

Politics and the Environment

A discursive analysis to develop a potential contribution to sustainable development

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at studying the role played by ideology in the access and functioning of the inter-discourse about ecology and the environment through a discursive analysis of the ways that the State’s power uses to inscribe itself in the citizens’ memory. We argue that there is a regular practice in the State’s verbal and non-verbal discourse in an attempt to eliminate undesirable meanings and install a hypothetical transparency towards impartiality and objectivity. Such “impartiality” and “objectivity” in these discourses do not guarantee equality in the organization of social differences of citizens who use public spaces. Sometimes, although in charge of disseminating the meaning that ecology is a good thing and that it will promote equality, the State’s power brings inequality to this signification process. We use the Discourse Analysis Theory as a method to study the complexity of interactions, and we acknowledge that a study which establishes a framework in the ecotourism and sustainability fields can be successful as interdisciplinary research when it uses different languages and methodologies to enable us to understand potential contributions and to integrate data, ideas, and perspectives when we seek answers for sustainable development.

Key words: Environment, sustainability, state’s power, discourse analysis, equality.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This project is part of a study for the implementation of the Project “Challenges and opportunities for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development of ecotourism and tourism in Lalzi Bay, Durres County, Albania” (Lushaj *et al.*, 2016). It is an interdisciplinary project, and this study aims to contribute, beyond the scientific dimension, to socio-economic goals, such as economic development, welfare, the environment, social, organizational and cultural spheres of society (Godin&Doré, 2016). Trewhella *apud* Jacic (2016) gives us a good idea of what interdisciplinary research is: “Interdisciplinary research moves beyond simple collaboration and teaming to integrate data, methodologies, perspectives and concepts from multiple disciplines in order to advance fundamental understanding or to solve real world problems”.

When we talk about the environment, we need to realize that there is a complex process behind this subject; there are elements and forces that are linked in time and space and need to be evaluated under different perspectives. Trewhella (2016) says that interdisciplinary research can attain the “kind of predictive capability that could inform policy makers”. The author states:

“Policies that govern the hiring, promotion and allocation of resources often work against interdisciplinary research. If interdisciplinary research is to flourish in academia, then its reward systems have to recognize the different paces at which interdisciplinary research may proceed as well as the fact that it is often a team rather than individual accomplishment. There is also a need for flexible organizational structures that can operate across discipline-focused departments.” (Trewhella, 2016).

We intend to discuss beyond the economic dimension, beyond case studies that quantify dimensions. We are concerned about other spheres of society and intend to collaborate with the analysis of the situation of threat to the environment and the “unwise” use of natural resources. How can we analyze whether a situation or attitude can become a sustainable development? As researchers (Gebhard, K.; Meyer, M.; Roth, S., 2007; Malsia-Lushaj *et al.* 2012) are developing a guide to serve as a helpful tool in developing an ecotourism management plan in the protected area, in this paper, we intend to create an alert so that such effort is not made in vain as well as to provide researchers with conditions to face all the challenges mentioned in the project.

We used the Discourse Analysis Theory (Pêcheux, 1988) in order to question the difficulty in implementing projects and laws governing the use of the environment, as such studies and regulations are established from a place based on the understanding that language is transparent, which makes meanings homogeneous and ignores the subjective character of understanding. We argue towards a constitutive division of meaning: the meaning of knowledge (place of logical discourse) and the subject’s meaning as a place of subjectivity. We examine which forms these two positions should take in the sustainable development of ecotourism because we understand that the individual is an important element to be considered for the success of this process of development (Lushaj).

2.0 PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

This study is justified because, although the State is well-intentioned, the paradox of inclusion of the non-included persists amid the various laws concerning the environment and environmental protection (Guimarães, 2002). We will then explain why this question, when taking a socio-economic character that considers individuals’ needs, has the purpose to expand the understanding and the knowledge of the effects of meaning caused by ideology (Adorno 1999, Zizek, 1999) in the State-environment-individual relationship. In order to conduct this study, we used a theoretical approach that combines concepts from Social Sciences (such as ideology, State, subject under the law, citizen) (Althusser, 1999; Haroche, 1988) with the Discourse Analysis Theory (Foucault, 1979, Pêcheux, 1988).

We question the extent to which the purposes of harmonious integration of people, nature, poverty reduction, human well-being improvement and respect for cultural values, for example, can co-exist with the paradox of “inclusion of the excluded” (Guimarães, 2002), which, if better investigated under the critical perspective of the Discourse Theory (Althusser, 1999; Foucault, 1979) and Discourse Analysis (Pêcheux, 1988), points to an ideological functioning of the State where, in that alleged “harmony”, factors such as “poverty reduction” and “well-being of the population” frequently remain as written words in the realm of ideas, without moving to the reality of individuals’ everyday life. This study is based on reflections about the State-individual relationship and about social inclusion developed by Monte-Serrat over the years. These reflections have been published in a thesis text, a post-doctoral report, articles and book chapters as well as presented in lectures, classes and national and international conferences. From those studies, we observed an increasing tendency to legislating about sustainability so as to regulate a *change of attitudes* that can minimize the existence of socially marginalized minorities. Such laws increase in number every year, and that constant increase must not be ignored. Despite the regulatory efforts made by governments, the *paradox of the inclusion of the non-included* persists; individuals continue being marginalized.

Our aim is to propose strategies in education and in the information related to the approach to ecotourism management so that the State’s actions, combined with participation by the population, can result in proper planning, without threats to nature and taking into account the differences in cultural resources which are the fundamentals of ecotourism. In other words: it is a participatory process.

The laws on Environment Protection dictate a “power/non-power” that interferes with citizens’ behavior, thus making conducts mandatory, establishing what is allowed and what is prohibited, providing parameters for how to act in relation to the environment. In addition to the laws, we also observed what happens to the environment in cases when there is no specific legislation that governs citizens’ conducts, since judiciary rules where no express laws exist that is, there is an appraisal for acting that influences social relations (Lagazzi, 1988).

We understand that the regulation of citizen’s conducts is not only found in established laws or only in the hierarchical relations of authority. Regulation is also present in opinions, beliefs, rules, behavior patterns. This is what ensures an order in society: “opinions and beliefs, customs and traditions are not raised on reason, but on symbols that mystify, thus interfering with the subject’s critical departure and allowing for the legitimization of a power” (Lagazzi, op. cit., p. 47).

What we propose is the monitoring and questioning of indicators that establish limits of “acceptable” change or “unfavorable” development. Such attitudes will interfere with the regulation and development of ecotourism.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

We used the Discourse Analysis (DA) method (Pêcheux, 1988), which works with evidentiary information (Ginzburg, 1989). Ginzburg places historical knowledge in a long tradition of cognitive practices and shows how a research strategy based on reading clues and traces, embedded in the historical record, reveals hidden information. The author challenges us to retrieve cultural and social dimensions beyond disciplinary boundaries (Herlihy, 2016). He challenges us to move away from common places of research that are inspired by hard evolutionism, which does not allow for observing what cannot be observed at first sight.

In the confrontation of legal enunciations concerning Environmental Protection with citizens’ private interests, we can state that power relations determine the discourse on the environment and on environmental protection. Our concern here is not about the content of legal texts, but about the functioning of such texts in the confrontation with private interests, keeping in mind that laws are permeated by the ideology of coercion.

Discourse, conceptualized as the effect of meanings between interlocutors within a socio-historical context, enables us to understand the process of production of the law discourse. According to the Discourse Analysis (DA) method (Pêcheux, 1988, Foucault, [1967]1984), we analyzed the linguistic surface of legal determinations in order to observe a “dual illusion”: that the subject under the law is “free” to make his own decisions and, at the same time, is subjected to legal determinations. Such dual illusion reflects a tension in discourse that can be observed in the conflict of interests between what the law states and what an individual understands it is better for him under the influence of the historical context within which he is.

The importance of using the qualitative method in the study lies in questioning whether objectivity ensures equality in the organization of the social differences of citizens who use public spaces. Can the objectivity of scientific discourse contain any type of subjectivity? According to Djamel (2016) (as regards to landscape valuation methods), “objectivity is not ensured when moving from a secular to a landscape specialist”. It is necessary to understand how the State-citizen relationship occurs.

3.0 DISCUSSION

3.1 The State-citizen relation marked by idealism

A citizen is defined as a subject under the law (a subject with duties and rights before the State) who performs a role that is marked by idealism: he is constituted under the “free and equal relations” among supposedly independent citizens (the subject under the law) (Miaille, 1979, p. 111). In such social relation, the State appears as something that allows full realization for the subject under the law and that provides such subject with an “expression that is coherent in itself” (Edelman, 1980, p. 61).

By means of a discursive analysis (Pêcheux, 1988), we observed that with the emergence of the subject under the law, there arose a new form of subjection (Lagazzi, 1988, p. 20) to which Pêcheux (1988) refers as “a fully visible form of autonomy”. In such alleged subject’s autonomy, one’s will is associated not only with “the person’s orientation towards action”, but also with an “appraisal of the acting” by the same subject, who is understood as “a center of decisions, as the holder of a power” (Lagazzi, 1988, p. 20).

In the hierarchy of command-obedience relations, juridicism permeates social relations, and this fact produces accentuated social effectiveness of the State’s determinations: interpersonal relations are marked by power relations inscribed in the following tension sphere (Lagazzi, 1987): at one end is the text of Law, which admits no errors, no ambiguities and, at the other, there is a position wherein subjectivity is allowed to arise, based mostly on personal experience. Is there a solution to this conflict? We want to direct the discussion to showing that the above mentioned separation can reach a dimension where the objectivity of knowledge is compatible with the subjective character of understanding.

3.2 The mirror in the State-city-citizen relation

In a conference at the Circle of Architectural Studies, Michel Foucault ([1967]1984) discusses the use of space over time and points out that, in the last few years, space has been in the center of attention together with the practice of juxtaposition and of the simultaneous. He states that under Structuralism is the effort to establish “an ensemble of relations that makes them appear as juxtaposed [...] implicated in each other”. Foucault explains that, in the middle Ages, space was a hierarchical location, a “space of emplacement” and, starting with Galileo, space is opened infinitely, extension takes the place of location.

“[...] Our epoch is one in which, for us, space takes the form of relations among places. In any case, I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, undoubtedly a lot more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the

various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that spread in our space.” (Foucault, [1967]1984).

Foucault says that position currently replaces extension. He states that position is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements, relations as series, trees and grids. All of this results in data storage in a set that may be randomly distributed or arranged according to simple or multiple classifications. The author draws attention to the fact that the problem of sitting or placement is not that of knowing whether there will be enough space for man in the world, but that of knowing what classification of human elements should be adopted in order to achieve a *given end*. According to Foucault ([1967]1984), private space and public space are nurtured by the *hidden presence of the sacred*: “we do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates places which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another”.

Foucault ([1967] 1984) asks why some places have the property to relate to all other places, in such a way to suspend, neutralize or reverse the set of what they happen to designate, mirror or reflect. Based on this reflection, Foucault divides spaces in utopias and heterotopias.

Foucault ([1967] 1984) states the following about utopias:

“There are also, probably in every culture and in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very foundation of society – which are something like counter-places, a type of effectively enacted utopia in which the real places, all the other real places, can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, questioned and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all the places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all those that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by the way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. I believe that, between utopias and these other places, these heterotopias, there may be a sort of mixed, joint experience which could be the mirror. *The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror [...]*” (Foucault, [1967]1984, emphasis added).

In Monte-Serrat (2013), there is the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis in an investigation on the image as an element that constructs something reaching beyond the experience lived by the subject; as “the frameworks of specular knowledge” that is not visually perceived (Lacan [1949] 1998, p. 96).

We understand the image-subject relationship as the subject under the law, parasitized by image, as an experience of thought on the subject’s constitution. This relationship happens in the same way as the mirror (A) realizes the illusion of the real image (which is not shown in the model) in the virtual image, thus leading the subject to perceive the vase and flowers as ONE (Lacan, [1949]1998): in the position of the vase with the flowers in the optical scheme of Bouasse, we located the subject under the law as a virtual image. We use analogy as a thinking procedure, thus establishing a relationship of similitude between the functioning of the optical model and that of the subject’s constitution in order to say that subject under the law is of the order of the virtual. The mirror (A, Other) of psychoanalysis, in addition to the social and logical dimensions, shows a political bias:

“[...] y también política, cuando reducimos su función a la del significante-amo que captura al sujeto y lo amarra a un trabajo del que es sustraído el goce. Es la

estructura llamada “del discurso del amo”, y es también la de lo inconsciente [...] si el hombre es un animal político, es porque es un ser hablante y hablado, un “hablaser” decía Lacan, sujeto del inconsciente, lo cual lo condena a recibir del Otro los significantes que lo dominan, lo representan, y lo desnaturalizan.”² (Miller, 2004 apud Zarka, 2004, p. 129).

The political articulation that denaturalizes the subject (individual) in the form of a subject under the law has a structural aspect. There is not a development; there is the individual's erotic relationship with his image reflected on mirror A (big Other), which:

“alienates such individual in himself, in a passionate organization of what he calls his self (Gaufey, 1998, p. 73 e 75). Such relationship takes place under the “symbolic reduction method” in which a “virage de je especular a je social” occurs (op. cit., p. 87). The formal mystery in which “alguién y objeto forman una pareja reunida por el operador ‘deseo del otro3” takes place in a unitary fashion, share “el je los percibe como se percibe a sí mismo. El je se reconoce en el otro, en el objeto, en la significación, en tanto están hechos a su imagen y semejanza.4” (op. cit. p. 88). (Monte-Serrat, 2013, p. 147).

The image of the subject under the law introduces the subject into a virtual reality that makes him “compact”, “ONE” in the mirror, something constructed to beyond the experience lived by the subject (Lacan [1949]); it is such an image that places the relation of the “inside” with the “outside” (Carreira, 2008): in this case, fiction is made believable, becomes a body and “remakes” the subject's history with an image of continuity, coherence and signification (White, 1991).

3.3 The city: a result of a dynamic process

The citizen's autonomy under the perspective of the subject under the law versus subjectivity is reflected on the city's structure. Jarasovic *et al.* (2015, p. 1134) state that the city is conceived under a dynamic, complex and incomplete process. The authors state that such process complexity affects the functional organization of the city in such a way that it results in the citizens' segregation and alienation. They say that “the rationality of the city's organization did not offer good results” and “socio-economic polarization and inequality pollute the space, giving birth to a new idea of a city. The city becomes a complex process and structure that is imprisoned in the model of duality between conflicting social spaces. All this implies an unbreakable bond between the divided society and the divided city.” (Jarasovic *et al.*, 2015, p. 1134).

In “The Republic” (Plato, 2016, p. 35-36), Socrates places the individual and citizens at a similar level to acknowledge that “every government, as a government, aims at the governed individuals' greatest good [...] whether it is the population of a city or an only individual”.

Whether it concerns an individual or citizens, we can understand that the subject of rights and duties (subject under the law) is unified, centered, self-sufficient and autonomous, and he shows his private interests at the same time. On one hand, there is the ideological subjection (Pêcheux, 1988) of the subject to laws; there is the interpellation of ideology in “free” subjects so that they subject themselves to the State's ruling. In this case, the constitution of meaning and the constitution of the subject are joined in the figure of interpellation in which the ideological subject and the subject under the law are bonded and, at the same time, the subordination-subjection to the big Other (State) is disguised under the form of autonomy (discursive structure of the subject-form). On the other, when we move away from the conventional logic of juridicism, we can also observe the individual, whose private interests are not compatible with those of the subject under the law.

There is the perception that the text of the Law dictated by the State, manipulating the order of words so as to tighten the relationship between “mastering writing and logical thought” (Tfouni, 2006, p. 25), institutes values to be pursued by citizens. Such values do not reflect “the basic properties of human conscience” (Luria, *apud* Tfouni, 2006, p. 37). In this process, meaning is conducted to another place, which leads us to associate the identification of the subject under the law to the signifier, thus letting show a divided structure: the citizen is divided by his own discourse because, when trying to use logical thought to seek the interests preconized by law, he may, at the same time, make an enunciation of his own interest, thus opposing the qualities of that subject under the law, who is transparent and predictable. On one end, there is the subject under the law, “the bastion of legality and legitimacy [...] the subject that thinks and articulates the sense and the meaning of reality in categories or concepts” (Santuário, 2009). On the other, there is the private subject, installed in the “order of the symbolic and ruled by the combination of the signifier” (*ibid.*).

Socrates (*apud* Platão, 2016, p. 352), when addressing the faults of oligarchies, asks: “Is it necessary for a city not to be unified, but dual, being that of the poor and that of the rich who live on the same ground and conspire against one another incessantly?”. He (*op. cit.*, p. 195) observes that a good and proper form of government, both for cities and for men, has the objective of “administrating cities or organizing individuals’ characters”. And he adds that there is something that corrupts the soul: “Additionally, all that we call assets perverts the soul and moves it away from philosophy: beauty, wealth, *powerful alliances in the city* and all other advantages of this type [...]” (Sócrates, *op. cit.*, p. 263, italics added). That is to say, Socrates states that “It is then true to contend that an excellent nature, *subject to an opposing regimen*, becomes worse than a mediocre nature” (*op. cit.*, p. 263).

3.4 Cities and ideology

In cities, the space problem causes alienation and segregation, according to Jasarovic *et al.* (2016). The idea of a functional city, rationality of the city’s organization did not offer good results: social differences, creation of segregation and hierarchical divisions inaugurate a concept of a divided city.

We can see such duality model when we consider all meanings in designing the built environment, and not only those provided by Law (as a mirror). Socrates had stated that:

“You have once again forgotten, my friend, that the law does not intend to ensure exceptional happiness for a class of citizens, but it attempts to realize happiness for the whole city *by uniting citizens by persuasion or subjection* and leading them to share the advantages that each class can provide to the community; and that, *if it forms such men in the city, this is not to give them the freedom to side with what pleases them, but rather to lead them to participate in the strengthening of the [...] State.*” (Sócrates *apud* Platão, 2016, p. 304, emphasis added).

4.0 CONCLUSION

As stated by Socrates (2016, p. 275), the debates herein presented are “devoid of vain adornment and useless subtlety, and nothing is said in a spirit of opposition or for the pure pleasure of eloquence”. What we seek is to warn the present generation about the fact that investment in ecology and environmental education will enable better administration of cities and even of houses (Sócrates *apud* Platão, 2016, p. 433). Interdisciplinary work is complex, but it is not impossible to be performed. The beginning has already been established in the project “Challenges and opportunities for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development of ecotourism and tourism in Lalzi Bay, Durres County, Albania,” which involves researchers from various fields of knowledge and different regions of the world. By doing so, we are trying to build research that establishes a framework in the ecotourism and sustainability fields in order to conduct a successful

interdisciplinary study. We have faced some difficulties in facilitating interdisciplinary research, such as “peer review systems’ depending heavily on experts from single disciplines [...]; the extra time needed [...] developing a common language and framework of study [...]; how to set performance goals [...]; increased tolerance of risk” (Trehwella, 2016). But we cannot deny that these elements are essential to ensuring the return for investment in this research. The Discourse Analysis methodology (Pêcheux, 1988: Foucault [1967]1984) allows for seeing the duality of ideas in the State-citizen relationship as well as for understanding that the law imposes prohibition to the realization of the subject’s will by regulating the direction of one’s looks, forcing the discourse to “enter [...] such category” and to reject “all the zones of instability, dispersion and contradiction” (Courtine, 2006, p. 25). As stated by Trehwella (2016), the multidisciplinary perspective of Discourse Analysis allows exposure to different languages and methodologies, which enables us “to understand the potential contributions that may come from outside our discipline” and to “formulate complex questions and then integrate data, ideas, and perspectives as we seek answers.”

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