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Pedagogical interventions and class positions in schools: an ethnographic study from semi-peripheral Hungary

(paper presentation)

This study investigates different pedagogical responses to segregation and educational inequalities through the lens of commons in education. Theoretically, the research is based upon a Marxist analysis of social reproduction and education with some integration of Gramscian, Bourdieuan, Foucauldian and Freirean interpretations. The framework will be integrated with a reflection on the semi-peripheral characteristics shaping class positions (Wallerstein, Arrighi).

The inquiry is based on an ethnographic study comparing two Hungarian schools. One is an average high school with middle-class students; the other is a primary, lower secondary school near a 'ghetto' with Rom/Cigány (underclass) population. Methodologically, the empirical study was a traditional, long-term, comparative ethnography.

In my analysis, I will follow a critical realist perspective unfolding the underlying structures behind the studied phenomena. The results show contradictory tendencies. Teachers in both schools are against the government's education policy, reinforcing class divisions. However, everyday educational interactions have an evident (though often hidden) pattern of shaping the habitus of the pupils according to this class division. In both schools, alternative ways started flourishing, but their evolvment was different. The lens of commons in education offers criteria for the evaluation and possible transformation of existing practices.