

ARTICLES

Situated Pedagogy and the Situationist International: Countering a Pedagogy of Placelessness

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Among the avant-garde organizations in Europe during the middle of the twentieth century, a few of them combined in 1957 to form the Situationist International (SI). This article locates relevant aspects of their theory in the increasingly visible constellation of Critical Geography and educational scholarship, both in the foundations of education and curriculum theory. After a brief introduction to the SI, a situated pedagogy is presented in past and present educational literature and is complemented with various theoretical constructs of the SI. These considerations are presented to address and, perhaps, remedy a pedagogy of placelessness that appears to be prevalent in public schools today. A situated pedagogy connects the curriculum to the everyday lives of students and is interested in identity and self-formation, but also social-formation and the relationships between the two, and asks students to pay attention to their environment, and listening to what places have to tell us. It also asks students to read the world and to decode it politically, socially, historically, and aesthetically. A situated pedagogy attends to place, not only as the focus of student inquiry or academic study, but as the spaces for performative action, intervention, and perhaps transformation. As such, education moves beyond schools to their communities as students participate in remapping their material and curricular landscapes.

SITUATED PEDAGOGY

The Spatial Turn

Educational discourse is abundant with spatial language and metaphors, such as student-centered curriculum, distance learning, learning communities, public and private spheres, secret places, border crossings, marginalization, colonization, globalization, etc. In the last several decades, many social theorists have devoted a great deal of attention to certain notions of space as a concept for discursive analysis and moreover, the ground for transformative action. The advent of so-called Critical Geography is evidence of what some have described as the *spatial turn* in social theory, and this turn has become evident in the field of education. For many, this spatial turn in social theory is rooted in a particular critical tradition (e.g., Harvey 1985, 1990, 1996; Lefebvre 1976, 2002, 2003; Massey 1994, 1995; Soja 1989, 1996). This article follows a slightly different genealogy in a lineage of theoretical relatives of Henri Lefebvre—a group of young rebel dissidents called the Situationist International (SI)—and, especially, the work of Guy Debord.

Among the avant-garde groups cropping up in Europe during the middle of the twentieth century, a few of them combined in 1957 to form the SI. For twelve years, this organization published the Paris-based journal *Internationale Situationiste* and disseminated other publications, books, pamphlets, movies, and graffiti before finally disbanding in 1972. They reached their height of popularity due to their role (which is still debated) in the May '68 worker and student revolts in France. In its early, more aesthetically oriented stage, the SI was, in part, a reaction to Dada and Surrealism—and, to a lesser degree, futurism—but their impetus soon turned more overtly political, developing into an incisive and, arguably, prescient critique of modern capitalism. They championed radical methods of agitation to promote their revolutionary goals as idealistic, and perhaps unrealistic, as they were. Their theory, protected for years in fear of assimilation, iconism, misappropriation, and dogmatism, nonetheless continues to resurface in various circles in and out of academia. Their critique has influenced many contemporary theorists and has already begun to trickle into educational discourses (e.g., Trier 2004; Vincent and Ross 2003). The SI occasionally wrote on student life, and their critique certainly has an implicit pedagogy. However, it should be noted that because of their aggressive, sometimes belligerent and violent, tactics, their association with public schools requires more than a modicum of prudence, as does any exegesis of their theory.

This article locates relevant aspects of their theory in the increasingly visible constellation of Critical Geography and educational scholarship, both in the foundations of education and curriculum theory. After a brief introduction to the SI, a “situated” pedagogy is presented in past and present educational literature. Second, the SI’s notions of situations, unitary urbanism, the *dérive*, and psychogeography

are then connected both to that literature and Critical Geography, mostly via an association with Henri Lefebvre. Furthermore, despite the literature that exist regarding the need to situate education, and the more recent attention given to spatial considerations, it appears that a pedagogy of placelessness is still the norm in many schools, particularly as they are being forced to standardized curriculum and teach to the tests. The article then concludes by addressing how all of this can inform practice.

And Now, The SI

In the mid-1950s, there were various active, avant-garde artists and organizations all over Europe and elsewhere. Dada and Surrealism had endured decades to still hold some influence in the art world, although both were arguably degenerating. In 1946, Isidore Isou—who was a Romanian prodigy heavily influenced by his fellow countryman and Dadaist poet, Tristan Tzara—formed the artistic group known as the Lettrist Movement. Members included Surrealist champion André Breton, as well as Maurice LeMaitre, Gil Wolman, and future Situationist Guy Debord and Michele Berstein. In what would become a trend of scissions and exclusions, the Lettrist Movement split with a group led by Debord, which took the name the Lettrist International. This group would go on to merge with the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (IMIB), which was a new version of an earlier group, COBRA, founded by the Belgian poet Christian Dotremont. After a string of dissolutions, scissions, and combinations of groups, on July 27, 1957, a new organization was formed by several of the remaining persons of the Lettrist International, IMIB, and London Psychogeographical Association, which at the time only had one member, Ralph Rumney. This new organization called itself *L'internationale Situationiste*, or the Situationist International (Marcus 1990; Plant 1997; Sadler 1998).

Fifty years later, the SI has achieved cult status in some circles and Debord has endured decades of hagiography. Their influence has been attributed to various movements from punk rock to American anarchists protesting the WTO, in addition to various expressions within the artistic community from guerrilla theater to postmodern montage. Guy Debord's (1998a, 1998b) *Society of the Spectacle* has been a noted influence on many contemporary thinkers such as Fredric Jameson and especially Jean Baudrillard. Indeed, several scholars have differently noted the similarities and disparities between Debord's spectacle and Baudrillard's hyperreality (e.g., Best 1994; Jappe 1999; Plant 1997).¹ Debord was openly pessimistic, especially later in his life, and always hostile toward misconceptions of his work, despite his insistence that there was no dogma. But although Debord wrote of the totality of the spectacle, most argue that he never arrived at the fatalism Baudrillard does and refused to accept impossibility of social change (Best 1994; Jappe, 1999;

Plant 1997). Jappe in particular points out that despite various affiliations with postmodernism, Debord and the Situationists were devoted Hegelian-Marxists. One element that leads to associations with postmodernism is their method of *détournement*, and it's also worth noting that this method—loosely conceived—has become a popular form of art, particularly in the form of remixes, mashups, and homemade videos that are popular on YouTube and other Internet sites, as well as corporate advertising.

Finally, the introduction of Situationist theory demands some caution regarding both an application to educational studies and how the SI have been interpreted by various groups to various ends. This article does not espouse a *Situationist pedagogy* in terms of following a uniformly theorized position or intent in terms of application. However, the notions of situations, the *dérive*, and psychogeography hold interesting and insightful contributions to the discourse of education, particularly in the nexus of Critical Geography and pedagogy. Regarding how the SI have been appropriated (and perhaps misappropriated) by modern-day theorists, artists, and activists, there are numerous reasons that differences of interpretation and application of their ideas are inherently more probable than the usual differences of interpretations of any given theorist. For one, when dealing with the Situationists, one is dealing with a plural of minds, and yet, one mind arguably predominates. Related to that, among the SI there were numerous exclusions, expulsions, and resignations over differences in ideology, which not only reveal the internal contradictions of the SI, but also exacerbates their posthumous consumption and appropriation. For a group that claimed, “Our ideas are in everybody’s head and one day, they’ll come out” (see Sussman 1989, 10), they—especially Debord—frequently denounced misinterpretations of their work and were vociferously critical of many of their contemporary theoreticians. According to Henri Lefebvre, “Debord followed André Breton’s example. . . by expelling everyone in order to get a pure and hard little core” (cited in Ross 2004, 275). Regardless, their flare for pomp and polemics, as well as their abusive rebukes of dissenting opinions existing in so much of the SI’s publications—whether attacking the faculty in the French University or the Chinese Communist Party—remain an indelible part of the literature by and about them, past and present.

Objective and Internal Conditions

One of the first appeals to a “situated” pedagogy can be found in the work of John Dewey. In *Experience and Education* (1997a) and elsewhere Dewey argued that any purposive model of education has the fundamental need for a philosophy of experience. One chief principle “for interpreting an experience in its educational function and force” is that of the “interaction” of experience, which is the “interplay” of “objective and internal conditions” (1997a, 42). “Taken

together, or in their interaction, they form what we call a *situation*” (42, emphasis his). The *objective* or *enviroming* conditions are those that affect any experience, and this consideration places a “primary responsibility of educators” to know and incorporate the “everyday life of students” (40). This is one reason Dewey insisted that *real* progressive education was more difficult than traditional education, which makes “no demand that the teacher should become intimately acquainted with the conditions of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc., in order to utilize them as educational resources” (40). The same could be said for more contemporary versions of curriculum- or test-centered education in that the “conditions of the local community” are not connected to the students’ lives. By contrast, a properly progressive and situated education would “take these things constantly into account” (40). Regardless, a situated pedagogy is interested in identity and self-formation, but also social-formation and the relationships between the two, between the self and social in the process of becoming.

In terms of situating education, Dewey believed geography and history were “the information studies *par excellence* of the schools” (1997b, 210), and should “supply the subject matter which gives background and outlook, [and] intellectual perspective” to student inquiry (208). Thus, students increase their “ability to place [their] own doings in their time and space connections” (208). It is clear that history and geography should not be taught as disciplines divorced from each other, or from the students’ individual experience, or from present social conditions. Regarding geography in particular, Dewey aligns this with the study of nature, and hence, it leads directly to science in Dewey’s interdisciplinary curriculum. Geography offers the students training in the ability “to gain in power to perceive the spatial, the *natural*, connections of an ordinary act” (210). Furthermore, it is clear that geography, as well as education in general, was to be situated in the locality. Although not necessarily to the same ends, these elements in Dewey seem somewhat aligned with Critical Geography’s emphasis on the locality and history, and the attention given to specific connections between individuals and the material aspects of particular places. Of course, the critiques of Critical Geography also attunes to other aspects of place, not the least of which are the ideological, economical, considerations of race and gender, and various other complexities that compose the “multisideneess of power” (Soja 1996, 87).

For Dewey (1997b), situating pedagogy clearly means more than students learning local waterways, topography, and soil content: “And while local or home geography is the natural starting point . . . it is an intellectual starting point for moving out into the unknown, not an end in itself” (212). As such, the study of geography was not only meant to move from the known to the unknown, but it was also related to the “associated life of men [sic]”—that is, the social and historical life of people. For Dewey, “nature is the medium of social occurrences” (211), thus reinforcing the complementary relationship between geography and history, and most of all, place. Furthermore, Dewey clearly included economics in that

relationship as he wrote, “economic activities deeply influence social intercourse and political organizations on one side, and reflect physical conditions on the other” (213). However, ultimately, Dewey’s intent was, for all of this, to create connections between the everyday places and lives of students to the curriculum, but not necessary to foster social transformation. Critical pedagogy offers a more sustained effort to engage issues of social justice, and some of the literature also makes explicit calls for situating education, particularly in the work of Paulo Freire.

Situated in Time and Space

Freire (1999) writes that, “People, as beings ‘in a situation,’ find themselves rooted in temporal-spatial conditions which mark them and which they also mark” (90). Not only is this quote reminiscent of Dewey’s “time and space connections,” but it also recognizes the dynamic play between people and place that both Dewey and Critical Geography address. That is, Freire similarly notes that people are not only affected by place, but also affect and even alter place. It should be noted that Dewey was less interested in fostering radical social transformation, but mostly used place as a medium for learning. However, for critical pedagogy and Critical Geography both, actions that are aimed at social change entail deliberate and critical reflection as a matter of praxis. Freire writes,

[People] will tend to reflect on their ‘situationality’ to the extent that they are challenged by it to act upon it. Human beings *are* because they *are* in a situation. And they *will be more* the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act upon it. (90)

It is clear that any reflection upon their “situationality” on the part of individuals (students) is fundamental to Freire’s (1999) notion of critical pedagogy and is part and parcel of the generative (problem-posing) themes that are related to the notion of *conscientização*. *Conscientização*, as Freire (1999) puts it, amounts to “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take actions against the oppressive elements of reality” (17). It goes without saying that these “oppressive elements of reality” entails a critique of power, which has already been stated as part of the analysis of Critical Geography. Moreover, like critical pedagogy, Critical Geography is concerned with working against oppressive elements in society, but the latter addresses localities with a more deliberate emphasis on the spatialization, or the “production of space” both in its positive and negative characteristics.

Freire's notion of a dialogic pedagogy, particularly as it stands in contrast to the banking model of education, is well known, especially as described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1999). In another text, he and Ira Shor (Shor and Freire 1987) also describe a dialogical education that must be situated "in the culture, language, politics, and themes of the students" (104). Ira Shor's description is worth quoting at length:

But in situated pedagogy we discover with students the themes most problematic to their perception. We situate the critical pedagogy in subjective problem-themes not yet analyzed by students. . . . In dialogic pedagogy, this turn towards subjective experience must also include a global, critical dimension. That is, we don't only look at the familiar, but we try to understand it socially and historically . . . situating pedagogy in student culture does not merely exploit or endorse the given but seeks to transcend it. That is, the themes familiar to the students are not thrown in as a manipulative technique, simply to confirm the status quo or motivate students. . . . We gain a distance from the given by abstracting it from its familiar surroundings and studying it in unfamiliar critical ways, until our perceptions of it and society are challenged. (104)

Regardless of whatever aspirations motivate this tactic, "Situated study presents subjective themes in their larger social context, to challenge the givens of our lives and the surrounding system dominating daily life" (Shor and Freire 1987, 105). Shor thinks that this is achievable by introducing or, rather, having students bring in material from their cultures, writing about their experiences, and "frontloading" his courses in students' languages. The latter means beginning his classes by relying heavily on student discussion and slowly working in his voice and the academy's discourse. Doing so ties the connections of the students' everyday lives ("ordinary acts") to the larger curricular contexts, and for the purposes of this article, the everyday lives of students also means making connections to the particular places of those lives.

David Gruenewald (2003a) adds a more contemporary contribution to the developing notion of situated curriculum when he writes, "being in a situation has a spatial, geographic, contextual dimension. Reflecting on one's situation corresponds to reflecting on the space(s) one inhabits; action on one's situation often corresponds to changing one's relationship to a place" (4). Furthermore, he argues that, "despite clear overlap between critical pedagogy and place-based education . . . significant strands exist within each that do not always recognize the potential contributions of the other" (4). He also believes the two traditions can be mutually supportive. Quoting McLaren and Giroux (1990), Gruenewald (2003a) notes that critical pedagogy has always been a pedagogy of place. Certainly, a pedagogy based on the notion of *conscientização* and the attention to situating the problem-themes of students in their everyday lives must necessarily attend to

issues of place. McLaren and Giroux (1990) describe it as a pedagogy that “must address the specificities of the experiences, problems, languages, and histories that communities rely upon to construct a narrative of collective identity and possible transformation” (8–9). Recognizing the critique of Bowers (1993) that critical pedagogy in the United States has often neglected ecological considerations and even projected environmentally insensitive ideologies of individualism and progress, Gruenewald (2003a) also notes that some critical educators have taken up ecological issues such as environmental racism. However, in the literature of Critical Geography, notions of identity are considered more deliberately in terms of how place also affects those communities of people and social institutions, and how all these come together in a process of spatialization.

Place-Conscious Education

The theories of critical pedagogy and Critical Geography are more explicitly combined in another essay by Gruenewald (2003b). Also incorporating phenomenology, bioregionalism, ecofeminism, and place-based education in his critique, Gruenewald discusses five dimensions of place that he believes can develop a “place-conscious” education: the perceptual, the sociological, the ideological, the political, and the ecological, and he admits that this list is not exhaustive. He begins by using phenomenological inquiry to describe the perceptual dimension of place and the sensual, participatory act of perceiving the world. He writes, “a theory of place that is concerned with the quality of human–world relationships must first acknowledge that places themselves have something to say” (624). Feeling that our modern era has “forgotten how to hear, communicate, and participate in meaning making with our places on the living earth” (624), he advocates a perspective that means we listen to places. The sociological dimensions of place refer to the social aspects of place, including identity and culture, recognizing “places are what people make of them” (627). As such, “Becoming aware of social places as cultural products requires that we bring them into our awareness for conscious reflection and unpack their particular cultural meanings” (626–627).

Gruenewald (2003b) specifically uses the literature of Critical Geography to describe the ideological dimension of place and, as such, is concerned with “how geographical space, always inscribed with politics and ideologies, simultaneously reflects and reproduces social relationships of power and domination” (628). Referring to Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (2002), Gruenewald (2003b) writes, “Space is the medium through which culture is reproduced” (629). Although he doesn’t reference Dewey, it is clear that Gruenewald similarly wants to situate curriculum in the local. Regardless, he believes this spatial critique offers an analysis of an education that reveals how schools are places where uneven dynamics of power, especially economic power, are reproduced. Critical Geography also

informs Gruenewald's description of the political aspect of place, noting that although economic power (capital) has a large role in the production of places and in shaping the literal and figurative landscapes of culture and identity, that "other spatial relationships are significant" (631). These include issues of race, gender, sexuality, region, religion, etc., all of which require "a radical multiculturalism," one that doesn't aim to move everyone—especially the marginalized—to the center, but instead "embraces the 'spaces that difference makes'" (633). Finally, in describing the ecological dimension of place, Gruenewald addresses the literatures of social and human ecology, environmental justice, and especially bioregionalism and ecofeminism to understand the person-to-place relationship in the globalized world and to critique the role of education in promoting the ideology of progress as economic growth.

Gruenewald (2003b) argues that, although those five dimensions do not cover all the ways one might perceive place, taken together they not only challenge many present assumptions and absences in educational theory and practice, but also, by perceiving place in these ways, provide important opportunities to learn from places. He writes that "places [can] teach us who, what, and where we are, as well as how we might live our lives" (636). Gruenewald notes the diverse approaches of education in which the schools engage local settings, including (but not limited to) outdoor education, service learning, community-based education, bioregional education, and several others, but he discusses three educational traditions of place-based research—natural history, cultural journalism, and action research—at greater length. Gruenewald's call for a "place-conscious education" emphasizes listening to the world, which seems congruent with "reading the world." Listening to what the world has to tell one means decoding it both as a living ecosystem, and socially and historically. Gruenewald clearly hopes this communication will lead to empathy, as he (2003a) advocates a "curriculum geared toward exploring places [that] can deepen empathetic connections" to the outside world (8). A situated pedagogy requires that students pay attention to their environment, to practice awareness and listening to what places have to tell us, and furthermore, to decode places politically, socially, and historically.

Situated Pedagogy Revisited

So far, the notion of situated pedagogy has been pulled from the literature of various educational theorists. This is not to suggest that, because all of these authors use some form of the word *situation*, they maintain a congruent usage or understanding of the term. However, it is argued the similarities are stronger than the disparities. Although Dewey supported interdisciplinary education, in terms of situating education, Dewey felt that local history and geography connected the curriculum to the students' "time and space connections" (1997b, 208),

or, in Freire's terms, the "temporal-spatial conditions" (1999, 90). Dewey and critical pedagogy both argue that education is not only situated in the everyday lives (and places) of students to connect curriculum to their lived experiences, but also to connect those experiences to larger social contexts, although those contexts were not necessarily synonymous. For critical pedagogy, such contexts are usually circumstances such as institutional oppression and social liberation, and in this respect critical pedagogy may be more aligned with Harold Rugg or George Counts than Dewey (see Stanley 1992). As such, a situated pedagogy attends to specific place, but this attention is not merely as the foci of discursive analysis or student inquiry, but as the spaces for action, intervention, and perhaps transformation.

The theorists mentioned heretofore agree that people are not only affected by place, but also affect places. And to be sure, critical pedagogy has always espoused itself as directed at *critical intervention* in oppressive realities, but these oppressive realities are often represented as abstracted institutional forces lacking the concrete particularities of space. Gruenewald (2003a) indicates this absence of deliberate attention to the spatial in critical pedagogy, and he answers by fusing the literature of Critical Geography and place-based education (among other supporting theories) with critical pedagogy to form a "critical pedagogy of place." Gruenewald's (2003b) description of place-conscious education develops an extensively developed situated pedagogy, although one might want to add a more historical emphasis. Furthermore, in most of these traditions, the notion of situated pedagogy is not simply a way of reflecting about place, but it is also about turning that reflection into actions that affect and, perhaps, alter those spaces. This latter element is aligned with the impetus of much of Critical Geography's insistence to move beyond spatial frames of discursive analysis and into the spaces of personal and public action.

The remainder of this article describes selected concepts of Guy Debord and the Situationists, and their relationship with Henri Lefebvre. The very name of the Situationists denotes an intervention in place. Although they rejected the term *situationism*, they wrote that situationist "denotes an activity that aims at *making* situations, as opposed to passively *recognizing* them in academic or other separate terms" (emphasis in original, Knabb 1981, 138²). In a typical appropriation (*détournement*) of Marx, they wrote, "So far philosophers and artists have only interpreted situations; the point now is to transform them" (138). In another essay, Debord announced that the "central purpose" of the SI was "the construction of situations" which he defined as "the concrete construction of temporary settings of life and their transformation into a higher, passionate nature" (2004, 44). This latter definition, however vague, points to the notion of alienation that is fundamental to understanding the Situationists and the construction of situations. The SI complained, "We are bored in the city" (Chtcheglov in Knabb 1981, 1). These young rebels came of age when much of post-war Europe was experiencing an

increasing level of material affluence. For some, this was accomplished by oppressive forms of domination and inherently inequitable institutions; for others, it was also accompanied by a greater psychological and spiritual poverty. It is against this alienation and poverty that the SI rebelled, and some argue that these conditions remain today.

PERFORMANCES OF EVERYDAY LIFE

A Love Story

In his book, *Guy Debord* (1999), Anselm Jappe examines the history of French Marxism, noting “the humanist and historicist Marxism of Sartre presents not a few parallels with the Situationist ideas, even though the Situationists “expressed the greatest contempt for Sartre” (127). They expressed the greatest attempt for many people, especially other French intellectuals. After Marx, there were two theorists (and two particular texts) that heavily influenced Debord and the Situationists: Georg Lukács (*History of Class Consciousness*) and Henri Lefebvre (*Critique of Everyday Life I*). Debord would have only read Lukács, but became friends with Lefebvre before an eventual falling out, or, as Lefebvre describes it, “a love story that ended badly, very badly” (Ross 2004, 268).

For a while, Lefebvre was a prominent member of the communist party and the first professor of Marxism in the French University system. He had past ties to both Dada and Surrealism, having known Tristan Tzara and André Breton and several others associated with the two movements. He shared with the Situationists similar ideas, particularly the idea of locating social transformation within the activity of everyday life. Usually the Situationists were very critical of most institutionalists, but Lefebvre’s reputation as a heretic no doubt attracted the SI to Lefebvre. The public rivalry between Debord and Lefebvre, typical for the SI’s tradition of contestation, occurred after claims of plagiarism on a piece of work that Lefebvre published on the Paris Commune. Regardless, the influence of Lefebvre’s tutelage is considerable, although many would argue that the influence was really a two-way street, and that no small part of what Lefebvre was publishing at the time were the results of collective discussions he was having with the SI (See Jappe 1999, 73–81; Plant 1997, 63–64; Shields 1999, 91–92). Rob Shields (1999) calls Lefebvre a “humanistic Marxist” and suggests that, “What unites all of his work . . . is his deeply humanistic interest in alienation” (2). Henri Lefebvre’s *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (*The Critique of Everyday Life*) was first published in 1947, with a second edition in 1958, and the Situationists would have been very familiar with this text. In the foreword of the second edition, Lefebvre announces that this book is “built entirely around . . . the concept of *alienation*” (Lefebvre 1991, 3, emphasis in original).

This is not the place for a detailed exegesis of the alienation and ensuing sense of boredom decried by Debord and the Situationists. However, it should be noted that they defined modern society as a spectacle in which individuals are portrayed as spectators of their own lives, experiencing even the most intimate of gestures as observers, as opposed to active participants. Constructing situations occurred as not only a refusal of the individual's role as spectators to the experiences created by modern society, but also as performative rejections of that passivity in participatory counteractions. Such actions were not only individual performances of repudiation, but they were also deliberate attempts to construct something different, as well as inciting this behavior in others. The alienation they reviled not only occurred in the experiences of various activities, including work, leisure, and particularly in the consumption of commodities, but also in places, and especially the city. In their minds, urbanism, as it was progressing in Europe, was the pinnacle of spatial alienation, and the tactics of constructing situations, the *dérive*, and psychogeography were deliberately developed to study and counter this spatial alienation. As Constant wrote before his eventual expulsion, "The crisis of urbanism is worsening . . . we are surrounded by a dull and sterile environment," and added in typical Situationist flare, "We require adventure" (cited in McDonough 2004, 95). In an unassigned article entitled "Editorial Notes: The Critique of Urbanism," the Situationists wrote "Until it merges with a general revolutionary praxis, urbanism is necessarily the first enemy of all possibilities for urban life in our time" (cited in McDonough 2004, 103). They also insisted (in 1961) that, "modern capitalism, the bureaucratic consumer society, *is here and there beginning to shape its own environment*" (108, emphasis in original) Furthermore, they complained that reform characterized as "'improvement' or 'progress' will always be designed to lubricate the system and perfect the conditioning we must overturn." (105). As such "unitary urbanism" was "not a doctrine of urbanism, but a critique of it," (103 and a "useful hypothesis that would allow present humanity to construct freely, beginning with its urban environment" (113). The *dérive* and psychogeography were, simultaneously, tools of this critique, and attempts to disrupt the conditioning passivity and freely construct alternative experiences in spaces.

The Landscape is Alive

Although Lefebvre is more widely known for his work on urbanization, in the beginning the SI were particularly interested in the concept of urbanism and the perception and the (re)construction of public space. In an early essay written in 1955, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography," Guy Debord (in Knabb 1981, 5–8), described psychogeography as a method of research intended to study the affects place had on people, on both their emotions and behaviors. The *dérive*

would become an important tool of such research. Literally meaning *drifting*, the *dérive* could be done singularly, but was best done in groups of two or three, and sometimes simultaneously with other groups in other parts of the city. The SI defined it as “a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances” (Knabb 1981, 45), and psychogeography was the study of those ambiances. Debord went to great lengths to separate it from the strolls of the Surrealists. To be sure, a similar practice goes back before the Surrealists strolls and Baudelaire’s *flâneur*, and has been practiced at various times in various ways. Nonetheless, maps played a key role in the SI’s experiments with psychogeography and the *dérive*. Although maps often produce the point of view that everything fits together, the SI’s maps also wanted to show places of fragmentation, difference, and obstacles. Debord called for a “renovated cartography” (Debord cited in Knabb 1981, 7), which included the production of psychogeographical maps and the “alterations” of existing maps. The SI constructed their own maps of Paris, recording more subjective experiences, often as narratives, as part of larger critiques of urbanism and social control.

On the one hand, the psychogeographer was to record the subjective experiences of his or her travels. On the other hand, the Situationists claimed psychogeography “does not contradict the materialist perspective of the conditioning of life and thought by objective nature” (Knabb 1981, 5). As such, psychogeography attended to both the public and private spheres, and, moreover, the relationship between the two, particularly how the material conditions of the public sphere affected the movement, behavior, and feelings of individuals. Debord wrote,

the primarily urban character of the *dérive*, in its element in the great industrially transformed cities—those centers of possibilities and meanings—could be expressed in Marx’s phrase: “Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive.” (in Knabb 1981, 51)

First, the notion that their very landscape is alive seems to refer to a level of consciousness, that is, a way of seeing the world, of *reading place*. Sadie Plant (1997) describes psychogeography as “intended to cultivate an awareness of the ways in which everyday life is presently conditioned and controlled [and] the ways in which this manipulation can be exposed and subverted” (58). This appears analogous to the Freirean notion of “reading the world,” about which Gruenewald (2003a) writes, “For critical pedagogues, the ‘texts’ students and teachers should ‘decode’ are the images of their own concrete, situated experiences with the world” (5).

The purposes of psychogeographical study of the city hold some analogous possibilities for the application to curriculum, particularly as a means to *cultivate an awareness* of the ways in which the students’ everyday experience in schools

is conditioned and controlled by the curriculum. A more Situationists' ambition would be to study how the spaces of the students' everyday lives (including their schools) are conditioned and controlled by the spectacle, which necessarily entails a critique of the global economy and consumerism. In an article called "Situationist Space," Tom McDonough (2004) addresses the *dérive* in detail. He writes, "for the situationists the subject's freedom of movement is restricted by the instrumentalized image of the city propagated under the reign of capital" (243). The movement of students, the spaces of schools, and the curricula are all analogously restricted by the reign of capital in its manifestations in the cultural economy of schools. For example, the curriculum of any class is often heavily influenced by the textbook, standards, and testing industries, as well as being generally guided by the market influences of preparing students to enter the global economy. Students embarking on *dérives* through the landscapes of their curriculum, as well as literal places of their physical environments of their schools and communities, can be used as methods of studying specific places, as well as curricular content. As such, students produce both cartographic representations of their journeys, as well as narratives of the experiences as both maps and narratives were integral to the *dérive*.

Voyeur or Walker

In the fifties, Debord and other Situationist (specifically Asger Jorn) were generating their own maps and depictions of the cityscape, real or imagined. One such map, called *The Naked City* became an icon among Situationist fans. It is made up of nineteen sections of Paris, cut up and arranged with directional arrows linking some and not others. The original map Debord reassembled (*détourned*) was called the *Plan de Paris*, and according to McDonough (2004), it was one of the most popular city maps of Paris. McDonough writes that this popular map

exists in a timeless present; this timelessness is imagined spatially in the map's (illusory) total revelation of its object. Users of the map see the entire city laid out before their eyes; however, such an omnipresent view is seen from nowhere (246).

Many maps present a representation that occurs from an impossible point of view, and furthermore, they create a homogeneity that doesn't really exist, concealing differences and conflicts that are present. Debord wanted to show that there are parts of the city that are riddled with conflict and, once these discontinuities and disparities are revealed, these sections can no longer be assimilated to the homogenizing structure of the map. There is a notably destructive character to psychogeographic activity. McDonough (2004) describes their maps thus, "distinctions and differences are not eradicated; they are only hidden in the

homogenous space of the [map]" (249). Debord and the SI wanted to disrupt that homogeneity and reveal its falsity. Through tactics that might be likened to guerilla theater, they tried to bring such differences to the forefront of public consciousness.

McDonough (2004) distinguishes between the *dérive* and the *flânerie*, noting their similarities and differences. Regarding the latter, he writes, "for the situationists, however, the *dérive* was distinguished from the *flânerie* primarily by its critical attitude toward the hegemonic scopic regime of modernity" (257). Furthermore, the *flâneur* was principled on the gaze of the "man of the crowd:" the voyeur, whereas as McDonough points out, the *dérive* is for the walker, and a person who participates in the construction and/or alteration of public space, not simply viewing it, but this was an active intervention. Debord (2004) writes, "We must develop an intervention directed by the complicated factors of two great components in perpetual interaction: the material settings of life [place] and the behaviors that it incites and that overturn it" (44).

McDonough describes the *dérive* as a "tactic in the classic military sense" and then, quoting Michel De Certeau, he writes,

it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to *keep to itself*, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight and self-collection: it is a maneuver "within the enemy's field of vision," as von Bulow put it, and within enemy territory. (De Certeau cited in McDonough 2004, 259)

This tactic involves the "playful constructive behavior" (Debord 1981, 50) intended to disrupt the homogeneity of the city, or as McDonough (2004) explains,

despite the spectacle's hegemonic power, the production of the city [of the social space] could not be fully instrumentalized. Contrary to the projections of spectacular society, which posited the city as a natural timeless form. . . . The *dérive* as a practice of the city reappropriated public space from the realm of myth, restoring it to its fullness, its richness, and its history. (261)

Just as the Situationists were regulated to their movement by the streets of Paris, so is a teacher somewhat regulated by the standard course of study. But just as the SI attempted to take part in the construction and alteration of public spaces, so can students and teachers reconstruct the standard course of study. Furthermore, in a more material ambition that would more likely appeal to the SI and Critical Geography both, students might be asked to apply these techniques to their physical environment as much as their intellectual one.

Pedagogy of Placelessness

Pedagogy of placelessness is not a phrase that Gruenewald uses, but it seems to be implied in the following statement:

Because the structures and processes of schooling are based on institutional patterns of isolating teachers and students from places outside school, one can claim that schools limit experience and perception; in other words, by regulating our geographical experience, schools potentially stunt human development as they help construct our lack of awareness of, our lack of connection to, and our lack of appreciation for places. (Gruenewald, 2003b, 625)

Lack of awareness, connection, and appreciation serves to dislocate students from their own localities and/or the history of those places, and, furthermore, from any sort of situated curriculum. This is not to say that people do not experience place in very tangible ways, but students are not often asked to consider or grasp the web of relations that affect the spaces in which they live. As such, history is what happened to other people in other places, globalization occurs elsewhere, and science explains the phenomena of the earth, such as global warming, without connecting it to the effects it has on the students' localities. To counter this dislocation, educators must act specifically to orient students in places by situating the curricular content in the everyday lives of students.

Countering concerns that such place-based education runs the risk of provincialism, Gruenewald quotes Nel Noddings (2002) as saying "the risk runs in exactly the other direction" and "might easily deteriorate to an education for 'nowhere'—that is, to an unhappy habituation to places and objects that have lost their uniqueness and their connection to natural life" (170; cited in Gruenewald 2003b, 646). Indeed, in an era when many students leave the home towns of their high schools to go on to college and jobs elsewhere, one might think that instilling in them an appreciation in the local environment is futile. However, Noddings insists that it is just the opposite. Even for students who will leave the localities of their public schools, it may prove to be more indispensable to teach them an ethic toward place that they will carry with them when they leave. That is, teaching kids about their local communities might be less important in terms of what they learn about their communities as much as it teaches them to be connected to their community, wherever it is and will be in the future.

Gruenewald (2003a) engages the consideration of "living well" and echoes Orr's bioregionalist distinction between inhabiting and residing in a place, the former being identified as "living well," although it may require "revolutionary social change" before it can be acquired (9). Orr's distinction is worth quoting at length,

A resident is a temporary occupant, putting down a few roots and investing little, knowing little, and perhaps caring little for the immediate locale beyond its ability to gratify. As both a cause and effect of displacement, the resident lives in an indoor world of office building and shopping mall, automobile, apartment, and suburban house and watches as much as four hours of television each day. The inhabitant, in contrast, “dwells” . . . in an intimate, organic, and mutually nurturing relationship with a place. Good inhabitation is an art requiring detailed knowledge of a place, the capacity for observation, and a sense of care and rootedness. (cited in Gruenewald 2003a, 9)

It may be arguable whether education can or should teach “good inhabitation.” However, when residence and dislocation seem to be the natural existence for so many of this modern era, it may be all the more important. Many people do not live where they’re from and are often more tied to a job than a location. Gruenewald seems to be offering his critical pedagogy of place as an antidote to a pedagogy of placelessness that he apparently sees in contemporary education. Furthermore, the sense of dislocation could also be likened (and perhaps a remedy) to the alienation of places as described by the SI.

Thirdspace

Finally, there is also a creative, constructive, and performative element to the *dérive*. It should be noted that their theories of urbanism and psychogeographic activity, including the *dérive*, were always in a process of being revised. Nonetheless, psychogeographic maps were narrative accounts of travel, partly told through images and maps, but also through texts and discourse. McDonough (2004) explains, “the key principle of the psychogeographic map: its figuration as narrative rather than as a tool of ‘universal knowledge’” (243). As such, movements were organized around or between psychogeographic centers, and sometimes “the users of these maps were asked to choose a directionality and to overcome obstacles, although there was no ‘proper’ reading. The reading chosen was a performance of one among many possibilities” (243). And to be sure, their *dérives* were overtly performative as they attempted to construct situations or to recreate public spaces.

In his book *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*, Baz Kershaw (1999) explores “performance beyond theater as a more fruitful domain for radicalism than performance in theater” (16). The theater for Kershaw, as others suggested before him, is bankrupt of any political activism, reproducing dominant ideologies and becoming more of a “disciplinary system” that reinforces commodification and consumerism, and otherwise a form of “spatial indoctrination that aims to embed normative social values in the behaviour of its participants” (31–32). Schools are, similarly, a “disciplinary system” that “embeds normative values.” Situated pedagogy not only situates students in the locality of their everyday lives

and in their schools, but it also aims to explore ways that curriculum can move education beyond schools. The models of cultural journalism, community geography, and action research that Gruenewald (2003a; 2003b) and Noddings (2002) describe provide good examples for such. Performance theory and arts integration also provide a means of moving education beyond schools and, although the role of art in politics and everyday life changed in SI literature over time, it was nonetheless integral to their project.

Dewey (e.g., 1980) obviously imagined arts as central to the experience of learning. Ira Shor (Shor and Freire 1987) also discusses the possibilities that come from dramatic and artistic integration, and he is worth quoting at length:

The creative disruption of passive education is an aesthetic moment as well as a political one, because it asks the students to re-perceive their prior understandings and to practice new perceptions as creative learners with the teacher. Maybe we can consider ourselves dramatists when we rewrite the routine the classroom script as it is a curriculum. The classroom is a stage for performance as much as it is a moment of education. (116)

However, regarding the performative aspects of education and arts integration, Madeleine Grumet's work is exemplary (e.g., 1976, 1978, 1991, 2004), and she, too has written about Dewey's "situation" (1978). Later, in arguing for the benefits of arts integration, she writes, "the arts, mixing material with fantasy, hope with memory, form with possibility, and individuality with community, are powerful processes of making meaning" (2004, 59). Additionally, arts integration involves imaging other possibilities rather than the actual, and Grumet describes arts integration as creating a "third space" (2004, 65). Although this term has specific denotations in cultural studies and Critical Geography, for her it represents "a new space that invites students' interpretations and resymbolization of the disciplines" and she describes it as "an unmarked field" that can become "blended space, or new knowledge" as the students "display the sense that the students make of what they study" (Grumet 2004, 66).

Making a direct reference to *Thirdspace*, as discussed by Edward Soja (1996), Robert Helfenbein (2004) also explores possibilities performance theory offers education. In this essay, he calls for a "radical geography of education" that "not only understands the landscape and the social and cultural processes that create it, but also allows for the impact of individuals upon the terrain put before them" (71). For Helfenbein, landscapes are processes, as opposed to products, and, therefore, are constantly in the act of being transformed and remapped, and the performative aspects of drama can help teachers and students be more deliberate regarding that process. He quotes Vivian Patraka to say the "performative negotiates the terrain between discourse and its material effects. Because it is reiterative and performative it constitutes a reality that is in some sense new" (cited in Helfenbein 2004,

72). Additionally, aesthetic integration not only provides motivation for student investment in the curriculum, but artistic production, particularly the performative, can create powerful bonds to place, for example, if students produce a play based on an oral history that they conduct.

The Rehearsal of Revolution

In *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Augusto Boal (2004) describes his “poetics of the oppressed” as different from theater that seeks “catharsis” but the instead, “critical consciousness” (122). Finding much of his inspiration from Freire and Brecht, Boal’s form of theatre attempts to dissolve the separations between the actors/actresses and the audience of receivers, but strives to integrate the two. Spect-actors do not feel for the protagonist; they become the protagonist. He writes that the main objective is to change spectators from their “passive beings . . . into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action” (122). His goal is to turn the spectator into a spect-actor, which denotes a more participatory role than that of the passive spectator. These terms are analogous to Freire’s passive learner and active agent in meaning making. Boal writes “‘Spectator’ is a bad word. The spectator is less than a man [sic] and it is necessary to humanize him, to restore him to his capacity of action in all its fullness” (155).

Such language would certainly have appealed to the Situationists, who spoke somewhat favorably of Brecht (though not entirely). Condemning Brecht’s “unfortunate respect for culture as defined by the ruling class” (Debord and Wolman, cited in Knabb 1981, 9), they still found him closer to the “revolutionary of orientation” they were calling for. Later, Debord would write, “In the workers states only the experimentation conducted by Brecht in Berlin, in its putting into question the classic spectacle notion, is close to the constructions that matter for us today” (in Knabb 1981, 21). Otherwise, the SI praised Brecht for beginning to express “the destruction of the theatrical spectacle and point[ing] out a few of the requirements for going beyond it” (44). Boal has attempted to carry this even further. Through the techniques that Boal describes, he believes that “Dramatic action throws light upon real action,” and, as such, “perhaps the theater is not revolutionary in itself; but have no doubts, it is a rehearsal of revolution” (155). Fifty years after the formation of the SI, their legacy lives on for better or worse. Although their noted ambitiousness betrayed the brashness (and perhaps potential) of youth, most of the theory generated within their critique reveals an insightful understanding of modern society. Not only has this influenced many critical theorists, including the work of Henri Lefebvre, much of it is still relevant today. Indeed, it may be even more indispensable now than ever, as the conditions they describe have only exacerbated over the last five decades.

By situating education in the space of local communities, and by connecting the curriculum to the everyday life of students, situated pedagogy allows students to take part in the production of a conversation that creates new understandings of the world and their place in it, and, furthermore, how they chose to act in it. A situated pedagogy is interested in identity and self-formation, but also social-formation and the relationships between the two, between the self and social in the process of becoming. It asks students to attend to their environment as psychogeographers, reflecting on the subjective and the objective, the internal and the material, with their bodies as well as their minds, and listening to what places have to tell us. Students read the world, experiencing living landscapes, and decode those politically, socially, historically, and aesthetically, participating in a remapping of those landscapes. A situated pedagogy attends to specific places and localities, but not merely as places for discursive analysis and academic study, but as the spaces for action, intervention, and perhaps transformation. As such, it means that education is meant to move beyond the schools and out into the world in an active, performative participation in the study and reconstruction of material spaces in and outside of their schools as well as the curricular landscapes of their education. Particularly in this era of standardized testing and cookie-cutter curricula that make no attempts to connect education to place, to carry learning beyond the schools, to address local communities or the natural environment, and least of all, to engage students in taking an active and deliberate engagement with both the study of, and intervention in, those spaces—in other words, in this era dominated by pedagogies of placelessness—situating pedagogy may indeed be more imperative than ever.

NOTES

1. Steven Best (1994) writes a notable article locating the theory of the SI in history, and particularly in relation to other cultural Marxists such as Georg Lukács, Henri Lefebvre, Antonio Gramsci, and those associated with the Frankfurt school. He then diligently illustrates the correlations and divergences between Debord's society of the spectacle and Jean Baudrillard's hyperreality.
2. Many of the articles of the SI were unsigned and unless otherwise noted, the unattributed quotes are from Ken Knabb's (1981) anthology or the collection in McDonough (2004).

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