

TEMA MONOGRÀFIC

Histories of education and the «unending dialogue»: a reflective account of 21st century historical practice

Històries de l'educació i el «diàleg inacabable»: un relat reflexiu de la pràctica històrica del segle XXI

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RESUM

«La història consisteix en un corpus de fets constatatats. Els fets estan a disposició de l'historiador en documents, inscripcions, etc., com els peixos a la llosa de la peixateria. L'historiador els recull, els porta a casa i els cuina i els serveix amb bestil que li agradi»

Així va respondre E.H. Carr a «Què és la història?» fa uns seixanta anys. Carr va reconèixer que la història era «un diàleg inacabable entre el passat i el present». És el paper dels historiadors preguntar, qüestionar, reunir i interpretar proves i reunir els fets que corresponen. En definitiva, el passat és el passat i la història la fan en el present els historiadors. Si totes les històries es construeixen en el present, no hauria de sorprendre que cada nova generació d'historiadors es plantegi noves preguntes sobre

el passat. Aquestes noves preguntes s'alineen amb les diferents formes de la història (econòmica, social, cultural, educativa, sensorial, postcolonial, pública, reparadora, etc.) que conformen col·lectivament l'empresa històrica. Com s'explica la història i els processos reflexius de fer història són fonamentals per al "diàleg inacabable". El present article utilitzarà un estudi de cas per explorar el "diàleg inacabable", documentant la pràctica històrica des d'una perspectiva intel·lectual, institucional i geogràfica particular i reflexionant sobre les maneres de conèixer, les connexions, les relacions i les xarxes de recerca associades i els productes de la investigació. En el procés s'abordarà les històries de l'educació en el passat i el present i identificarà possibles històries de futurs educatius.

PARAULES CLAU: Diàleg, fer història, investigació, metodologies, pràctiques educatives, coproducció, codisseny.

ABSTRACT

«History consists of a corpus of ascertained facts. The facts are available to the historian in documents, inscriptions and so on, like fish on the fishmonger's slab. The historian collects them, takes them home, and cooks and serves them in whatever style appeals to him [or her]»

So wrote E.H. Carr in «What is History?» some sixty years ago. Carr recognised that history was “an unending dialogue between the past and the present.” It is the role of historians to ask questions, gather and interpret evidence, and bring together the facts that belong together. In short, the past is the past and history is made in the present by historians. If all histories are constructed in the present, it should come as no surprise that each new generation of historians ask new questions of the past. These new questions align with the different forms of history (economic, social, cultural, educational, sensory, postcolonial, public, reparative and so on) that make up the collective historical enterprise. How history is told, the reflexive processes of making history, is central to the “unending dialogue”. The present paper will use a case study to explore the “unending dialogue” by documenting historical practice from a particular intellectual, institutional, and geographical perspective and reflecting upon ways of knowing, the associated research connections, relationships and networks, and the products of research. In the process it will address histories of education in the past and the present and identify possible histories of education futures.

KEYWORDS: Dialogue, making history, research methodologies, education practice, co-production, co-design.

RESUMEN

«La historia consiste en un corpus de hechos constatados. Los hechos están a disposición del historiador en documentos, inscripciones, etc., como los peces en la losa de la pescadería. El historiador los recoge, los lleva a casa y cocina y les sirve con el estilo que le guste»

Así respondió E. H. Carr a «¿Qué es la historia?» hace unos sesenta años. Carr reconoció que la historia era “un diálogo interminable entre el pasado y el presente”. Es el papel de los historiadores preguntar, cuestionar, reunir e interpretar pruebas y reunir los hechos correspondientes. En definitiva, el pasado es el pasado y la historia la hacen en el presente los historiadores. Si todas las historias se construyen en el presente, no debería sorprender que cada nueva generación de historiadores se plantee nuevas preguntas sobre el pasado. Estas nuevas preguntas se alinean con las distintas formas de la historia (económica, social, cultural, educativa, sensorial, poscolonial, pública, reparadora, etc.) que conforman la empresa histórica colectiva. Cómo se explica la historia y los procesos reflexivos de hacer historia son fundamentales para el “diálogo interminable”. El presente artículo utilizará un estudio de caso para explorar el “diálogo inacabable” documentando la práctica histórica desde una perspectiva intelectual, institucional y geográfica particular y reflexionando sobre las formas de conocer, las conexiones, las relaciones y las redes de investigación asociadas y los productos de la investigación. En el proceso abordará las historias de la educación en el pasado y en el presente e identificará posibles historias de futuros educativos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Diálogo, hacer historia, investigación, metodologías, prácticas educativas, coproducción, codiseño.

1. BEGINNINGS

History of education, as Gary McCulloch recently wrote, “is a discrete and unique knowledge formation with a distinctive identity in higher education”. It has a cognitive and a professional identity and draws on the “methods, perspectives and philosophies of the discipline of history while exploring the content of education as a field of knowledge.”¹ So where should we locate the

¹ MCCULLOCH, G. «History of education in Britain since 1960», *Histoire de l'éducation*, núm. 154 (2020), p.120.

beginnings of the “unending dialogue” and its public visibility? One location is the UK’s second city, Birmingham at the end of the nineteenth century. History was added to the teaching in the English Department of Birmingham’s Mason Science College in 1882, with the caveat that “English history should only be taught in the class of English language and literature in so far as to illustrate such language and literature.”² A women’s non-denominational day elementary teacher training college opened in 1890 as part of the College and courses for the academic study of school subjects including history were provided. It was followed in 1894 by the formation of the Department of Education and as Education became an established constituent part of the College, the College was absorbed into the new civic University of Birmingham in 1900. Amongst the Education staff between 1890 and the First World War it is evident that women lectured, published, and researched, including Mary Lilley (BA London, MA New York) who lectured on the *History of Educational Ideas* and the general principles of teaching.³ In other words history of education became part of the University’s subject teacher training programme. In the twentieth century Education was restructured and reorganised several times⁴ but history of education continued to be taught and in 1966 the School of Education appointed Kenneth Charlton as the first Professor of History and Philosophy. This significantly strengthened history of education research.⁵ History of education was taught alongside philosophy, psychology and sociology of education courses until the 1980s when curricular changes “banished” subject courses in favour of more generalised educational theory and practical training in school.⁶ As McCulloch bluntly wrote, “history of education lost its place in teacher education”.⁷ In 2001 the School

² University Collection, Reports to Council 4/i/5 quoted in Ives, E., DRUMMOND, D., SCHWARZ, L. *The First Civic University: Birmingham 1880-1980*, Birmingham: Birmingham University Press, 2000, p. 25.

³ WATTS, R. *120 Years of Education. The School of Education*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2014, p. 9-11, 66, 81.

⁴ Between 1947-1966 Education was part of The Institute of Education and the Department of Education offering Secondary Teacher Training and Research and Higher Degrees. It was succeeded in 1966 by the School of Education, see Watts, R. *120 years... op.cit.*, passim.

⁵ Charlton’s reputation as a historian of education was associated with his book *Education in Renaissance England* (1965) reprinted (1968). Charlton was also a founder member of the UK History of Education Society in 1967 and was the first editor of the journal *History of Education*, ALDRICH, R. «Kenneth Charlton: 1925-2008», *History of Education*, vol. 38, núm. 5 (2009), p. 601-603.

⁶ WATTS, R. *120 years... op.cit.* p. 93.

⁷ MCCULLOCH, G. ‘History,’ 120.

of Education merged with Westhill College, an affiliate of the University, and took on undergraduate courses including *Education and History* which brought history of education back into the University's curriculum. This degree course was later replaced by the *BA (Hons) Education* which includes history of education modules in each year.⁸ Despite all these changes academic research in history of education has continued since the 1960s, but in 2001 in a significant break with the past a history of education research centre was established for the first time in Birmingham, a Centre which is still active nearly a quarter of a century later: the *DOMUS Research Centre in Histories of Education*.⁹

Nine UK academics came together as founders of the *DOMUS Research Centre in Histories of Education* because of a shared interest in the common questions and debates which arose from their historically informed research across a range of educational disciplines and issues.¹⁰ They were at different stages of their careers, with growing or established national and international reputations for excellence within the field. Collectively they were committed to inter-disciplinary enquiries that challenged and explored the boundaries of knowledge and ways of seeing. They aimed to explore creative and exploratory methodologies and generate projects across institutional/disciplinary boundaries. Individual research interests were broad ranging from school architecture, space and images to politics of educational change and development, from race, identity and post-colonialism to sociological and cultural theories, and from teachers, identity and professionalism to gender and science. As a collective they also aimed to consolidate and extend critical historical research in the cultural politics of schooling and education, particularly focusing on material artefacts as sources and on the use of images, on critical life history, and discursive analysis. Plans were made for teaching programmes and research supervision, national and international networking, and organising regular open seminars. There was a commitment to the local and the importance of working beyond the academy and reaching out

⁸ The modules are *Schooling: a Social and Cultural History* (year 1), *Changing Behaviours: a History* (year 2) and *Reclaiming Education: past, present and futures* (year 3).

⁹ History of education research activity in Birmingham in the 1980s and 90s was led by Clyde Chitty, Martin Lawn, Roy Lowe, and Ruth Watts.

¹⁰ Domus members: David Coppock, Ian Grosvenor, Helen Gunter, Nick Peim and Ruth Watts (School of Education, University of Birmingham), Martin Lawn, Kevin Myers (University of Birmingham, Westhill), Jane Martin (University of North London) and Joyce Goodman (King Alfred's College, Winchester).

to different publics as well as the international and a belief that as a critical mass of historians of education working together within a small national field it would be possible to develop into an interdisciplinary, national and international research centre. The Centre also reached out to international researchers and six academics became associate members of *DOMUS*.¹¹ However, the Centre's ambitions, ideas and attention to the future of history of education did not suddenly come together, but rather were the product of four significant moments, local and international, in the field of history of education.

2. THE MAKING OF DOMUS

2.1. *Silences and Images*

In July 1995 a conference was held in Birmingham which brought together twenty academics from seven countries who were interested in the sociology or history of schooling. A second conference took place in Toronto a year later. Both conferences were organised by Martin Lawn and Kate Rousmaniere under the title *Silences and Images: The Social History of the Classroom*.¹² The two conferences discussed and deconstructed the routines and activities of the classroom, its pedagogical order, and the lived realities of pupils' and teachers' work in and around classrooms. The conferences were experimental in format with sessions organised around the study of photographs, films and documents and papers were produced well in advance to allow for group discussion and analysis. Participants were encouraged to think about their professional skills as historians. A third conference followed in Rotterdam in 1998. The result of the conferences was the publication of a book with the same title in 1999 which focused on the social construction of classrooms as places of learning and places of work and the reconstruction of the silent history of the classroom.¹³

¹¹ Kate Rousmaniere (Miami University, Ohio), Harry Smaller (University of York, Toronto), Therese Hamel (Laval University, Montreal), Malcolm Vick (University of South Queensland) Christine Mayer (Hamburg) and Frank Simon (University of Ghent).

¹² The Toronto conference was scheduled to adjoin the joint Canadian-American History of Education Conference.

¹³ GROSVENOR, I., LAWN, M., & ROUSMANIERE, K. (eds.) *Silences and Images. The Social History of the Classroom*, New York: Peter Lang, 1999.

2.2. Network 17 History of Education

1999 also saw the first meeting of the History of Education Network of the European Educational Research Association which took place in Lahti, Finland as part of the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER).¹⁴ The Network organised a three-part symposium around the idea of *Ways of Seeing Teachers and Pupils: towards a new historiography of European Education*. This title was chosen to allow the Network, in its first meeting, to impose a style upon its work, foster an interest in new combinations of ideas and practices in history of education and adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of space, time and the material and visual culture of schooling. In other words, the symposium followed the style of work and heterogeneous approach established within the earlier international seminars on *Silences and Images*. Six of the future founding members of the *DOMUS* research centre participated in the symposium. Other participants had met either within the seminars associated with the *Silences and Images* publication or at a workshop on “Montage, Walter Benjamin and School History” which was organised for the International Standing Conference for the History of Education (ISCHE) conference at Kortrijk, Belgium in 1998. A second Network symposium was held at ECER 2000 in Edinburgh. The founding Network convenors were Ian Grosvenor, Martin Lawn, Ulrike Mietzner, Henk van Setten and Frank Simon. As with the *Silences* conferences a publication was produced.¹⁵

2.3. Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures

Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures was established as a working group in 2000 to provide a strategy and framework for building historical and cultural records of Black peoples' lives and experiences in Birmingham. The term “Black” was used inclusively to refer to people of South Asian, African and Caribbean origin. Its aim was to ensure that the histories, cultures and contribution of Black people were permanently represented in the City's Museum, library and archive collections, had a place in the school

¹⁴ GROSVENOR, I. «History of Education Network», *European Educational Researcher*, vol. 5, núm. 3 (2000), p. 25-26.

¹⁵ GROSVENOR, I., LAWN, M. (eds.), «Ways of Seeing Education and Schooling: Emerging Historiographies», special issue of *History of Education*, vol. 30, núm. 2 (2001).

curriculum, and that the memories, stories and knowledge held within the City's diverse communities were to be shared and valued. Participants in the work of the group were drawn from the City's museums, libraries, archives and equalities services; from schools, higher education and the arts sector; and from community organisations. The Central Library provided a meeting place where academics, heritage practitioners, community activists and teachers could informally network, discuss and exchange knowledge, and share and advance ideas and projects which celebrated but at the same time critically engaged with Birmingham's cultural diversity. The convenors were Ian Grosvenor, Rita McLean and Siân Roberts.¹⁶

2.4. International Standing Conference for the History of Education Conference 2001

In 2001 the School of Education brought the ISCHE to the city. Planning began in 2000, and the theme was *Urbanisation and Education – the City as Light and Beacon*. The sub-themes – City States; Sites and Communities; Metropolis; Space and Technology; Representation and Citizen and Subjects - reflected the work undertaken by the local organisers (who would become *DOMUS* founder members after the conference) and the Birmingham context. In organising the conference and its social programme a Partnership User Group was set up with Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham Archives and Birmingham Museums Service, the Development Education Centre, the Local Education Authority Schools Advisory Service and *Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures*. The group worked with the School of Education to produce research material for the conference including an exhibition on the history of education in Birmingham, two historic trails documenting key education places and spaces, and a comprehensive guide to Birmingham Education Archives.¹⁷ The Partnership User Group demonstrated the importance of the local in delivering the international, and at the same time raised community awareness of the important collections held, increased their accessibility and promoted potential research agendas.

¹⁶ See GROSVENOR, I., MCLEAN, R. & ROBERTS, S. (eds.), *Making Connections. Birmingham Black International History*, Birmingham: Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures, 2002.

¹⁷ *The City a Light and a Beacon. A Guide to Birmingham Education Archives*, Birmingham: Birmingham City Council and the History of Education Society GB, 2001.

It was the coincidence of people, ideas and structures as outlined above which resulted in the 2001 founding of the *DOMUS Research Centre in Histories of Education* and marked a significant shift from largely individual led history of education research into engaging with a strategic framework which as described earlier was focused on new ways of working and thinking about history of education and the importance of establishing international and local partnerships.

Once founded *DOMUS* did not stand still. Early in its history it was successful in obtaining Socrates funding for a European Masters' course in *Childhood, Youth and Education in European Cultural History* through a partnership with the universities of Ghent, Groningen, Hamburg and Malaga. In 2005 the activities of the Centre were reviewed, and the social, political and cultural history of childhood was added to its focus on the histories of education and schooling and the Centre's name changed to *DOMUS: Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Histories of Education and Childhood*. In 2010 it was instrumental with Ghent in establishing the History of Education Doctoral Summer School which will have its fifteenth anniversary in Oslo in 2025. Internal structural changes within the School of Education in 2015 and the introduction of a departmental structure saw *DOMUS* located within the Department of Education and Social Justice and research refocused on progressive education and pedagogies, areas of research which connected with other researchers in the Department and collectively strengthened the School of Education's research profile in line with the University's strategic framework 2015-2020. In 2019 *DOMUS* became a recognised research centre of the University as opposed to the School of Education and this brought in additional funding. Although membership over time has changed as colleagues moved institutions or retired, it has continued to provide an intellectual home for those with an interest in the legacies of the past for present educational research and practice. But what has it achieved as a Centre? In addressing this question what follows is a narrative account of six projects between 2007 and 2023 associated with the Centre's commitment to new ways of working and thinking about history of education which reflect the "unending dialogue" between the past and the present, historical practice, and the importance of giving public visibility to the history of education through engagement and participation.

3. IDEAS INTO PRACTICE: A NARRATIVE OF COLLABORATION, PARTICIPATION, THE LOCAL AND THE INTERNATIONAL

Birmingham Stories: from communities of interpretation to communities of understanding was a DOMUS led externally funded knowledge transfer project from 2007 to 2009.¹⁸ The project was concerned with facilitating a dialogue between the academy, heritage practitioners and wider community audiences through a shared engagement with existing historical research produced from local, national and international archive resources available in the city of Birmingham. The “stories” contained in the archives held an important key to understanding urgent social issues surrounding citizenship, identity and belonging. In this context Birmingham Stories was established to extend an awareness of the diverse histories of the city in its many voices and cultures, making research on archive collections more available to the public. Unlocking the experiences contained in archive and heritage materials the project organised a series of public workshops in community libraries and other venues about Birmingham’s history. The project team produced ten downloadable on-line research learning guides alongside digitised archive material, and these included *Urban Childhoods: Culture, Context, Images* (which mainly covered Birmingham schooling), *Visualising Birmingham: Reframing the Photography Collection*, *Votes for Women: Tracing the Struggle in Birmingham*, and *Refugee Movements: From the Eighteenth Century to Today*. These were all reflective of areas of established DOMUS research activity and of future research projects.¹⁹ Raising the profile of the archive collections through community workshops led to new research materials being deposited including a photographic collection of Birmingham Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community history and an associated collection of children’s educational materials. The project also provided evidence of the persistence of race thinking and intolerance of difference as illustrated in, for example, comments written about an exhibition organised by the project and displayed in the Central Library: “I think this exhibition is biased against the white

¹⁸ *Birmingham Stories: from communities of interpretation to communities of understanding* was funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

¹⁹ Other *Birmingham Stories*’ research guides included: *Slavery and Abolition*; *Civic Gospels: Networks for Social Change*; *Race and Racism in Birmingham: Researching Post-War Archives*; *Travelling Communities: Voices from the Margins*; *City of Religions: Exploring Faith Diversity through Archives*. See <https://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/birmingham-stories/>.

people of Birmingham”; “Absolutely disgusting minority exhibits... only the British haters are given publicity”.²⁰

Documentary Film in Educational Research [DFER], 2009-11 explored the challenges for historians of education of using documentary film on schools and schooling as a research resource. The project drew on film archives in Belgium, Portugal, Scotland and England and from studying their catalogues it became very clear to the multinational project team that the historian of twentieth century schooling had in the documentary film access to one of the richest sources for educational history. Further, documentary film as a data source opened a direct window into the past and enabled us to see and hear the ‘edited’ past as it was experienced by teachers and children. Edited in the sense that what was seen on screen were selected images arranged into a sequence to tell a story. Reading a documentary film involved not only developing questioning strategies that responded to the “truth” of the documentary images, but also identifying the provenance of thinking that informed that particularly documentary practice. As with other projects the DFER produced a journal special issue.²¹ Further, looking back the DFER project had its antecedents in the focus on school images in the *Silences and Images* conferences and the showing in Toronto of François Truffaut’s 1959 fictional film *Les quatre cents coups* (The Four Hundred Blows) and the use of documentary film in Network 17’s ECER conference programme in Edinburgh 2000. In the recent present, in the context of UNESCO’s “Education Futures” programme a *DOMUS* seminar used the English documentary film *Education for Living* (1949) to frame a discussion about film and future with an analysis of the documentary’s content as an example of education futures from the viewpoint of 1949 and to pose a question as to what content would be included in a film in 2024 which looked into education futures.

Past and present were the focus of the exhibition *Children’s Lives* which was a partnership project with the City Archives and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG) April to July 2012.²² Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund *Children’s Lives* contributed to a debate over what it meant to be

²⁰ See Domus Research Centre Archive AHRC *KT Fellowship Final FEC Report 18523*.

²¹ Special Issue: VAN GORP, A., WARMINGTON, P. (eds.), «Education in Motion: Producing Methodologies for Researching Documentary Film on Education», *Paedagogica Historica*, vol. 47, núm. 2, 2011.

²² The curatorial team were Nicola Gauld, Ian Grosvenor and Siân Roberts.

a child. Using the rich collections of the archives and the museum it explored how childhood in the past was constructed by adults, how those constructions shaped childhood experiences and how traces of the past continued to shape present childhoods. It explored the relationships of children with their families and peers, the experiences of children in school, at work and at the hands of various welfare institutions, and the ways in which children imagined the world. The exhibition presented source material that allowed visitors, despite childhood being predominantly shaped by adults, to hear children's voices and to see them as independent social actors in the past.²³ The importance of the child's voice was celebrated in the final section of the exhibition which was curated by children from two schools to show generations to come what life was like for children and teenagers in Birmingham in 2012. An internal partnership in the University complemented the exhibition in BMAG by showing two smaller exhibitions one telling the story of the Nettlefold children who lived in Winterborne House in 1903 and a second displaying artefacts relating to childhood rites of passage.²⁴ The origins of the *Children's Lives* project in part connect back to the *Birmingham Stories* project and the richness of archives identified relating to childhood.

Cultural Learning, Identity and the European Project was funded by the European Educational Research Association in 2015-16 and jointly organised by EERA'S Network 17 (Histories of Education) and Network 20 (Research in Innovative Intercultural Environments). The project built on earlier work, a conference panel *Adventures in Cultural Education*, at ISCHE 37 in Istanbul in 2015 organised by *DOMUS* members²⁵ and a Birmingham led research project on *Connecting Communities in the City: The Roles of Cultural Intermediaries and Cultural Learning* which ran parallel to the EERA project.²⁶ The EERA project brought together historians of education from the universities of Birmingham, Debrecen, Ghent, Luxembourg, Riga and Vic and through international interdisciplinary workshops (Barcelona and Riga)

²³ For a discussion of child agency see GROSVENOR, I., MACNAB, N. «Children just don't sit centre stage in life: images as objects to think through», in DUFFETT, R. (ed.). *Children and Conflict*, Birmingham: Voices of War and Peace, 2021, p. 16-26.

²⁴ Winterborne is an Edwardian historic house which is now part of the University of Birmingham estate.

²⁵ Special Issue: HERMAN, F., ROBERTS, S. (eds.), «Adventures in Cultural Learning», *Paedagogica Historica*, vol. 53, núm. 3 (2017).

²⁶ The project ran for four years and produced JONES, P., PERRY, B. & LONG, P. *Cultural Intermediaries Connecting Communities*, Bristol: Policy Press, 2019.

they focused on creating a platform for critical dialogue about current cultural learning discourses and practices by exploring two concepts that were (and still are), shaping European educational policy discourse: the “engaged university” and “cultural learning”.²⁷ The former was concerned with establishing the principle of public engagement as integral to academic practice and the latter was the outcome of such engagement and its transformative impact on communities. In the workshops participants reflected on five questions: How knowledge develops? How people make meaning? How publics are constituted? How change happens and How knowledge-based institutions develop? Each participating university presented case studies of cultural learning projects involving public engagement and discussed commonalities and tensions associated with different approaches to cultural learning and how experiences were shaped by national and local circumstances. The project presented a final report at ECER Dublin, 2016.

A focus on public engagement was also central to *Beyond Commemoration: Community, Collaboration and Legacies of the First World War* a one-year funded project in 2019-20 which brought together community partners, historians of education, public historians and heritage consultants to co-produce and design four open access e-books which would make visible the work of community historians involved in commemorative activity and the production of new knowledge.²⁸ The four books were *Remaking Histories of the Nation*, *Children and Conflict*, *Women and War* and *War and its Aftermath*. The project began and ended during the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, every conversation and meeting happened online and “as a collaborative project, addressing some ‘difficult histories’, it depended wholly on dialogue, conscious participation and transparency, on sustained relationships of trust and on an ethics of care and empathetic listening.”²⁹ One of the many community projects described in *War and its Aftermath* was “Words of Peace.” Inspired by a 1919

²⁷ The workshop convenors were Gyöngyvér Pataki, (Debrecen), Eulàlia Collelldemont Pujadas (Vic), Angelo van Gorp (Ghent), Iveta Kestere (Riga), Christian Quvang (UC South Denmark), Karin Priem (Luxembourg), Ian Grosvenor (Birmingham).

²⁸ *Beyond Commemoration: Community, Collaboration and Legacies of the First World War* was a follow-on project jointly organized by two AHRC funded First World War Engagement Centres 2014-2018: *Voices of War and Peace* and *Everyday Lives in War*.

²⁹ Each e-book had the same introductory essay by Ian Grosvenor and Sarah Lloyd, and the quote is from GAULD, N., HAMMERIN, A., MOORE, J., SAVILL, D. *War and its Aftermath*, 2021. Downloadable at <https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/2021/12/13/resource-beyond-commemoration-community-collaboration-and-legacies-of-the-first-world-war>.

international peace manifesto the project aimed to explore the peaceful ways people in Birmingham contributed to the war effort. Led by Sampad South Asian Arts community volunteers were trained to gather information to be used for creative workshops in schools with the aim of inspiring young people to produce their own modern-day Pledges for Peace and express their own thoughts and feelings about war. Pledges were later mounted on wooden leaves and attached to a sculpted Peace Tree which toured local schools.³⁰ A concrete example of learning with the past.

Birmingham, the “workshop of the world” and “the city of a thousand trades,” was at the heart of the British colonial and imperial project in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Photography captured the Empire at home and abroad and projected a unifying vision onto the popular imagination and Birmingham’s significant photographic collections provided a rich supply of images for exploring its position as a key node in the nexus of the British Empire. In 2022, as part of the Commonwealth Games cultural programme which the city was hosting, *DOMUS* partnered once more with Sampad South Asian Arts and the Library of Birmingham to deliver the exhibition *From City of Empire to City of Diversity. A Visual Journey*. The exhibition activated the archive to surface new knowledge and encourage new learning. An agenda which Sampad translated into a “Cultural Education” programme which included a young people’s guide to the exhibition and a series of questions to help them navigate their journey around the exhibition and discover connections between the city’s past, present and possible futures. There was also a city “learning walk” which schoolchildren followed to locate the physical remains of empire and identify the changing landscapes associated with migration and settlement. Sampad also partnered with twenty schools. In developing and delivering the exhibition the project drew upon knowledge from the earlier *Birmingham Stories* project and the work of *Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures*.³¹

³⁰ See *War and its Aftermath* at <https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org/2021/12/13/resource-beyond-commemoration-community-collaboration-and-legacies-of-the-first-world-war/>.

³¹ To this list should be added the *Connecting Histories* project which predated *Birmingham Stories*. *Connecting Histories* made archive sources and stories relating to the hidden histories of Birmingham’s diverse communities more widely known. It worked to ensure that these stories were told to encourage new learning and support people from a range of communities to get involved in documenting, archiving and researching their histories, see <https://theironroom.wordpress.com/2020/04/14/connecting-histories/>.

4. LOOKING BACK, GOING FORWARD

Much more could have been included in this narrative to make the case for the singular nature of how one research centre intellectually, institutionally and geographically has addressed the future of history of education, but given the narrative as presented what does it tell us about *DOMUS* and the “unending dialogue” with the past?³² Looking back from 2024 it is narrative of knowing and acting, and of connections and networks. It is a narrative which points to work, which over the decades, has consistently reflected the interwoven nature of the social, the historical and the spatial and acknowledged the importance of local contexts in shaping research questions, of place and space being an active force in shaping the histories of education written, the concepts used and the dialogues in the present with the past which have collectively made *DOMUS* research knowable and actionable. The decades also coincided with the emergence of a supra-national European educational space which attracted transnational lines of enquiry and history of education projects.³³ Such projects, just like those that were locally focused, were generally multi-faceted and involved partnerships. For *DOMUS* collaboration was, and continues to be, based around the ideas of mutual respect and understanding, equality and inclusion, democratic participation, personal integrity, accountability, collective action and making a difference, and success was determined where from the outset there was an agreement about principles and a commitment to provide opportunities and agency for community partners. In particular, civic society mediators (museums and arts organisations) have proved to be particularly valuable in building partnerships between *DOMUS* and communities because of their extensive knowledge and experience of outreach and working with new audiences.

Despite all that has been said above, including McCulloch’s claim about the distinctive identity of history of education, it is the case that historians of education are still rarely seen as part of the mainstream whether defined in relation to history or the field of education. Indeed, it is increasingly common that mainstream historians are exploring histories of education through the lens of childhood. Further, what the narrative presents needs to be placed in a broader context, that of the nation and the world beyond Britain’s borders. We

³² See Appendix 1: *DOMUS* activities 2001-24.

³³ See Novoa, A., Lawn, M. (eds.). *Fabricating Europe: The formation of an education space*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002.

all inhabit a world which has become increasingly tumultuous and dangerous, a world that is more multi-polar, fragmented and contested. In the UK the last fourteen years have seen ten different education secretaries, education becoming a focus for culture wars, and the growth of identity politics and populism.³⁴ For the academy it is a world where historical legacies need to be addressed and the culture wars and associated claims of wokeism challenged.³⁵

In the early 2020s *DOMUS* adopted the slogan ‘thinking forward through the past’ and prioritised four areas of activity: working with communities and third sector agencies to deliver co-produced and co-designed research; sustaining international research partnerships and establishing new ones; translating research into research led teaching that addresses education issues which transcend borders and disseminating research through seminar programmes and publication. In practice this translated into a renewed desire to make a difference through research that addressed issues of social justice. Where, as historians we should (following Ludmilla Jordanova) “unsettle... audiences, provoke them to think harder and deeper about the human,” and “bearing witness... stand firmly in the present as mediators between past and future.”³⁶ This can be seen in *DOMUS*’ involvement in the founding of the *History of Education Ecologies* international research group in Landau, Germany with its commitment “to produce understanding rather than only knowledge,”³⁷ and in two areas of ongoing research and activism: Kevin Myers’ work around reparative education and Siân Roberts’ focus on refugee pedagogy.

³⁴ The office of Education Secretary corresponds to an education minister in many other countries and is primarily concerned with England.

³⁵ See GROSVENOR, I. «Populism, Nationalism and the Past. An English story of History in the Present», *Rizoma freireano*, núm. 31 (2021). <https://www.rizoma-freireano.org/articles-3131/populism-nationalism>.

³⁶ JORDANOVA, L. *History in Practice*, London: Arnold, 2000, p. 204-07.

³⁷ See VAN GORP, A., COLLELDEMONT, E., FELIX, I., GROSVENOR, I., NORLIN, B., PADROS TUNEAU, N. «What does this have to do with everything? An ecological reading of the impact of the 1918-19 influenza pandemic on education», *Paedagogica Historica*, vol. 58, núm. 5 (2022), p. 728-747.

Reparative education is an emerging set of ideas and practices.³⁸ Its theory, and its practice, is informed by a thoroughgoing account of both «past» and present injustice, while also promoting and exploring projects for future orientated reparation. These projects can take many different forms, including material redistribution, and *DOMUS* has promoted, and collaborated in, educational projects concerned with reparative relationships, epistemic repair and symbolic redress. A collection of such projects is presented in a recent special issue of the journal *Futures* whose introduction conceptualises reparative action in four, often overlapping, domains of justice (racial, transitional, ecological and psychic) and urges educators to work constructively across boundaries, to “recognise difference and work across it, and to find new ways to identify and cope with the weight of past-present relations.”³⁹ A further practical example of this work is the *Teachers for Educational Equity* project in Malaysia.⁴⁰ Aiming to learn from, and further develop, teacher skill and efficacy in alternative learning centres in Malaysia, the project starts from the understanding that British colonialism implicates contemporary educational institutions, including our own, in ongoing histories of violence. One such form of violence is the exclusion of refugees, and displaced people, from national schools and from the benefits and security of citizenship.⁴¹ In a context where modernist rationales for schooling – as a form of nation building, and as an investment towards a better future – are extremely weak, the project seeks to investigate how alternative forms of citizenship can be imagined, and realised, through a pedagogy of care while promoting an understanding of historical responsibility for educational exclusion.⁴²

³⁸ See SRIPRAKASH, A., NALLY, D., MYERS, K., & RAMOS-PINTO, P. «Learning with the Past: Racism, Education and Reparative Futures», in HUTCHINSON, Y., CORTEZ OCHOA, A., PAULSON, J., TIKLY, L. (eds.). *Decolonising Education for Sustainable Futures*, 2nd. (1st edition Paper commissioned for the UNESCO Futures of Education report), Bristol University Press, 2023; SRIPRAKASH, A., «Reparations: Theorising Just Futures of Education», *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, vol. 44, núm. 5 (2023), p. 782-95.

³⁹ MYERS, K. and others, «Reparative Futures», *Futures*, 2024 (forthcoming).

⁴⁰ See <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/tee>.

⁴¹ DRYDEN-PETERSEN, S., HORST, C. «Education for Refugees: Building Durable Futures?», *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 36, núm. 4, 2023, p. 587-603.

⁴² TIKLY, L., BARRETT, A. M., BATRA, P., BERNAL, A., CAMERON, L., COLES, A., JUMA, Z. R., MITCHELL, R., ALVILES, N., PAULSON, P., ROWSELL, J., TUSIIME, M., VEJARANO, B., WELDEMARIAM, N. *Decolonising Teacher Professionalism: Foregrounding the Perspectives of Teachers in the Global South*. Background paper prepared for the UNESCO Futures of Teaching initiative (October 2021).

Research on historical examples of pedagogies centred on an ethics of care with and by refugees is also ongoing. Interventions by educators, artists and humanitarian activists with children displaced by war and persecution have demonstrated how pedagogic initiatives rooted in art and cultural learning were used to develop and sustain identities and enable the expression of traumatic experiences, thereby contributing to the evolution of a tradition of therapeutic pedagogic approaches that continues into the present day.⁴³ Similarly, a concern with addressing the relative absence of scholarly research on the pedagogic ideas, practices and legacies of refugee educators and teachers who arrived in Britain in the twentieth century has begun to identify a number of individuals who made a distinctive contribution to aspects of British education in exile.⁴⁴ Early research suggests that these refugee educators also shared a commitment to therapeutic, creative and play-based practices as part of a discernible and distinctive “refugee pedagogy” that promoted educational inclusivity and social justice.⁴⁵ Further research into the relationship between the ideas, practices, and life experiences of refugee educators will clarify the extent and nature of their contributions to the histories of education in Britain.

5. LAST WORDS

DOMUS has produced a significant body of innovative and cutting-edge research and publication particularly in relation to the development of new methodologies (the “visual turn”; the “material turn”; the “participatory turn”), new areas of research (materiality of schooling; cultural learning; education and diversity; education and activism) and new synergies with specific areas of educational practice (heritage education; educational progressivism; memory,

⁴³ ROBERTS, S. «Education, art, and exile: cultural activists and exhibitions of refugee children's art in the UK during the Second World War», *Paedagogica Historica*, vol. 53, núm. 3 (2017), p. 300-317; ROBERTS, S. & GROSVENOR, I. «Art at the Edge: refugee children and the creative moment», in ISENSEE, F., RASMUSSEN, L. R. & WAHLER, J. (eds.), *Pedagogical Peripheries – Practices, Materialities, and Actors Beyond the Classroom*, Peter Lang, 2025.

⁴⁴ See, for example, ROBERTS, S. «Hilde Jarecki, social pedagogy and the transformation of society through early years learnings», in BRINSON, C., NYBURG, A., BOHM-DUCHEN, M. (eds.), *Innocence and Experience: Childhood and the Refugees from Nazism*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2024, p. 213-31.

⁴⁵ MYERS, K., ROBERTS, S. «Expulsion, emotion and refugee children: forced European migration and refugee pedagogy (1912-1947)», *Educació i Història: Revista d'Història de l'Educació*, núm. 34 (2019), p. 43-63.

historical injustice and reparative education). It has collectively pushed the boundaries of history of education as a discipline, linking researcher interests with contemporary educational challenges, providing opportunities for community co-production and co-design, and engaging in collaborative activities which directly address issues of mutuality and inclusion. In sum, the contribution of DOMUS to the «unending dialogue» remains, to borrow words from Furlong and Lawn, “vitally important to the current and future advancement of education - both as an intellectual and as a practical activity”.⁴⁶ That said, the future is never without its challenges.

Appendix 1: DOMUS activities 2001-2024

2001	Founding of <i>DOMUS Research Centre in Histories of Education</i>
2001	International Standing Conference for the History of Education, University of Birmingham <i>Urbanisation and Education – the City as Light and Beacon</i>
2001	Project: <i>The Inner-City Network</i> [INC]
2001-03	Project: <i>School I'd Like</i>
2001-09	Project and Network: <i>Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures</i>
2002	Project: <i>Using History to Build Community</i> (Paul Hamlyn Foundation)
2002	Project: <i>Making Connections</i> (Heritage Lottery Fund)
2002	Project: <i>Qualitative Classroom Research: What in the world happens in classrooms.</i>
2002-04	European MA <i>Childhood Youth and Education in European Cultural History</i> through a partnership with the universities of Ghent, Groningen, Hamburg and Malaga
2003	Project: <i>Archiving Education</i>
2004	Exhibition: <i>Educated Perspectives</i> , Midlands Art Centre
2005	<i>DOMUS: Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Histories of Education and Childhood</i>
2005-06	Project: <i>Whose Story? Interpreting Sites for a Culturally Diverse Society</i> (National Trust)
2005-07	Project: <i>Public history and social identity: representing the past in Birmingham and Liverpool 1970-2005</i> (Nuffield Foundation)
2006-07	Project: <i>Connecting Histories</i> (Heritage Lottery Fund)
2007	Exhibition: <i>Equiano. Enslavement, Resistance and Abolition</i> BMAG and Equiano Society (Heritage Lottery Fund)

⁴⁶ FURLONG, J., LAWN, M. (eds.), *Disciplines of Education. Their Role in the Future of Education Research*. London: Routledge, 2011, p. 186.

2007-08	Project: <i>The view of the child in designing museum spaces and gallery spaces for learning, exploration, discovery and research</i> (AHRC)
2007-09	Project: <i>Birmingham Stories: from communities of interpretation to communities of understanding</i> (AHRC)
2007-10	Project: <i>Indian influences on progressive education in Britain in the early 20th Century</i> (British Academy)
2008-13	Project: <i>Suburban Birmingham: spaces and places, 1880-1960</i> (AHRC)
2009-10	Project: <i>Developing BMAG New History Galleries</i>
2009-11	Project: <i>Documentary Film in Educational Research</i> (British Academy)
2010	History of Education Doctoral Summer School [HEDSS] University of Ghent, Belgium
2011-15	Project: <i>School I'd Like Revisited</i>
2011	HEDSS University of Birmingham, UK
2012	Exhibition: <i>Children's Lives</i> (Heritage Lottery Fund)
2012	HEDSS Lisbon, Portugal
2012-14	Project: <i>Digbeth Speaks</i> (Heritage Lottery Fund/ Friends of Birmingham Archives and Heritage)
2013	HEDSS University of Hamburg, Germany
2013	Project: <i>New Perspectives on twentieth century social history: opening up the archives of the National Union of Women Teachers</i> (Heritage Lottery Fund)
2014	HEDSS Umeå University, Sweden
2014	Project: <i>Role and Impact of private schools in developing countries</i> (DFID)
2014-16	Project: <i>Caroline Benn: a comprehensive life, 1926-2000</i> (Leverhulme)
2014-19	Project <i>Voices of War and Peace First World War Engagement Centre</i> (AHRC) £1,390,000
2015	<i>DOMUS</i> located within the School of Education Department of Education and Social Justice
2015	HEDSS University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg
2015-16	Project: <i>Cultural Learning, Identity and the European Project</i> (EERA)
2016	HEDSS University of Groningen, Netherlands
2016-19	Project: <i>Connecting Communities in the City: The Roles of Cultural Intermediaries and Cultural Learning</i> (AHRC)
2016-21	ISCHE Project: Standing Working Group <i>Migrants, Migration and Education</i>
2017	HEDSS University of Sassari, Sardinia
2017-18	Exhibition: <i>Käthe Buchler: Beyond the Battlefields</i> BMAG and University

2017-20	Project: <i>Totalitarismos europeos, propaganda y educación</i> (ARAEF)
2018	HEDSS University of Latvia, Latvia
2018	Book series: <i>Progressive Education: Policy, politics and practice</i> Routledge editors Cathy Burke and Jane Martin
2018-22	ISCHE Project: Standing Working Group <i>Visual Studies in Education</i>
2019	<i>Beyond Commemoration: Community, Collaboration and Legacies of the First World War</i> (AHRC)
2019	Exhibition: <i>Save the Child Centenary</i>
2019	<i>DOMUS</i> becomes a recognised research centre of the University
2019	HEDSS Liverpool John Moores University, UK
2020	Book Series: <i>Appearances – Studies in Visual Research</i> De Gruyter editors Tim Allender, Inés Dussel, Ian Grosvenor and Karin Priem.
2020-	Founding member <i>History of Education Ecologies International Research Group</i> [HEC]
2021	HEDSS University of Lyon (online), France
2020-21	Project: <i>Historical Justice and History of Education</i>
2021	Hosted 'Timeless Memories': <i>Memory and Temporality in Histories of Education</i> UK History of Education Society annual conference, online
2022	HEDSS Universidad Complutense du Madrid, Spain
2022 -	Project: ISCHE Website <i>Education and Pandemics Archive</i>
2022-25	Project: <i>Public History of Education</i> (MCIN/AEI)
2023	Project and Exhibition: <i>From City of Empire to City of Diversity. A Visual Journey.</i> (National Lottery Heritage Fund/Sampad/Library of Birmingham Archive Fund)
2023	HEDSS University of Zürich
2023 -	Project: <i>UNESCO Futures of Education</i>
2023 -	Project: <i>Teachers for Education Equity</i> (University of Birmingham School of Education/YTL Foundation)
2023-24	Project: <i>Making Good Teachers. Politics, policymaking, and practice in teacher education from the nineteenth century to the present day</i> (Society for Educational Studies)
2024	HEDSS Aarhus University, Denmark