can learn from these societies. This was stated by the Director of International Relations of one of the schools in an event in which the students of the last year of high school told and detailed their experience to the rest of the students:

Europeans have better habits: they do not peck food all day, they drink water instead of soda, they do not throw paper on the floor, they are things that are learned. Not only is perfecting and practicing the language after so many years of effort. It is not the same to go to Bariloche [on a trip of graduates] than to Europe: there you learn.

While this “other” appears as a desirable subject with whom to share experiences, moments and even accommodation, other population sectors



appear, but in another key: as subjects to whom we visit, attend, or include them and in this case, so that they learn from the institution:

We have the Solidarity Action Program since long before being an IB school, which requires this type of activities. What allowed us to incorporate it into the CAS<sup>11</sup> is to give it more shape. Not only go to the Formosa school once a year, but also add hours that students must meet in neighborhood institutions [where the school is located].

The fourth-year boys have been going to a rural school for a long time: they paint, prepare and do other kinds of tasks. It also helps them to see everything they have. That has been done for a long time and it is not questioned. On the contrary, the boys hope to reach the fourth year to do it.

Regarding solidarity actions and trips, we can highlight them with “altruistic” actions that arise in parallel with the deepening inequalities of the last decades, particularly from the shift of the Welfare State and the intensification of forms of exclusion present in the national reality (Mayer, 2009).

As Tiramonti and Ziegler (2008, pp. 124 and 125) argue, unlike the beneficent actions of wealthy women of the first half of the 20th century, the asymmetries in social relations resulted in a sustained growth of inequalities, the deepening of exclusion and poverty, which resulted in new patterns of socialization for the higher sectors. In this framework, private solidarity is exalted, as a virtue of the moral conscience of each individual. In this way, regardless of the ideological frames of the institutions, while the “others” with whom it is socialized in the trips belonging to the second type are seen as peers or as part of a society from which one can learn, the sense of solidarity travel and/or volunteering acquires other meanings.

In the first place, they are highlighted from poverty, since the help and presence are in function of their unmet needs. Then, the visits, although they are as or more sporadic than the trips of the second subgroup, have as their purpose the help on the one hand, but also to contrast the existing positions on their differences, on the other. As mentioned in the fragments of the interviews, these trips and visits contribute to young people being aware that

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11 CAS refers to the service-learning area that must be developed as an IB school. The acronym means Creativity, Action and Service and supposes the solidarity activities that the students of the schools that belong to the IB world must develop, to then add points -credit- that are also taken into account for Issue the Diploma Program (Billig, 2013).

not everyone “has what they have”, to “see other realities” and get a reward for the performed task. This gratification is reciprocal, since it supposes the appreciation for the help, but also the one of having helped and instilling, in the students, the private solidarity ethos to which we referred above.

However, while in educational and/or academic trips, a main objective is to strengthen links in the future, here what is invigorated is an ephemeral present of exchanges, but then social positions are restored. The visit to these enclaves allows to reinforce the identity and own position with social responsibility. In this sense, the documents of the IBO refer to the conformation of future leaders, aware of their privileges and their privileged education with the obligation to help the most destitute and to build this participation as a way of life (Billig, 2013). In this sense, the development of the global mentality also implies a tradition of moral universalism, which supposes universal rights and values and a morality that expands beyond national cases, with the individual as a “responsible” agent (Appiah, 2006; Doherty *et al.*, 2015). It fuses then, the processes tending to the internationalization and cosmopolitanism with an active citizen, occupied and worried, as much by global, as by local issues.

## **Conclusions: the place of travel in the accumulation of advantages**

In our article, we have analyzed several of the dimensions by which in our opinion, travel is a growing trend in educational institutions, particularly those related to wealthy sectors that try to preserve and secure their privileged positions, or to position themselves in such sense. As already stated in other studies (Larrondo, & Mayer, 2018, pp. 11-21), in times when inequalities multiply and interact and where degrees of uncertainty prevail regarding the future, education occupies a fundamental place in the struggle -symbolic- to establish positions and advantages. Just as literature (Castel, 1997, Sen, 2000) has shown the process of accumulation of disadvantages, as one of accumulation of unfavorable situations, this phenomenon has its counterpart in the *accumulation of advantages*, as strategies developed by agents - and the institutions- to secure such positions. Here the connection between education, youth and social inequality is fundamental, since the cumulative process of advantages is based on the concept itself: on previous advantages. As Esping

Andersen (2002) argued, this combination of events, situations, experiences and processes, to the extent that the welfare conditions of a given moment presuppose previous ones and enable future ones, collaborates in the accumulation of favorable positions, allows the accumulation of goods and services desired and/or necessary, among which are the socially significant relationships. Within this framework is that the schools, through their institutional projects, try, in a sustained and growing way, to cover these areas and the trips, from the dimensions analyzed above, occupy a central role. These modes of circulation act on previous advantages, such as a varied or expanded curriculum, which then permeates other privileges, by enabling new connections and experiences, which are capitalized both materially and symbolically.

While the studied schools make trips that we have divided into two large groups, the solidarity and volunteering on the one hand and academic-educational on the other, the truth is that our analysis shows different institutional inclinations among these large groups. Beyond the nuances that can be established, the truth is that the displacements oriented to the first group are related from the “help”, service ethic, what in other areas can be understood as social responsibility, while in the second group, prime, in several aspects the relational and learning. While these trips try to be bridges to other cultures and ways of perceiving the world, it is important to highlight the distinction they make depending on the choice of these, either in geographical terms (of the places to visit), or social, in relation with whom to share them. What this type of trips repeatedly tends to generate are processes of accretions of the previous positions: while they intend to increase contacts with the “diverse”, to the extent that these trips start from several previous socio-economic filters, reinforce the restrictions that, from the beginning, have on diversity, anchored in the school selection criteria, sustained by high tuition fees. These trips reinforce the idea of globalization as a union between divergent points and a space of flows (Castells, 2000) that, although it unites, leaves vast sectors of local populations outside or at least contributes to establishing new -and deep-stratifications.

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