

Pedagogies of struggle and collective organization: the educational practices of the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement

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Abstract

The Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) is one of the largest and most influential social movements in Latin America. Since the very beginning of the movement's agrarian reform struggle, MST leaders have developed a broad-based program of leadership, political training, and education for all participants in the movement. The MST's educational demands are organically connected to the movement's attempt to create, in the present, a new social order based on social justice, participatory democracy, autonomy, and humanistic and socialist values. The goal of this article is to introduce to an English-speaking audience the main contours and components of the MST's educational proposal. The first part of this article discusses the three theoretical foundations of the movement's educational approach and its five pedagogical practices. The second part of the paper presents two concrete experiences of educational institutions administered by the MST leadership: the "Itinerant Schools" in Paraná, a network of public schools located inside MST occupied encampments, and the MST's national political training school, the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes (ENFF). Together, these two cases offer concrete examples of how the MST's educational proposal is implemented in diverse Brazilian contexts.

Key words: Landless Workers' Movement (MST), social movements, counter-hegemonic education, popular education, Freire, Makarenko, Pistrak.

Introduction

Over the past thirty years, the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) has been globally recognized as one of the largest and most influential social movements in Latin America. The MST is an agrarian reform movement, with the primary goal of redistributing large land estates to landless workers. The MST arose in the early 1980s in the southern part of Brazil, not as a united movement, but rather, as dispersed attempts among poor rural laborers to claim

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land through occupations of large, unproductive estates. These land occupations were organized with the support and encouragement of progressive priests following the ideals of liberation theology,² a philosophy advocating for structural solutions to poverty and inequality. Even during those early years, while Brazil was still under a military dictatorship, these land occupations were successful and hundreds of families living in occupied encampments received land in newly formed “agrarian reform settlements.”³

In 1984, the leaders from these diverse occupations came together to form the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST).⁴ Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, the MST’s struggle for land expanded across the country and currently the movement is present in 23 of 26 Brazilian states. Over 400,000 families (2 million people) have received land through MST-led land occupations, with tens of thousands of people still living in encampments waiting for land rights. Although the MST was born out of this fight for land, the movement currently struggles for three interrelated goals: (1) land, (2) agrarian reform, and (3) social transformation. The MST makes a distinction between the fight for land and the fight for agrarian reform, as the former represents ownership over the primary means of agricultural production (land) and the latter represents the struggle for all of the resources that are necessary to have a productive and dignified life on this land (roads, houses, technical assistance, agricultural credits, schools). The MST’s third goal, social transformation, represents the movement’s desire to transform the capitalist system and construct new forms of economic and social relations in the countryside based on family-farming, food sovereignty, agro-ecology, solidarity, collective work, and socialist practices.

Since the very beginning of the movement’s agrarian reform struggle, MST leaders have realized that to achieve social transformation it is necessary not only to occupy land but also to develop a broad-based program of leadership, political training, and education for all participants in the movement. As Pizetta (2007) writes, the goal of this educational process is, “political and ideological unity, the development of a political-organizational consciousness in order to overcome the challenges imposed by capitalist reality” (p. 242). This investment in leadership training is also an expression of the MST’s emphasis on autonomy: the movement’s desire that all Brazilian citizens become subjects (agents) critically analyzing the world and constructing new possibilities for their communities. Over the past three decades, the MST has invested a huge amount of financial and human resources in developing alternative political education and leadership development courses for its activists and leaders. These courses

² For more information about liberation theology and education see: (Berryman, 1987).

³ While land is being occupied it is referred to as an *encampment*, after families win the rights to live in this area is called a *settlement*.

⁴ One of the social movements that was critical in organizing the first land occupations in Rio Grande do Sul was the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (Land Pastoral Commission, or CPT), an organization formed by the progressive priests following liberation theology. Some highlights of these early land struggles are discussed in Morissawa (2001).

occur in dozens of schools or “training centers” across the country, which MST leaders administer autonomously from the state.

In parallel to this struggle for internal leadership development and political education for new activists and leaders, the MST has also fought for access to state-administered public schools in its territories (encampments and settlements). Formal public schooling became important within the movement because the families living in MST settlements and encampments were worried about their children and began to demand access to public education (Hilário 2011). These families mobilized and put pressure on state and municipal governments to build schools in their communities. However, the families who won educational access quickly realized that the state’s educational project was in direct contrast to the movement’s goal of social transformation. In particular, the capitalist model of the Brazilian public school system, which functions (at best) to prepare students for an urban job market, did not support the movement’s goal of establishing vibrant small-farming communities in the Brazilian countryside. This capitalist model of public schooling emphasizes individual social mobility, competition, and conformation, not the movement’s values of solidarity, collectivity, self-governance, and autonomy. Furthermore, the public schools in Brazil were increasingly seen as a source of profit, a sphere of capitalist intervention through the production of textbooks and standardized teacher training, not a public institution with the purpose of promoting collectively defined social goals. Thus, along with the demand for schools, a demand for “another type of school” was also born: a school that contributed to the movement’s social and political vision for the countryside.

In summary, the MST’s educational demands are concerned with both political training for the movement’s established and new activists, to cultivate in each person the ability for leadership and autonomous action, as well as the transformation of thousands of state and municipal public schools located in MST camps and settlements across the country.⁵ The MST has also attempted to create university programs at the bachelors and graduate level that adhere to the movement’s socialist vision. The MST’s pedagogical proposal in all of these spaces is characterized by the direct connection between these educational processes and the movement’s larger social struggle. The goal of this article is to introduce to an English-speaking audience the main contours and components of this educational proposal.

In the first part of this article, we discuss the *three theoretical foundations* of the movement’s educational approach and the *five pedagogical practices* that characterize this proposal. We present the MST’s educational approach in dialogue with the other pedagogical practices that have been developed historically by working-class movements. The second part of the paper presents two concrete experiences of educational institutions administered by the MST. The first case is the “Itinerant Schools” (mobile schools) in Paraná, a network of

⁵ The movement has won access to 2 thousand schools in these new communities, with over 8 thousand teachers attending to 250 thousand students (Carter & Carvalho, 2015).

public schools located inside MST occupied encampments that are currently serving hundreds of elementary and high school students. The second case is the MST's national political training school, *Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes* (ENFF), which over the past 11 years has educated over 30 thousand activists, organizers, and social movement leaders across Latin America and the world. The Itinerant Schools and the ENFF are concrete examples of how the MST's educational proposal is being implemented in diverse Brazilian contexts.

Methodology

This paper is based on two decades of the authors' first-hand experiences with and research on the MST's educational initiatives. The article also draws heavily on the theoretical reflections elaborated by the national MST Education Sector. Two of the authors are currently members of this national education sector, and also accessed much of their formal schooling through the MST's educational programs. The third author is an academic and community organizer from the United States, who is a long-time collaborator with the MST.

Alessandro Mariano entered the MST in 1997, when he was 11 years old and his family participated in a land occupation in the southern state of Paraná. He immediately became involved in the organizational life of the camp. When he was 13 he participated in a statewide gathering of hundreds of children from MST camps and settlements (*sem terra*). Two years later, he enrolled in a high school degree program with a specialization in teaching at the Josué de Castro Institute (also known as ITERRA), a school in Rio Grande do Sul administered by the MST leadership (graduated in 2003).⁶ During this period he became an adult educator, using Paulo Freire's literacy method to teach adults to read and write in MST camps in his state. After graduating from the MST high school program, Alessandro took on the task of organizing one of the first Itinerant Schools in his state, with 500 encamped students. Alessandro received a bachelor degree in the Pedagogy of Land from the State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE) (2008), a graduate specialization in Human and Social Sciences from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) (2011), and a graduate specialization in *Educação do Campo* (Education of the Countryside) also from UNIOESTE (2015). All of these university degree programs were administered through a partnership between the universities and the MST, with funding through the federal program PRONERA (National Program for Education in Areas of Agrarian Reform). Alessandro also has a Masters in Education from the State University of Central-West Paraná. Alessandro is currently a member of the national MST education sector,

⁶ This is the first formal educational institution that the MST founded, in 1995. The school was first considered a research institute known as ITERRA (Technical Institute of Research and Training on Agrarian Reform), and offered two types of high school degrees programs (in teaching and cooperative administration). Shortly after the ITERRA's founding the MST obtained permission from the Rio Grande do Sul Educational Advisory Board to found the Educational Institute Josué de Castro, named after the writer of *Geography of Hunger*.

participates in the pedagogical coordination collective of the MST's Florestan Fernandes National School, and is part of a research group on social movements and education at UNICENTRO.

Erivan Hilário is an educator and activist in the MST from the municipality of Santa Maria da Boa Vista, in the Northeastern state of Pernambuco. Erivan entered the MST in 1998, when he was 13, after his mom participated in an MST land occupation and won land rights. Although Erivan resisted moving to the settlement, once he arrived he fell in love with its organizational dynamics and the integration of youth into the camps participatory structure. He was invited to become an adult educator in one of the MST's literacy campaigns, travelling to several cities to learn about Freire's pedagogical methods. That same year he was asked to become part of the MST education collective in the region, and he was invited to attend the MST's first high school degree program in the Northeast (hosted by the University of Paraíba, graduation in 2002). Erivan received his bachelor degree in pedagogy from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (2006) and a graduate specialization in Human and Social Sciences from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (2011), both degree programs administered in partnership with the MST and these universities through the federal program PRONERA. During this period Erivan became one of the leaders of the statewide MST education Sector, attempting to implement the movement's pedagogical proposal in public schools throughout the State. Between 2012 and 2015, Erivan was part of the coordinating collective of the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF), when he also earned his masters' degree in Education from the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP) (2016). Erivan is currently living in Brasília and is one of the two leaders of the MST's national educator sector and also participates in the UNICAMP Laboratory of Observation and Descriptive Studies (UNICAMP/LOED).

Rebecca Tarlau attended public school in the United States, in the state of New Jersey and went to college at the University of Michigan (2006), where she majored in Anthropology and Latin American Studies. The daughter of labor union leaders, Rebecca was an activist in the United Students Against Sweatshop and a labor solidarity group in college. In 2004, Rebecca went to Brazil for the first time and worked with a women's organization in the city of Recife, Pernambuco, that was using Freirean education as a method of social change. Rebecca decided she wanted to learn more about Freirean pedagogies and moved to Bolivia for a year to work with a grassroots organization offering political education classes to social movements. When she returned to the United States she worked as a popular educator for an immigrants rights organization in Maryland. In 2007, Rebecca entered a doctoral program in Education at the University of California, Berkeley (graduated 2014), with the goal of returning to Brazil and working with the MST's education sector. Between 2009 and 2015, Rebecca spent more than 20 months living in MST settlements and camps, conducted more than 200 interviews with MST activists and state officials, observed dozens of MST teacher trainings, and participated in other MST educational initiatives. Rebecca is currently a Postdoctoral scholar at Stanford University where she is writing a book about the MST's thirty-year

struggle to transform education in the Brazilian countryside. Her contribution to this article is both empirical, as the article includes some of her own experiences and observations, and as a translator of Erivan and Alessandro's writings—in the sense of translating Portuguese to English *and* translating the MST's conceptual frameworks to resonate with an audience unfamiliar with these educational ideas.

The theoretical foundations of the MST's pedagogical approach

The MST's pedagogical approach was born out of the struggle for land in Brazil. The process of creating this educational proposal began in the early-1980s, when families living in MST settlements and camps began to discuss the type of school they wanted to construct for their communities. It was the female activists and mothers who were the protagonists of this process, forming regional "education collectives" that would oversee the learning process in the public schools built in their communities. In 1987, a national MST education sector was founded to develop a more concrete educational proposal for the movement. Over the past three decades, the MST's educational proposal has been influenced by three main theoretical traditions.⁷

Three theoretical traditions

The first educational theorist that influenced the movement was Paulo Freire (1921-1997), and in particular, his 1968 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Many of the women and men who were involved in the first MST land occupations already had experiences with Freirean educational theory through their involvement in local church study groups that incorporated Freirean practices, known as *popular education*. According to Brandão (2002), popular education refers to the community-led educational practices that developed throughout Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, especially in Brazil, based in Freirean principles. By the early-1980s, these community-based educational projects were present in poor neighborhoods throughout urban and rural Brazil (Kane, 2001).

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ([1968] 2002), Freire critiques the conception of schooling as simply a process of transferring information to the student, or "banking education." Freire pointed out the necessity of valuing students' reality in the educational process, which for the MST meant the reality of landless people in Brazil. Another lesson that the MST took from Freire is agency, or the idea that working-class people can be their own protagonists in constructing a new society. For Freire, this agency requires both dedication and humility. Inspired by these ideas, MST leaders began referring to the movement's educational approach as the "Pedagogy of the MST," similar to Freire's

⁷ These three theoretical traditions are discussed by Roseli Saete Caldart in Sapelli (2014).

“Pedagogy of the Oppressed.” In other words, rather than construct a pedagogy *for* the MST, the movement’s goal was to construct something *of* the MST, led by the movement itself.⁸ As one MST leader, Maria de Jesus, says: “When people ask us, ‘What pedagogy does the MST follow?’ we should respond that the MST does not follow a pedagogy, the MST has a pedagogy!” The MST’s focus on constructing its own pedagogical approach is related to the movement’s belief in community sovereignty and autonomy: working-class people’s right to take part in determining their own destiny.

The second theoretical foundation that is central to the MST’s educational approach is what the movement refers to as *socialist pedagogy*. These are the pedagogical experiments that were developed historically by other socialist countries, such as the Soviet Union and Cuba. Local MST leaders first began to read about these socialist educational experiments in the mid-1980s, when several outside intellectuals introduced texts from the Soviet Union to the movement. These socialist theorists were important because, while Freire’s focus is primarily on classroom pedagogy, these authors discuss the transformation of entire educational systems. In particular, MST leaders were inspired by the educational experiments that developed immediately after the Bolshevik revolution, when the country was attempting to create a school system to support a new socialist society.⁹ For the MST, one of the most important of these authors is Moisey Pistrak (1888-1940), a Soviet educational leader who discusses the importance of manual labor as an educational process (Pistrak, 2000).¹⁰ A second author that the MST draws on is Anton Makarenko (1888-1939), a Ukrainian writer and educator who organized schools as student-led collectives.¹¹ Pistrak and Makarenko reinforce two central ideas within the MST’s educational approach: the pedagogical value of manual labor and the importance of student self-governance.¹²

In the 1990s, the MST also began to study Cuba’s educational experiments, and in particular, the 1959 literacy campaign when the Cuban government

⁸ In the late-1990s this idea inspired *Educação do Campo* (Education of the Countryside), a rural educational approach built *with* rural populations, not *for* them (Tarlau 2015).

⁹ The MST draws on Soviet theorists writing between 1917 and 1931. The MST always references 1931 as the moment when the Soviet Union stopped investing in the creative capacity of its population for collective work and self-governance, and became a top-down industrial model.

¹⁰ There are no English translations of Pistrak’s writings.

¹¹ In his book *Road to Life* (Makarenko, 2001), Makarenko writes about his experience founding a school for orphans in the new Soviet Union, known as the Gorky Colony. The Gorky Colony educated marginalized and orphaned Soviet youth by giving them collective responsibility over their own school.

¹² The MST has also studied several other Soviet educators, although Pistrak and Makarenko have been the most influential. Another reference is Lev Semenovich Vygotsky (1896-1934), a Russian psychologist that saw children’s intellectual development as based on their social interaction and life conditions (Vygotsky, 2007). More recently, the MST began studying th Viktor N. Shulgin (1894-1965), a Soviet educator and government official that developed many of the educational pedagogies used by the Soviet Union in the early 1920s (Shulgin, 2013).

suspended all schooling for a year and sent students to the countryside to teach illiterate adults how to read and right. More recently, the MST has created rural literacy programs based on the Cuban literacy program, *Sí Se Puede* (*Sim Eu Posso*, Yes I can). The MST has also been directly inspired by Cuba's approach to childcare. Setting up *cirandas infantis* (child care centers) during all MST political events is a priority for the movement, allowing for equal gender participation while educating MST children through age-appropriate pedagogical activities. Learning about Cuba's educational experiences deepened the MST's conviction that schools are places for integral human formation, not just academic instruction.

The third theoretical foundation of the MST's educational approach were the *organic practices of the movement*. The MST always refers to this as the movement's third educational inspiration, because it was only through the process of studying these other theoretical references that MST leaders were able to perceive their own practices as a legitimate source of knowledge. This led to MST leaders studying these organizational processes, such as the democratic participation, division of labor, collective work, solidarity and the other cultural practices that make up the day-to-day life of the movement. By studying these practices, the MST leaders were able to extract elements of the movement's own organizational structure that could help to construct educational goals that aligned with the goals of the movement.

Five categories of pedagogical practices

Based on these three theoretical foundations—Freirean theory, socialist pedagogies, and organic movement practices—the MST has developed five categories (“matrixes” in Portuguese) of pedagogical practice in their schools and courses: work, social struggle, collective organization, culture, and history. The first pedagogical practice of *work*, inspired by the Soviet theorists, is understood as human creative activity. For the MST, work is what it means to be human. As Marx says, “What is life, if not activity?” In this sense, labor is not just wage work or labor exploitation, as it is usually manifests in capitalist society. Rather, the “pedagogy of labor” attempts to convert all human beings into workers who are able to overcome alienated forms of individual wage work and instead help students use their collective labor power for the improvement of their own communities. The MST believes that this type of work/labor must be at the center of any educational project.

One of the MST's most important educational principles is “everybody is working,” or the idea that all students should participate in “socially beneficial work” for several hours each school day. Socially beneficial work refers to labor that produces benefits for the entire community, for example repairing a bridge, organizing a radio program for the community, producing a newspaper, or organizing a cultural event (Shulgin, 2013, p. 41). Socially beneficial work also includes the daily chores that allow the school to function, such as dishwashing, cleaning the school's bathrooms, and cooking. This work is decided, planned,

and carried out by the students, taking into consideration the ages of the participants. Again, incorporating “work” in the schools is not an attempt to “train” students to assimilate to the job market; rather, for the MST, labor is a source of creative production associated with free, autonomous workers. Work is also the best way to help students connect to and identify with the working-class.

The second component of the MST’s pedagogical approach is *social struggle*. Social struggle—participation in occupations, protests, marches—is the essence of the movement and considered the driving force of any transformation. As Caldart writes, (2004, p. 331), “Everything is achieved through struggle, and struggle also educates people. This is one of the lessons inherited and built by the MST’s historical trajectory.” Social struggle is integrated into the school day through various methods, one being students’ constant investigation of working-class movements. Social movements become the scientific object of study in classrooms, during extracurricular activities, seminars, debates, and weekly or monthly thematic events. In addition, part of the schools’ curriculum is students’ active involvement in these local struggles, either through their connection with the MST or through other working-class organizations in their communities. As part of their educational experience, students participate in mobilizations, marches, protests, and other activities, such as local gatherings of MST youth. These activities vary according to students’ age and local context.

The third pedagogical practice is *collective organization*, which is the way in which the MST organizes itself. The MST tries to promote collectivity within its movement, not individuality. The hope is to build communities that are based on socialist ideals, whereby everyone is considered equal and there is gender equity in participation. The most important aspect of collective organization occurs through the students’ self-governance of their schools. All of the students participate in decisions concerning curriculum, finances, extracurricular activities, outside visits to the school, decorations, or any other issue pertaining to their daily educational experience. This student participation occurs through smaller student collectives, known as *núcleos de base* (NBs, or Base Groups), which are the most important organizational component of the school. Collective organization is also practiced in the classroom, through study groups as well as a collective evaluation processes in which all of the students and teachers are evaluated each semester. The overall goal is to make students the main protagonists of their educational process, thus promoting their freedom and autonomy for critical thinking, creativity, and action.

The fourth pedagogical practice that is central to the MST’s educational proposal is *culture*. Culture is understood as our collective human experience. It is a way of life and a way of being that produces and reproduces knowledge and world visions. Culture is our collective inheritance of certain values, objects, science, arts, and technologies. Every person is born in a particular culture that shapes her or his daily activities. If one becomes conscious of the influence of culture on our actions then it can be used to affirm or change these practices. Thus, the MST’s educational proposal involves an *intentional* “practice of

culture,” whereby educators attempt to cultivate among students a collective identity as working-class farmers and peasants—through art, dance, music, theatre, and other cultural expressions. The goal is to promote daily practices in the schools that directly critique the cultural hegemony of capitalist society (industrial culture). The pedagogical practice of culture involves a range of activities, among the most prominent *mística*: daily performances that express local traditions and social struggles through theatre, poetry, music, arts, gestures, and rituals.

Finally, the fifth pedagogical practice is the MST’s approach to *history*. The MST believes that it is impossible to be involved in working-class organizations without an historical perspective. The MST leadership educates itself by studying the successes and failures of other social movements that have historically fought for land. This collective memory of struggle helps the MST to move forward, as activists realize that their current fights are part of a long historical process. In the schools, students practice history by studying these past struggles and analyzing the lessons these histories hold for the movement’s current challenges and contradictions. Teachers cultivate a daily “practice of history” by teaching students how to make these connection between the past, present, and future. In the classroom, this involves learning about the relationship between memory and history and the need to form a historical consciousness. Students are asked to record everything that takes place in the school each day, and constantly reflect on these events. The students are also taught that to comprehend our current lives it is necessary to analyze every action and situation from a historical perspective, or in other words, learn how to analyze the relationship between past, present, and future.

In summary, three theoretical foundations—the pedagogy of the oppressed, socialist pedagogies, and the movement’s own organic practices—have inspired the MST’s educational approach. These educational theories have consolidated around five categories of pedagogical practice: work, social struggle, collective organization, culture, and history. While the MST’s educational approach is not new, it is innovative as it brings together the practices and educational experiences of other working-class groups from different geographical regions and historical moments. The MST wants an educational proposal that directly contributes to the construction of autonomous, socialist societies, which strive for equality and the ample participation of all people, according to their needs and capacities, in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Moreover, the MST’s educational initiatives are aimed at ensuring farmers’ right to a dignified life in the countryside. The following two sections describe two examples of how this educational proposal is currently being implemented in practice.

Itinerant Schools: public schools in MST occupied encampments

Itinerant Schools are public schools inside of MST “occupied encampments,” locations where hundreds of families are occupying land for an unknown amount of time to demand the right to farm this land. Itinerant Schools are recognized by the government and have official permission to be “mobile,” or in other words, move with these communities through their various transitions. Camini (2009) links the origins of these Itinerant Schools to the informal educational activities that MST activists have organized in their camps since the founding of the movement. A pivotal moment occurred in 1985, when thousands of families in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul occupied Fazenda Anonni. More than 600 children were involved in this occupation. A survey of the encamped families found that about a dozen former teachers had been part of the occupation. These teachers formed a collective and began to voluntarily educate the camp’s children each day, under trees, in squatter shacks made of black plastic tarp, and during the political protests and marches that frequently occurred. Through this process, the MST began to realize that a new form of education was being organically constructed, an educational approach that could adapt to the chaotic and unstable life of the landless workers occupying land. This new type of school, constantly moving due to the evictions, marches, and protests of the encampment, became known as an “Itinerant School.”

It was only in 1996 that the state government of Rio Grande do Sul first recognized the Itinerant Schools as state public schools. This concession to the movement occurred after two-years of continual protests, with hundreds of children living in occupied camps throughout the state participating in large political actions in front of the state Secretary of Education. In one of these protests, the children read the Brazilian Statute on Childhood and Adolescence, declaring that their rights were being violated as they did not have educational access in their camps (Camini 2009; Tarlau 2013). The Itinerant Schools functioned throughout the state for the next decade, and were also established in several other states including Paraná (2003), Santa Catarina (2004), Goiás (2005), Alagoas (2005), and Piauí (2008).

The Itinerant Schools have faced harsh critiques and direct political attacks in all of these states, leading to the closing of most of these schools. For example, after a decade of legal recognition, the Itinerant Schools in Rio Grande do Sul were shut down in 2009 by a right-leaning government determined to weaken the MST’s presence in the state (Tarlau 2013). By 2016, Itinerant Schools were only functioning in one state: Paraná. The government’s closing of the Itinerant Schools demonstrates the threat that these public schools posed to elite interests, as they were directly contributing to the mobilization and internal capacity of the occupied encampments; both in this sense of both guaranteeing the children in these camps a place to study—and therefore, ensuring that the children do not have to leave the camp to pursue their studies—and becoming a

space of learning the basic arts and sciences in connection with their lives, the exercise of autonomy, the collective planning and execution of work.

The state of Paraná still has an expansive network of Itinerant Schools, a total of 11 schools with 1,800 students studying at the elementary, middle, and high school levels (Table 1). The success of the Itinerant Schools in Paraná, yet their uniqueness within Brazil, illustrates both the possibilities and challenges of establishing educational initiatives within the current political system that directly contests capitalism.

Table 1: Summary of composition and location of Itinerant Schools in Paraná in 2016

Itinerant School	Municipality	MST Encampment	Number of Students	Number of Teachers
Carlos Mariguella	Carlópolis	Elias Gonçalves de Meura	56	08
Valmir Mota	Jacarezinho	Valmir Mota	103	15
Maria Aparecida Rosignol	Londrina	Eli Vive	344	30
Paulo Freire	Paula Freitas	Reduto de Caragata	23	5
Caminhos do Saber	Ortigueira	Maila Sabrina	178	30
Sementes do Amanhã	Matelândia	Chico Mendes	38	12
Egídio Brunetto	Londrina	Eli Vive II	40	5
Herdeiros da Luta	Porecatu	Herdeiros da Luta de Porecatu	134	25
Herdeiros do Saber	Rio Bonito do Iguaçu	Herdeiros da Luta do 1º de maio	476	30
Vagner Lopes	Quedas do Iguaçu	Dom Tomas Baldoino	220	30
Zumbi dos Palmares	Cascavel	Keno Vive	230	30
TOTAL			1,842	220

The Itinerant Schools, given their location in the occupied encampments, are directly inserted into the MST's broader political struggle. Among other things, this means that the students and teachers have to continually confront the reality of state violence in these encampments and the constant repression of organized militia hired by oligarchical landlords to harass the landless workers. Over the past thirty years, more than 1600 rural activists have been assassinated throughout Brazil. In the state of Paraná, between 1995 and 2015, there were more than 200 evictions of landless families from their camps, 470 arrests of rural workers, and close to 30 landless workers that were assassinated. Nonetheless, the MST leadership has pushed forward its proposal for the Itinerant Schools, in the midst of this violence.

In Paraná, the Itinerant Schools serve a dual purpose: students' learning and their preparation for life in the encampment. In other words, although the Itinerant Schools teach the students all of the traditional academic subjects, students are also encouraged to use this knowledge to engage in community projects. The MST believes that in order to change the precarious situation in the countryside it is necessary to educate students to be leaders in the encampments and promote practices that are more democratic and equitable. It is this dialectical relationship between the current reality of the countryside and its future possibilities that inspired the MST to think about public schools as institutions that could prefigure this future world. This is more than simply connecting theory and practice; it is transforming the organization of the school, the relationship between teachers and students, and the school's methodology to illustrate that another social, economic, and political society is possible.

There are two elements that distinguish the Itinerant School's pedagogical approach from traditional, capitalist schools: *self-governance* and *diverse educational spaces*. These two central elements contribute to the MST's five pedagogical practices of work, social struggle, collective organization, culture, and history. The first element, "*self-governance*," is how the schools are organized—a process that involves the collective organization of both the students and the teachers. In the Itinerant schools, there are four primary spaces of collective self-governance: the Student Work Collectives, Teachers' Collective, the School Executive Coordination, and the School Assembly. The second element of the Itinerant Schools are the "diverse educational spaces," which refers to the organization of the school day to include time for activities beyond classroom study. The MST believes that study is only one component of learning, and therefore, it is important to intentionally incorporate time for other educational processes. The rest of this section goes into detail about the self-governance of the Itinerant Schools and the diverse educational spaces that compose the daily routine of these schools.

Student self-governance and school organization

The students' *Work Collectives (Núcleos Setorias)* are the most important organizational component of the Itinerant School. These are spaces where

students practice collective organization and work, and exercise their autonomy as subjects of the educational process. According to Mariano and Knopf (2015), these student work collectives are based on the organizational structure of MST camps, in which *núcleos de base* (NBs, or Base Groups) are the fundamental decision-making unit. The NBs on the camps usually consist of 7 to 10 families, with a male and female coordinator that represent each collective. These base groups are spaces of local organization and decision-making.

Similarly, the student work collectives in the Itinerant Schools include students across various ages and grades. The number of work collectives is determined in each school by assessing the real needs of the students and teachers at the school, with the goal of promoting “socially beneficial work” processes (Shulgin, 2013).¹³ In other words, the work collectives are organized to engage in practical activities (teacher support, finances), as well as the daily work that is needed for the school to function (cleaning, cooking). While these student work collectives are set up according to the real demands of each school, they are also organized around learning objectives. Table 2 summarizes the different work collectives in the Itinerant Schools, the students’ responsibilities in these collectives, and how these tasks relate to learning.

¹³ As described in the first part of the article, “socially beneficial work” refers to labor that produces benefits for the entire community (Shulgin, 2013, p. 41).

Table 2: The Organization of Student Work Collectives in the Paraná Itinerant Schools

Work Sectors	Students' Responsibilities	Related Skills
Memory Collective	Students are responsible for keeping a daily records of what occurs in the School. This collective writes about the activities in the school using three different methods: a) A daily school diary, b) Documentation of the pedagogical practices in the school; and c) Photographic and Audiovisual Archives.	Orthography, writing, organization of texts, archiving, reading, etc.
Culture and Communication Collective	Students are responsible for sharing information about the schools with the families in the camp and nearby settlements. This collective provides everybody with facts about the school. The collective organizes the school's radio, newspaper, and announcement boards. They also read out loud the school's diary each morning.	Speaking, writing, the use of diverse technologies such as the radio, internet, newspapers, murals.
Teacher Support Collective	Students are involved in the teaching process in the school, helping with the planning of lessons and the scheduling of diverse educational spaces. They are also responsible for organizing the educational materials and equipment in the school, such as the TV, radio, and DVD player, all of the school's materials. This collective is also responsible for organizing the library and school's office. The collective also welcomes visitors to the school, which involves presenting to the visitors the school's pedagogical proposal and the school's daily dynamics.	Organization, how to take care of equipment, and cataloguing books and information. They also learn about how to welcome outside people, how to present on the pedagogical proposal of the school, and the school's logic, etc.
Finance and Structure Collective	Students are involved in the financial and administrative planning of the school. They help to organize the school's financial processes, including the money that comes in and out of the school, financial planning, and the payment of bills. They oversee the schools expenses, for example, funding of daily meals.	Calculation, electronic tables, planning, and financial management.
School Decorations Collective	This collective helps to organize the school's appearance. Students try to create an environment where nature and human activities are in harmony. They are primarily involved in three activities: planting flowers, trees, and bushes; organization of school's esthetic appearance, for example the identification of spaces to exhibit student projects; and, finding ways to value the school's symbols (flag, mascot, etc.)	Esthetics, organization of environments, planting and gardening, art projects, planning.
Health and Wellness Collective	Students are responsible for the collective wellness of the school. This collective is responsible for ensuring healthy food is served, and also to monitor student hygiene and well being. They execute cleaning tasks and hold meetings to discuss healthy eating habits and hygiene.	Basic cleaning procedures and hygiene as well as the preparation of healthy food.
Agriculture	Students are responsible for the agriculture practices at the school. They plan the school's food production and take care of the agroecological gardens, orchards, plantation, and animal husbandry. This food is allocated for both the school and families in the encamped communities.	Learn about rural practices, from planning the agricultural production to the harvesting of the plants, all based in scientific knowledge about agricultural production.

Similarly to the students, all of the teachers at the Itinerant Schools participate in a *teachers' collective*, which is when all of the lesson planning takes place. The goal in this collective planning process is to make a connection between the class content and a real-world phenomenon relevant to the students' daily lives. The teachers also connect the academic content they are teaching to the work happening in the community, such as the agricultural work, the raising of animals, etc. Together, teachers develop diverse teaching methods, such as field trips, experiments, observations, and research. There is also a teacher from this collective that participates in each of the students' work collectives, providing the students with help, support, and any information that is requested. For example, the science teacher oversees the agricultural work collective; the Portuguese teacher participates in the memory collective, and so on.

Who are the teachers at these Itinerant Schools? Often, the first through fourth grade teachers are women and men who are living in the occupied encampment and have degrees in pedagogy. These teachers are chosen by the MST education collective and then hired by the State Secretary of Education. For the higher grades, teachers more often come from outside of the camps since it is unlikely that anyone in the camp has the specialized degree required for these educational levels. The State Secretary of Education assigns these teachers to the Itinerant School. Generally, they live in the cities near the camps and commute daily to the schools. When a new teacher arrives at the school, the teacher is immediately introduced to the MST's pedagogic proposal. Then, these teachers receive pedagogical training through professional development courses, which take place in the schools and also statewide, generally run by the MST Paraná state education sector. The new teachers are also integrated into teachers' collectives, allowing them to become protagonists in the process of lesson planning, developing new teaching methodologies, and overseeing the students' work collectives. Often, the teachers that are the most engaged with the MST's pedagogic proposal are invited to take part in the construction of new Itinerant Schools in other MST encampments. These teachers become organic members of the MST education sector, helping to develop and implement the movement's educational proposal in other regions.

The *School Executive Coordination* is a collective composed of two student coordinators from each of the work collectives, two representatives from the teachers' collective, the principal of the school, and a parent representative. The principal of the school is always a member of the MST's state education sector, which allows for coordination between the different Itinerant Schools throughout the state. The school's Executive Coordination collective oversees and reflects on all of the pedagogical processes and activities that are taking place in the school during any given year. The students that participate in the Executive Coordination rotate from time to time, so that all of the students have the chance to learn "how to coordinate and to be coordinated." In this way, the participation of all students in all of the collective processes of the school's governance structure is guaranteed.

Finally, the *School Assembly* is an important decision-making moment that occurs at the beginning and at the end of each semester. Students, educators, parents, and staff all participate in the assembly. In the school assembly all of the reports from the work collectives and the teachers' collective are read and decisions about the school's future are discussed. In this way, the school assembly helps to share all of the information about the school and the different activities taking place in a fully transparent and open process. After the school assembly, it is the Executive Coordination collective that is responsible for making sure that there is follow-through on the collective decisions made during the assembly.

In addition to these four primary collective spaces (student work collectives, teachers' collective, executive coordination, and the school assembly), there is also an administration commission that oversees the bureaucratic aspects of the school and the school's relationship to the state. One of the participants in the administration commission is the principal of the school, although all of the decisions concerning school administration are collective. There are also several full-time employees in the school that provide specific support to the student work collectives, like cooking and general services.

Parents also participate in the educational process of the school in three ways: (1) Helping to build the school, as the construction of the Itinerant Schools often depends on the community's own effort after the area is occupied; (2) Electing a parent representative to participate in the school's Executive Coordination collective; (3) Participating every semester in the participatory class councils, which oversees the continual process of evaluation and assessment of the students, teachers, and the school as a whole. This participation of the parents and broader community in the school is critical for the Itinerant Schools to function. This educational approach, geared towards the creation of a new society, only works if families are also actively engaged this process of transforming the world around them.

Diverse educational spaces

The second feature that distinguishes the Itinerant Schools from other public schools are the *diverse educational spaces* that are incorporated into the daily school routine, allowing the students to participate in learning processes beyond classroom study. These diverse educational spaces are based on the idea that the integral education and multi-dimensional development of each student is critical.¹⁴ In order to incorporate these diverse educational spaces, the MST has received permission from the state government to increase the school day from the usual 4 hours to 6 hours each day.

The Itinerant School's diverse educational spaces include: (1) *school opening*, which is the first moment of the school day, when all of the students, teachers

¹⁴ In Manacorda (2007) this is referred to as the "omnilateral" learning, which is defined as the development of the totality of human capacity for a new level social life.

and workers gather together on the school patio. During this moment there are cultural presentations, school announcements, and the flags of Brazil and the MST are hoisted. The coordinators of the student work collectives organize these activities. (2) *Class time*, which is focused on teaching the traditional school subjects and curriculum. This is the educational space where the students spend the majority of their day; (3) *Work collective planning time*, a moment that is essential for the general management of the school. This is the moment when the work collectives meet to organize and evaluate the daily work processes and make proposals to share at the school assembly. This planning time for the work collectives happens once or twice a week; (4) *Work time*, this is the moment for the execution of practical work that is conducted by the work collectives. It involves the entire collective, since everyone has a daily job/responsibility regarding some aspect of the school; (5) *Reading time*, which is dedicated to reading books, tales, and newspapers, with students divided according to their ages; (6) *Culture time*, which is a moment for the creation of and reflection on different local cultural practices, through organizing cultural events, the practice of daily cultural performances (*mística*), watching movies, etc.; (7) *Study time*, which is dedicated to student research and homework; (8) *Workshop time*, which are moments when students develop a specific ability, such as playing the flute, performing theatre, or woodwork. These are activities that contribute to students' manual, cognitive, and motor abilities.

Finally, one of the most important characteristics of the Itinerant Schools is that the idea of "failing" and "ranking" does not exist. Different methods for continual improvement have been adopted, which do not require assigning a grade to each student. Some of these forms of evaluation include: individual and collective self-evaluations, presentations and feedback through seminars, and continual assessment of the students' completion of tasks in the school. An important moment for evaluation occurs at the end of each semester, when teachers, students and parents come together for a "participatory class council," in which all students *and* teachers evaluate each other and themselves. To prepare for this moment, teachers write long, descriptive reports of students' progress, indicating if the student reached the learning goals for each subject. The students also evaluate each of the teachers. During the participatory class council, students first read their evaluations of the teachers and the teachers read their self-evaluations of their own work. After the evaluations of the teachers, there is an evaluation of each student. First, the student coordinators read the teachers' reports on each student and then the students read out loud their self-evaluations. This leads to a collective discussion of goals and plans for student and teacher improvement the following semester. During this evaluation process everyone has the right to speak: parents, teachers, and students.

In conclusion, the Itinerant Schools are attempting to construct new social relations based on the principles of participatory democracy, self-governance, and collective work practices. The goal is to develop students' capacity for autonomous action and self-governance, and who will then fight for new forms of social relations in the larger society. The Itinerant Schools require the

rigorous teaching of academic knowledge, because students cannot participate in constructing a new world if they are ignorant or lack this academic background. However, the goal is for students to appropriate this knowledge, in order to increase their leadership and self-esteem and use this knowledge for constructing a new, socialist society.

Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes: a national school for activists and organizers

The Florestan Fernandes National School (*Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes*, or ENFF) is not a part of the K-12 public school or university system. Unlike the Itinerant Schools, the ENFF is a training center within the movement, founded for the life-long learning, education, and study of working-class social movement leaders in the MST and globally. Since the ENFF is autonomous from the state, the MST leaders who run the school are able to implement the MST's educational proposal with fewer constraints than the Itinerant Schools. The ENFF, coordinated by a collective of MST activists, has become a place to share knowledge, experiences, theory and practice, and to bolster the struggle and organizational efforts of working-class organizations globally.

The ENFF is located in Guararema, about 40 miles outside of the city of São Paulo.

The Florestan Fernandes National School officially opened in January 2005. Over its 11 years of existence, more than 30 thousand workers have participated in the school's courses, meetings, seminars, debates, and conferences. Today, the ENFF also partners with many public universities in Brazil and other Latin American countries, to offer university degree programs. However, while these university programs take place at the ENFF, the partnering universities issue the degrees. The students who come to study at the ENFF are activists, social movement leaders, and educators, both rural and urban, from across Latin America as well as other continents, such as Africa. The teachers at the school are educators with a commitment to social justice and include hundreds of university professors that volunteer their time to contribute to the educational practices of the ENFF each year.

The ENFF is based on the MST's educational approach, and consequently, the school seeks to construct an educational experience that is connected to the challenges of working-class populations globally. The courses at the school teach students about the destructive logic of capitalism, and the organization of the school attempts to advance new forms of human coexistence, such as cooperation and collective work. The knowledge shared and produced at the school is not just any kind of knowledge; it is strategic knowledge aimed at human emancipation through the study of diverse Marxist traditions across different continents. The school also teaches about the various particularities of

workers' struggles, such as race, gender and LGBT movements, thus including the experiences of different organizations on the global left.¹⁵

Constructing the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes (ENFF)

The ENFF's pedagogical approach is a synthesis of the MST's 32 years of educational experiences and debates. The history of the ENFF can be traced back to the VII National Meeting of the MST in 1996, in the city of Salvador, Bahia, when it was agreed to develop a proposal for a national school within the movement. After this collective deliberation, the MST started an international campaign to raise funds for the school by selling dozens of photographs donated by Sebastião Salgado, the CD *Terra* (Earth) by Chico Buarque, and the book *Terra* by José Saramago and Sebastião Salgado. Many international organizations also donated directly to the campaign. The actual construction of the school, which began in 2000 and was concluded in 2005, was carried out by voluntary brigades of MST activists who travelled from across the country to help build the school during a period of several years. According to the ENFF records, this construction project involved 12 thousand hours of voluntary work by over a thousand people, organized in 25 different voluntary brigades from 112 settlements and 230 occupied encampments across 20 Brazilian states.¹⁶

According to the school's mission statement, or the *ENFF Political Pedagogical Proposal* (PPP), the construction of the school was itself an education process:

[This process] involved volunteer work and solidarity. Volunteer workers built the ENFF, while also participating in an educational program as they were constructing the school. Thus, the construction of the school integrated workers into a process of physically building the school as well as their own educational development. Building the school meant not only a physical school but also the construction of the humans involved in the process. (ENFF, 2009, p. 3)

Thus, the ENFF was a dream translated into reality through "socially beneficial work." With every brick made, the workers transformed their dream into reality. These workers studied political theory, while putting into the ground the building blocks of the school. For the MST, both knowledge and work are the tools of the working-class. As Florestan Fernandes himself says, we need quality education because, "The greatness of a man is defined by his imagination, and

¹⁵ This focus on race, LGBT, and gender has been a more recent development in the movement and the MST's emphasis on these issues is still not as strong as the movement's class critique.

¹⁶ In order to maintain the ENFF, the MST continues to rely on donations from dozens of national and international NGOs and the active campaigning of "Friends of the MST" committees in Europe, the United States, and Canada. The MST also raises money through the international peasant network, *La Via Campesina*, during meetings, seminars, and conferences about land and agroecology.

without a top-quality education, imagination is poor and incapable of giving men the tools for transforming the world” (Fernandes, 1977, p. 142)

The MST chose to name the school after the Brazilian activist and sociologist Florestan Fernandes, thus paying homage to one of the most important political figures of Brazilian history, who tirelessly fought in defense of education. Born in São Paulo on July 22, 1920, Fernandes was a shoe shiner, salesman and teacher. His search for knowledge can be described in his own words:

I say that I started my sociological learning when I was 6, when I had to make ends meet as if I were an adult. Through this concrete experience I absorbed knowledge about human coexistence and society. [Fernandes 1977, 142]

Florestan Fernandes learned from a young age what it means to live and struggle. Throughout his life, Fernandes was a dedicated activist and organizer in working-class struggles. He is also considered the founder of critical sociology in Brazil. Ianni (1996, p. 26) says, “All of his intellectual writing is packed with a style of reflection that questions social reality and thought.” The ENFF is an attempt to materialize Fernandes’ vision of critical reflection. This is not a new project, but a product of the experiences amassed over time by the working-class organizations of Latin America. The goal of the ENFF is to contribute to the multiple dimensions of human formation by training the activists and organizers of our time to struggle for new forms of human coexistence, by prefiguring these socialist human relations in the present.

The ENFF in practice: organization and method

The educational process at the ENFF aims to train activists, organizers, and movement leaders, both from the MST as well as other movements, to be capable of engaging in critical thinking and knowledge production, in order to overcome capitalist alienation and build a different social world. These other movements include organizations in diverse sectors and geographical areas, for example, organizations participating in *La Via Campesina* (LVC), the *Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo* (CLOC),¹⁷ as well as urban and indigenous movements. The ENFF draws on the philosophical and pedagogical principles of the MST’s educational approach, organizing the school around four major categories of practice: study, collective organization, *mística*, and work.

Study

For the MST, *study* represents the need for human emancipation. The appropriation, socialization, and production of knowledge must support the

¹⁷ The LVC and CLOC are the two largest networks of agrarian social movements globally.

development of the new man and woman, becoming a tool in the fight for a more just society. For that reason, study at the ENFF is focused on the following areas of knowledge: land/agrarian issues, human rights, education, agroecology, culture, political economy, and others topics related to social movement struggles. The methodology of study developed at the ENFF includes both individual study time and collective study processes. The students have at their disposal a library with more than 40 thousand books, spaces for individual and group work, and Internet access. The students live at the school for their duration of study.

There are dozens of courses that are held at the ENFF each year, organized into four “study groups”: National Political Theory; Latin American Political Theory; Formal Courses; and Seminars and Debates. Table 3 outlines the courses and leadership programs that were taking place at the ENFF in 2015:

Table 3: Courses offered at the ENFF in 2015

Study group	Courses offered
National Political Theory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic Introduction to Marx’s writings • The Legacy of Political Theory of Florestan Fernandes • National Course on Land / Agrarian Issues • Training Course for MST Leaders • Training Course for Leaders of all Social Movements • Feminism and Marxism
Latin American Political Theory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationalist Brigades • Training Courses for Latin American Educators • Internationalism • Latin Studies (ENFF / Federal University of Juiz de Fora) • Training Course for Educators (in English) • Latin American Political Theory
Formal Courses Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masters in Territorial Development in Latin American, in partnership with the State University of São Paulo (UNESP) • Masters in Health, Work, Environment and Social Movements, in partnership with FIOCRUZ
Seminars and Debates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly seminars on a range of national and international themes • Series of debates that promote the culture of discussing historical and contemporary topics related to class struggle

The time load of each course varies, from a few weeks to a few months or several years. Some of these courses, such as the training course for MST leaders, are for activists who are not able to spend a lot of time away from their communities. Consequently, this leadership-training course may occur for several one-week periods during the course of the year, or several week-long sessions. Other courses, like the training course for Latin American educators, is

a one-time course that takes place for 3.5 months every year, with over 100 activists from across Latin America. The formal courses, which are always run in partnership with a degree-offering institution, take place over the course of several years. Students in these courses will alternate their study between several months living at the ENFF and several months back in their home communities, engaging in practical research projects that are related to the course. The seminars and debates happen every Saturday with all ENFF students at the school expected to participate. These Saturday discussions are also open for the general public, as cultivating an open and educative relationship with the outside community is a principal goal of the ENFF.

Collective Organization

Collective Organization refers to the process of permanent participation of all students in the governance of the school. It is only through self-governance that working-class populations can overcome traditional hierarchies and build their autonomy for strategic action. Since there are constantly different courses being held at the school, with varying numbers of students and lengths of stay, a permanent collective of MST activists lives at the school, overseeing the collective organizational structure. This collective, known as *Brigada Apolônio de Carvalho (BAC)*, is the administrative and pedagogical core of the school. The name of the BAC honors Apolônio de Carvalho, who was born in 1912 in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul. Apolônio de Carvalho was a member of the Brazilian Communist party and participated in a range of international socialist brigades, fighting in the Spanish Civil War, the French Resistance against the Nazis, and the struggle against the military dictatorship in Brazil. Apolônio de Carvalho died in 2005, the same year the ENFF was inaugurated.

The BAC is made up of around 35 MST leaders who live and work at the school continually for 2 to 4 years, giving them enough time to contribute to the organization of the school while also allowing for the constant flow of new activists into this coordination collective. The BAC collective has various functions ranging from coordinating the work sectors at the school (planting, tending, reception, gardening, hosting) to supervising the courses. The work sectors are all organized around the idea of “socially beneficial” labor. This labor includes both domestic tasks to maintain the school, such as cooking and cleaning, as well as work that produces collective goods for the school, like gardening. The students who come to participate in the ENFF courses are all integrated into these work sectors, with the supervision of MST leaders from the BAC. Once the students become part of a work collective, they are now in charge of the planning and division of tasks in that work sector, as well as the constant evaluation of the collective work process in order to suggest improvements.

Within the BAC there is also a smaller collective, known as the school’s Political and Pedagogical Coordination (CPP), which is in charge of the political and pedagogical oversight of the school. The CPP is responsible for ensuring that the ENFF is in sync with the MST’s social and political needs, as well as the needs of

the other organizations and social movements attending courses at the school. The CPP also oversees all of the courses taking place, helping to determine their pedagogical content and purpose. The CPP has between 5 to 7 MST leaders who form this collective. In addition to the school-wide CPP, each course also has its own political-pedagogic collective, known as the course's CPP. The course CPP includes members of the school-wide CPP as well as outside activists who come to the school for a period of time to oversee a particular course. Often, members of a course's CPP have already studied in the course or similar ones previously. The responsibilities of the course's CPP are: (1) To plan and organize the classes and study topics; (2) To guarantee that the collective organizational structure and educational goals are being carried out within each student collective; (3) To dialogue with the volunteer educators who come to the school, helping them organize the content of their classes and reflect on their teaching methodologies; (4) To be educators themselves through their everyday interactions with the students.

As mentioned previously, all of the ENFF educators who teach at the school are volunteers who also work in other spaces (universities, social movements, etc.). The contribution of these educators occurs for short periods, for example, one class or several days when the educator stays at the school to teach. This means that for a month-long course, there may be 20 different educators who come to the ENFF to teach the content of course. Consequently, it becomes the job of the class CPP, not these educators, to ensure the coherence of the course and that the political-pedagogic objectives are achieved.

In every course the students are organized into *núcleos de base* (NBs, or Base Group), small student collectives that become spaces of study, debate, and reflection about their classes and the organization of the ENFF. The number of participants in each NB varies with the size of the cohort, but is usually 5-10 students. Each NB elects a coordinator and a recorder. The election takes place through an open discussion between with all members of the NB, when anyone can indicate a candidate. After that, there is an open debate between each pair of candidates (coordinator and reporter), and the final decision is reached by consensus, or by the opinion of the majority. The coordinator's function is to facilitate and lead the study process within the NB. The recorder is responsible for guaranteeing that there is a (written) memory of the activities that take place within each NB. All of the coordinators of the NBs form a larger class collective, the Political-Pedagogic Support Collective (CAPP), which coordinates issues pertaining to the entire course. The CAPP becomes its own space of collective, autonomous debate and discussion within the cohort.

Another important element of the Base Groups, or NBs, is the students' choice of a name (identity) for their collective, with the goal of paying homage to an activist, a historical struggle, or even to a dimension of life expressed in the field of critical literature. These names should not be someone who is still alive, as priority should be given to martyrs and fighters that left us with a legacy of struggle. Issues of gender and ethnic diversity should also be considered. Choosing a name for each NB is one of the first tasks of this collective group, a

process that occurs at the beginning of each course. The choice of names happens separately in each NB, and is later shared with the entire cohort. After choosing a name, the members of the NB do research to learn more about this person or historical moment. Some of the names that have been used at the ENFF include Hugo Chávez, *primavera dos povos* (People's Spring), Rosa Luxemburgo, Che Guevara, Olga Benário, Playa Giron, Sumak Kawsay, Bartolina Sisa, Soledad Barret.

During their period of stay at the school the student collectives—the NBs—immerse themselves in all aspects of the planning and oversight of the educational life at the ENFF. For example, when there is a case of discrimination of any kind, the first place to discuss this issue is in the NB. If the issue cannot be resolved, the class CPP is informed, and in some cases, the school CPP becomes involved. The goal in these collective spaces is to discuss the occurrence and to look for practical follow-up activities that can address the issue. Sometimes the CPP will decide to have a school-wide debate about a relevant topic, for example, a debate on gender discrimination in society if gender relations become an issue within a cohort.

Over 11 years of educational practice, the ENFF has also developed a series of collective agreements that all students discuss at the beginning of every course. These agreements are a product of the contributions of the many different students that studied and worked at the school. At the start of every new course, the NBs take time to discuss both the ENFF's political pedagogical proposal (mission statement) and these ENFF collective norms. One of the norms in this document prohibits aggression of any kind, and in the case of physical aggressions, the responsible student must leave the school and return to his or her state or country of origin. This strict discipline is important, as the ENFF attempts to become a space of liberatory theory and practice and therefore there is no tolerance of any kind of violence.

The MST's ultimate goal is for the ENFF to continue to be constructed by the students who arrive, through a permanent process of organizational and curricular innovation. For example, for many years the Latin American political theory course offered at the ENFF did not include debates about gender and indigenous people, however, as a result of students' critiques, the curriculum evolved to include these discussions. Similarly, the students' work tasks were previously isolated from the broader "work sectors" at the school, such as the school's agricultural production sector. Recently, based on the evaluation of students, there was a decision to integrate the students into these sectors while they are studying at the school.

No single student cohort, however, has complete control to transform the school in any way that the students see fit. Partially, this is because the established practices at the school affect other student cohorts as well as the BAC, and therefore, changing these practices must be part of a larger collective discussion. Furthermore, the overall goal of the ENFF is to provide political training to activists to build a global working-class movement; therefore, the MST leaders in the BAC are responsible for ensuring that these objectives are met and

students' suggestions must be analyzed from this perspective. The MST believes in provoking students to creatively construct their own educational experiences at the ENFF and improve the school's educational proposal; however, there is a limit to students' interventions, as the ENFF's broader goals and the accumulated collective experiences of the students' who came before them must always be considered.

Mística

Mística (mystic in English) broadly means the cultivation of the social and human relations that we want to build. *Mística* is an artistic means of communication, which can include music, poetry, storytelling, dance, theatre, etc. At the ENFF, these artistic expressions are always constructed around a theme of struggle, for example, humanitarian and socialist values, the Cuban Revolution, collective work, the history of the MST, etc. Every morning, a student NB is in charge of presenting a *mística*, during a period of time known as "human formation," when everyone in the school comes together for 20 minutes before classes begins. The goal is to inspire in the students and teachers the *feeling* of collective struggle, before studying about it. During the moment of *mística* everyone in the school is present, including the MST leaders permanently living at the school. However, the students themselves coordinate the presentations of the *mística* through their NBs.

The students' daily preparation for the morning *mística* is as important as its implementation, as each NB has to meet the day before to discuss the theme they are going to present (land reform, environmental crisis, industrial strikes) and create a plan for expressing this theme in an artistic form (theatre, poetry, dance). These *místicas* are recorded and become part of the "memory" of the school. For example, the ENFF records state that on September 21, 2013, a *mística* was preformed by the NB Camilo Torres, a student collective in the Latin America political theory course named after a Colombian socialist and priest who was a promoter of liberation theology. According to this report, the objective of the *mística* was to remember the indigenous struggles during the period of colonialism through a theatrical presentation. The *mística* incorporated music, poetry, speeches, audiovisual materials, and photographs. The presentation began with a song, "Heights of Machu Pichu," during which a person dressed as Túpac Amaru enters wearing jewelry, a sword, gold bullion, and holding a bible. Túpac says, "I am Tupac Amaru and I represent the struggles of indigenous resistance against the colonial power." The sound of drums accelerates as he speaks. Four more people enter as though they are riding horses, attempting to assassinate Túpac. They injure Túpac and then steal his bible, jewelry, and gold bullions. Then the music stops and someone comes in and reads a poem called "Poetry of Túpac Amaru," which is about why it is not possible to kill Túpac Amaru. The poem includes lines such as, "They want to break him, but they cannot break him." After the poem is read, four more people enter the room, each representing the independence or socialist struggles of Haiti, Paraguay, Cuba, and Chile. These four people fight off the

colonists and free Túpac. As Túpac rises from the ground, each of the four revolutionaries shouts a chant that represents her or his country's struggle. Then, Túpac Amaru shouts, "We raise our voices because we are the people, we are the land, and only socialism frees us!" Everyone in the room repeats this phrase three times and the *mística* ends.

This is just one example of the cultural performances that are created and performed everyday at the ENFF. These artistic expressions are never repeated, as the process of creating the *mística* is as important as the presentation itself. For the MST, *mística* is a process of translating collective dreams into art and bringing together, through this artistic expression, the feeling of past struggles and the possibilities for the future. Thus, *mística* is part of the pedagogical approach of the school, as it teaches students that the struggle for a more just world precedes us, and that we are not only a part of the past but also connected to future generations to come, who will know about our collective struggle in the present.

Work/manual labor

As already discussed, work is considered one of the pillars of the MST's educational approach because the movement believes that humans build their existence through manual labor. The work activities at the ENFF are all socially beneficial, or in other words, they are processes of production for the collective and not for private appropriation, as the logic of capitalism dictates. Collective work has been a cornerstone of the ENFF since the very beginning of its construction. As the ENFF's *Political Pedagogical Proposal* states:

The experiences that developed through the ENFF's construction reframe and reinforce the meaning of volunteer work as a fundamental value for a free society . . . These work practices serve as a reference for social movements and organizations that have not lost hope in the future and therefore keep building, in the present, the base and the principles of a socialist society. (ENFF, 2009)

Everyone who studies at the ENFF is involved in manual labor, because it is through this process that we begin to identify as the working-class. This focus on work also breaks the historical divide in capitalism between manual and intellectual work. At the ENFF manual labor is an educational principle, a space to both produce our livelihoods through the production of food, arts and culture, and through domestic services such as cooking and cleaning. By including men and women equally in all of these tasks, the ENFF also breaks with the sexist societal norm of domestic labor being "women's work." Instead, these work activities become spaces for creativity, as both women and men collective design and executive these diverse work processes.

For these reasons, the ENFF does not have employees. Its governance and management is collective and self-organized by the students and the MST

leaders that live at the school. The goal of integrating students into the work necessary to maintain the school is not just a practical necessity, it is also an educational process as students learn how to *plan collectively* and decide as a group how they are going to organize and divide the completion of tasks. For this to occur, it is necessary for students to have weekly meetings among their work teams to plan these activities. There is also a continual process of evaluation of the challenges that arise, in order to improve this collective work process.

The school organizes this process through work sectors and work units. For example, the “Production Sector” includes several units, including agricultural production, tending to the animals, and cultivating fruit trees. The “Pedagogy Sector” has work units that focus on child care for the children of the students studying at the school, cultural production, and the school’s daily “memory” (diary of school activities). The “Service Sector” is divided into work units that take care of the dining hall, general cleaning, and maintenance. These are all work processes that requires planning and permanent evaluation. Every student at the ENFF must be involved in at least 1.5 hours of daily collective work. As already mentioned, the students do all the planning for their work collectives, under the supervision of the BAC.

The ENFF is a school that remains in construction. In other words, its process of construction did not end with the finishing of the physical building and its inauguration; rather, the ENFF’s construction continues in every collective action that the school executes. Throughout its 11 years of existence, the ENFF has developed a new practice of Latin America popular education. Like the daily struggles of the social movements that participate, the ENFF keeps moving forward as an educational strategy that contributes to the struggle for socialism.

Conclusions: education and social movements

The MST has attempted to construct an educational proposal that is connected to the movement’s fight for land, agrarian reform, and social transformation. For the MST, this means building a socialist society that is just, egalitarian, autonomous, and based in solidarity. This vision is in direct contrast to capitalism, which increases inequality, the concentration of wealth, and misery for the majority of the population. In its current phase, global capitalism is run by finance capital and large multinational corporations, which dominate and control the production and circulation of goods in every country.

This same nefarious, capitalist process has also made education a new sphere of business and profit. In addition to the historical role schools have played training workers for these businesses, now corporations are turning education into one of their enterprises and are seeking political and pedagogic control over public schooling. Large business groups have been intervening more and more in educational politics, and government’s have accepted these private sector proposals with their false pretense of improving the quality of public education.

In practice, these proposals are part of an accelerated process of turning education, across all levels, into a market good.

First, these proposals seek to illustrate that the public school system is in crisis, students are failing to learn, teachers cannot teach, and the educational system does not work. Then, these corporations suggest as a solution that schools be run according to theories of work and management from capitalist businesses. This implies the use of metrical targets, external control of the pedagogical process, loss of autonomy for the teachers, individual accountability for students' learning, and curricula developed to serve large-scale, high-stakes evaluations. These private actors argue that, in order to maximize efficiency, businesses themselves should be in charge of the public schools and receive public resources to this end. In Brazil, these private groups are organized as the coalition "*Movimento Todos pela Educação*" (Education for All Movement). In other countries, this process has involved the active participation of private capital in public education through the promotion of charter schools, vouchers, and new educational industries. All of these interventions result in working-class populations' decreasing control over public education.

Currently, the MST is trying to become a counterpoint to this capitalist model of public education. For 32 years the MST has drawn on its own internal practices and the historical experiences of the working class to develop an educational proposal based on solidarity, collectivity, and local sovereignty. First, drawing on the decades of experiences of grassroots organizations that have incorporated Freirean theory, the MST promotes the idea of working-class agency and autonomy, the need for a "*Pedagogy of the Movement*," and the importance of local knowledge and dialogue. Second, drawing from the historical practices of the Soviet Union and Cuba, the MST has appropriated the idea of student self-governance, the educational value of work, and socially beneficial work practices. Third, drawing from its own organizational practices and pedagogies of struggle, the MST has incorporated agro-ecology, cultural performances, and *mística* into students' daily educational routine. The movement has also created a direct articulation between these educational practices and the movement itself. All of these theories and practices have helped to produce the Pedagogy of MST, and its 5 main pedagogical components: work, social struggle, collective organization, culture and history. As we have emphasized throughout this paper, these 5 components are not new, but rather, a product of generations of working-class organization and innovation. These pedagogical practices are adapted to each regional context, through the participation of local communities and the MST leadership.

There are at least three lessons that we can extract from the MST's educational experiences, which can help inform other global struggles: (1) A constant investment in leadership development, grassroots education, training, and human formation—namely, a pedagogy of struggle and collective organization—is critical to the long-term autonomy of working-class movements; (2) These educational practices, whether within movement spaces or in state institutions, must construct and prefigure in the present the types of social and human

relations we hope to build in the future. It is necessary for people to experience other types of power and forms of participation inside their organizations, so that workers can demonstrate that effective paradigms for a new society and participatory democratic governance exist; (3) Working-class organizations around the world have the responsibility of disputing the current educational model with these alternative practices, because if they do not private actors will continue to use education as a tool for reproducing capitalist relations and education will be reduced to a private commodity.

In conclusion, the development of a truly emancipatory educational process should be the goal of the collective working class. In many locations working-class groups have already created concrete educational practices, which offer alternatives to the hegemonic educational model. As Florestan Fernandes said, “socialism teaches us that equality, liberty, fraternity and happiness can only be achieved through the collective self-emancipation of the oppressed classes” (Soares, 1997, p. 98). Thus, we must learn from the experiences of grassroots organizations and their historical processes of political training, informal education, and self-organization. We must build, starting right now, concrete alternatives to the hegemonic model and, through political struggle, song and poetry, we must bring this future (socialism) closer to the present.

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