

Chapter 13: Educational Administration's Paradises Lost: A flâneur/se stroll through the futures past

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Introduction

The field of educational administration and leadership, particularly in Anglo-American countries, tends towards optimism on a universal level such as achieving social justice, shared leadership, and global wellbeing, even though this has been unrealistic in many countries that are conflict zones with war and invasion, accompanied by famine, disease and lack of medicine or an authoritarian regime. On a more fundamental level, much writing in the field also assumes that leadership is taking place, when the activity is predominantly administrative, that writing a great deal about distributed leadership means that it is taking place. This can be attributed to a type of 'magical thinking', that speaking the words somehow brings into existence the subject of the thought (Malinowski, 1954), or that one can project one's mental state onto the world (Freud, 1979). Which, of course, doesn't mean that it does. This is perhaps why education is one of the most fad-driven fields, especially in Anglo-American contexts (Birnbaum, 2001).

The futures that many saw through the 1970s to the 2000s were a globalisation of Western education, even though this has been belied by many postcolonial authors for pursuing a new form of colonisation (Quist, 2001), or practices that cannot be implemented in the countries targeted (Vidovich, 2013) for policy transfer. Increasingly there are negative impacts discovered about digital technologies such as surveillance and privacy issues that were assumed to hold promise (Monahan & Torres, 2009) or negative psychological effects (Suler, 2015). In the last few years there are also political changes in many countries that are shifting to populism and other right wing laws, policies and programmes that also affect education in carrying out teaching and research, and affect foreign students educational mobility reducing globality (Moffitt, 2016), leaving behind the many liberal goals that were conceived on international levels (Mearsheimer, 2018). The main problem with future predictions discussed here is the simplistic levels on which this often takes place, ignoring the complexities of the historical as it unfolds into the future, unintended consequences that compromise futuristic thinking, and events or conditions that can arise that fundamentally change the trajectories that were taking place. This chapter is primarily about the restrictions on this kind of thinking and the impossibilities of truly predicting what may come in the future, a boundary that the field of history has acknowledged as a fundamental part of societal and organisational developments.

This chapter proposes the method of flâneuring used in sociology, history, and cultural studies (Koselleck, 1982, 2004; Tester, 1994) in much the same way that Benjamin (1940/2002) investigated the Parisian arcades, Musil (1954) the city of Vienna, Hessel (1929/1984) investigated Berlin, or Simmel (1990) through sociological impressionism investigated economics. Here, though, it is an imaginative stroll through avenues, streets, squares and paths that make up the values, knowledge, and norms in the ideational spaces of an academic field. There are many aspects of the field that have been pursued that have held the promise of improving the social institutions and lives of individuals to make better societies. However, currently in a period of threatening populism (e.g., Gessen, 2020; Post,

2019), increasing literature on existential threats and challenges in various disciplines (e.g., Dion, 2014; Foer, 2018; Griffiths, 2017; Segal & Jankelson, 2016), it is not difficult to see that there are many lost futures. In order to determine what futures are dissolving, one has to take a broad societal and international view – the shaping of social institutions within which educational organisations and practices are embedded is subject to socio-historical and psychological forces. Many of these are located beyond the horizon of much educational administration and leadership that tends towards an organisational perspective of schools and universities rather than a system view that brings in these causal factors.

What is Flâneurie?

The origins of Flâneurie are usually associated with the writing of Baudelaire (e.g., 1970), in which he poetically and interpretively investigated the meanings of public spaces and the public in Paris outside of their experience in private spheres (Tester, 1994). Flâneurie is a complex activity consisting of participant observation, interpretation, and experience, synthesising these into an expressive form that allows the reader to follow the stroll empathetically and in so doing, expanding one's experience and revising the meanings one holds, sometimes involving challenges to closely held values and conceptions, and sometimes is painful. For example, if one strolls through the many countries undergoing violent politics, civil war, and invasion, and following information on the many refugee groups that are migrating around the world, and those populations being interned and possibly executed (Samier, 2019, forthcoming), the stroll one takes is consumed in suffering and misery.

One criterion for Flâneurie is an awareness of moving through history: one is always in the flow of historical change. In other words, social reality is dynamic; it is always evolving or even devolving, and frequently not in positive directions, as the critiques of neoliberalism have pointed out through its negative impact on education (e.g., Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), although the critical literature is being overtaken by books on how to restructure the university as a cog in the economic sphere (e.g., Massy, 2016). It is clear that external forces are internalised and in the process affect all aspects of education.

Since we experientially move through history, even though we may cling to past conditions, the strolls one takes are always changing. Ricoeur's (1984) notion of *l'ipséité*, how one moment is different from all other moments, is a perspective that the Flâneur/se needs to embrace: what has been interpreted and represented before does not necessarily hold any more. As Bauman (1994) describes it, the Flâneur/se has to overcome bias of the knowledge one had before, and open oneself to the experience of strolling the passages with aimlessness.

Koselleck characterised the modern world's pathogenesis as 'an exaggerated focus on the future, overstated claims of rationality, equality, and freedom, and a lack of political responsibility that was allegedly bound to have disastrous consequences for political planning and decision-making' (Olsen, 2014, p. 53). To a large extent, the positing of unlikely futures, or a limited construction of futures, are due to explicit or implicit conceptions of the nature of history in many disciplines and fields: 'These tendencies and their connection to the historical "process" . . . always remain tied to the linear temporal construction of history, whose evidence is mathematical and historical-philosophical' (Koselleck, 1982, p. . . .), resulting in what Olsen describes as a 'linear, unified and progressive view of history that is focused on the future' that Koselleck replaced with a plural view of historical possibilities (Olsen, 2014, p. 143), subject to the always present forces of conflict, political crises and war (Olsen, 2011)

that can cause ruptures and reversals of social conditions, and rapid developments. In other words, many futures are posited but dissolve into past conceptions and projections without becoming empirical reality. Futures past, are those resulting from Heideggerian and Gadamerian practices of self-understanding and self-interpretation (Olsen, 2014) that are quite often constructed, imagined or hoped for. It is the confusion of the experiential, the 'present past', with expectations as 'futures projected in the past' (Olsen, 2014, p. 223), the latter is invested in conceptual processes, embedded in values and beliefs systems and how one interprets oneself and the social world one inhabits.

A second criterion is being *of* the public rather than *in* it in order to enter the experiences one interprets. This corresponds closely to hermeneutic and phenomenological research that subsequently developed in which the researcher uses their own experience and empathy to interpret what others experience and the meaning they make of it (see Glesne, 2010). Flâneurie involves an observational and interpretive stroll through the sites that comprise public spaces: both interior and exterior, such as parks, squares, shopping arcades, malls, walkways, sometimes referred to as 'the art of doing' but through a purposive staged alienated relationship with self, other people and the world (Shields, 1994, p. 65). There is also a Cyberflâneurie, the strolling through of websites, blogs, social media sites, and gaming that exist in the virtual digital world. But such moving through cyberspace has been curtailed by security systems, researcher secured practices, and the activities of social media like Facebook clogging up digital space preventing strolling (Morovoz, 2012) and the increased 'fake news', cyberbullying content, and cyberwar practices of states like Russia posting disruptive content online (Nance, 2018).

Another is contextual embeddedness, amid a large number of factors and forces in dynamic relationship in any society or community. Drawing on Côté and Levine (2002), Samier and Al-Qallaf (2016), added additional dimensions to their multidisciplinary model to map out the many interconnected levels of change and development as it would apply to Gulf women's leadership formation, and by extension to any other context. The first level is foundational consisting of historical and emerging contextual conditions and factors that range from international to local, such as colonisation, global effects, religious and cultural traditions, and social structures and norms that are regional and societal relating to social institutions such as political and economic. Upon this foundation is the individual and social identity construction with deep unconscious layers, the ego, the self, personality and character shaped by values and beliefs, all interacting with the immediate group context one is located in and immediate qualities and characteristics of the groups one is a member of. This is embedded in the social interaction level – the religious, cultural, social and other norms and practices one has direct experience with including type of family structure like nuclear or extended and tribal. This in turn, is embedded in large organisational and social institutions structures across societal sectors. In multicultural environments, one may be located in and interacting with very different individual and social structures.

A fourth feature noted by a number of commentators, is that Flâneurie arose at the time of capitalism, where the Flâneur/se brings a critical eye to the rise of this economic system that had metamorphosed the public social world into an 'exotic unknown' (Mazlish, 1994, p. 47). Now, many decades later, one can still use this approach, however, the context has changed to neoliberalism, globalisation, and more recently to autocratic populism that is arising in many countries (Albright, 2018; Gessen, 2020). As Mazlish (1994) explains, the Flâneur/se operates like a Panopticon, to critique and judge rather than discipline and punish. However, Foucault does present a form of representation that exposes the discontinuity of time

embedded in capitalism not unlike Kant's framing of the epistemological problems arising with the Enlightenment. The prior ruptures examined by Foucault (1970) in *The Order of Things*, I would argue here, can be followed by a further rupture of neoliberalism and its critique through a number of critical and postcolonial approaches.

Koselleck (2018) elaborated further on problems of future conception and its reflection of past and present projections in *Sediments of Time*, using the metaphor of sedimented layers representing contemporaneous historical times, but with each layer moving at different speeds, some eroding, others shifting, and some remaining static, and therefore not moving in a clear unitary linear way. The contrasting conditions of the layers produce historical events that seem to erupt unexpectedly, such as clashes between societal sectors and revolutionary developments, appearing as new conditions that were not anticipated. Even memory is affected variously by the relative movements of the strata, influencing experience, interpretation and expectation, and through this values, identity, roles, knowledge and social relations, in educational terms, curriculum, pedagogy and its administration and leadership.

Flâneurie in the passages of academe: futures lost

The analogy for the field of educational administration and leadership consists of the public sites of colloquia, conferences, workshops, seminars, lectures, and more virtual spaces like articles, chapters and books, now supplemented with social media and internet videos and podcasts. These are also a function of meetings with colleagues discussing any number of academic matters, which sometimes evolve into a symposium, published article or chapter, or book or handbook. Here I am looking at the scholarly activities as rooms and corridors one can pass through. However, much of that world consists of textual voyages and virtual sites, strolling on two levels that are interconnected in many ways. Included also are the politics of the field – the coalitions, arguments, subcultures, and controversies that shape constituencies of how people move through the educational administration and leadership world. The Flâneurie needs to be conducted on at least three levels: strolling through the interpersonal world; through the virtual world of the field in its various incarnations and expressions; and strolling through the reality of the worlds it purports to represent, in other words, the complex and increasingly internationalised context within which it is situated and shaped by. Using the method of Flâneurie, consisting of observation, reading and producing text that 'reads' a social setting of the people, architectural configuration and events as an interpreter or 'detective' of social experience, in this case the implications of socio-cultural and political dynamics of society (Frisby, 1994) that affect the understanding and conduct of educational administration and leadership in the emerging Zeitgeist (Samier, 2018).

Where the original Flâneur/se strolled through the capitalistic world of its public spaces, currently, it consists of strolling through neoliberalism and its application internationally through globalisation. Ideologies, like neoliberalism, can have profound effects - the promise of greater collegiality, opportunities for free thought, creating greater value in knowledge and social relations have been belied by the many ways in which academia is subservient to the market (Busch, 2017), suffered a general degradation of academic life (Maisuria & Helmes, 2020), through effects on social interaction including bullying, deception, challenges to privacy and hate groups (Joinson et al., 2007). In a higher education context this is seen in the significant rise of academic bullying and the mobbing of highly productive scholars (Crawford, 2020), to some extent a reaction to the performance regimes and budget cutting from the governance level, which when internalised compromises collegiality itself.

Two new developments that have sidelined past futures are the cyberworld and the negative impacts of globalisation examined in the many postcolonial critiques that have developed. The spread of digital, or cyber, worlds has reduced many educational features through online teaching and instituted an anti-intellectual culture escalating hegemonic battles (Rosenfeld, 2015). Identity has been affected by the increase in virtual identities (Henschke, 2017), and the promise of technology now is turning into negative impact on mental development, loss of empathy (Suler, 2015), internet addiction (Young & Nabuco de Abreu, 2017), compromising personal privacy and security and organisational security (Awan, Spiller, & Whiting, 2019; Deakin, Taylor, & Kupchik, 2018; Monahan & Torres, 2009). The very nature of Flâneurie has changed – one must stroll through seemingly endless virtual corridors of internet sites, blogs, and social media, in addition to digital correspondence and virtual meetings.

The analogy to the strolls through city public spaces in an intellectual realm, particularly for lost futures or futures past, can be first to stroll through the published landscape in a field, in the ‘public life’ of scholars on one level, down the many pathways of topicality, and a second is to compare the meaning of scholarly writing in the context of the societies it is intended - the intellectual passages - to refer to. The latter is accomplished by taking a stroll internationally through the actual world of events and developments that threaten to derail many advances that seemed well underway or expose such fantasies of how the world will develop globally (e.g., Waldron, 2017), myths of a post-racial society (Bhopal, 2018), the empty promises of neoliberalism and negative impacts on social institutions like education from the leadership level of governance to organisational practices (Au & Ferrare, 2015), the intended and unintended consequences of globalisation such as loss of contextuality and decline in quality through standardised assessment (Napier, 2014), and illusions punctured through postcolonialism (Fawole, 2018), foreshadowed by Nkrumah (1965/2009). In more critical form, the Flâneur/se is at once part of the worlds strolled through, and a critic who brings a critical eye by distancing one’s identification with the setting and participants. In other words, one detaches from the context by cultivating an anomie and alienation while engaging in the experience (Ferguson, 1994), what Mazlish (1994) calls the ‘impartial spectator’ exercising sympathy and an ironic perspective. It is only with this ability to distinguish oneself from the field while being in it, that lost futures are detected, through the interpretive research practice of using the subjective as part of one’s research ability (Glesne, 2010), and creating interpretive and critical distance through techniques like the ironic.

Increasing anti-intellectualism in many countries – deepening, in the case of the US, from Bloom’s now classic work, *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), to conditions examined by Bauerlein and Bellow’s (2015) collection of several scholarly treatments. In part the issues of post-truth (McIntyre, 2018), the impact of ‘fake news’ on politics (Farkas & Schou, 2020), and alternative facts, politicised versions of a long standing condition which affect the governance and policy levels of the educational system. At the same time, the narcissism that Lasch (1979) discussed in the *Culture of Narcissism* has increased considerably (Twenge, 2009) and most disturbingly in leadership studies, becoming malignantly toxic in these roles (Haycock, 2019; Post, 2005, 2015) and appearing to spread across societal sectors (Kets de Vries, 2019) and through the use of social media (Campbell & McCain, 2018). Attention has turned from the narcissistic leader to the nature of the followership as dysfunctional and extreme, involving in the case of the US, and other countries large proportions of the population (Post, 2019), in other words, parents, teachers, educational administrators, and others involved in education. The sector of education is not

immune from these effects, and combined with other factors like neoliberalism, digitalisation, and anti- diversity and immigrant politics, can have a cumulative and profound effect.

Some of the most fruitful explorations, or passages to stroll down, that bring to light the underlying negative character of what were regarded as positive movements, like globalisation, are critical sources and postcolonial literature that offer a very different stroll through the administration and leadership of fields like education. Most effective are scholars like Foucault (2016) and Bourdieu (e.g., 1993), who have pulled back the veil on seemingly constructive advances in education. Foucault's critique of governmentality has been used to uncover the sources and dynamics of power, for example, how neoliberalism becomes pervasive in social institutions (Lemke, 2016). Bourdieu's analysis is a new form of sociology, consisting of several dimensions of a complex paradigm like field, habitus, capital, power, interests, and strategies that provide a new way to stroll through educational administration and leadership in its empirical and virtual forms producing power games, inequalities, and the suppression of those intellectuals who raise critiques perceived as threats to the status quo, applicable to any national location where inequalities and social divisions are produced (e.g., Bennett et al., 2021). A particularly interesting insight is that of symbolic violence – the many ways that marginalisation, suppression, and other forms of power struggle can occur in organisational change (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Another increasingly tread passage is that of the postcolonial – a warren of interconnected passages, much like the Arab souk one can wander through – like strolling through Paris' arcades, but operating through a different logic of association and mores that shape the experience. One of the more recent scholars influenced by Foucault's (1970) discussion of representation is Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* that examined the imposition of colonisation on the Middle East through what was defined as 'real' based on acts of Western power that reflected images of Arabs and Muslims that served imperialism (Mazlish, 1994). Since that time, the passageways that Said opened up, has generated many levels and types of voyages. There are those forms that focus on identity, mind and roles such as Thiong'o (1986) and Gramsci (1971), Guha (1982) and Spivak's (1992) subalternity theory. Others, like Mignolo (2011) and Satterthwaite and Atkinson (2005), focus on social groups, cultural imperialism and social institutions including cultural genocide (Bachman, 2019; Novic, 2016) and indigenisation (Battiste, 2013; Frawley, Larkin, & Smith, 2017). Recolonisation or neocolonisation are other approaches or pathways, often comparing the current effects of globalisation to 19th century imperialism – the capture of other countries assumed to need civilising (Memmi, 2003; Nkrumah, 2009; Quist, 2011).

There are many now applying these critiques to education such as Fryberg and Martínez (2014), Khalifa (2018), Minthorn and Chávez (2015) and Naidoo (2007). Particularly important for education are the knowledge critiques, like epistemicide (Gandhi, 1998; Hall & Tandon, 2017), epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007; Kidd, Medina, & Pohlhaus, 2017) and cognitive injustice (de Sousa Santos, 2018). These can be engaged with like thought experiments – following colleagues down these paths of oppression through knowledge, identity, and social interaction, in other words, through curriculum, pedagogy and the structuring of professional relations, however, travels that require one to both be of one's Western systems if from these countries and to transcend and separate from it and journey with new colleagues who occupy worlds that are substantially different – in other words, one many need to change one's identity into a multicultural, cosmopolitan or transculturality. Identity is a fluid and dynamic construction that changes through time due to contingencies and changing conditions, a process that is affected by increased relationships with those from

other cultures, producing variable complex forms (Benet-Martinez & Hong, 2014; Leary & Tangney, 2012) that allow for greater cross-cultural understanding and action.

Conclusion

Despite the great differences between the early 20th century worlds that Flâneurie formed in and the early 21st century conditions we face now, the essence of the approach is easily transferable, and provides a means by which to overcome inequalities, injustices, and the many politics of differences that are again becoming politicised in increasingly populist and authoritarian countries. This kind of stroll, through the other educational administrations and leaderships require the establishment of new norms, new enculturations, and redefining one's relationship with the rest of the world. It requires a new professionalism, a change in hierarchies of value and knowledge, and new social relations that can place equal and sometimes more value on the traditions and heritages of Others.

This kind of voyage requires also imagination – creative thinking that can posit a new world, and a rethinking the futures that past scholarship failed to bring about on a larger historical and international canvas. There are artistic sources that can aide in the process, the many forms of art that have already taken imagined strolls through worlds that may be. These issues have been with us for a century in literature such as Zamyatin's *We* (1924/1993) Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932/2007) and Orwell's *1984* (1949/1987). Such dystopic topics have also been explored many times in film and TV series, such as *Children of Men* (2006) and *The Last Enemy* (2008) that open doors to critiques that may be uncomfortable and even denied. These also fulfil the role of Flâneur/se through possible futures and past futures, uncovering human aspirations as well as failings that have implications, and sometimes including as a dimension of the work, education's governance, leadership and administration.

While predicting the future has been demonstrated repeatedly in the past to be a spurious occupation, there are forces at play that give an indication of what possibilities may emerge. While increased strides have been made to some extent in social justice and development for many countries, in science and medicine, these have often been overturned by political crisis, invasion, collapsing societies, and corruption. Of particular concern is the increased populism and authoritarianism evident in many countries, including those in the West, usually accompanied by increasing xenophobia, prejudice, expulsion, and hate-filled violence. The future is looking bleak: in addition to these problems that shape education, there are increasing human costs to social media, widespread narcissism in some countries, vulnerabilities in online systems, cyber attacks, grave climate degradation, unmanageable immigrant and refugee migrations, the loss of fundamental human values through decades of neoliberal emphasis on market and economic values and practices, and the viral and bacterial exposure through the destruction of the environment. Finally, there is also a fragmenting of any forms of stable global orders that have restrained and constrained to some extent aggressions and wars. Looking into the future development of the educational administration and leadership field until ten years ago, was mostly a vision of further developments in human rights, in tolerance and diversity, in greater quality, and contributions to society – however, historical development has a way of suddenly changing direction, often presaged by indications of negative or destructive forces, but these are often overlooked when there appears to be a humane or moral trajectory still at play. The new role now for educational

leadership is a more critical one, in combatting the many degradations taking root and growing.

The last words of this chapter are devoted to Koselleck, whose historiographical work is due much more attention for the insight it can bring to fields like education. One of his starting point was ‘the argument that conceptual structures dictated structures of meaning’ (Tribe, 2004, p. ix) applied by him to many topics, including how administrative structures are shaping by historical conditions and forces (e.g., Koselleck, 1975). The temporal realm is much more complex than a simple linear past – present – future. For Koselleck (2004), drawing on Heideggerian hermeneutics, it consists of anticipated futures, former futures, and various lived presents. The past, also, is subject to redefinition, necessary in a world of inequalities and injustices that affect knowledge and education. This includes the suppression of colonial pasts, genocides, and the denial of past knowledge that did not originate in the West, but migrated in from many parts of the world, most notably the Middle East, constituting a large part of the Renaissance that has politically been redefined to remove Islamic influence (Morgan, 2007; Saliba, 2007). However, one cannot enter the future without the contemplation of possibilities – but it is the quality of values and knowledge that shape them, certainly a primary role for education as a cultural institution.

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