

## **EDUCATION AND TERRITORY: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

**PIERRE CHAMPOLLION**

pierre.champollion@ujf-grenoble.fr | ECP – Lyon, ESO – Caen and Université Joseph Fourier –Grenoble,  
France

### **ABSTRACT**

The links between education and territory are complex. No part of schooling can free itself from the territorial context in which the school action plan develops: formal schooling, academic achievement, vocational orientation, didactics, pedagogy, etc. are all concerned, to a greater or lesser extent according to the territories and to the educational systems. Thus, territory can have an effect from the outside on school education as an impact factor, but it can also have a full educational role. It may also impact on education as a whole, as in some mountain areas. Nevertheless, all things considered, is it really the territory which has an impact on school; or is it rather its «symbolic» part—the territoriality—which «shapes» the education pathways? While the different contexts having influence on education—spatial, political, institutional contexts for instance—have been analysed for a long time, it is completely different regarding territoriality, which has only really been tackled for fifteen years.

### **KEY WORDS**

Context; Rural school; Territorial effect; Territoriality; Territory.



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# Education and Territory: A Conceptual Framework<sup>1</sup>

Pierre Champollion

## INTRODUCTION

School, particularly, but not only, in rural and mountain areas, has always had a more or less close relationship with the territory in which the school action plan and training are set. This is clear in many well-known school features, such as, for instance, «formal schooling», specific «single-class» schools and «multigrade schools» which developed in rural and mountain areas of many countries, as well as specific schemes created in Catalonia—«rural education areas» (ZER, *Zones d'éducation rurale*), or in France—«mobile liaison and action teams» (EMALA, *Equipes mobiles de liaison et d'animation académiques*). In order to break rural and mountain isolation, similar institutional networks have been mobilized in many countries in all kinds of territories to facilitate the integration of school in its territory; the pedagogical use of the surrounding area—«territory didactics»—in Italy (Pesiri, 1998), in Spain, and in France, to give a sense to the learnings; the pedagogical use of «local» or «intermediate» resources as educational means to facilitate access to academic knowledge by teachers; the «territorial» part of the teachers' professional identity in Chile, Spain, France, and Uruguay, (Rothenburger, 2014); the building of a «pluriactive» training offer in France that is adapted to the seasonality of tourism related-jobs (Champollion, 1987), and so on.

1 Translation: Sarah Vernet.

## SHORT HISTORY OF THE THEMATIC «EDUCATION AND TERRITORY»

On a more theoretical level, the issue of «school and territory», based on the links between school and territories that come from professional practices, was in fact only built within the Educational Sciences (*Sciences de l'éducation*, SDE) in the early eighties. Before that, it had developed<sup>2</sup> in a very progressive way, relying on studies on educational «contexts» slightly earlier (in the sixties), in the broader field of human and social sciences (SHS, *Sciences humaines et sociales*), more particularly in the sociology of education. At the level of schools in rural and mountain areas, several de facto convergent initiatives have clearly contributed to this territorial contextualization of school. As far as France, our example here, is concerned, there was a certain number of studies done by scientists of the «Assessment and Prospective Direction» (*Direction de l'évaluation et de la prospective*, DEP<sup>3</sup>) «ordered» by the French Ministry of National Education (*Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale*, MEN) especially on the efficiency of rural schools, as well as the research that was conducted within the Institute for Educational Research (*Institut de Recherche en Éducation*, IREDU) of the University of Burgundy on rural schools and classes, and a specific work linked to the alpine mountain area which was carried out at the time of the publication of a special issue called *Journal of alpine research* (*Revue de Géographie Alpine*, RGA) that was dedicated to «kids living in a mountain area...their future?» (Gumuchian & Mériaudeau, 1981).

It is only during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the fundamental notion of «context» will be specified within Educational Sciences (Champollion, 2013). No other notion is at the same time as essential to the reasoning of human and social sciences and paradoxically as neglected as the notion of context (Lahire, 2012). Its first dimension—the spatial one—was updated thanks to the work of geographers and was used from the fifties and sixties as a first «framework» for a certain number of contextualized educational analyses (Gumuchian & Mériaudeau, 1981). Then, the sociological dimension of educational contexts and their impact on academic achievement and vocational orientation were highlighted by Bourdieu and Passeron's internationally recognized work on «reproduction», in the sixties and seventies for

2 The university discipline called «Sciences de l'éducation» was officially created in France in 1967.

3 Which has now become «Direction de l'évaluation, de la prospective et de la performance» (DEPP).

instance (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 1970). As a matter of fact, at the beginning of the sixties, after the publication of studies on school curricula, the magazine *Population* alerts people to the «big» differences according to the families' socio professional status. For instance, it shows that in France a senior manager's child is 80 times more likely to go to university than a farmer's child. Sociologists quickly turned their attention to primary school to find the origin of these differences. At this time, at the very beginning of schooling, nearly one third of worker's children (exactly 30.6%) repeated the first year of elementary school (year 2/ first grade), as opposed to only 6.5% of senior managers' children. Globally, social issues have quickly become the most important contextual factor with an impact on academic success as a whole (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 1970). At last, in the eighties, the political aspect of educational contexts started being studied, namely territorialized education policy and spatial planning policy regarding education (Charlot, 1994; Derouet, 1992; Van Zanten, 2001, etc.). These first analyses concerning territorialized education policy were quickly connected to the study of the institutional educational dimension, which, as far as the context is concerned, relies mainly on the study of «teacher effects», «class effects», «school effects» and, possibly «education district effects» (Duru-Bellat & Mingat 1988, Bressoux, 1994, etc.), whose impacts on academic achievements were successively identified and measured. It is approximately at the same time that researchers of the assessment and prospective direction of the French Ministry of Education (Davaillon & Oeuvarard, 1998) highlighted, to everyone's surprise, the children's good level of academic success in schools located in rural and mountain areas and who were attending single-class schools and multigrade schools («education forms» that are developed, as we have seen, in such areas, in order to cope with the decline in population due to rural exodus).

Of course, in spite of the previous brief chronology, nothing is that simple or linear. The succession of the different emphases on school contextualisation, which often overlap, at least partially, was not that linear. And today, while the different (spatial, social, political, institutional, territorial) school contexts are still rightly explored since they are still poorly known, especially territorial contexts, territory is progressively being seen in a different way by the SDE, with the successive creation of Education related to environment (*Education relative à l'environnement*, ERE), then Education for sustainable development (*Education au développement durable*, EDD), in which, through «territory projects», territory has an impact on school and



graduate curricula, being again part of the educational process as it had been in the seventies concerning the training programme (especially agriculture) (Barthes & Champollion, 2012).

#### ABOUT CONCEPTS OF «TERRITORY» AND «TERRITORIALITY»

It was only after the nineties that the territorial aspect concerning school contexts, which has many interrelated dimensions, was only noticed concerning its one-off, then systemic impacts, on education (Pesiri, 1998; Feu & Soler, 2002; Boix, 1999; Arrighi, 2004; Grelet, 2004; Caro, 2006; Champollion, 2005, 2008, 2011a; Broccolichi, Ben Ayed, Mathey-Pierre, & Trancart, 2007; Mezeix & Grange, 2008). In this last case, the Observatory of Rural Schools (Observatoire de l'école rurale, OER)<sup>4</sup> and its Andalusian, Aragonese, Catalan and Portuguese partners developed some analyses founded on the impact of territoriality on education, a notion which was highlighted by Le Berre (1992) and later refined by Gumuchian (2001), B. Debarbieux (2008) and Vanier (2009), for instance. Territoriality, which seems to have a more important effect than territory on school (in a broad sense) in rural and mountain areas, mainly refers to a «symbolic» territory dimension (Bozonnet, 1992; Caillouette, 2007; Debarbieux, 2008; Champollion, 2011a, 2013) which had been introduced at the end of the nineties by the sociologist Bernard Lahire<sup>5</sup> (in the framework of the «research group on socialization»—*groupe de recherche sur la socialisation*, GRS) when referring to «ideal» territories and «prescribed» territories or territories that had been «experienced». Territory, from this perspective, amounts to an «activated territoriality» (Vanier, 2009). To «illustrate» this last concept concerning territoriality, we can relate it to painting and literature in the following two examples: mountain territoriality, for instance, could correspond to Holder's paintings (Jungfrau, Thun lake, etc.) or Segantini's (mountain life) and Ramuz's novels (The great fear in the mountain, *La grande peur dans la montagne*), whereas Provençal territoriality could be linked to Cezanne's paintings (Sainte-Victoire, etc.) and to Giono's work (Regain, etc.).

4 It became «Observatoire éducation et territoires (OET)» in 2009 because of the expansion of its field research to all kinds of territories: <http://observatoire-education-territoires.com>

5 Area of work number 4 «Territories, policies, identities» GRS (Lyon 2 University).



All this conceptual stimulus, which will be even clearer when questioning the two multi-referenced territories<sup>6</sup> and territoriality concepts developed at the beginning of the second article of this special edition of *Sisyphus*, feeds the very complex notion of territory used by the educational sciences and more generally by the human and social sciences, whose main constitutive dimensions are briefly remembered below:

- The «spatial» dimension, which for a long time constituted the only framework (a physical one first) of the emerging notion of territory.
- The «sociological» dimension, which obviously has an impact on schooling and career guidance, is part of the «social game» of the territorial actors of the territory it characterizes.
- The «political» and «institutional» dimension, linked above all to territorialized education policies and also to different teacher-effects, class-effects and school effects.
- The «economic» dimension, integrating the constitutive elements of the local area (Frémont, 1976), includes incentives and funding coming from national states and from the local authorities concerned, as well as from European structural funds aiming to reduce regional imbalances<sup>7</sup>. Thus, it also includes making training programs, building schools<sup>8</sup> and vocational training<sup>9</sup>.
- The «symbolic» or «ideal» dimension relies mainly on the social representations of the territory, thus leaving the representation «area» to correspond to an «internalizing» process (Merton, 1949) which is part of the collective unconscious (Jung, 1988); that is to say, to a really territorial *habitus*, which refers to the notion of territoriality, as we have seen before.

6 More than 200 different definitions of the term «territory» were identified by the geographer Horatio Bozzano in 2008, in the context of the «Coordination action of the «Réseau européen d'intelligence territoriale» (CAENTI).

7 The European zoning of deprived areas called «5b», for instance.

8 Exclusive competence of local supervision authorities for middle and high schools.

9 Shared competence.



## IMPACT OF TERRITORY AND TERRITORIALITY ON EDUCATION

The question of the potential impact of territory and, even more, of territoriality on school, generally remains an issue that is seldom handled in Educational sciences (SDE) (Rhein, 2003; Ben Ayed, 2009). As a matter of fact, as regards educational contextualization, educational scientists study more particularly the modalities and forms that the territorialisation of education processes takes, the different contextual determiners concerning education, and, more and more (though still under-studied), the impact of the systemic impact on territories and territorialities on school. In this last regard, we should mention that recently (2005, 2008), in «the French mountain area»<sup>10</sup>, a specific systemic «territory effect» on school has been identified, thus completing the major contextualized impacts linked to the social and institutional fields (Champollion 2005, 2008, 2011a) that have already been mentioned. The latter plays a positive role<sup>11</sup> on pupils' schooling until the end of middle school but then it has a negative effect<sup>12</sup> on orientation. Territory can thus have an impact on the pupils' school and vocational future by «locking» them up in their «local setting» via a cultural «moulding», but also «freeing» them progressively from it, thanks to the growing «awareness» of how deeply «settled» they are in their territory.

### A SPECIFIC FOCUS: RURAL SCHOOL

As far as the SDE (Educational sciences) are concerned, founding research teams, laboratories or organisms such as *Espaces et sociétés* (ESO, Space and Societies), the *Centre d'études et de recherches sur l'emploi et les qualifications* (CEREQ, Work and Qualification Research Centre), the OER and its Iberian partners (Barcelona, Grenada, Lisbon and Zaragoza Universities), the *Groupe interuniversitaire de l'école rurale catalan* (GIER, The Catalan research group on rural schools), are confronted with the following dilemma: in a rural or mountain area, if the territory, and school itself, does not only highlight inequalities (particularly social

10 Villages and towns with an average altitude of 700 (1985 French law).

11 The rate of academic delay (one year or more), for instance, is significantly less important in the mountain areas than all over France.

12 In the sense that pupils in mountain areas, with similar results, do not completely use all the vocational possibilities that are offered to them, compared to the majority of other pupils.

inequalities), but also has an impact as such on school, then it becomes essential to try to know and understand this impact, to try to reduce school difficulties that it can lead to, to increase the assets that it creates, and to give the essential elements of knowledge and comprehension in order to increase the teaching performance of schools in rural and mountain areas.

Studies concerning schooling in rural and mountain areas were initiated after a temporary statement, particularly from the DEP and IREDU research in the eighties and nineties, carried out by all the founding members of the OER, at the end of the nineties. To this day it remains, beyond all the whys and the re-emergent polemic concerning the question of the pedagogical efficiency of multigrade schools, without any fully documented scientific answers: why do pupils coming from schools in rural and mountain areas, who are among the «best» (Oeuvrard, 1995) in terms of academic achievement, become among the «worst» when they enter middle school (Davailon & Oeuvrad, 1998) and when it comes to the social hierarchy of career guidance<sup>13</sup>? These initial questions could not find, at that time, real scientific answers for many a reason, some of which are briefly detailed below:

- First of all, the main causes of academic paths had not all been studied in depth: if, as we have seen, the effect of the pupils' social and cultural origin had already been fully highlighted after the first work of sociology of education, and the studies on the impact of public policies on territorialized education had already begun, the same cannot be said for the potential effects of territorial contexts.
- Also, the study of rurality was largely undifferentiated: the division into subareas (specifically of the entire French rural area) had not been carried out, which contributed to submerge the territorial differences in the entire rural area, whose meaning was decreasing at the same time as the rural area, previously mainly agricultural, was diversifying.
- Finally, in the context of a large generic metonymy, rural and mountain schools were still often only assimilated to single-class and multigrade schools, which «were born» in rural and mountain areas in response to challenges, particularly demographic ones, with which they were confronted (DEP and IREDU surveys in the eighties).

<sup>13</sup> That is of course an exaggeration: we do not condone the implicit social hierarchy of the pathways that underlie the majority of today's practices concerning career guidance and their representations...

At first the OER analyses (begun over 10 years ago) on the school paths of pupils living in rural and mountain areas—«isolated rural settings», «rural centres», «rural areas under the insignificant influence of urban areas» (Champsaur, 1998), and of the French «mountain area», together with the research conducted by its Iberian partnership in the EDUC 13460 project of the Spanish research program I+D+I<sup>14</sup>, confirmed previous results that had been obtained by the DEP and the IREDU regarding primary school. But the OER also completed these results on several points. It proved that, at least in the «isolated rural areas» and «mountain areas», good primary school results did not significantly erode in middle school. It also established that, globally, in any «mainly rural area», the regular use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching, for instance, did not seem to have any impact on school results (Alpe & Fauguet, 2008). But most of all it showed that, in the context of a «territory impact» more particularly linked to mountain «territoriality», good primary school results and then good middle school results did not have (as far as career guidance is concerned) the same effects as anywhere else in France. Paradoxically, due to an over-determination of the territorial anchoring, generating a lower potential mobility, and a less important capacity to project into the future, pupils and above all parents in rural mountain areas<sup>15</sup> used the whole of the possible choices concerning career guidance that are available at the end of years 10 and 11 («general and technical high school») less than the other pupils and parents (Champollion, 2005, 2008, 2011a, 2011b)<sup>16</sup>.

## ABOUT SOME THEORETICAL QUESTIONS

The interest of a territorialized approach of school, as we have noted in this brief introduction, remains mainly in the possibility of making the «educative thing located», visible and comprehensible thanks to a systemic study of the inter-

14 See the research n° EDU 13460 of the Spanish programme: «investigation + development + innovation» (I+D+I) conducted by Barcelona University to which has been participating the OET for three years (2009-2012).

15 More or less according to the kind of mountain: more on the «Ardeche plateau» (highland), less in the High Ubaye Valley (Champollion & Legardez, 2010).

16 The integrality of the OER and OET research results, apart from individual scientific publications of researchers of the Observatory, is at the moment available in the six volumes entitled «Teaching in rural and mountain areas» (*L'enseignement en milieu rural et montagnard*), coordinated by Yves Alpe, Pierre Champollion & Jean-Louis Poirey, that were published by Les Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté from 2001 to 2004 (with Renée-Claude Fromajoux for the first one and Angela Barthes for the sixth).



actions between people, their territorial living environment, and their social representations. But such a comparative approach also enables us to imagine a potential transfer, such as the aforementioned Iberian project did, after a decontextualisation and recontextualisation, even a generalization, a modelisation of specific studies, in order to make school participate in «territorial intelligence» and in «sustainable territorial development». It is for that purpose that the OER built its first database (1999-2007) and that the OET that succeeded it in 2009 is at the moment building the second one (2012)<sup>17</sup>, with the additional purpose of assessing if and which changes occurred concerning leisure activities (pupils), cultural openness (schools and middle schools), representations in rural and mountain areas (pupils and parents), school results (pupils), geographical mobility (pupils and parents), projects and career guidance (pupils and parents), particularly since 1999. It is still for the same purpose that studies were carried out on the links between territoriality and education for sustainable development, essentially conducted in the context of the ANR research «Education for sustainable development: assets and obstacles» developed between 2009 and 2012.

This research approach takes into account the territorial level, the territorial differences, spatial planning, education policy, educational institutional measures and more largely inter-ministerial ones—in brief, the entire school contextualization, the multiplicity of factors, teaching staff, local officials, parents' representatives, educational staff, pupils' parents, institutional networks, even «remote» ones such as trade unions or the edition market sector, for instance. We can thus say that this research program is based, at least partially, on a developmental approach (in a Vygotskian perspective).

Today, rural school is perceived not only as an actor of the territorial development that participates in the long term enhancement of the territory, but also as a «laboratory» where pedagogical and educational innovations take place, innovations that may interest, in a «count down» technology transfer of the previous habits, urban schools located in France<sup>18</sup> but also and above all in Spain, as we have seen.

17 The OET is currently questioning pupils and parents of the same schools (CM2-Year 6 level) and the same middle schools (3ème-Year 10) in Ardèche, «low-alpine» and in the Drôme area that the OER had previously questioned from 1999 to 2004 in order to detect, characterize and measure based on the variables mentioned above, in particular the potential evolutions in the complex relation education-territoriality which would develop during these last ten years.

18 In the Drôme department, in 2011, 75% of the classes are multigrade classes, whose model, coming from schools located in rural and mountain areas, has developed to try to respond to the triple challenge of school demography, the distance from urban centres, and geographic isolation.



Territory is thus built by each one of us, «territorial actors» indeed, in an interactive dynamic that involves mediation of signs, symbols and stories that it conveys. Territory stands for incorporated past (Lahire, 2012). Consequently, research on rural school participates in the comprehension of the interactive processes between a subject and a complex social and territorial environment. The multifactorial effect of territory and, above all, of territoriality on identities, inequalities, on successes, on career guidance and on occupational integration is, as we have seen, recognized. There is a «mark» of the areas and of their representations on everybody's life which we need to become aware of in order to better understand it and to try to limit its possible «negative» effect, if we want to.

But beyond this multifactorial and sometimes systemic impact of the territory on school, a change appears today, at least implicitly, in the education logic within the issues of education and territory. As in agricultural education, where the national curriculum has clearly attested it since 1985, territory in that perspective is going to be more and more of an entire educational «player», instead of being seen only as a context among others with an impact on school. Some Catalan villages are already playing a real educational role (Feu & Soler, 2002). It becomes likely to feed a curriculum based on the local, specific of the development needs of territories where the school is located, at least concerning sustainable development education in France.

This new epistemological position should enable the educational sciences to complete their interpretation grid of the links which developed between education and territory-territoriality usefully, insofar as the analysis of the territorial context in all its dimensions (particularly the symbolic dimension) has largely to be built. It will of course have to be refined in its processes and educational consequences, and, above all, to be broadened to subjects other than education for sustainable development (which is not a subject).

## CONCLUSION

In the end, the acknowledgement of territorial dimensions by the educational sciences is enriching itself today more of the highlighted paradigmatic renewal (Feu & Soler, 2002; Piveteau, 2010; Barthes & Champollion, 2012) than it draws a



line under the past, very recent<sup>19</sup> sometimes, that it absolutely doesn't deny. In fact, the two territorial «roles» «played» by territories and territorialities at an educational level, and by the educational sciences, are not at all contradictory: territory as a «player» which was already participating since the seventies in the set-up of initial and continuing occupational training programs, and was progressively starting to play a «prescribing» role thanks to curricular activities, at least concerning education for sustainable development, does not toss out territory as a «context», which punctually—and sometimes globally—has an impact on educational «matter» as a whole.

The two research positions, beyond their inevitable overlaps, do not fundamentally correspond to the same territory dimension: territory seen as a «player» refers to the social and economic territory dimension, whereas territory seen as a «context» refers more to the symbolic territory dimension, and so to the notion of territoriality...

In the current state of research concerning the issue of education and territory, today many questions remain unanswered, while others are progressively emerging from current studies. The question concerning virtual territories has not really been answered yet. Nevertheless, the development of digital networks, and of the identity forms that they convey, really comes up. It is the same concerning the «local» question: what is its level? Finally, is there really, as many international institutions think (World Bank etc.), «territorial knowledge», «local knowledge» produced by territories? Does territory have an impact, as an actor, apart from education for sustainable development, on different school subjects (Barthes & Champollion, 2012)? In what forms? On which terms and conditions and through which actions? To what extent?

A certain number of ongoing studies and theses may not only highlight the questions that have been mentioned above, but also consider the perspective of a comparative approach between different rural schools (Chile, Spain, France, Portugal and Uruguay, in the framework of the international research conducted by Barcelona University, as mentioned above); France and Italy, in the framework of the OET, identify and characterize if necessary regularities between different rural schools, as common features were

19 Let's repeat that the studies conducted by the educational sciences concerning the impact of territories and territorialities on school date from the very end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These studies are still going on, but are also developing more and more at the moment.



identified between different mountain territories, thus creating the «mountain territoriality» (Bozonnet, 1992; Debarbieux, 2008). Beyond this comparative approach between types of rurality in different countries, and by studying the links between education and territories in urban areas, deprived urban areas linked to the implementation of town policy (particularly in France—*Observatoire des quartiers sud de Marseille* – Observatory of the southern district of Marseille), researchers who work on the issue of school and territory try to identify possible consequences of the territory in these last areas too.

The scientific issue of school and territory, which would only gain in clarity and precision if it were called «education, territory and territoriality», has historically analysed the complex relationships between education and territory with the example of school in rural and mountain areas. As we have seen in this article, at the moment it is both in the process of being consolidated and of being enlarged. Thus, it should soon no longer appear as one of the nearly «blind» points of educational sciences, as the second to last international congress in Geneva (*Actualités de la recherche en éducation et formation*, AREF, Research news concerning education and training) had inventoried in 2010 (Champollion, 2010b)...

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