Urban Pedagogy

Counterstrategies of Protesters against State Repression in the National Strike of 2021 in Colombia

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Abstract *Widespread social unrest erupted across Latin America in 2021, fueled by public anger over government policies, the socioeconomic crisis, and the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Colombia, these protests exposed a legitimacy crisis for President Duque's government from 2019 to 2021. His administration responded with repression and attempted to silence dissent by labeling national strike participants as terrorists or vandals (Bringel 265; Valencia 94). While the protests subsided somewhat after June 2021, some protesters faced persecution and legal accusations of terrorism and torture in late 2021 and early 2022 (Montes 46). In response, protesters developed counterstrategies to resist silencing and state repression. Their goal was to gain public support and legitimize their cause. This article examines a field study conducted in Bogotá between January and February 2022. The study involved nine video interviews with citizens who participated in the 2021 protests. Thirty-one excerpts were analyzed using critical discourse analysis (CDA) (van Dijk 153) and Extractive Qualitative Content Analysis (ECQA) (Gläser and Laudel 4). This analysis revealed a glocal strategy called "urban pedagogy," which highlights the non-academic educational practices protesters used to spread political knowledge and resistance narratives. Inspired by Freire's concept of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, urban pedagogy emphasizes informal learning that takes place in everyday urban contexts. The article argues for the importance of recognizing these alternative educational settings, often invisible in academic circles, and their connection to narratives within protest movements, also the dialogical as a means of resistance. Nine examples of protesters discourses are analyzed.*

Keywords *Counterstrategies; Urban Pedagogy; Pedagogy of the Oppressed; Narratives*

This article explores *Urban Pedagogy*, a concept that expands our perception of learning beyond the traditional classrooms. It argues that everyday spaces and activities can be educational, and people outside of schools can be teachers. The importance of informal learning is undeniable. In Latin America, for example, protests have become crucial sites for social and political education. Faced with these situations, people on the streets take on the role of educators, teaching others the skills and knowledge necessary to resist. My analysis explores how this process of informal education unfolds within such protest movements.

Fueled by years of discontent rooted in neoliberal policies (Niño 127), the 2021 Colombian protests extended beyond the initial demand to withdraw proposed reforms. As Díaz Guevara (622) highlights, protesters craved inclusion in decision-making, echoing demands from the 2019 *national strike*. This desire, according to Pachón (401), posed a threat to the established power structure. Colombian elites accustomed to wielding exclusive control saw these diverse voices as a challenge. Their response, Pachón argues, was a resort to violence. Max Weber, a famous thinker, said that when governments are allowed to use force (like the police or army) in a fair and legal way, it makes the government stronger. It does not make it weaker. The Colombian government, under ex-president Duque (2018–2022), aimed to legitimize police and military using violence and force. However, these actions backfired, eroding trust in institutions and raising doubts about the legitimacy of violence. Citizens, witnessing their quality of life deteriorate, became more receptive to the voices of protesters. The crisis, therefore, was not a sudden eruption, but the culmination of long-simmering tensions.

Beyond physical attacks, protesters faced a war of words. Official narratives reflected in media and television smeared them as vandals or terrorists (Rojas Osorio 48; Valencia 94). To counter this, protesters employed violent reactions, but as well non-violent methods like the ones proposed by Paulo Freire's educational *emancipation* (20). This paper focuses on those peaceful-dialogical strategies, particularly how they challenged negative media portrayals and disseminated their resistance message. The analysis prioritizes the lived experiences and lessons shared by these young protesters through discourses that in my opinion represent a nonviolent action of resistance as they created their subjective versions of reality. The discourse is a medium to teach how to resist here.

Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* contended that literacy empowers the oppressed (6). By acquiring it, they access knowledge often concealed by unfair systems. Literacy becomes a tool for liberation, fostering critical reflection on

social realities and driving transformative change. While Freire saw education institutions as crucial, his framework does not fully capture alternative educational spaces; Freire's model of *education of the oppressed* focused on emerging schools, however not much is said about the practices of citizens when they get together to resist. This paper explores *urban pedagogy*, a form of popular education outside traditional settings. Urban pedagogy lacks a formal definition in this context, but its essence emerges from the streets themselves. It refers to the educational potential found within everyday city life. This concept draws inspiration from historical and contemporary movements of civil resistance. It reminds us of Emerson, Gandhi, the Arab Spring and Extinction Rebellion; these movements utilized the urban environment as a space for learning, protest, and social change. These events, while not constituting a defined pedagogy, suggest the existence of a powerful, informal educational practice within the very fabric of our cities. In this paper, Urban Pedagogy is described by several of the protesters as: "means of dialogue", "communal dialogue", "urban pedagogies", "urban schools", or "local pedagogies". The emphasis on this strategy is due to its potential for organization, agency, and its emancipatory potential through peaceful means and support gain during the protest.

This research delves into how Colombian protesters, through interviews, perceived everyday actions such as using public transport as spaces for learning and resistance. The analysis employs two frameworks: Extractive Qualitative Content Analysis (ECQA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). ECQA's content comparison method (Gläser and Laudel 4) helps identify core themes. CDA, focusing on power dynamics in discourse (van Dijk 155), proves crucial in revealing how protesters countered state repression and silencing tactics. Analyzing thirty-one excerpts exposes Duque's government's systematic use of repression and silencing. The interviews denounced supposed facts like the state profiling through camera and drone surveillance, undercover individuals photographing and questioning civilians (often leading to false charges or paramilitary threats like kidnappings and disappearances). Protesters also described psychological intimidation through death threats targeting them and their loved ones. These insights illuminate the situation from the protesters' own perspectives.

The protesters wanted to show their *Barrios* or neighborhoods that were before invisible. Inspired by protests in Hong Kong and Chile, leaders of the mobilization at *Portal de la Resistencia* and *Portal de Suba* (Main bus stations in Bogotá) used helmets, hoods, shields, and improvised armors to ensure their own safety in case of confrontations with the ESMAD, the Colombian riot po-

lice. Protesters also engaged in collective cooking in the streets, urban gardening activities, and gatherings for planning future protests. They acknowledged the role of *cacerolazos* (pot banging), *ollas comunitarias* (communal meal gatherings), urban gardens, and street art forms like theater, dance performances, or *batucadas* as spaces for learning and cultural expression.

The interviewed participants emphasized the importance of group organization that fostered not only practical survival skills in urban protests but also political engagement and critical thinking. They saw their fellow protesters as educators, facilitators, and advisors, all collaborating to craft a persuasive narrative to win public support. However, between July 2021 and February 2022, they witnessed a decline in protests due to effective repression. This shift led them to adapt their tactics. They devised alternative commuting routes to avoid surveillance, essentially weaving self-preservation strategies into their ongoing efforts to connect with the public.

While the term urban pedagogy already exists in other contexts, particularly within architectural and design planning and creative arts like in Natarajan and Short, the Colombian protesters independently developed and applied it to their movement. This approach, as they envisioned it, involved sharing information and persuasive arguments through a reflective process. There are many coincidences with Freire's concept of "cultural synthesis", where citizens are exposed to contrasting viewpoints (thesis and antithesis) to critically analyze a situation (101). This fosters emancipation by raising awareness among the public. Urban pedagogy, as practiced by the protesters, unfolds in everyday settings like family gatherings, conversations with neighbors, or cultural events, offering anonymity from authorities. The base is dialogical because through informal conversations they develop processes of community awareness. Just by talking, they interact and somehow teach other people not only about evasion strategies but also about political stands. The following extracts are result of my own interactions and observations with the protesters, names were changed for security reasons:

Urban Pedagogy comes alive when witnessing protesters like Socorrista (Spanish for first-aid volunteer in action). Socorrista, a 23-year-old philosophy student with experience aiding injured protesters on the frontlines, transformed a routine bus ride into a microcosm of urban pedagogy. He assumed a leadership role, challenging passengers' perspectives. He argued that the Colombian government and media had manipulated the passengers with a narrative of "normality", a stark contrast to the reality they were experiencing.

His intervention exemplifies how urban pedagogy utilizes everyday situations, in this case, a bus ride, to spark critical reflection among citizens.

Excerpt 1

> Socorrista: "Hold on, hold on, you might say, if I am free to express my opinion, I can say that we are under the oppression of a paramilitary nation. Do you think it is reasonable that potatoes are 100, 110 pesos more expensive? Do you think it is reasonable that yuca/manioc is now 3000 pesos while Duque claims it is solely due to the pandemic and they are not to blame? Do they think that if they say everything is fine and normal on RCN (radio and television network), people will not say anything? They may preach about freedom, but they want you to conform to their mindset, to exploit you and render you docile like a lamb. If you think price increases are normal and everything is fine, well, pardon, but I must laugh…" (personal communication, January 28, 2022).[20]

Socorrista's intervention focused on a critical point: the government's narrative downplaying the economic hardship, particularly the surge in essential food prices. By mentioning these everyday items, he aimed to connect with the passengers' experiences and validate his argument. He even targeted a specific national media outlet, implying its alignment with the government's agenda, potentially sowing seeds of doubt in their minds. Finally, Socorrista employed sarcasm, comparing those accepting the status quo to sheep, to challenge their passivity and evoke indignation. His overall goal was to raise awareness and ignite critical reflection among the passengers. Non-verbal cues suggested some passengers resonated with the protester's opposing viewpoint (antithesis) to the government's narrative (thesis), potentially leading to a "cultural synthesis" – a space for critical analysis according to Freire (165). This intervention exemplifies urban pedagogy, where Socorrista, through dialogue prompted self-reflection among the passengers. While some might remain unconvinced, others might find his message aligning with their own concerns and be drawn to the protest movement.

Despite lacking formal training in sociology or political science, Socorrista assumed the role of a *street educator*. His discourse weaved together economic, political, and social issues, offering the passengers an alternative perspective on the complexities shaping their community, grounded in the reality of rising

prices. This intervention showcases urban pedagogy, but similar reflective processes can emerge from other dialogical interactions. Street plays, community gardening projects, or even online videos can spark critical reflection. The interviews with other protesters provide more examples of public interventions. The following excerpts will explore how other protesters integrated explanations of the protests from their own perspectives, forming the content they would use to "educate" new recruits. They are pure dialogical.

A second example is taken from a conversation with Lola, who is twenty-six years old and works as a DJ. She denounces the ex-president Uribe Velez as responsible for the persecutions.

Excerpt 2: Uribe is Responsible

> Lola: "One also stops going out because there have been persecutions even to one's home or taking pictures by civilians. Well, we already know that it is the "unnamed common paramilitary". So, this is also a way to lower it a bit when there is so much persecution, and that is why other participants also step aside a bit from the protest" (Personal communication, January 31, 2022).[21]

Lola told me that she felt watched by unnamed civilians, a chilling form of personal surveillance that stifled her urge to protest. Her experience exemplifies the silencing effect such tactics have on protesters. By using terms like "unnamed common paramilitary", Lola suggests a connection between this surveillance and former President Álvaro Uribe. Hoyos (70) reinforces this connection, highlighting how Uribe's inflammatory statements on Twitter (Now X) fuel Colombia's political polarization. This aligns with Lola's perspective, demonstrating how political figures can shape public opinion – either aligning with the government or its opposition. On one extreme stands Uribe advocating violence against protesters. On the other, current Colombian President Petro stands with the protesters on the streets. This digital war of words, intertwined with online profiling of protesters, served to legitimize Duque's government by demonizing the protesters as vandals and terrorists. Lola's narrative becomes a powerful act of denouncement. By speaking out against the persecution of young protesters, she sheds light on a hidden reality, one that might otherwise go unnoticed. She might than *educate* the citizens that are listening

to her while telling them a subjective version of the events that is different from the official one.

A third example is taken from Ximena, a 22-year-old language student at a public university in Bogotá. While juggling her studies with a call center job, she actively participated in the 2021 National Strike. She has been teaching music lessons and participating in street theater since 2020. Her work has not gone unnoticed and she has been threatened by unknown individuals for her activism. Twice, she found herself facing off with the police during peaceful demonstrations. Her story goes beyond Colombia's borders. She highlights the connections between the Colombian protests and those that erupted in Chile, showcasing a spirit of global solidarity among those fighting for social change.

Excerpt 3: The Chilean and Hong Kong First Lines as Influences in Colombia

> Ximena: "Before the pandemic, there was a lot of social movement, not just in Colombia but also in the Chilean first line. Colombia began to adopt a similar approach. In China, there was so much social unrest that many people began to think the pandemic was intentional" (personal communication, January 26, 2022).[22]

Ximena's perspective on the protests reveals a fascinating connection. It seems Colombian protesters, like her, were closely following developments in Chile and Hong Kong. This aligns with González's analysis in his article on Colombian societal representation (210). He argues that social unrest in these nations has inspired Colombian protesters, leading to similar protest tactics and a lack of centralized leadership. Distance is no barrier in today's world. Through online content sharing, protesters across continents can learn from each other's experiences. This "empirical pedagogy", as González (212) terms it, involves virtual discussions on countering military repression. Protesters exchange strategies, like adapting everyday objects for protection or establishing blockades.

A fourth example is the one stated by María, twenty-five years old, who is a journalism student at a public university. When asked about the causes of the protest, she highlights the social gap in the country and refers to Duque's government as paramilitary. She talks about the censorship through outages in a Colombian city.

Excerpt 4: Power Outages in Cali and the Use of Apps

> María: "(...) and in Cali, people were left without power during the most critical moments of the protest. At that time, I was participating with an independent radio station, and we had to use alternative programs... *Telegram*. *WhatsApp* [referring to *Meta*] blocked us on *Instagram*. *Orbot* was a spectacular tool for blocking all kinds of publications" (personal communication January 31, 2022).[23]

During the 2021 Colombian protests, a troubling incident occurred. A group affiliated with the country's military (including the Ministry of Defense and various branches of the armed forces) used the hashtag #ColombiaEsMiVerdad (#ThisIsMyTruthInColombia) to fabricate a cyberattack on their websites (Prensa Colombia). This ploy served as a pretext for the *Police Cyber Center* (CCP) to monitor hundreds of social media profiles critical of the police, labeling their online activity as "digital terrorism". This Colombian example highlights the potential for abuse by authorities in the digital age. However, social media can also be a powerful tool for protesters. In 2019, Hong Kong protesters created *HK Map Live*, a real-time information sharing platform about protests and police confrontations. Similarly, Catalan pro-democracy activists developed an app in the same year to coordinate peaceful demonstrations (Solano). These tools, often funded through crowdfunding and independent of big tech companies, are born from the capacity of adaptability of social movements. Interestingly, Solano argues that similar protest apps have not yet emerged in Latin America. This suggests an opportunity for tech-savvy Latin American activists to learn from these global examples.

A fifth example is the one from Bruno, twenty-nine years old and an IT professor who developed the RPG game *Bakatá Online*, based on Bogotá's reality. According to the creator who I interviewed, the game has three objectives: to reconstruct the memory of assassinated or disappeared social leaders, offer a digital copy of iconic city places for participants to develop geospatial awareness, and provide bilingual Spanish-English training. It is aimed at people living in Bogotá, intending to enable the player to critically view their immediate reality. The game features antagonistic characters such as corrupt politicians and police officers, but it is noted that any resemblance to reality is purely coincidental. Here, Bruno mentions that his game can potentially serve as a memory construction instrument. This protester used technology and created a space to teach through al online environment.

Excerpt 5: Anonymity and Memory Construction

> Bruno: "One of the intentions of this game is to rescue memory, to rescue historical memory regarding the people who have died, those who have fought. The intention of this video game is to vindicate those characters. That is one of the objectives, to vindicate the history of those characters and show that certain types of problems are experienced here, and all from a humorous perspective, and we can emphasize that any resemblance to reality is purely coincidental. This is to avoid certain legal problems or persecution. We also hide our identities for the same reason because we are dealing with a very serious political issue that is heavily persecuted in this country" (personal communication January 27, 2022).[24]

Bruno is on a mission. He is creating a role-playing game (RPG) that recreates Bogotá's reality, aiming to keep the memory of assassinated social leaders alive. This effort aligns with Berón's thoughts on memory and the 2021 Colombian protests (426). Berón argues that time does not erase the impact of past struggles – past victims can become powerful symbols in present movements. Bruno's game design reflects this idea. By featuring slain social leaders as in-game statues, Bruno allows players to discover their stories. This demonstrates Bruno's awareness of the potential risks associated with discussing sensitive social issues in Colombia. To mitigate these risks, Bruno has implemented a two-way anonymity system. The development team remains anonymous during promotion, and players can choose usernames to protect their identities.

A sixth example comes from Alessa, a twenty-six-year-old trans woman who protests through dance, specifically *Vogue* in Bogotá's Ballroom culture. In her interview, she provides a historical account of *Ballroom* in New York and its impact on Colombia during the protest. She specifically talks about the *vogueras* (group of trans women who dance) in Plaza de Bolívar and how the performance is a way to protest heteronormativity.

Excerpt 6: Between Ballroom and Fear

> Alessa: "Well, regarding the protests, honestly, I used to participate much more before, but that has changed due to fear. I have had many encounters with the police where I felt my life was in danger. I have felt that at any moment, they could make me disappear, and no one would know anything

> about me. So, that fear has repressed me so much that I no longer want to attend all the events or protests because I feel that each one is an opportunity for them to harm me. The *Ballroom* community, which I don't know if you are familiar with... the Ballroom started in New York in the late 80s, almost 90s, a community created by trans, Black, Latina, LGBTIQ+ people, but mainly trans women, because these were groups of people who were not well regarded by society. Well, we still aren't much, and even less so back then, you couldn't even have a space in a bar or a movie theater, not even a job like cleaning a house. Generally, they were prostitutes and very marginalized, so they created their space in the Ballroom. The *Ballroom* is also a symbol of protest, a symbol of resistance against the imposition of the patriarchy or heteronormativity. So, last year and in the last three years, the Ballroom has gained a lot of strength in Colombia. I don't know if you saw the video of the *Vogueras* in Plaza de Bolívar. They always want to paint us as if it's just vandalism, and well, yes, but there's also always art, there's always performances, there's music, acting, there's everything we can think of to make our voices heard" (personal communication, January 28, 2022).[25]

Alessa's story sheds light on the intersectional challenges faced by Bogotá's LGBTQ+ community. Police repression disproportionately targets transgender people, making her fearful of protesting. Her words echo the struggles against a conservative society dominated by heteronormative ideals. She finds solace and a powerful form of expression in *Ballroom* culture, a symbolic resistance against the patriarchy. For her, Vogue dancing is a platform to be heard and challenge the government's narrative that portrays protests solely as vandalism, silencing peaceful artistic expression. *Queer Pedagogy*, a concept developed by Luhmann (123) based on Freire's critical pedagogy (9), offers a framework to understand Alessa's perspective. It centers on dismantling patriarchal structures of knowledge creation and promoting liberation from heteronormative power dynamics. This aligns with Alessa's fight for self-expression and dismantling societal biases. Alessa mentions the performance by Bogotá's *Vogueras*, a vibrant expression of Ballroom culture. Their dance to *guaracha music*, a Colombian genre, directly confronts the ESMAD riot police. Despite fear, they stand their ground. The applause and support from bystanders in Plaza de Bolívar (main square of Bogotá) highlight the collective power of their message. This artistic form of contestation reflects the critique offered by Roth et al. (29) on the *glocal* intersectional gendered issues. Duque's government's conservative rhetoric of gender equality fails to address the

harsh reality faced by Colombia's transgender community. Through art, the *Vogueras* expose the struggles against social prejudice, violence, and hatred.

Their actions resonate with the Urban Pedagogy proposed in this paper. Freire's emphasis on critical reflection and Luhmann's ideas of deconstructing binaries, are evident through this process of conscientization (critical awareness) within the urban context.

A seventh example comes from Carlos who is a twenty-four-year-old man and an artist in a street music group that plays *Batucada*, which is a percussive music style originating in Brazil. Due to the economic situation and the pandemic, he had to leave his studies at the public university and now works informally as a bike courier for a food delivery app. He was directly involved in violent clashes with ESMAD (large-scale public disturbances police unit) as a member of the first line at the Portal de la Resistencia.

Extract 7: Points of Resistance

> Carlos: "In the face of repression, we had to adopt resistance alternatives… Against the gases, the stun grenades, the shots. We also had to provide support from a human rights perspective, as well as from the perspective of neutralizing the gases, having something to protect us from the gas, you know? … From these ESMAD agents who ultimately just wanted to attack people. Also, in the so-called *Portal de la Resistencia*, which encompassed other localities in the south of the city like Ciudad Bolívar and Kennedy. It was a point of resistance, and a humanitarian space, where collectively, mothers, young people, many people came together not only to create such space, but also to provide a community pot, to feed the communities, the people in general, a space for sharing. Community gardens were created, and resistance was carried out from there, with many educational workshops too; so, accompanying those processes a lot. The *batucada* was also called upon in other processes, in other parts of the city, where we were also present and were also victims of repression."[26]

Carlos shares his experience from the 2021 protests. Facing brutal repression from the ESMAD riot police, protesters devised creative ways to shield themselves from tear gas and stun grenades. Yet, even amidst the violence, Carlos remembers the powerful acts of community learning. These acts took the form of communal kitchens, community gardens, and lively *Batucada* performances – spontaneous spaces that fostered participation and local connection.

This is not a new concept. Freire's work in the 1960s sparked a movement in Latin America called "Popular Education". This approach emphasizes the importance of including everyone from Indigenous peoples to workers and students. Knowledge is shared through dialogue, fostering a more horizontal relationship between teacher and student. Freire famously argued that there is no more political social practice than the educational practice (118). These educational practices can lead to a more empowered political stance through critical reflection. For Freire, effective political pedagogy must involve critical thinking and dialogue to enable people to analyze and confront social injustices. Carlos' perspective aligns with this pedagogical approach. He recognizes the self-organizing power of these protest spaces and the significance of shared meals. He highlights the stark contrast between these acts of community building and the violent tactics used by the ESMAD to dismantle street blockades.

An eighth example comes from an extract from Fredy. He is twenty-three years old and a student of Social Sciences at a public university in Bogotá. He was part of the *Primera Linea* (first line) at the Portal de la Resistencia, which aimed to protect protesters from ESMAD attacks. He talks about the use of masks to secure anonymity.

Extract 8: The Faceless Youth

> Fredy: "I think there are ways to evade for the moment because you don't know when it might come. Still, I think that to avoid that kind of persecution, at least stay anonymous. Always, since universities, since the social outbreak, people cover their faces because they are obviously afraid that any police officer might chase them in their neighborhood, that any paramilitary might kill them, right? Also, there are much more organized ways, obviously... Like people who start to go underground as a form of struggle, keeping their life separate so it doesn't affect them precisely because one of the forms of psychological torture used by paramilitaries or the police is to go after one's family."[27]

This article examines how protesters, regardless of ideology, can craft messages that resonate with citizens. Protesters can develop strategies to engage in dialogue with potential supporters, those who might back a different cause, or even those on the opposing side. This dialogic approach aims to impact not just people's perceptions of oppression, but also their emotions.

By confronting well-constructed arguments, the audience is placed in a state of discomfort, which can lead them to either support or reject the cause. This example serves as a springboard to explore how contemporary protest movements craft narratives. It sheds light on how protesters garner support and amplify messages by appealing to emotions (imagine being and feeling cornered). Within this research, these practices are viewed as a form of pedagogical intervention. The explanation about ways of being anonymous not only a way of showing strategies to escape but also to denounce a situation of danger through emotional ignition of a persecution. Here, pedagogy extends beyond formal education. It encompasses the broader concept of transmitting information through persuasion within the context of social movements that are persecuted. Ultimately, these interventions aim to impact citizens' knowledge, values, and emotions, fostering critical political reflection by reflecting why young people would have to hide their faces.

The last extract comes from Juan. Juan is twenty-seven years old and a drug dealer in his locality. He says that there are difficulties for young people to advance because they are in an economic environment that limits their possibilities, forcing them to find ways to survive.

Extract 9: Surviving Day by Day

> Juan: "People have indeed lost that sense of patriotism, that self-love, because the social uprising no longer feels the same. The guarantees that we demanded at the beginning of the strike are not being met, and our voice is not being heard because maybe it went viral. Yes, I'm protesting, and I want people to see me, but it goes beyond that; it's about the people's feeling. It's feeling that they are taking us and making us survive. Survival in Colombia is day by day. Here, you cannot live in peace. You cannot easily thrive. Thriving in Colombia is becoming increasingly difficult. They may raise the minimum wage, but if the cost of living goes up, you become poorer" (personal communication, January 31, 2022).[28]

This section explores the Colombian social unrest through multiple lenses. First, we hear from Juan, a drug dealer, offering a glimpse into the lives of those most affected by the country's economic hardship. Juan's perspective aligns with the analysis by González and Monsalve, who argue that the government downplayed the severity of the economic crisis, attributing it solely to the pan-

demic (58). Juan's words also highlight the effectiveness of the government's strategy, as he observes citizens becoming desensitized to the ongoing issues. The meager minimum wage increase (announced at the turn of 2021–2022) further underscores the governments disconnect from the reality faced by many Colombians like Juan.

Learning extends beyond classrooms. Norton and Toohey explain how informal settings, like shape individual identities and perceptions of reality (430). Within these spaces, discussions on social issues (gender, race, class) influence how people see themselves and the world. Protest movements as informal spaces can foster critical thinking, ultimately impacting societal norms. Informal education emerges during protests. The traditional teacher-student dynamic is replaced by protesters acting as educators, inspiring others to become more involved. Socorrista's example in the bus highlights this. Protesters engage in dialogues, fostering spaces for new ideas and critical reflection. Ideology seems less relevant than the shared goal of mobilizing citizens.

Colombia in 2024 reflects this dynamic. President Petro faces demands from both those harmed by the previous administration and those fearing a loss of privilege under his leadership. Examining social unrest through various perspectives reveals the importance of informal settings. While progressive political and protest movements have addressed issues like validation for marginalized groups, criticizing neoliberal policies and climate change, emergent new right-wing protest groups also utilize informal education tactics, albeit potentially employing elements like hate speech to sway emotions. These new far-right movements, however, use narratives focused on anti-immigration, conservative values, family structures, and anti-abortion stances. Citizens need critical thinking skills to navigate these potentially manipulative narratives. Researchers and educators play a vital role in deconstructing such narratives and fostering critical viewpoints. Traditionally, the classroom has been viewed as a physical space within a school building. However, critical pedagogies argue for a broader understanding. The classroom can be seen as a set of practices that extend beyond the physical walls. These practices involve not just rote learning of pre-determined knowledge, but rather, a space for critical thinking, dialogue, and the development of agency. This expanded definition of the classroom allows it to become a site for everyday learning, where people engage with and analyze the world around them. Notably, this framework can be applied to protest movements. Protest spaces can be seen as classrooms where individuals collectively learn about social issues,

develop strategies for change, and practice skills like communication and public speaking. By recognizing the classroom as a set of practices, not just a physical space, we see its potential to empower individuals not only within the school walls, but also in the act of shaping a fairer society. The themes of Urban Pedagogy that the interviewed protesters expose encompass anti-dialogical actions or government actions such as police abuse, surveillance and profiling, digital censorship, state corruption, economic issues such as the rise in prices of basic food basket products, the injustices of the health system and speeches about the vandal-terrorist ideology. On the other hand, they also include dialogical actions based on the speeches of legitimation of social protest, communal construction actions, peaceful protest and resistance spaces such as workshops, events, gardens and community pots or speeches that demarcate the protester from the vandal-terrorist classification.

In this research, Urban Pedagogy could be evidenced from art as in the case of the protesters who raises awareness through street theater or the trans woman who uses *Ballroom* and *Vogue* against heteronormativity. In digital media, there are publications for the purpose of collective reflection such as the case of the developers who designed the *Bakatá Online* video game to promote political reflection and the construction of memory of murdered or disappeared social leaders. This innovative counterstrategy is projected as the basis of a revolution that starts from peaceful collective actions and that through creativity, critical thinking and community political organization from the neighborhoods aims to strengthen local ties to face the challenges caused by neoliberal policies.

The discovery of Urban Pedagogy in this specific context in Colombia, evident in everyday practices, offers a new perspective on informal education. It helps explain the surge in social mobilization across Latin America. This article is a call to action, urging educators and academics to acknowledge these often-overlooked forms of knowledge. By recognizing the value of informal practices, educators can incorporate them into formal settings. Ultimately, validating glocal emerging concepts like Urban Pedagogy can empower citizens to critically analyze information and resist manipulation. This broadened view shows that teaching and learning extend far beyond schools. Educators are not solely defined by degrees; and classrooms are not limited to institutions. Everyday interactions, even outside formal education, hold immense potential for teaching, including political awareness. Open spaces can be transformed into classrooms, fostering a more inclusive and critical learning landscape.

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