Writing for Research in Brazilian Schools: The Landless Workers Movement's Education of the Countryside

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WRITING FOR RESEARCH IN BRAZILIAN SCHOOLS: THE LANDLESS WORKERS MOVEMENT’S EDUCATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the incredible teachers and leaders from the Landless Workers Movement who commit to the best education possible for their students and their communities; to my sister Gabriela for always believing in me; and to my friend Cibele for igniting this process within me a long time ago.
WRITING FOR RESEARCH IN BRAZILIAN SCHOOLS: THE LANDLESS WORKERS
MOVEMENT’S EDUCATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

by

ANA MARIA DOLL GHELERE PORTAS

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at El Paso
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING

Department of English Education

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2022
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the English department of the University of Texas at El Paso for granting me the Hunter Strauss Endowment Fellowship, which allowed me to fund the translation of a great number of primary documents for this research. The translations were made by Gilberto Stam, a science writer and lifelong friend whom I would like to thank for beautifully translating these challenging documents.

I would like to thank Professor Brad Jacobson, Ph.D., for reading parts of my drafts and helping me decide on many key critical lenses of my thesis. His contributions to my research and the discussions in his classes were fundamental to my journey as a researcher. I would also like to acknowledge Professor Joseph Ortiz, Ph.D., for providing guidance in the early stages of my research and writing process.

My research would not be possible without the collaboration of the school leaders of the four schools investigated here, especially the school principals and counselors Francisco Erivando Barbosa, Márcia Cavalcante, Ohana Pageu, Sandra Vitor Alves, Messias Gomes de Sousa, Maria Silvana de Sousa, Antônio Jerri Abreu, Zilda de Sousa da Luz. They provided the primary materials for my investigation and patiently answered to all my questions and requests during two years of research. They open the doors of their schools to me and introduced me to teachers who offered invaluable resources and first-hand accounts of their students. I would like to thank these incredible teachers who made my research a more lively and up-to-date documentation of the Education of the Countryside program: Itala Almeida dos Anjos, Francisco Ronaldo Fernandes, Dávilla Cristina de Sousa, Eudes Araújo Santos, Antônia de Maria Costa, Antônia Ferreira Fernandes. Specially, I would like to acknowledge three teachers that invited
me to their online classes during the pandemic, allowing me to observe and interact with students, an unforgettable experience that gave me a more concrete idea of the subjects of these schools: Celina Lima, Geilton Sousa Silva, and Evangelina da Silva Freitas, from Patativa do Assaré High School. Above all, I am grateful to the Landless Workers Movement (MST), through their National Educational leaders Maria Cristina Vargas and Luana Pommé who discussed my early research questions and accepted my research in the MST.

This research would not be possible without the MST regional leaders of Ceará, Maria de Jesus dos Santos Gomes and Maria de Lourdes Vicente da Silva, who patiently listened to my questions and kindly challenged my assumptions about their particular universe. These two leaders wisely advised me during the initial process of research and guided me through the particularities of the Education of the Countryside program.

I am most grateful to Jonna Perrillo, Ph.D., who taught me how to be a researcher, who acknowledged my interests and ways of thinking, who encouraged me to research and write better, who was always present even during the worst periods of the pandemic. She respectfully bridged my Brazilian modes of thinking to the American academic culture, encouraging me to incorporate one in the other and build my own research writing.

Finally, I am most thankful to my loving family, Santiago and Sofia, who supported me throughout these years. I would like to thank my sister Gabriela for all the support and help, and for the endless discussions about my findings. A special thanks to my mother, who waited for me.
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Introduction

Nowadays, the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – MST (Landless Workers’ Movement) occupies the entire Brazilian territory except for the lands bordering the Amazon Forest that are not available for agrarian reform. In the past decade, they have built chapters and partnerships in other countries. Today, there are chapters of the MST in Latin America (Colombia, Haiti, and Venezuela) and in other countries and territories (Zambia, Palestine, and Ghana), an effort to internationalize and globalize the Struggle (and the hope) that unites rural populations of many countries. The MST is the biggest grassroots movement of Via Campesina\(^1\), the umbrella international organization that shelters 182 peasants’ organizations in 81 countries, fighting for land, food sovereignty, preservation of peasant culture, and social justice.

After 38 years of struggle for agrarian reform in Brazil, the Movement has conquered land rights for more than 450,000 families in 24 states of the Brazilian territory, with more than 2,000 cooperatives\(^2\), small agricultural industries, and other commercial associations that produce organic food from agroecological processes. Today, there are still approximately 90,000 families encamped, waiting for their land rights, to become a settlement, that is, to have the legal ownership of the lands they are camping. These encamped families live in makeshift tents made of black plastic tarpaulin usually without any basic infrastructure, such as running water, gas for cooking or electricity. This means they must make day trips to nearby water sources to get water

\(^1\) La Via Campesina. [www.viacampesina.org](http://www.viacampesina.org) (accessed 4/20/2022)

\(^2\) MST Official Website. [www.mst.org.br](http://www.mst.org.br) (accessed 4/20/2022)
for personal use and for irrigation; they set up campfires for everyday cooking; and they start planting their food as soon as they break the fence of the occupied land.

For the second year in a row because of the pandemic, the 10 high schools of Ceará State co-governed by the Landless Workers Movement (MST) had their annual pedagogical week online. Because of that, I was able to watch and participate in the debates among school principals, counselors, teachers, other invited MST activists, the Movement’s national educational department leaders, and another researcher like me. Every day of that week focused on one aspect of the MST pedagogical practice, and each school had to show the results of their work during the previous year, not in grades or numbers, but by listing the main issues they are struggling with and the advances in every discipline. They also made specific talks about how each school was dealing with the pandemic and decided to intensify the “busca ativa” program, an action to reach students who are not connected online by sending teachers to their homes from time to time, with materials and instruction.

At a certain point, after each school presented their pedagogical results, one of the MST state leaders spoke about the current political situation under the Bolsonaro administration. She listed evictions of MST settlements and camps, an increase in violent police confrontations with landless workers protesting, budget cuts in funding for rural schools, militarization of schools, and other types of violence specific towards rural populations and the MST, including the legislative proceedings to pass the Bill PL1595/19 regulating actions to prevent and reprimand domestic terrorist groups. Among those, the MST is a potential candidate, as already vocalized by the president. After she finished her analysis of the political scenario affecting the settlements and camps and threatening the very existence of the MST as a grassroots social movement, she urged schools to take action. Acting as another voice in the debate among the issues schools
were facing, she said that “we” needed to start occupying the government agencies again, marching in protests. We needed to take the schools to the streets.

Her speech made me think to what extent the MST as a grassroots movement controls the schools, and how decisions are made. My teacher instincts made me feel sorry for the students who would miss learning opportunities of essential content. My citizen consciousness asked if this was even legal, that is, if a social movement is allowed to take students, as on a field trip, and occupy a government agency in a protest against school budget cuts. My maternal side feared these children would face police confrontations and questioned if schools had the families’ support and consent. And as a lifelong union supporter, I was wondering if teachers would have their hours paid when marching. But the more I thought, the more I realized I was the only one thinking about these aspects. These were not issues for the teachers debating online. Somehow, they all knew what to do.

Members of a grassroots social movement that was born out of the need for survival, these teachers and activists, who are also settlers, immediately recognized themselves in that speech. The collective “we” applied to them. The need to take the schools to the streets would come before the need to adjust curriculum to the online instructions of the following pandemic year. They knew there was no point discussing school curriculum if they would be evicted of the lands where they’d been cultivating for more than a decade. Above all, they knew the process of occupying unproductive large estates and pushing for agrarian reform was a lifetime commitment.

As this MST leader’s speech about the priorities of the moment shows, the schools co-governed by the MST are unique, with a close relationship between school and community life, and between school and the social movement. It is not uncommon to see social movements’
principles feeding educational practices or having their exclusive schools, educational initiatives circumscribed into the movement. However, in the case of the MST, the Schools of the Countryside are public regular schools co-governed by the Movement and the state. In these schools, the MST ideological framework disputes the educational project coming from federal agencies and tries to implement its pedagogy. It is a “contentious co-governance” as Rebecca Tarlau describes the political relationship between the state and a grassroots movement.

Investigating many aspects of this contentious relationship, but focusing on the institutionalization of this social movement, Tarlau examines the many political decisions, investments, and legislative bills passed by the federal government in the late 1990’s and first decade of the 2000’s that placed the MST in federal agencies leadership positions. This moment was crucial to the Movement’s political survival and consolidation, but, as she argues, the institutionalization of a socialist-oriented grassroots movement like the MST represented some setbacks. One of them, she claims, was the implementation of the MST pedagogy into the Education of the Countryside, a program that derives from the Movement’s critical pedagogy but whose implementation had proven to be a soften version of it. Her research was made in 2009, when the high schools in Ceará state analyzed here were being built. Tarlau argued that the 1998 official creation of the Education of the Countryside program being implemented in any rural school context, not only for populations in situation of agrarian reform, represented a “watering down” of the Movement’s educational principles.

Although Tarlau’s research focused on the ideological, political, and social aspects of the educational project, today we can see that this institutionalization has had an impact on the MST pedagogical practices, too. More specifically, the Education of the Countryside research program—the institutionalization of the MST’s pedagogical practices for the teaching of research for high school students— involves negotiation between traditionally dominant teaching of writing for research and the MST’s pedagogical approach. This means the Education of the Countryside research program is not a fully consolidated project of the MST pedagogy nor the traditional research program of a regular public school. Instead, it is a project in constant dispute, where the dominant approach to writing for research is challenged by use of evidence from experience and non-written sources, validation of non-dominant language and modes of thinking, and disruptions in the genres involved.

Another important anthropological study about the MST focuses on the identititarian aspect of the Movement’s members. If Tarlau’s research questioned whether the MST pedagogy was not the same after its institutionalization, Wolford’s research would challenge the idea of a uniform single activist-member. On a paper published in 2004, following her research on the MST, Wendy Wolford examines stories of families who joined the MST and that challenge the Movement’s official genesis stories. Years before, her first research on the Movement had examined the common people’s economies, the peasants that made the movement in their everyday lives, and she had claimed that the representation of the poor and the peasant, in the social movement, was not a product of a coherent uniformed group of subalterns. In a line of argumentation that follows the logics of this previous research that challenges the single ideal MST activist member, Wolford examines, in her 2004 article, the peasants’ motivations for joining the movement as coming from different sources. Her analysis of two families, one from
the south and the other from the northeast, showed the different reasons that made these families join the movement. However, both families had something in common; whatever reason they had to join the movement, it was not the ideological framework of the MST. This was something they embraced (or not) later. As she reported on a family from the northeast that joined the movement and started embracing the Movement’s ideals but, as soon as the activist leading the families started working for the mayor, they also changed their allegiance.

The settlers had never fully embraced the MST’s ideals, and without a constant spokesperson for the movement, they had little reason to remain involved. Antonio still worked to provide services and goods for the settlers, but instead of encouraging them to thank the movement, he now encouraged them to thank the mayor. The settlers, who were used to seeing state investments as gifts or favors, had little difficulty shifting their allegiance back to the mayor and thanking him for things that only months before the movement had tried to teach them were their rights as citizens of Brazil.4

This shows how the political training provided by the MST as part of the families’ engagement with the Movement’s concept of occupation, as we will see later in Chapter 1, has a strong relationship with the regaining of citizenship. The fact that “the movement had tried to teach them [ ] their rights as citizens of Brazil” indicates how their political training, though very much connected to the project of a socialist society, has deep roots in the current democratic life of Brazilian citizens.

As we will see, the political training provided by the Schools of the Countryside also tries to teach the same, combining political training for the struggle for agrarian reform, social justice, and citizenship. The MST is an ongoing project that trains its members as they make the

movement, and the Schools of the Countryside are one of the spaces for that. Students’ writings are an opportunity to see the contradictions and competing forces driving the Movement’s ideological framework.

This thesis examines part of this Education of the Countryside research program in four of the ten schools mentioned above: Florestan Fernandes High School, João dos Santos High School, Patativa do Assaré High School, and Paulo Freire High School. These four schools are located in the same geographical area in the Ceará state, the semiarid region called sertão. Specifically, I investigate one of the Education of the Countryside disciplines, the PEP – Projetos, Estudos e Pesquisa (Projects, Studies, and Research). I analyze 95 students’ research papers and 65 memorials ranging from 2018 to 2020.

My research will examine how students’ writings incorporate the MST ideological framework, implementing the Movement’s pedagogy and advancing their agenda for agrarian reform and social justice. I examine how these writings welcome competing ideological forces but at the same time circumscribe students’ thinking into the MST principles, suggesting the Education of the Countryside program is also a political training for young MST activists. In that sense, my larger research questions are: What kind of individual authority do these papers show, as students’ research are circumscribed in a prescribed collective discourse? These questions about individual and collective lead to others that are more connected to the movement’s pedagogy and ideology: What do the genres chosen by this program tell us about what counts as knowledge and research under this approach and particular context? What’s unique about students’ research topics in relation to MST’s ideology and political agenda? A final question addresses the relationship between the Movement’s political agenda and the Education of the Countryside, considering the latter represents a reframing of the MST’s pedagogy to a larger and
more diverse group of rural communities: how do genre and language reflect rural individuals’ attempts to see themselves as producers of knowledge, challenging rural populations’ historical status in relation to access and production of scientific knowledge? To what extent does this research program help rural populations regain citizenship and participation in the democracy? And how do the Movement’s pedagogical practices challenge or confirm other practices and concepts of popular education?

Considering these questions, I claim that the writing for research developed in the PEP research program is the conveyor and shaper of this political training. In that sense, the MST research program mimics the Movement’s historical process of occupying land, with its political training and the concept of studying from the concrete reality of peasants. This will be discussed in Chapter 1, which brings the historical context of the MST’s creation in 1984 and its educational department in what concerns their logics and foundational principles. The historical context of the Movement will help us understand the ideological framework they embody, and how this constitutes a reference for their pedagogical practice. I describe the principles of the Movement’s pedagogy and the underlying concepts implemented in the Education of the Countryside schools nowadays.

Chapters 2 and 3 analyze students’ research papers (also called scientific articles by the MST Pedagogy) and memorials, the two main genres of this research program. These chapters discuss literacy, political training, and ultimately democracy. I claim that the writing for research conveys the MST political training and allows students to rehearse their participation in democracy. Chapter 2 examines how the research program of the MST-governed schools is shaped by their concept of studying, through the students’ personal narratives (memorials), used
as evidence, and the scientific article as another genre pushing students to the writing for research.

Chapter 3 examines students’ research process through their final research papers, from their choice of topics to their reasoning, selection, and use of evidence, types of arguments, and language. In this chapter I look into the students’ selection and treatment of topics, the papers’ “objectives” and “methodology” sections, as well as their argumentation and use of evidence.

Chapter 4 discusses how the research papers and the memorials contribute to a larger framing force that builds knowledge collectively, a group and a project that deeply mark students’ identities. This chapter also discusses the concepts of context and generative themes, as well as the importance of curriculum in the debate of critical pedagogies today. I claim the MST research program represent an advance in the Freirean idea of context. It concludes with the discussion about freedom and democracy from the perspective of the Education of the Countryside research program as a program that intends to reach for social justice. In that sense, I claim the research program operates from a particular idea of research, that challenges the scientific article as genre for research but pushes students to dominate it.
Chapter 1 – The Imaginative Act of Occupying

Land is more than just land.\(^5\)
—Dom Pedro Casaldáliga, archbishop emeritus of São Felix do Araguaia.

The lawsuit on behalf of 13 families across many different states in *Brown v. Board of Education* is known for its effects, a landmark in the history of school segregation in the United States. A strategic move from the NAACP, it was not spontaneous individual acts of families trying to register their children in all-whites schools. I invite us to imagine this moment here, as I discuss the strategy the MST used to demand land reform and quality education for the landless workers and their children in the early 1980’s. In both cases, the struggle for social justice relied on the collective organization as much as on the individual hope and strength to take difficult risky actions. Perhaps in both cases, this strength is something that grows from political training.

I would like to imagine the conversations between Oliver Brown and the NAACP members weeks, or months, before he attempted to enroll his 8-year-old child in the all-whites elementary school near their home. I wonder what arguments convinced Mr. Brown that risking social exposure, discrimination, and possible humiliation was worthy. I wonder if his wife feared her daughter would be bullied in case they got her in, and if they anticipated this to the young Linda. What made them feel they would give it a try? Did NAACP members tell them no harm would come to them? Did they instill in them a sense of collective social justice? The answers to these questions come to our minds as we imagine the emotional steps taken by these individual families crossing the threshold that separates individual family dreams from collective social

\(^5\) Original in Portuguese: Terra é mais do que terra.
struggle. There must have been not only an act of courage but also a non-return political step towards the demanding of rights that were, above all, constitutional. Let us imagine that, and then let us imagine the conversations the NAACP members had among themselves, months or years before that, planning a strategy that would create the case law we all know.

Now, let’s imagine another situation, from a very different context but similar in many aspects. It is the late 1970’s in Brazil and, as a result of bills recently approved, many traditional rural families have been expelled from their small farms. The landless families have been sleeping in makeshift tents on the sides of roads and occasionally on reservation lands belonging to native peoples. These are peasants that have always had their small farms, even if they never had the land rights of the plot where they lived. The native people from the lands they were camping on said they should talk to local church missionaries who were holding group meetings to give guidance and help people in need, the Comissão Pastoral da Terra – CPT (Pastoral Land Commission). After rounds of conversations and political training from the CPT, the peasants learned that the land was a “right of God”, and not a “right of birth” these landless farmers found an association to fight for their rights. They knew the Constitution prevented land speculation by stating that the primary function of land is to provide housing or/and food production, but they also know that agrarian reform was slow and hard to be implemented. This led to their first imaginative act: to occupy private lands, large unproductive estates, and push for the constitutional right of agrarian reform.

Similar to the 13 families organized by the NAACP, the landless workers believed the hope that pushed them forward was stronger than the fear anticipated by police confrontations, militia violence, and best-case scenario, living in makeshift camp with no water, no school, no doctors, and no electricity for years. Above all, the Brazilian countryside had been ruled by large
estate landowners for more than four hundred years. Families who possessed the largest portions of land, the regional source of employment, also possessed local political power, “dominat[ing] local courts and police, usually ruling over state and national governments, virtually immune from punishment.” An1 These landowners usually had (and still have) paid gunmen to “protect” them against whoever stays in their way, and they “often carried out or ordered assassinations to guarantee their power; far from being punished, they were rewarded with favorable court opinions and protected by the police from retribution.”

As the 13 families, the landless peasants had to decide between marginalization and the possibility of a different and better future. However, this dreamed future would not come at a cheap price. The NAACP and the collective organization of the landless peasants built strategies for the struggle that counted on lawful, constitutional moves but which also required acts of courage from individual families. Above all, in both cases the collective organization had to gather people to join the Struggle, offering political training and planting the seed of hope for social justice.

The imaginative situations described above invite us to think of the complexities involved in the process of (re)gaining citizenship. Groups that were marginalized like African American citizens in the 1950’s, and the Brazilian peasants that were alienated from land, the condition that defines who they are, needed to regain their place in democracy. They understood that this was not going to happen without disrupting structures that were built to exclude them. In the case of

6 Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford, To Inherit the Earth: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for a New Brazil (Oakland, CA: Food First Books, 2003), 9.

7 Wright, 9.
the MST studied here, their history of struggle for land taught them the best strategy to fight for a place in the democratic society, and this involved occupation of land and of the school system. It is because the agrarian reform hasn’t been implemented that the land occupation is needed. Likewise, it is because the right to good, specific education has been denied to rural populations that the school occupation is needed.

For the MST, both represent attempts to break the capitalist logic that tries to place rural workers in wage jobs of agribusiness or, in the context of education, the teaching that trains poor rural populations to join the labor force of urban sites or the agribusiness industry, reproducing forms of oppression. Above all, by occupying the land and the school, the Landless Workers Movement is exposing the open wound of poor rural populations historically marginalized by the growing industrial urban centers. The parallel between land and school occupation helps us think about why the MST has an educational department and how the land occupations are more than just the occupation of land, but the occupation of the school system and the national educational project. As they say in the Movement, land is more than just land. For the MST nowadays, land is also quality education, food sovereignty, and the basic needs that lead to social justice and citizenship.

The questions I invite us to think of in this imaginative exercise are similar to the ones that guide this chapter. The broad questions guiding the reflection I invite here are: What are the historical forces that forged this movement’s ideas? To what extent do they subvert the democratic order and at the same time try to be included in it? How do they unfold their struggle for land in other struggles, as in educational system they occupy, and in the pedagogical program they design? What are their theoretical influences and how do they implement them as their
own? To what extent can a pedagogical program designed by and within a grassroots socialist movement educate citizens to think freely?

This chapter helps us see how ideologies about work and land ownership get made into ideologies about education. Through the history of the MST and the construction of its educational project, we see how this social movement understands that the access to power in a capitalist society comes through the access to education. More specifically, they believe their struggle for social justice happens by accessing scientific knowledge. In this context, literacy is a fundamental part of this process. Through literacy, they recognize themselves as producers of knowledge, able to participate in the democratic society and to write their own History.

This chapter explores the historical context of the MST’s creation in 1984 and its educational department in what concerns their logics and foundational principles. The historical context of the Movement will help us understand the ideological framework its members embody, and how this constitutes a reference for their pedagogical practice. I describe the principles of the Movement’s pedagogy and the underlying concepts implemented in the Education of the Countryside schools nowadays. Specifically, I examine the concepts that build the Education of the Countryside but are specially connected to the research program: the

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8 For a more comprehensive account on the MST background, Branford and Rocha’s *Cutting the wire: the story of the landless movement in Brazil* (2002) is a good source. It offers a panoramic view of the MST struggle for land, covering their history, description of camps and settlements, the agroecological production, the politics and police repression over the years, and one chapter about their educational department. An interesting contribution of this book is the many testimonies from MST members narrating their personal experience as the authors narrate the “official” story.
Polytechnical Education, the Socially Necessary Work\textsuperscript{9}, the concept of studying, and Dermeval Saviani\textsuperscript{10}'s critique of critical pedagogies leading to his proposal.

These are especially important to understand the complexities of the MST pedagogy implemented in the PEP research program and will prepare us to inform students’ writings. The poli\textit{technica}l education, the socially necessary work, and the MST concept of studying will help us understand why students’ research is strongly connected to community issues and is derived from the collective necessity to solve concrete problems in the settlements. These concepts adopted by the MST Schools of the Countryside guide decisions of what counts as knowledge, which curriculum should be included, and why the research can include prescribed thinking and still be research.

These concepts are guiding forces pushing towards a critical reading of reality, where every thinking and studying should contribute to the peasants’ struggle. On the other hand, Saviani’s critique of critical pedagogies and his proposal of a more curriculum-centered

\textsuperscript{9} This term comes originally from Karl Marx’s \textit{Capital} and is mostly translated by “Socially Necessary Labor”. Engels adds a note to the first chapter calling attention to the different aspects of the same meaning the words Work and Labor, in English, have. He mentions that “work” has use-value and is measured qualitatively, while “labor” produces value and is measured quantitatively. Here, although the MST uses the expression equivalent to Marx’s in Portuguese, \textit{trabalho socialmente necessário}, I will use “Socially Necessary Work”, considering Krupskaya’s \textit{On Education} essay uses both labor and work indistinctively.

pedagogy pushes the Schools of the Countryside to the opposite direction, arguing that the struggle of peasants is achieved through the access to dominant knowledge/curriculum.

The final part of this chapter shows how these concepts are implemented in the structural organization of MST high schools, including the discipline at the center of the research process, PEP (Project, Studies, and Research) and the Inventory of Reality, the schools’ efforts to map the community problems and other characteristic elements that guide decisions about curriculum.

Through the history of the MST and the passage from the pedagogy of the Movement to the institutionalized Education of the Countryside program we see the emergence of a special group among the rural populations. By incorporating different struggles other than the struggle for land, the MST consolidates its identity, but at the same time makes it more difficult to have a uniform ideological group. From the first occupations in the 1980’s to the constitution of the MST Pedagogy and its institutionalized Education of the Countryside program in the end of the 1990’s, the Movement has always invested effort in political training. In this context, the historical events that defined them as rural populations in struggle for land, and later for education and social justice, create the basis for their pedagogy.

Their pedagogy was designed out of their condition as landless workers, as peasants. Here the term peasant is important and refers to the peasantry as the first historical identity group that opposed the capitalist phenomenon of industrialization. In this context, they function as an identity group, with specific demands, as well as proper need for specific education. Their point of view on education is coherent with their historical struggle for land and social justice and their research program represents an attempt to build a program that is designed to give them access to power, but which respects the peasants’ modes of thinking. This program attempts to break the
binaries rural/urban knowledge, manual/intellectual work, concrete/abstract thinking, and, ultimately, superior/inferior groups of people.

The History of the MST and the Origins of the Movement’s Educational Department

Created after decades of isolated peasant rebellions and attempts to build unified organizations, the Landless Workers Movement is a mass grassroots movement organized by rural workers that fight for agrarian reform and social justice. It was formally constituted in 1984, but by then the movement had already occupied some latifündios (unproductive large estates). In fact, from 1979 to 1984, peasants from different regions of Brazil started occupying land, pushing for agrarian reform. It was a new strategy; before that, landless farmers were expelled from the land they were farming for different reasons—the land belonged to tenant farmers or were public lands in most cases—and would fight to get it back as in an individual effort to regain what they believed to be theirs. After the first occupations and the creation of the MST, the landless workers started to actively engage in the collective organized process of getting land, not necessarily the land where they had been expelled from. It was a shift in tactics, from a more individual reactionary one to a direct collective action of getting land. Above all, it was a shift to a consciousness of their condition of rural workers without the land that defines who they are, peasants.

In this process, many families who had previously been expelled from the countryside or who identified with the Movement came from urban contexts and joined it. This logic of creating the political fact (occupying large estates that were unproductive) to force an official response from the government (grant the legal papers of the land) marked the tone and identity of the
Movement in many aspects. It was the awakening of them as a group, as rural workers who saw themselves identified with the peasant identity, rural workers who have always been in struggle to maintain their ways of living. By occupying land, they begin to embody the identity of the peasant who is the historically anti-capitalist identity group; the peasantry that opposes industrialization centuries ago is brought to surface by a social movement that fights for agrarian reform and to maintain the traditional ways of living of these rural populations.

This new direct tactic of occupying land to pressure the government to implement what was constitutional was just the initial seed to other actions demanding other basic rights that would help rural workers regain citizenship. The first of them, education. But to understand the shift the movement makes from an immediate demand for land to a larger claim for education and social justice, it is important that to understand that occupying, for the MST, is a multifaceted word.

Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, a long-term MST activist and an important reference to understand the Movement and its territorialization, clarifies the organic connection between the Movement’s land occupations and the broader sense of the term occupation for the Movement, that englobes more than just the act of breaking the fence of large estates.

The occupation is, then, part of a movement of resistance to these processes [of expropriation and exploitation of rural workers’ land and work force by capitalist forces, including the State], to defend the workers’ interests, which are the expropriation of large estates, the settlement of families, the production and reproduction of family work, the cooperation, the implementation of public policies for the development of peasant agriculture, the implementation of public policies destined to promote the basic rights of citizens.  

Fernandes explains that occupying land is connected to a broader resistance to historical exploitation of the rural populations whose cultural and traditional ways of being and working the land have been reduced to their manual labor, the agribusiness’ work force. He refers to the traditional work of those populations as “family work,” when peasants and their families had small farms and worked in their own land. Peasants would reproduce this kind of work, learning from the previous generations and passing the knowledge on to the next. And this is at the center of the peasants’ identity as a cultural group. So, if occupying means resisting the capitalist forces that explore rural workers’ work force and fighting for many different basic human rights for rural populations, how does the act of occupying the land develop into those different struggles? This is important to understand the specificities of this group and how they built the force of their identity. The effort to stretch their struggle for land to other struggles coincides with their formation as an identity group, and today this effort is materialized in the School of the Countryside program. In that sense, the research program asks students to write from the personal to the public, from the memorials to the research articles, but as students advance to a less intimate, personal writing, they build authority as peasants-in-struggle.

The Movement has many subdivisions —here I call them departments\textsuperscript{12}, although some of them work more like boards or committees— that organize the several struggles under the main concept of social justice. They have always given particularly attention to Education. Since the first occupations, they have built and tried to implement a pedagogy that connects rural work, the struggle for agrarian reform, the peasants’ cultural life and the role of education in the anticapitalist struggle.

\textsuperscript{12} The English version of the MST official website calls them Sectors.
For the MST, education is associated with the idea of studying, another loaded word for the Movement, and with the theoretical references they use as sources to build their pedagogy. The concept of studying organizes many aspects of the Education of the Countryside schools and is the backbone of the research program. The MST is known for the development of its own grassroots intellectuals from its own process of studying and researching. Along the past 40 years, it has incorporated many theoretical references as part of their research process, which include reading and discussing written sources, visiting and exchanging practices with other grassroots movements, looking into local practices, establishing collaborative partnership with universities, among others. Fernandes characterizes their concept of studying and explains the action-reflection-action modus operandi.

During the process of building the Movement’s organizational structure, the landless workers developed important procedures to qualify the struggle. Among these procedures, we can highlight the importance of and connection between these activities: political training, education, production, administration, communication. They went on by doing, studying, reflecting, and trying to overcome obstacles.\(^\text{13}\)

Since the first occupations the Movement has seen the need to qualify their struggle, that is, to make sense of what they were doing so they could understand why they were occupying and decide upon what to do next. Hopefully, in the mean process, they would understand who they are. Their process of reflection has always been characterized by this logic: doing, studying and reflecting, and doing again. Fernandes specifies this last moment as “overcom[ing] obstacles,”

\(^\text{13}\) Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, A Formação do MST no Brasil (Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2000), 172.
which indicates that the trigger for the study-reflection process is a concrete problem, the obstacle, in the “doing” moment of the beginning.

Fernandes observes that the procedures to qualify the struggle are the connection between five pillars that supported the organizational structure of the MST in the beginning: the political training activities to empower and educate the members and future members of the Movement; the education department to start thinking about what kind of school and education they needed; the production activities to help settlers produce food from creole seeds\(^\text{14}\) in the agroecological manner; the administrative actions to organize the occupations and the families entering the movement; and the communication activities to allow individuals to share their stories of struggle and at the same time organize the communication between the other sectors and the public life. These pillars, that today are departments, show us that the Movement is mainly worried about organizing future occupations, training new activists, and at the same time working on how to produce food from agroecology and how to educate their children.

This is the Movement’s double folded character that is embedded in the larger struggle for land: the need to be in constant movement by occupying land and the need to settle and produce. This double folded character of the Movement is called by João Pedro Stédile, the

\(^{14}\) According to Campos and Soglio, “In the Law of Seeds and Seedlings - Law No. 10,711 / 2003, Art. 2, XVI, creole seeds are also designated as seeds of the local or traditional variety. These are selected varieties, managed and conserved by family farmers, quilombolas, indigenous people and other traditional peoples, and are permanently being adapted to the forms of management of these populations and their cultivation places.” Michele L. de Campos and Fábio K. Dal Soglio, “Creole Seeds and Power Relations in Agriculture: Interfaces Between Biopower and Social Agency” in ANPPAS Revista Ambiente e Sociedade (2020). DOI:
https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422asoc20180242r2vu2020L5AO
national MST leader, the *logic of the roll* and the *logic of production*. He names *logic of the roll* the Movement’s need to be in constant movement, occupying, marching, looking for new places to occupy, gathering families, etc. The *logic of production*, in contrast, is the settling, the fact that the people need to settle, to produce, sell the products, educate their children, and study while they are still the movement. In that sense, the students’ writing for research primary reflect the Movement’s *logic of production*, because they address the necessity to settle, study, bring betterments for the community, build a solid education project. However, as the writings reveal prescribed thinking connected to the anti-capitalist struggle, we see students’ also embodying the *logic of the roll* and the MST agenda.

The MST has solved these seemingly contradictory vectors — to settle and to be in the Movement helping with new occupations — by framing the single act of occupying into a larger idea of *occupation*: “The occupation is a form of struggle; it is a grassroots action, [but] we need to distinguish the act of occupying from the process of occupying. The act of occupying is a moment in the process that starts with the organization of family groups, then develops in the camps, in the negotiations, in the confrontations, in the march, the conquering of the land, and the following struggles.”\(^\text{15}\) So, occupying the land, according to Fernandes, is more than just the physical act of breaking the fence and building the camp. It is the materialization of the struggle and the training of the activists that will carry on this and the future struggles. At the center of this project is the literacy developed in the research program. As students write, they build their voice as activists. Their research papers are an important part of this fence-breaking moment.

The Movement has understood this since the beginning of its existence, and that’s why the need for continuous political training and grassroots work among themselves. The families that occupy a piece of land may get their plot rights to begin a settlement, but their struggle does not finish with the land papers; it continues until they reach their objectives of a socialist society, of agroecological production, of food sovereignty, and land papers for the next families. There is a principle of solidarity that unifies the ones that already settled and the families that are about to occupy land, in a way that “landless MST families are expected to remain actively involved in the movement even after receiving their plots of land. This basic principle of solidarity helps assure support for future land occupations from MST members who have already benefitted from the organization’s activities.”\footnote{Anne-Laure Cadji, “Brazil’s landless find their voice” in NACLA report on the Americas (vol.33, no.05, 2000 pp. 30-35), 33.} And this process involves fighting for better infrastructure in the settlement, access to health service, to education, among others.

So, the struggle also involves the non-movement vector, that is, the \textit{logic of production} in settlements. Differently from the logic of organizing the occupations —marching, breaking the fence, confronting police, organizing makeshift tents, negotiating with landowners and the governments, and others— the \textit{logic of production} is that of settling down and growing roots: growing produce in an agroecological way, educating children and adults (literacy campaigns, regular schools, and political training), demanding basic services from the local governments (water and power supply, mainly), fighting for good health services in the region, etc. The convergence of these two logics in the political training is embedded in the research programs where students choose topics based on issues of their communities and write about them as activist voices of the Movement.
Another moment when political training and education meet is the methodology for training new members, which gives us a glance at how the Movement sees the democratic participation of individuals in the process of education. By looking into the actions that precede the occupations we can see how individual testimonials contribute to form a collective unified voice. This methodology adopted by MST as the initial part of their political training finds echoes in the education structure and program, as student-researchers find their individual voice and identity as activists while writing their research.

Community and communication are foundational to the MST’s “Methodology of Struggle.” The MST’s varied “methodology of struggle”\(^{17}\) is the actions taken in the moments before and during the occupations, when the activist leaders gather new families or are reached out by individuals willing to join the MST. They all start with grassroots work, in the form of political socialization that appears in three dimensions. First, the *communicative dimension*, that happens since the first meetings: “it is the moment of introductions, of getting to know each other and the objectives, of knowing why they are in that place. The reason is the necessity and interests that, together with the revolt and indignation, represent attitudes and feelings that will determine the right time to occupy.”\(^{18}\)

The second dimension is constituted by the *interactive spaces*, that may happen before, during or after an occupation, and that involve the sharing of experiences and life stories. In this process, the individuals build the consciousness of pertaining to a group that is explored and expropriated: the landless workers. This is a process of identity formation, or revealing, that


\(^{18}\) Fernandes, 283.
happens by discussing about the larger political context, the forces acting upon the struggle, their strengths, and limitations. They at the same time constitute as the collective group and as individual voices, activist-members. This is the political training that builds the subject of the struggle, the condition the Movement needs to be in movement, and ultimately start transforming the reality. The transformation starts to be \textit{materialized} in the third dimension, when the groups of families decide which land will be occupied, when, and how. As we will see in the research process, some of the steps for the political training of new activists are also present in the \textit{studying} of reality: communicating the purpose of studying, sharing personal stories, discussing issues from the larger political context, and positioning themselves in the materialization of the research.

\section*{The Educational Department of the MST}

The Educational Department was created in 1987, three years after the MST was officially founded, out of the necessity to seek for references and body of study needed to further the Movement’s agenda, as well as to organize itinerant schools in the MST camps following the first occupations.

The educational department started with a collective organization of mothers, 25 of them trained teachers that organized educational activities for the almost 800 school-age children in the Annoni\textsuperscript{19} occupation, in 1985. After some deliberation among themselves — some landless

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{19} The Annoni farm that was the first large estate occupied by the then recently founded MST is today Nossa Senhora Aparecida settlement. The settlement today shelters the Educar Institute and a plant nursery. The}
workers didn’t want the fight for education to distract them from the struggle for land—they voted for demanding school for their children from the authorities. They understood that they were citizens that had the right to access the basic needs as any other. This argument didn’t convince the authorities in the beginning, who saw their land occupation as illegal but, in the following years as the occupations became settlements, authorities agreed to set up schools for them. By the same logic, settlement members would later demand other services, such as health, paved roads, electricity, running water. They understood, at that initial moment, that “it was just as important to knock down the barriers to these services as it was to break down the fences that keep them off land.”

And as the families fought for education, they started to realize that they didn’t want for their children the same education they had for themselves; instead, they wanted their kids to learn how to engage in the struggle for land and to value life in the countryside. And this meant they should reflect about the kind of education they wanted and needed. As Fernandes observes, this process of reflecting after an action and before the next one is a characteristic of the MST organization. They study because they need to qualify their struggle, that is, to understand what and why they are fighting for, as well as the means to achieve it. As in the political training and the grassroots work made for and after the occupations, the Movement organized collectives to study Education. And just as they had references for the political framework of their struggle for

plant nursery is part of the MST 10-year goal of planting 100 million trees all over the Brazilian territory. The Educar Institute is affiliated with the Universidade Federal Fronteira-Sul (UFFS) and Instituto Federal de Ciências e Tecnologia (IFRS) and offers undergraduate courses in Agronomy Engineering focusing on Agroecology.

land reform, they started looking for sources for the kind of education they wanted for their children.

It is important to mention that these sources have changed over time. The MST’s educational board has included new referential works and educational practices over the years, as well as relativized others that once were at the center of their practices. As for today, the educational theorists and experiences that are present not only in their documents about education but also and mainly in their everyday practice are: Paulo Freire, (international) socialist pedagogies, and their own practices. The socialist pedagogies mainly stem from the 1961 Cuban Literacy Campaign and the Soviet authors of the Soviet educational program implemented from 1917 to 1931 in the U.S.S.R. (mainly Krupskaya, Shulgin, Makarenko, and Pistrak), each of them contributing with specific concepts, some of which will be explained in this chapter. It’s important to specify the period of the Soviet education the MST uses as reference to build their pedagogy; they choose theories and practices that were at the center of the Soviet program until Stalin made the 1931 educational reform that shifted the school program to a more technical one, in broad terms. The MST educational department is interested in the humanistic, socialist program developed by Lenin and his wife Krupskaya until Stalin took over.

In defending the central importance of curriculum for revolutionary pedagogical practices, Dermeval Saviani represents a shift in the Movement’s pedagogy. Even though his theory is critical, Saviani’s proposal emerges from his understanding of the limitations of critical pedagogies implemented in Latin America. He challenges popular educational theories that value experience and cultural capital of students, in the sense that these practices, as implemented in Latin America in the past decades, contribute to include more diverse groups of individuals in education but have failed ending marginalization. According to his theory, the only way to
overcome marginalization is to promote access to dominant curriculum aligned with critical thinking, and this can be achieved through a critical pedagogy that is also curriculum centered. I examine some aspects of his critique of critical pedagogies and his argument in favor of a pedagogy with curriculum-centered approaches.

This, combined with the Polytechnical Education concept will give us lenses to think of the role curriculum plays in the Schools of the Countryside today and specifically in the research program analyzed here. The issue of curriculum is central to these theories and particularly interests us because the School of the Countryside program designs research that challenges the concept of writing for research but at the same time puts curriculum —here understood mainly as literacy and genre— at the center of its practice.

**Saviani’s Critique of Educational Theories and Critical Curriculum-Centered Proposal**

Taking a radical position, Saviani argues that the traditional education was far more democratic than the critical pedagogies. His critical study points both to educational approaches that were created to maintain the hegemonic power of the bourgeoisie, and to those that tried to emancipate the oppressed but failed them and ended up reproducing forms of oppression. His study is grounded in a very concrete phenomenon: in Latin America in 1970, almost 50% of children finished elementary school as semi-illiterate, and no pedagogy could overcome the concrete problem of marginality.

In his study of the major educational proposals implemented in Latin America over the years, he separates these in two groups. The first group of theories are those that “understand education to be an instrument of social equalization, therefore, for overcoming marginality,” and
the second groups are the ones that “understand education to be an instrument of social discrimination, thus a factor of marginalization.”\textsuperscript{21} For the first group, society is essentially harmonic with marginalization problems, accidental phenomena that happen to part of society members, that are considered distortions to be corrected by the school and other institutions. The first group of theories believes the school’s main role in society is to overcome marginalization. The second group of theories believes education is “entirely dependent on the social structure that generates marginality, fulfilling the function of reinforcing domination and legitimizing marginalization.”\textsuperscript{22} which is to say that the school is also a product of the hegemonic society and works as an instrument that reproduces this system of marginalization of oppressed groups. Saviani calls these “critical-reproductivist theories, which are not pedagogical proposals \textit{per se}, to be implemented, but theories. The first group, that understands the school as autonomous and able to reform society is called “non-critical theories.” This is the critique that mostly interests to the discussion about the role of curriculum in the pedagogical program of the MST and of critical pedagogies with which the MST Pedagogy dialogues.

The Non-critical Theories (Group 1)

According to Saviani’s classification, the non-critical theories are the ones that believe the school is autonomous and able to overcome the marginalization phenomena. They are non-critical because they don’t see the school as reproducing systems of oppression. They believe,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{22} Saviani, 40.
\end{flushright}
the school is the solution for this distortion. I summarize here the main arguments he poses for each educational proposal present in this group.

The *traditional pedagogy* is the first proposal, the one present in the most common national education systems of the 19th centuries. This proposal arises in a moment when building the future workers of a society with free men that lived under a social contract required ending ignorance. In that context, “the cause of marginality [was] identified with ignorance [and] the school emerge[d] as an antidote to ignorance, thus an instrument for equating the problem of marginality.”23 The traditional school was responsible for transmitting the knowledge accumulated by society, the cultural heritage of humanity. Students were supposed to assimilate that knowledge. Teacher, at the center of the teaching process, had to be well prepared.

The *new pedagogy*, the second proposal, arises from criticisms to the traditional pedagogy and believes “marginality [is no more] to be seen predominantly from the angle of ignorance, that is, the non-domain of knowledge. Those marginalized are no longer properly deemed as ignorant but rejected. People are integrated not when they are enlightened, but when they feel accepted by the group and, through it, by society as a whole.”24 This pedagogy advocates every human being is different and the differences must be respected. So, the problem of marginality can be explained neither by social/class difference nor by cognitive performance. The differences are a normal phenomenon and “[not] sufficient to characterize marginality, which is marked by unfitness or maladjustment, phenomena associated with the feeling of

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23 Saviani, 41.

24 Saviani, 43.
rejection.” In this context, the new pedagogy is the instrument by which this maladjustment will be corrected, by promoting inclusion, adjustment to society, and an increase in the feeling of acceptance.

Saviani believes that this new proposal causes a shift in some aspects of the pedagogical practice: from the intellectual to feelings; from the logical to the psychological; from the contents to the processes; from effort to interest; from teacher-centered to student-centered, among others that displace the pedagogical questions from “a pedagogy of philosophical inspiration centered on the science of logic to a pedagogy of experimental inspiration based mainly on the contributions of biology and psychology.” He argues that what the New School and the new pedagogy, mainly in their manifestation in Latin America, represented an aggravation of marginality. This was noted in many aspects. One of them was the physical structure of schools, that should be more colorful, full of stimulating didactic objects, with less students, creating the appropriate environment for learning experiences, which were expensive and ended up being implemented in rare experimental schools for small elite groups. The new class environment and teacher role as a mediator, a mentor, also contributed to a “relaxation of the discipline and lack of concern with the knowledge transfer, [which] lower[ed] the level of education of the lower classes, which very often have in the school the only means of access to elaborated knowledge.”

25 Saviani, 43.
26 Saviani, 44.
27 Saviani, 45.
The third proposal is the technicist, or *technical-oriented pedagogy*, that represented a shift from the student-centered approach to the pedagogical processes that mediate the pedagogical practice. In this proposal, the processes (class plans, instructions, sequences, syllabi, etc.) are designed by specialists and both teacher and student are secondary actors in this supposedly rational organization, minimizing subjectivity in the teaching-learning process. This proposal is “based on the assumption of scientific neutrality and inspired by the principles of rationality, efficiency, and productivity”\(^28\) and represents a counter reaction to the “softness” of the progressive new pedagogy, but instead of the teacher-centered, knowledge-mediated proposal of the traditional education, the technical-oriented pedagogy relies on the means, on how the knowledge is delivered, presented, handled. In this context, the marginalization occurs not because the individual is ignorant (tradition education) or rejected (new pedagogy), but because they are inefficient and unproductive. The role of the school in ending marginality is, then, “to provide an efficient training for the execution of the multiple tasks demanded continuously by the social system.”\(^29\)

Therefore, Saviani understands the non-critical theories only aggravate the problem of marginalization, whereas critical-reproductivists offer explanation but not solutions in pedagogical terms. In trying to find a balance, Saviani “bends the rod” back to traditional pedagogy, believing this is the right direction of a more democratic and just education.

Trying to explain why he turns to traditional pedagogy in order to build a critical pedagogy, Saviani retells the anecdote of Lenin, told by Althusser, in which Lenin justifies his

\(^{28}\) Saviani, 46.

\(^{29}\) Saviani, 49.
radical ideas by saying that when the rod is too much curved to one of the sides it needs to be bent to the opposite side in order to be straightened. He believes that a bending towards one aspect of the traditional pedagogy, the curriculum-centered aspect with critical treatment, is the mid-way between both traditional and critical pedagogies. For Saviani, it is through the acquisition of knowledge that the marginalized can access power, that is, the dominated should dominate the knowledge of the dominant: “The role of the teacher is to ensure that knowledge is acquired, sometimes even against the will of the child, who spontaneously cannot undertake the necessary efforts to acquire the richest contents and without which they will have no chance to join society.”30

This critique is at the center of the moment the MST’s educational program is living now. The institutionalization of the MST pedagogy into the Schools of the Countryside have required the Movement to coexist with and incorporate the regular education curriculum. Using Saviani’s proposal helped them to reframe their pedagogy into a critical reading and use of the mainstream curriculum. At the center of this reframing is the idea that the contents should be taught synthetically, contextualized critically.

Saviani’s proposal suggests that, among other things, the only possibility of promoting access to knowledge and at the same time being critical is by having students go from a situation where they have syncretic knowledge to that when they reach synthesis. Students’ knowledge of social practice is scattered, not articulated, not organic. Their experience and accumulated knowledge are syncretic in character, while the teacher’s is (more) synthetic. So, schools should

30 Saviani, 80.
give access to knowledge in a way students learn them synthetically and inserted into a historical perspective.

The literacy developed within the research program is a unique opportunity for this kind of transitions. The research students are encouraged to do is exactly the one that asks them to read knowledge synthetically. They choose their topics and have to write/read them by looking for causes and consequences rooted either historically or critically and consequences connected to the struggle for social justice.

The MST Pedagogy combines this curriculum-centered practice associated with critical pedagogical approach, as suggested by the teaching of synthetic knowledge, with the Soviet concepts of Polytechnical Education and the Socially Necessary Work. The MST Pedagogy tries to implement both practices, balancing between critical pedagogical programs that are work-oriented and those that are curriculum-centered. The research program is a singular example where the two are blended.

**The Socially Necessary Work as the Principle Connecting Research and Community**

Viktor Nikholaevich Shulgin\(^{31}\) establishes a discussion about the socially necessary work from an anecdotal episode of a teacher that sees their students interested in something from real life. The teacher, eager to see the students self-motivated to apply the content they learned,

\(^{31}\) One of the intellectuals behind the concept of education for the Soviet school program, Shulgin worked together with Pistrak in the experimental communal school of Moscow, one of the socialist experiments of labor school, guided by humanistic self-management principles.
pushes them to go forward, to explore the connections between the content and concrete life examples. This class situation is not uncommon nowadays, although it might be more common to see the teacher, instead of students, doing this connection between the school program and concrete examples. In some class plans, this connection happens in the beginning and works as contextualization; in some others, in the middle or at the end, as illustrations. Shulgin, aware of the subtle differences between contextualizing and what he is proposing, clarifies: “this [the context] is just the starting point of a program that, to be livelier and to be assimilated, takes examples from life. […] The approach [to life] starting from the program is a wrong approach.”

For Shulgin and his fellow Soviet educators, the connection between education and life exists because life needs to be better. There are issues in life that need to be worked out, developed, accommodated, solved, and the school is one of the public instances that should act upon it. So, the idea of context that helps a program that is predetermined and needs to be taught is not the correct one. It is the school that needs to help life.

This means that the program starts in life, but not life as a context, as a starting point to be developed into abstract bookish content that will be transmitted, memorized, understood, learned. Life should be seen in its full colors — changeable over time, in constant movement and contradiction, as Shulgin defines whole in opposition to portion of life — and students are active members of the society that should contribute to make it better. The essence of the social work, then, is to use the knowledge provided by the school to solve practical issues immediately. In that sense, “the expansion and deepening of the [school] knowledge should be dictated not by

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33 Shulgin, 67.
abstract considerations, but by the real practice; [in that way,] a portion of life pushes forward the study of the whole.”34 This is the inversion of the traditional logic that places the school program at the center of the teaching-learning activities.

This theory correlates with some of Saviani’s differentiation between syncretic (portion) and synthetical (whole) knowledge. Shulgin is not abandoning the role of teachers or school curriculum in the learning process. However, by suggesting the study of the whole from the portion found in life in order to bring practical betterments for it, he subjects the role of school to something bigger: “The socially necessary work makes you work together with the others and to subordinate your desires to a common purpose.”35

Considering this, Shulgin defines the Socially Necessary Work as that one the fulfills three conditions. First, it’s the work that is done aiming at improving the community’s economy, life, or cultural level with positive (productive) results. Second, it needs to have pedagogical value, that is, the work should be useful for teaching/learning practices. Third, it should be such a work that fits the child or adolescent’s capabilities, according to their age and potentialities.36 He gives examples of socially necessary work that helps us understand how the three conditions should happen together. He mentions a campaign for cleaning a park whose floor is full of cigarette stubs. It’s clear that it is a necessary work for the community, but having students pick the stubs with their bare hands is not healthy. Besides, the school needs to see what students are learning with or from that work.

34 Shulgin, 67.
35 Shulgin, Politecnismo, 144.
36 Shulgin, 90.
Therefore, there are social activities that students are capable of doing but they don’t learn anything from them. These should be done by someone else. There are those that are harmful or above students’ capacities but would be a good opportunity to learn. These should be done by someone else, and the learning opportunity should be transferred to another life issue or, if there isn’t any, the content should be taught anyway. Shulgin is aware that there is knowledge that needs to be taught regardless, but he warns that positioning the content from the program should not be the rule. And, finally, there are the social activities that are necessary, can be done by the students and are a good source of knowledge to be developed in classroom. These are the activities that define the socially necessary work.

He explains that the gravity center of this educational approach based on the socially necessary work is not in the school. The school is a facilitator, a helper, of the work that needs to be done and that can be found in the community life.

And this idea of the school as the center, as the school as a unit that is designed to carry upon its shoulders all this work, is a false idea, and we need to fight against it. The school is a helper in the Party and in the Committees that solve these problems – a helper, just that. And that’s why the school needs to determine which part of this work it can be responsible for, how it can help the farmer, the doctor, etc.37

And, if the center of gravity is not in the school, the work that needs to be done is not (only) a means to teach some content, for the socially necessary work is not a method. The objective is to build knowledge through the work that needs to be done but the result of this can only be measured if the work is done. Again, the school is a helper of the work that needs to be done; the gravitational center is in the work and the task is only finished when the work is appropriately

37 Shulgin, Politecnismo, 101.
complete. In the research papers, we will see that students try to put their research into practice, that is, to implement the solution they find through research, but the research program still assesses the students’ works by the papers produced and not by the solution implemented. These are some of the limitations of the MST project; they can use these Soviet concepts as sources but the community where they are inserted is not part of a socialist country. The role and importance of the school as an agent in solving community problems, as suggested by Shulgin, cannot be achieved outside the Movement.

In the Soviet context of the 1920’s, however, the school is organically connected to the community and, by doing the socially necessary work it roots itself in the economy and culture of the village. This shows how important it is, for the teacher and the school, to get to know and understand the economic and cultural tasks to be done in the community. For this, the ethnographic work needs to be precisely done so the program can be properly built. In the schools of the countryside in the MST program, the MST members try to implement this through the construction of the Inventory of Reality, a descriptive mapping of local issues and characteristics made by the school community through the lenses of critical education.

Particularly in the contexts of the Movement’s research program, Shulgin’s understanding that the socially necessary work “erases the boundaries of the school” by “position[ing] the child as a researcher and doer”\(^\text{38}\) complicates the practices of school research that traditionally rely on reading as source of evidence and writing as the end of the research process. The Movement tries to implement research that feeds from different sources and types of evidence (including personal) and relies on the writing for research as part of the process, not

necessarily the end of it. Also, the research questions are mostly guided by the life problems that need to be solved, instead of inquiries with multiple angles and complex contradictory answers. Students are looking for answers to solve a concrete issue, not to complicate it. The research is a means for that and serves the purpose of informing student-researchers on best ways to tackle the problem, circumscribed into the MST’s ideological framework.

**Polytechnical Education and the Attempt to Reach for Abstract Knowledge**

The opening pages of the UNESCO report on the 1958 Soviet Education Reform commissioned to Shapovalenko generically describe the socialist education in the U.S.S.R. at the time as “…intellectual training and productive, polytechnical, aesthetic, physical, and moral education. All these aspects are indissolubly bound up with one another, interpenetrating and complementing one another, and together ensure a well-balanced development of the child’s physical and mental capabilities.”\(^{39}\) The description is faithful to the Soviet education as told by the authors of that program, but words like “training” associated with “intellectual” are open enough to give room to misinterpretation. The editor is aware of these possibilities and, very didactically, tries to differentiate polytechnical from general education, and then from vocational education. According to the document, the general education’s aim is “to provide the basic knowledge of nature, human society, and thought, together with the intellectual accomplishments and practical skills relevant to these branches of knowledge, which are essential to every

individual irrespective of his future occupation,”⁴⁰ that is, a scientific outlook on life, while the polytechnical education gravitates around production. This means that the polytechnical education provides the same basic knowledge that general education does but is connected to “the main branches of production and the scientific principles on which these depend.”⁴¹ The document emphasizes the handling of tools and instruments of labor coming from the processes of production which, combined with the scientific study, develop individuals with “creative technical abilities and […] a love and respect for physical labor and work” who will have “an opportunity to choose freely [their] future trade, to master a variety of the jobs to be done in production, and to play an active part in technical progress.”⁴² Finally, the document differentiates polytechnical from vocational education, explaining the specialized aspect of the latter, and how the aim of vocational training is to have a full professional at the end of the process.

So, the polytechnical education was not vocational, in a way it didn’t intend to train students in any craftsmanship or practical skill for the purpose of becoming full professionals able to join the labor force. However, at the same time the polytechnical program taught students how to manipulate the main tools in every industrial area, which may cause confusion and misunderstanding. Much as the Socially Necessary Work concept (not a method), the polytechnical program starts in life, in the factories. The polytechnical education promoted the teaching of the basic fundamental knowledge (Elements, in Lenin’s words) of the main

⁴⁰ Shapovalenko, 17.
⁴¹ Shapovalenko, 18.
⁴² Shapovalenko, 18.
industries, “introducing the pupils to certain basic practical skills widely involved in production. These are seen as the essential conditions necessary if young people are to have a free choice of occupation in a realistic sense, and to develop the ability to change their occupations.”

Therefore, the polytechnical education taught students the basics (practical and theoretical) of every main industrial production (rural included) so that the children would be more equipped to choose their careers after they finished their studies around the age of 17. After the first school reform promoted by Stalin in 1931 this changed and the final years of schooling became more technical, to attend the need to industrialize the U.S.S.R. faster.

The Polytechnical Education was born out of the necessity to change. Factory workers needed to adapt to constant technological changes in their work, to learn how to do different kinds of jobs and to operate different machines and tools. According to Shulgin, this constant change triggered a need for better professional qualifications, starting with literacy, for illiterate workers were less useful than literate ones, who could learn faster and acquire new abilities. And this happened more often in cities (where factories were located) than in the countryside (where technology and modes of production change less frequently). But the polytechnical education is more than just the training of individuals for a changing work environment. By “familiarizing [the children] with the general scientific principles of every production process and, at the same time, giving children and adolescents the practical abilities to manage the basic tools of all industries,” we start to shorten the gap between intellectual and physical labor, city and

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countryside, and to envision the possibility of what communists defined as a “fully developed Man.” The individual that learns from the polytechnical education has a broader horizon. [They] know the importance of this [specific] production in the country’s and the world’s system of production; they know the basic principles of several industries; they can bring to the work the creativity, the invention, because they know the material’s technology, and the history of a series of tools industries; also, they are familiar with the most recent advancements in scientific knowledge; they have knowledge in physics, chemistry etc., that they bring to practice.

At this point Shulgin is referring to Marx and Engels’ description of a possible future communist society, with no difference of classes, when the contradiction between city and countryside will disappear and the same people will be either working on the fields or the factory, with no difference of social class. A leading person in the creation and implementation of the educational program in the first decade of the socialist government, Nadezhda Krupskaya specifies that the polytechnical education prepares for the work but doesn’t provide the ready-to-work specialist.

The task of the polytechnical school is not to prepare the narrow specialist, but an individual who can understand the interconnections among the several different branches of production, their specific function [in economy], each individual development tendency; it is to prepare a person who knows what needs to be done and why in every moment, in other words, to prepare the owner of the production means, in the true sense of this word.

45 Shulgin, 178.
46 Shulgin, 198.
So, what are the “basic elements” of research to be learned by students? The genre and the ability to relate evidence to reasoning in an inquiry-driven investigation. The writing for research, in the perspective of the polytechnical education, would be the basic elements that need to be learned in the Education of the Countryside research program. Literacy is the fundamental content of the research. In the Education of the Countryside program the disruptions in the genre to accept other forms of reasoning and somehow to allow a softening of research skills challenge the possibilities of implementing a polytechnical education.

As we will be able to read from students’ writings, by trying to make sense of an issue in their community, be it through the memorials or the research papers, students oscillate between reasoning from categorical propositions to evidence-based arguments. This shift reveals student-authors tackling the language used in writing for research and trying to build authority as writers and thinkers. Literacy and specific content related to the research topic are interdependent; students are able to study and understand certain issues as they read and write about it. Without the constraints of the genre and the (im)possibilities of the language for research, students would not move from the personal to the public writing. In that sense, the polytechnical education implemented in the MST schools meets Saviani’s critique and proposal, that places curriculum at the center of the school program, through critical-pedagogical lenses.
From the MST Pedagogy to the Education of the Countryside Approach: the MST Schools Today

According to the MST official website, nowadays they have more than 2,000 schools in settlements or camps\(^{48}\), which provides education to approximately 200,000 children (3.7% of the total number of rural students in Brazil). The last school census (Inep 2018) indicates there are 56,954 Brazilian rural public schools. This means at least 3.5% of Brazilian rural schools are schools governed by the MST. These schools are regular public schools in areas of settlement or agrarian reform that are organized and managed by the Movement, that is, they function as regular schools with core curriculum disciplines but are also allowed to have curriculum that attends specific populations.

Since the late 1990’s, the MST has tried to expand and institutionalize its pedagogy, in a process that is part of their understanding of the expression “occupy the school”, which encompasses the right to education —hence, the choice of staying in regular schools— and the right to specific pedagogy attending the needs of landless workers fighting for social justice. The combination of both, the need to occupy public the school systems with their own pedagogy, results in the Education of the Countryside (Educação do Campo) proposal. Rebeca Tarlau, in her 2009 book about the MST, argues that this is a contentious co-governance between a

\(^{48}\) The schools located in the MST encampments, not settlements, are usually called Itinerant schools, which are provisory schools lodged in makeshift houses or tents. These are sometimes composed of multi-aged class groups and last while the camp is not yet a settlement.
grassroots movement that wants to disrupt the system of oppression and the oppressor itself, the educational system that is designed to maintain the hegemonic power. Recalling the history of the official creation of the Education of the Countryside approach, Tarlau points to the numbers that place the movement in a position of pressure and shows how far their political strategy has gone.

As the MST grew nationally, these local experiments evolved into a proposal for all schools located in MST settlements and camps—which, by 2010, encompassed 2,000 schools with 8,000 teachers and 250,000 students. The MST also pressured the government to fund dozens of adult literacy campaigns, vocational high schools, and bachelor and graduate degree programs for more than 160,000 students in areas of agrarian reform. During the early 2000s, the MST’s educational initiatives expanded to include all rural populations in the Brazilian countryside, not only those in areas of agrarian reform. The proposal became institutionalized within the Brazilian state by 2010, the MST’s educational proposal—now known as Educação do Campo—was the Brazilian state’s official approach to rural schooling.49

Tarlau investigates the co-governance of MST and the state in public schools, which is interesting to think about the Movement’s political-ideological outreach and setbacks. She examines the Movement’s organization in different regions over thirty years, focusing on the political and ideological aspects of the co-governance and relation between state and social movement. Her analysis shows that while the co-governance of state schools and the MST helps the Movement to gain influence, the new frame alignment of the MST educational program from local isolated experiments in settlement schools to the larger group of all public schools in rural areas would weaken the Movement’s initial goals in education. In fact, one of her arguments is that “although institutionalizing social movement goals can scale-up activists’ initiatives, this

process can result in more stakeholders laying claim over these programs and a watering down of initial intentions.”

Although I examine a different aspect of the MST’s pedagogical proposal and outreach in public schools, the research papers made in one of the institutionalized programs, my analysis shows students adopting the Movement’s ideological discourse through the school. My analysis does not compare students’ discourse with the official ideological discourse of the MST, but it shows the important role their institutionalized program in public schools play in forming new activist-member of the Movement.

Institutionalized or not, since 1984 the MST has been occupying the school. From the first community collectives organized in their camps, in the first land occupations to the nowadays more than 200 public schools co-governed by them, the Movement has always understood that there is a necessity to occupy the school. For them, “occupying the school” means “producing the consciousness of the need to learn.”

This consciousness leads to the need to study and **studying** becomes the leading activity of the Education of the Countryside program for high schools. In that context, it means “the search for knowledge, but also the willing to be transformed, as a person.”

So, **studying** is a loaded word that refers to a more holistic formation and has become one of the organizing principles of the MST Pedagogy and the Education of the Countryside program. This dual purpose of studying — to learn content and to change themselves and their reality — challenges the actual public schools the MST occupies, not only by subverting what Freire refers to as the banking logic of education, but mainly by breaking the barriers of the

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50 Tarlau, 31.


52 Caldart, 138.
school structure. The school limits now extend to the community, as the school tries to reach the problems that need to be solved, the Socially Necessary Work.

Differently from the land occupations, where landless farmers break the fence, camp, expropriate the land, and then transform it in their settlement, the school occupation establishes a different relationship around the idea of expropriation. They occupy the schools to have access to knowledge historically constructed by humanity and at the same time to intervene and change this humanity, including changing themselves. For that, the landless workers need to “learn how to appropriate [the school] without expropriating the current owners of its heritage.”

In a relationship of “shared appropriation,” as Roseli Caldart points out, the pedagogy of the MST will organize its fence-breaking around the simple idea of studying as a principle that enables personal change and appropriation of content at the same time. Zooming in to the core task of the schools, the contentious aspect of the co-governance between the MST and the state is studying as an act of resistance.

According to the Dictionary of Education of the Countryside, the Education of the Countryside proposal is centered around the principle that “the rural workers’ struggle for education access [is associated with] the struggle for land, agrarian reform, the right to work, culture, and food sovereignty.” In the Schools of the Countryside, this is materialized in the three disciplines designed by the MST pedagogical department, that incorporate the concepts and theories that are sources for their pedagogical practices, such as the socially necessary work, the

53 Caldart, 139.
54 Caldart et al., Dicionário da Educação do Campo (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Expressão Popular, 2012)
polytechnical education, and their concept of studying. As we will see, these and other school practices constitute the idea of “occupation” in the school context.

The Soviet Ideologies Transformed into Pedagogical Practices: “Study Complexes”, “Inventory of Reality,” and the Education of the Countryside Program

When implementing a program whose references come from socialist practices that are distant in time and context — the Socially Necessary Work concept and the Polytechnical Education were implemented in a communist government, with almost no resistance from the government — the MST’s Education of the Countryside proposal tries to develop practices around the three disciplines whose curricula and syllabi they are allowed to design. So, the three disciplines that are part of the diversified program of their schools — OTTP (Organization of Work and Production Techniques), PSC (Communal Social Practices), and PEP (Projects, Studies, and Research) — were created to deliver part of the Education of the Countryside program.

In OTTP classes, students study and put into practice, on the 5 to 10-acre experimental field in every school, specific techniques and methods for growing crops. In PSC classes, they study different dimensions of the peasant’s culture, and organize themselves in collectives for social, cultural, and political participation. In PEP classes, students research about a topic that

56 This part of the curricula is called diversified by the official federal guidelines, in opposition to the common curricular disciplines that constitute the core subjects of every schools. The right to diversified curricula apart from the core disciplines is granted to schools whose demographics include specific groups, such as minorities.
comes from issues in their communities that need to be solved, trying to implement solutions that will lead to a transformed reality. The PEP program is developed in the three years of high school: students in Year 1 write a memorial, which is an autobiographical text with some informal research about students’ communities; Year 2 students choose their topics and write their research project; and Year 3 students finish their research, gather evidence, and write their scientific article, culminating in a public presentation of their research, similar to a defense.

In different ways, each of these disciplines represent some interpretation of the MST’s concept of *studying*, which is an action that starts from concrete reality into the discipline, and goes back to reality, the dual purpose of getting knowledge and transforming reality and themselves. The implementation of the study in the three disciplines of the Education of the Countryside program involves the doing-reflecting-doing modus operandi mentioned earlier, but each discipline favors one or another aspect of study practices. In OTTP, the study of agricultural techniques involves physically experimenting with the land. In PSC, they study by asking, listening, sharing their knowledge in collectives, or organizing new socio-political representations. In PEP, they study by reading, writing, and going on field research. Because PEP depends on reading and writing skills, we can say that it is the discipline that most connects the MST concept of *studying* to the one that is historically present in regular schools. This makes it more difficult for the teachers of this program to disrupt traditional forms of banking education that place students as receptacles of the studying process.

The connection between work and school in the Socially Necessary Work and the Polytechnical Education in the context of the U.S.S.R. in the 20th century were not easy to be implemented. The MST, in adopting these concepts as guidelines for their School of the Countryside programs, is aware of the different contexts, mainly considering that the schools
where they try to implement these concepts today are inserted in a capitalist globalized society. In that sense, the Movement is not looking for a polytechnical education that equips future factory workers, nor can they combine efforts with other government agencies and institutions to share the responsibility for the work that needs to be done in public life, as it was originally done in the U.S.S.R. Instead, these concepts are combined with the concept of *studying* and the Movement’s understanding of research, which is more deeply analyzed in Chapter 3. Here I show how these ideas come into practice in the context of the Education of the Countryside program and the high schools’ organizational design.

**Study Complexes**

The concept of “complexes,” as it is developed by Krupskaya, is a way to understand the reality as the complex interconnections of phenomena in their historicity. This idea challenges the teaching through disciplines, and even the multi, inter, transdisciplinary studies, composed of projects that not necessarily represent the co-relationship between phenomena. According to

57 There is an interesting discussion about these categories that underlie approaches like project-based-learning and others that represent an effort to link school with concrete life and students’ experiencing. The definitions of these categories made by Antoni Zabala, the Catalan professor and author, contributes to the discussion about the co-relation between disciplines, school projects, and context. His definition of transdisciplinarity as a “global integration inside a totalizing system,” whose learning result is an “interpretive unit, with the objective of building science that explains reality without subdivisions” (144) would be the closest to the MST’s idea of study complex but the transdisciplinarity starts from the program, and not from the concrete life. Antoni Zabala, *A Prática Educativo: Como Ensinar*. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 1998.
an internal document used by the MST teacher training program, The organization of the pedagogical work in the schools of the countryside and the study complexes, the idea of study complexes is to study the themes “as phenom[a] of the present reality, in its historicity, in its territoriality, in its social dimension.” The document offers the example of the study of “Popular agrarian reform.” which would commonly be studied in a multidisciplinary way (history, geography, sociology) in a regular school but this “bookish, classroom-like study” of the phenomenon reduces it to a school/class task. The School of the Countryside program designs study processes that shift the students’ interests to the reality. The ultimate goal is to transform the reality, not to accomplish school tasks and memorize contents. As in the Socially Necessary Work developed by Shulgin and Krupskaya, the Study Complexes are not pedagogical processes of contextualizing the reality.

Besides this understanding of the complexes as ways of looking into reality, the complexes can be seen as a method, the Method of Complexes, mentioned by the document as the historical-dialectic method of studying reality phenomena. Finally, there is the System by Complexes, the curricular organization in the study plans of the Schools of the Countryside. In that sense, the System by Complexes opposes that of disciplines, and considers the “curricular unit in its multifaceted complexity, integrating the contents and teaching objectives […] with the

58 Paulo Roberto de Sousa Silva, The organization of the pedagogical work in the Schools of the Countryside and the Study Complexes (2018).

59 Sociology was a mandatory high school discipline in Brazilian public schools until it was considered optional as part of the most recent school reform in 2017.
present reality\textsuperscript{60}, the socially necessary work, and the students’ self-organization, [all] starting from a complex unit (reality phenomenon in its complexity), which is the base of the curricular unit.”

The document also specifies how this should work in a system in which the disciplines, as organized by the government, are present and mandatory. Although the initial theoretical part of the MST document differentiates “complex” as a concept different from interdisciplinary pedagogical work, the orientation in the document suggests “an articulation [between disciplines] in a theoretical-practical exercise with real phenomena, in their present reality, making an interdisciplinary approach possible, bringing and building knowledge from the several disciplines to understand the reality.” The difference, then, is that the pedagogical organization based on study complexes proposed by the education of the countryside program used an interdisciplinary approach because they cannot avoid the mandatory disciplines. Like in the Socially Necessary Work concept, the center of gravity is in life, not in the program. In this perspective, the scientific knowledge is the background of a stage where the real-life-knowledge dialogue happens. The Schools of the Countryside make a pedagogical effort to explore phenomena of the local reality, find the portions that can be “used” in class, draw lines between the scientific knowledge of each discipline and the portion of reality, and establish the study complexes. In the schools co-governed by the MST, these lines between reality and school program start with a panorama of students’ local reality, the Inventory of Reality. The table below is part of \textit{João dos Santos de Oliveira High School} Inventory of Reality.

\begin{table}[h]
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\end{table}

\textsuperscript{60} The “present reality” is a concept developed by Shulgin and Pistrak that is the understanding of the present moment in its historical essence, within the context of the class struggle.
Table 1. Inventory of Reality (2017). João dos Santos de Oliveira High School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participatory organizations and administrations</th>
<th>Teaching sources from the environment (natural, cultural, and social)</th>
<th>Types of work</th>
<th>Social struggles and contradictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community organizations:</td>
<td>Natural sources:</td>
<td>Types of organizations:</td>
<td>Access to and quality education:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pau Branco Women’s group; São Nicolau Youth group; COOPAMA: 25 de Maio agricultural cooperative etc</td>
<td>lakes environmental reserves (collective) Individual reserve (used for planting, hunting, etc) 25 de Maio Settlement geographical relief etc</td>
<td>volunteers cooperative work housework (man, woman, children) agricultural work (man, woman, children, others) etc</td>
<td>poor school transportation roads in bad conditions (condition described) unfinished constructions (listed) etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Organizations: Churches (Catholic and Evangelical) etc</td>
<td>Cultural sources: Traditional church celebrations (all listed) Violeiros (traditional guitar player groups) soccer fields rodeos etc</td>
<td>Productive Systems: Peasant agriculture (all types listed) Compost and other organic products handicraft production (every type listed) bakeries (locals listed) etc</td>
<td>Cultural Issues: cultural domination (music, food, clothes, jargon) Loss of peasant identity etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government welfare programs: ATER (technical assiatency for rural workers) INTERVITA PNAE (school food distribution) etc</td>
<td>Food Habits most common meals and snacks (not listed)</td>
<td>Agroecology and the Semi-arid: agroecological experiences (types listed) alternative medicine</td>
<td>Environmental Issues: garbage (burn, bury, feed the animals) periodic droughts misuse of water supplies use of pesticides etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School organizations: teachers’ collective students’ collective 13 schools in the region (names listed) etc</td>
<td>Social sources: 25 de Maio Settlement Radio Station (95.3 FM) etc</td>
<td>Other income sources: civil servants benefits from welfare programs Handicraft sales day workers etc</td>
<td>Threat to food security and sovereignty: industrial food consumption conventional agriculture (capitalist) etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure: 7 health centers (names listed)</td>
<td>Technological sources: techniques to work with semi-arid fields (every technique listed) apiculture water dams (all listed) communications media (cellphone, e-mail, telephone, Whatsapp, internet)</td>
<td>Commerce: middlemen in the commercialization process commercialization of legal and illegal drugs</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>etc</td>
<td>Éxodo Rural</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other contradictions:</td>
<td>Struggles: water shortage in some communities lack of auditorium in some schools good health service in some communities etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teen pregnancy domestic violence drug use etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Health problems: high cholesterol high pressure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Under “Struggles,” for example, we see elements from their reality highlighting problems (e.g., water shortage in some communities) and others (good health service) emphasizing their goal. In some other parts we see information that needs to be complete, such as in “most common meals and snacks,” which is consistent with the ongoing character of this document and needs to be fed and updated every year by the incoming students and their families. This process of updating is a formal process that is part of the research process students do in their first years of high school, while they are writing their memorials.

According to the MST internal document for teacher training, the purpose of this activity is double fold: it can be used to introduce students in the research process and as a source of themes to elaborate the pedagogical plans, when contents will be articulated with some “portions” of the Inventory. When used to introduce students to the research process, the school organizes field trips to the communities to collect data, followed by activities to organize and file the information, such as map-making, graphs, journals, photography exhibitions, and others. According to the document, this research would allow students to be introduced to the scientific method of research, to different types of data organization, to different genres involved in this process, and, above all, it helps “build a systematized archive of information about the local reality that can feed a public and permanent space for the peasant’s popular culture and memory.” Most recently, students from this semi-arid region of Ceará state have been working on descriptive files for each item, building the region’s “Book of Reality.”
As a resource for pedagogical planning, each item of the inventory of reality is a portion of reality, a study complex. Teachers will select which portions they will work with and then they will plan their class syllabi, matching scientific knowledge with the chosen portion. The Education of the Countryside program is mainly worried with something they call *formação humana*. *Formação* is a word whose meaning is a mix of upbringing with training, something difficult to translate without leaving one of the aspects behind. The MST uses the Inventory of Reality for its *formação política* (here translated by political training, following Rebecca Tarlau’s option in her book about the MST schools), *formação de professores* (teacher training), and humanistic education. The internal documents where I base this section list very briefly some main objectives and larger principles School of the Countryside teachers should know, always highlighting the larger goal of humanistic education. However, when it comes to the item “Schools of the Countryside and knowledge,” the orientation takes a slight shift, from a more generic humanistic goal to a very specific curriculum-oriented principle (their marks).

Although the function of the school is mainly the humanistic education, we recognize its specificity related to knowledge (scientific, philosophical, and artistic). There is an amount of knowledge produced by society, organized systematically into disciplines that are fundamental to understand reality in its complexity, and so they constitute an important dimension of the humanistic education, nowadays. The school is the main institution where we can access this type of knowledge. Its main function is to give access to this knowledge.61

This points to the importance of curriculum, here understood as content, for the program of these schools. As discussed through Saviani’s critique of critical pedagogies that value experience and inclusion over knowledge and curriculum, the Movement’s attempt to reinforce the school as the

instance where these marginalized populations can have access to knowledge, and thus power, is clear. Here we see Saviani’s proposal of a more curriculum-oriented program combined with strong critical reading as an underlying message behind these orientations for teachers. If once the Movement was worried mainly with the right to specific education that includes the peasants’ culture and modes of living, today this discourse is enlarged by another one: that schools promote access to knowledge of the dominant groups. The explicit reference to scientific knowledge and its importance to the struggle we find in many documents can also be found in the research program of PEP classes, where students are invited to build their voice as researchers and thinkers through a structure that values evidence-based arguments and writing for research.
"I wonder if being one, I could be all\textsuperscript{62}
—Luis Felipe, \textit{Patativa do Assaré High School}

In many of his books and public speeches, Paulo Freire uses anecdotal passages of his experiences as an educator. Reading his \textit{Pedagogy of Hope} in English for the first time, I got intrigued about why a specific passage had been highlighted 76 times (by other E-reader users in this algorithmic community that is invisible to me). The excerpt says that

one of the tasks of democratic popular education, of a pedagogy of hope [is] that of enabling the popular classes to develop their language: not the authoritarian, sectarian gobbledygook of 'educators,' but their own language— which, emerging from and returning upon their reality, sketches out the conjectures, the designs, the anticipations of their new world. Here is one of the central questions of popular education— that of language as a route to the invention of citizenship.\textsuperscript{63}

This passage is preceded by his personal narrative of Freire’s experiences in Chile in 1965 after the Christian Democratic Party won the presidential elections. He tells us he had just been reunited with his wife and children after some time alone in exile. He describes the euphoria on the streets of the capital, Santiago. He tells how, ironically, the party members despised his warnings about the fragile loyalty of the army. Then, he takes us to 1973, right before the

\textsuperscript{62} Original in Portuguese: \textit{Por que não posso ser de um tudo?} Translated by Gilberto Stam.

military coup, on another personal visit to Chile. He interrupts his reflections about the social-political landscape pre-dictatorship to zoom in on the creation of the MIR64 (Revolutionary Left Movement), the left of the left in the Communist Party. He explains what’s specific about the MIR that differentiates it from the Communist party; he remembers that the MIR saw the need to go back to the grassroots movement in the countryside. At this point, I began looking for text clues that told me Freire was sympathetic (or not) with this movement. But no, he only offered the factual narrative. He continues talking about a personal visit to one of these settlements, where he witnessed peasants demanding the rights to a “villa.” After obtaining the land papers, he tells how they decided to continue the active struggle for health, education, social security, and other basic needs. The description follows the old buses donated by the government that were adapted and transformed into schoolrooms that sheltered an experimental pedagogy.

As a reader of Freire for some time, I was anxiously waiting for this moment when he would suspend the narrative of his memories and reflect upon this experimental pedagogy or show how relevant this is to his personal journey and theory. But no. He reflects upon how his perception of that moment has changed nearly thirty years later. He reflects on himself, and then again about the MIR and the political forces at play in Chile. In the final part of this blending of memory, historical analysis, and description of experiences that constituted Freire’s thinking, I finally figured out what he was talking about.

He takes me for a stroll to arrive at the Chilean “culture circles,” where peasants discuss the local and national social-political scenario. I sit down with him, and he offers his impression of the peasants' eagerness to talk but, at the same time, their difficulty to express themselves, to

64 Movimiento Independiente Revolucionário, also known as Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionária.
break the “culture of silence.” Finally, he shows how the peasants seemed to have "begun to perceive that the development of their language, which occurred in their analysis of their reality, finally showed them that the lovelier world to which they aspired was being announced, somehow anticipated, in their imagination.”\textsuperscript{65} Ultimately, Freire starts developing his arguments about how democratic popular education should enable the oppressed to develop their language as a route to achieving citizenship, which is the passage most cited.

This long passage in \textit{Pedagogy of Hope} invites us to reflect not only on how the language developed through this grassroots work (peasants debating in the cultural circles) leads to consciousness-raising but also about the connection between experience and thinking that is central to this chapter's discussion. Could Freire have communicated his arguments without the previous description of the cultural circles? Would it have been different if we didn't know about the social-political context of Chile and the MIR's tendency to go back to grassroots work among peasants? Does it change our perspectives as researchers if we read Freire's impressions and personal life context framing these events and theories? And, most importantly, does it change for \textit{him} as a writer-researcher building his thinking?

For the MST educational leaders, Lourdes Vicente and Maria de Jesus, the personal narrative characteristic of Freire’s writing has been important for the Movement’s community of readers that feeds from his theories. Paulo Freire was one of the first authors to be read by the landless workers and incorporated into the MST Pedagogy. This does not mean that the anecdotal aspect of his writings makes him easier to read and digest. On the contrary, this kind of

discussion makes readers underline and cite only the categorical, abstract formulations of his theory. The question of accessibility in Freire's writings can be quite the opposite. What does he say that is not accessed because it is taken as an illustrative preamble? For the Movement's study practices, the concrete scenes, memories, impressions, and other personal aspects of Freire’s writings convey knowledge just like the abstract theoretical parts but wrapped in a different package. Like the Education of the Countryside research program that includes individual and collective experience to build the writing for research, this chapter invites us to reflect upon personal writing as a place where the thinking and writing for research start to be built.

This chapter and the next examine how the research program of the MST-governed schools supports their concept of studying through writing practices that involve the genres and procedures of scientific research, and students' personal narratives as part of the same idea of research. The concepts delineated in Chapter 1 are strategic to understand how the Movement combines research practice that weighs in the "doing" (Socially Necessary Work) portion of their doing-reflecting-doing study logic but also commits to language and genre for research (formal contents in the Polytechnical Education perspective) that are essential to the landless workers’ emancipation (Saviani’s proposal). In that sense, this chapter will discuss how the two main genres chosen for the research program push students into the traditional scientific research process while welcoming alternative modes of research.

As a more intimate genre, a personal narrative, the memorial allows students to "talk freely," blending memory and reasoning, while the research articles drive student-researchers to a more distant, critical position towards the research topic. However, we will already see the start of critical thinking in the memorials, a seed of the research articles. Likewise, there is a ghost presence of the memorials in the research articles made in the second and third years of High School...
that compromise the public writing with the presence of the MST-prescribed thinking, language used for private writing, and the use of personal narratives. I argue that in the PEP program, the concept of *studying* for these MST schools is implemented by teaching the scientific article, a dominant genre for research communication, together with the memorials, a genre that conveys students’ personal and collective practices. This encounter of the scientific article with the memorial is shaped by the Movement’s ideology that builds a third space where these opposing forces (scientific and experiential knowledge) meet. In this context, *studying* and writing for research are intermingled and characterized, among others, by using personal experience as evidence, the disruptions in the scientific article genre to accommodate these texts into the larger goals of the Movement’ and the use of non-standard writing for research. The genre works as a structure that allows students to learn content from the dominant groups and, at the same time, build a language that places them as voices in the ideological discourse of the MST. By acting as writer-researchers in these genres, students become activist-members of the MST.

In Part One of this chapter, I discuss how students position themselves in this autobiographical text as individuals coming from a life story of struggle but who are beginning to be introduced to a program that invites them to see their realities critically. This description of the memorials’ content is important for understanding students' different belief systems and social conditions. The way the students position themselves determines their point of view and to what extent they are already engaged in the MST ideology that will later influence the choice of topics for research. Also, their positioning anticipates the process of critical consciousness-raising, which is an essential part of the research for the Education of the Countryside program. The questions that guide the description and analysis of the memorials are as follows: What is important for students according to their self-narrative? How do they see school and teachers?
How do they make sense of their community’s issues through writing? And how do they see themselves as part of this community? As seen through the memorials, the answers to each of these questions will foster my discussion about personal narratives as the initial stage of research.

I would like to think of the connection between the personal and the public writings from two angles in the memorials. The first angle utilizes what Sharon Marshall suggests as the “fishing” for ideas and the writing that promotes “the chaos within.” Even if we consider that Marshall is advocating for the use of freewriting while memorials are otherwise structured and prompt-guided, I believe this genre offers students room for the blurring of memory, imagination, and reason that Marshall sees in the freewriting. In that sense, Marshal offers a good lens to see students’ relationship with the writing of memorials. I also wanted to discuss this blurring between personal narrative and reasoning from Nicole Wallack’s understanding of the various dimensions of reading and writing. Advocating for the use of focused freewriting, she suggests this kind of writing allows students to perceive, recognize, and better understand themselves as thinkers as they read/write by approaching the object of study from different angles. I argue that the memorials from the PEP research program are not just fixed testimonies or reports on students' past lives; through the memorials, students write their pasts and re-read their life experiences. They start seeing their lives critically, signifying their present and future from a different ideological framework. There is a learned experience in this process.

The second angle that helps us think of this connection between the personal and the public is Candace Spigelman’s understanding of personal narratives as evidence. The author suggests personal writings should be included in academic writing. Considering the memorials as a blend of life experience accounts, community field research reports, oral family testimonials,
community experience, and storytelling, I examine Spigelman's "experience as evidence." argument to claim the legitimacy of students' self-narratives as evidence in the research process that will culminate in scientific articles.

As students move from the memorials to the articles, they emerge as student-activists, members of the MST, and a special kind of citizen: individuals that are deeply connected to their community traditions and claim their rights as citizens, but who also fight to transform their reality. Therefore, Part 2 of this chapter discusses the possibilities of using scientific articles as a genre that conveys the “reflection” part of the studying concept for the MST. As the genre chosen to communicate students' research process publicly, the scientific articles are, at the same time, content and container. I argue that genre is the content "to be learned" to access the knowledge of the dominant culture. However, the genre is also a container that shapes the individual voices of student-activists — that is, by writing the article, they are affirming themselves as part of the collective discourse of the MST, as part of a performative act. The performative act is mainly discussed by Charles Bazerman's theory of social activity. This analysis of the scientific articles as a research genre will be explored further in the next chapter, which examines students' inquiries, thematic choices, and reasoning.

Methodology

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Data collection. The data collected for the analysis of this chapter comes from a total of 65 memorials and 95 research papers. The research papers range from 2018 to 2019 and memorials from 2018 to 2020. The files received do not represent each of the four schools equally. Nevertheless, I treat the documents received as a uniform group, considering they belong to the MST educational department responsible for designing the Countryside's Education of the Countryside program. Most of my data come from Patativa do Assaré High School.

Coding. The memorials were initially coded into categories that helped map students' ethos and their relationship with the school, teachers, and future college/work. This first coding included the following categories: relationship with education in a strict and broad sense (different teaching agents other than schoolteachers); relationship with religion, faith, and church; how the students perceive issues in their communities; and marks of strength and hope, which I see connected to the attitudes of activist-members of the MST. This first coding also included textual marks of oral expressions that indicate either student-authors orally dialoguing with their implied audience or authors talking to themselves and of expressions that come from the everyday oral language in moments when more abstract or formal words could have been used (especially when students use proverbs or popular sayings instead of specific language to explain something).

I made the second coding to map students' personal narratives, including two family generations back and their previous school history. I wanted to locate moments when students specifically addressed the Education of the Countryside program, the relationship with the MST or any other social movement, and their interest in rural work and life. This second coding would give me themes to explore students' understanding of their personal history, including how their memory is signified or beginning to be re-signified after being introduced to the MST ideological
framework. Also, I wanted to see how much they have connected to the Education of the Countryside program already. The categories for this coding were as follows: students raised by family members other than parents or by a single parent; history of death/prison/addiction/abandonment of family member that impacted the student’s life; family members struggle(d) because of unemployment or lack of money; parents didn’t finish school (grandparents are not part of this coding because none of the students had a grandparent who finished elementary school); students or parents had to move to other places because of unemployment or environmental conditions (usually long periods of drought in that region); student or parents live(d) with lack of major infrastructure (no running water, no electricity, no roads); students’ perception of overcoming difficulties or of not having any in face of lived difficult situations (stories of survival); students’ description of the Education of the Countryside program or the Movement’s principles; students relationship with rural work, including how they see their future and what they dream for themselves.

Part 1 – The Memorials Shaping Research and Student-Activists

What these schools call a "memorial" is an autobiographical text that might have some internal subsections depending on the school and year. The 2018-2020 Patativa do Assaré High School memorials that compose most of the primary materials analyzed here are subdivided into the following sections: “The Self,” “Family,” “School,” “Community,” “Perspective and Projections.” The other three schools rearrange the same content differently or do not make specific subsections, but we can read the same thematic blocks of subtopics inside the
autobiographies. *Paulo Freire High School* adds a different subsection, “Family productive practices,” seen in the other schools as “Family/Community.”

The memorials are the beginning of the research process in the PEP program and can be seen as a strategic genre and writing process that helps students reflect on themselves and their community. This personal narrative functions as exploratory writing for students who are being asked to examine their lives as a history that begins to open itself to re-signification—the reframing of their lives after being introduced to the MST’s ideology—and future research processes. Likewise, they start to see that their communities also contain a history open for reinterpretation and transformation.

These students are not new to the MST. They already live in settlements and participate in the community's collective life, including meetings organized by the MST, protests, other occupations, and all the social and political activities of the Movement. However, for most of them, these schools are the first co-governed by the MST that they go to. Therefore, they first see the ideology and discourse that accompanies the settlement's political actions organized and embedded in study practices as content to be learned. In the Schools of the Countryside, these high school students have three disciplines (PEP, OTTP, and PSC, as outlined in Chapter1) that will use critical lenses to guide them through reflection, practice, study, and research subjects and topics. As members of the MST, they begin to embody the Movement's point of view and frame their realities by it. In PEP classes, they do it by writing. The memorials invite them to reframe their personal lives and look at their communities. The research papers ask them to address community issues from a critical point of view.

The most important platforms defended by the MST and guiding students reading of reality are:
- Struggle for land through popular agrarian reform;
- Struggle for the right to produce organic food from agroecology and to have food sovereignty;
- Struggle for access to culture (as recipients and producers), education, health;
- Struggle for a participatory democratic political system

The critical lenses that are part of the MST ideological framework see the world from a historical dialectical perspective centered on the struggle of classes. In this perspective, the landless workers are the peasants, the historical group opposed to capitalism.

**Students’ background and ethos.** The first reading of the memorials reveals that students from the Education of the Countryside schools enjoy doing the same things any other teenager does. They like playing soccer and hanging out with friends; some like reading or cooking; some like riding bikes or horses. Teenagers from the four schools investigated here can be classified as poor or extremely poor, a category that statistics agencies define according to economic status criteria. However, for this research, I chose to access the information students share about themselves spontaneously in their memorials (even if suggested by prompts) and try to understand how they make sense of their own social condition instead of placing them into the generic category of “poor.” This means we will see memorials in which students sometimes read their own living conditions as "good enough" to be happy, otherwise classified by agencies that measure human development. The focus here is not to compare official demographics to the spontaneous self-narrative of this group, but their perception of life conditions certainly disrupts how poverty is classified and qualified by many agencies.
The memorials address different aspects of students' lives; the issue of poverty is one of them and cannot be ignored because students' socio-economic positioning is an essential part of the Movement's pedagogy. However, this poverty needs to be qualified, for it is not a generic condition that requires generic solutions. The memorials color and individualize the conditions of those individuals and, at the same time, show that the students share some characteristics among themselves. Student-authors build bridges between failure and strength, dreams and school, a past of struggle, and a present of opportunities that challenge stereotyped or generic classifications of poverty.

Some aspects of the students' social and economic positioning are illuminated by the coding that maps what is valuable to them. Some students didn't report on some of the categories, and others positioned their struggle or social vulnerability as a less important factor in their lives. What is important for the discussion I want to bring here is not the truthful character of the information provided by the memorials. Other than matching the memorials with demographics, I want to discuss how students make sense of their lives, either by showing awareness of their social condition or not and how these elements mark their positionality.

Students’ background information reveals they are the first generation for almost everything in their families: they are the first to be able to go to high school, the first to be able to study without working at the same time, the first to have running water and electricity at home (not all of them), the first to be able to dream of a career. The table below shows how students describe themselves and their families concerning **family structure** (students who were raised by one family member other than the parents or only one parent); **relationships in the family** (student impacted by death/prison/impairment/addiction of family member), **poverty** (student’s perception of family struggling because of unemployment or low income), **parents’ incomplete
schooling (student indicating parents had to drop out of school); family members being forced to move (because of drought or unemployment); and their perception of lack of structure in their homes or community (no running water, electricity, or paved roads mainly). These six categories were common to almost every memorial. Moreover, most students self-reported at least 3 of them in each memorial.

Table 2: Students self-reported background information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ self-reported background information</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Raised by other family members/single parent</td>
<td>42.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Death/prison/impairment/addiction of family members</td>
<td>37.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Struggle(d) because of unemployment/lack of money</td>
<td>40.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Parent(s) didn't finish school</td>
<td>76.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- Family members had to move due to environment or no jobs</td>
<td>59.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- Lack of structure (water, electricity, schools nearby, roads)</td>
<td>44.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>membranes with 3+ categories</td>
<td>67.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with 4+</td>
<td>32.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with 5+</td>
<td>16.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It's interesting to notice that these students are the first generation in their families to graduate from high school and have the chance to go to college. Only two students mentioned parents finishing high school. All the other parents had to drop school before or just after finishing elementary school because they had to work and help with family income, as Antonia heard from her mother.

My mother tells me that when she was a child [her family] struggled, she couldn't go to school because there were no schools. [But] when she was 7, she went to school for the first time, [although] she had to work with her brothers and sisters to help her parents not go hungry. I asked if she had a dream when she was a child, and she said she didn't because it was impossible in her condition. [...] My father's childhood was no different from my mother's. He struggled and had to work during his childhood with his four brothers because if they didn't help, they would starve.

Most students’ grandparents and great-grandparents (only some memorials mention this generation) were able to study enough only to know how to read and write or sign their names. They dropped school to work, help parents take care of younger siblings, or help with

67 Brazil has federal and state universities in every state. They are public and tuition-free. However, the access to these excellent schools is through strict entrance examinations that limit the access to students coming from private institutions that prepare elite individuals to pass those examinations. Since the leftist PT political party took over (2002), they implemented affirmative policies to democratize college access. The students' memorials analyzed here are from 2018-19, which means this was the first generation of poor students graduating from public high school that will benefit from these affirmative policies.

68 All translations of students’ works are mine unless marked otherwise. I tried to maintain the register and tone of students' writings, including grammar mistakes that, in most cases, came from the influence of spoken language or from failed attempts to use written formal registers. Readers will find, for example, students trying to use subordinates with the wrong connectors. I only edited their writings when it compromised understanding.

69 Antonia Clerciane Delfino dos Santos, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial).
house/farm chores. They also describe living conditions as worse two generations back when grandparents had to walk for miles to get water and go hungry during the summer. And had no schools or hospitals nearby. However, these difficulties and the lack of living structure are seen by students from a special point of view. The examples below illustrate how students describe the difficulties of past generations and how they put them in perspective. Patrícia's description of domestic work shows how women sometimes had a double journey, from the fieldwork to the home chores.

My grandma told me she raised her children with goat milk, that her kids walked barefoot, and that they ate cassava paste. And that they (my grandparents) picked Feijão Bravo leaves to sell, besides the difficulties they had to get water. Water was far away, and it was that dirty water from a clay pit. And they washed their kids' clothes with soap made of Rapa de Juá plant. Studying was difficult too because they had to go to schools that were far... far away from home. They had to walk there; when it was possible, they rode a donkey. The only types of work available were in the fields; they would leave home at 6 am and come back at 5 pm, and all male kids and adult women would also do this work. The women would also work in the evening, sewing up to midnight. My grandma tells me they had dreams, too. The main one was to study, but there was no school.

Antonia Iris describes how her father had to walk to distant places to get water every day:

70 Summer in this equatorial region means the dry season that lasts six months, from July to December. The first half of the year is called winter, the rainy season. Temperatures don't vary much during the year, staying between 78 and 82°F.

71 Ground cassava is part of the process of making cassava flour.

72 Canavalia Brasiliensis, a species of beans that are not used for human consumption but can be used as organic fertilizer.

73 Medicinal plants are traditionally used as homemade antibacterial products.

74 Patrícia Santos Almeida, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial, emphasis mine). 
(1D9)
My father ... moved to São Roberto, where he lived until he was 14. He struggled there. The food was not enough; they ate rice and beans and meat only sometimes. He would transport water on a donkey and would walk 5 or 6 kilometers to get water to drink ... He studied up to 3rd grade of elementary school, that is, he knows how to read and write, but he is very good at Math. My father says he wore shoes for the first time when he was 16 years old.\(^7\)

Antonio calls attention to how past generations started working early, at home:

My parents' childhood was not very easy. My mother told me she didn't go to school, and she had to work a lot to survive. At 12, she was sent to live with her oldest brother to help his wife with the kids. She [my mother] worked so much she didn't have time to study. She was the one who would get the water, she worked in the fields, and besides all that, she took care of the kids. Since she was a child, my mother has always been hard-working, and I am very much proud of her. She has always done everything she can to help her loved ones. She is a very good woman.\(^7\)

Finally, Rúbia Paula reported that her grandparents had no electricity and no school supplies.

My grandparents struggled a lot because their family was very big [12 children on her mother's side and 11 on her father's], and they were not able to provide for them. My grandfather from my mother's side told me he used to go on foot to Canindé for the monthly groceries, and he had to go back on the same day carrying a bag of groceries on his back. There was no electricity; they would use gas lamps or candles. They had a wood-burning stove, and they had no school supplies to study, only some sheets of paper and pencil stubs. That's why some people from those times were illiterate and never finished school, and [now] they don't have much learning. At least my parents made it to the third grade of elementary school. They learned how to read and write. But even with all the difficulties, my grandparents managed to raise all their children well, teaching them to be good people and follow a good path as they did.\(^7\)

\(^7\) Antonia Iris Cruz Castro, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial, emphasis mine). (1C8)

\(^7\) Antonio Gildasio Silva Uchôa, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial, emphasis mine). (1C5)

\(^7\) Rúbia Paula Barros Cavalcante, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial, emphasis mine). (1C16)
The main difficulties lived by these students' parents and grandparents were no easy access to water, no nearby school, no electricity, not enough food, no clothes, and not being able to study (there were no schools nearby, or they had to work instead).

However, as we can see from these excerpts when students describe this, they don't understand themselves or their parents as victims; instead, they say those were obstacles, but their parents survived all the odds and were people who “managed to raise their children well, teaching them to be good kids,” as Rúbia Paula says. Their families’ stories are told as stories of overcoming difficulties, always thanks to the love their (grand)parents had for their family. They are proud of their (grand) parents and see them as people who have “always been hard-working,” who is "very good at Math,” who are “good [people],” For student-authors, there is value in “follow[ing] the good path,” in raising kids to be good people, in the effort. They recognize their parents suffered and had to give up their dream of studying, as explicitly mentioned by Patrícia but present in the others, too. *Studying* is a generic word, in Portuguese, for going to school, but we see Antonia Iris relativizing the knowledge her father has acquired through school and the skills he has now: “He studied up to 3rd grade of elementary school, that is, he knows how to read and write, but he is very good at Math.” She probably sees her

78 Rúbia Paula, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1C16)
79 Antonio Gildasio, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1C5)
80 Antonia Iris, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1C8)
81 Rúbia, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1C16)
82 Rúbia, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1C16)
83 Antonia Iris, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial, emphasis mine). (1C8)
father’s ability to do numbers in her everyday life, and this tells us that the meaning of studying and knowledge these students might have is broader than simply going to school.

In these examples, students recognize and vocalize their (grand) parents' strength and ability to navigate difficult times. Students' writings reveal parents' and grandparents' agency as the only condition that could help them survive. However, this agency seemed not to be enough in some situations; some of the difficulties reported by them were described as natural conditions of the environment that could not be overcome. Verbs and expressions like “there was no [school, water, electricity, etc.]” or “school/water was far away” describe a landscape of poverty that seems to be immutable and part of life. Even faulty causal associations like Antonio Gildasio’s justification for his mother not going to school (“She [my mother] worked so much she didn’t have time to study”) or Rúbia Paula’s interpretation of past generations’ lack of studying (“they had no school supplies to study, only some sheets of paper and pencil stubs. That’s why some people from those times were illiterate and never finished school, and they don’t have much learning.”) reveal how student-writers tell their past generations’ lack of agency to overcome some difficulties but at the same time their heroic success in surviving these difficult times.

This framing is compelling for the contrast it shows with the research papers written by students from the same school one or two years later. In them, student-writers describe their realities from a different point of view, framing issues into a more critical understanding of their conditions of poverty. But so far, at this point of the PEP program, when they are writing their personal narratives, what we see is students describing past generations as individuals who survived all the odds of life in a context of immutable poverty. There is no reference to
collectivity or any network sustaining their lives in the community. The bond of the expanded family relationship seemed to be the only help their parents could count on.

According to student-authors, their (grand)parents’ struggle relied on individual efforts to change the game of poverty. Above all, those are stories of strength and hope for the future, a hope that their (grand)parents’ attributed to their faith in life, in themselves, and sometimes in God. This hope is different from the hope we see associated with the Struggle when students talk about their dreams for the future. Instead, they see themselves as part of the MST and a collective struggle for a better future. This changes their idea of hope, from a passive God-willing hope of their (grand)parents to their hope of today, rooted in the collective struggle.

So far in the memorials, there are no social critical lenses to read this narrative that places parents and grandparents in a condition that could otherwise be read as a lack of proper public policies or marginalization. The MST-ideological critical reading of their reality is just beginning to be part of the students’ thinking, as we will see in their report about their community. Church and family life seem to be the centers around which life gravitates. They all value and love their family as the most important thing they have in life. They refer to God as part of a background belief system and as part of their social life since most of the community's traditional events happen on church holy days. However, their lives and life decisions don’t seem to be ruled by the church or any specific religion.

**Positionality and discourse through literacy**

The way students decide to write about themselves, their families, and their past generations marks how they position themselves at the beginning of the research process.
Bronwyn Williams, in his introduction to *Identity Papers: Literacy and Power in Higher Education*, calls attention to the way writers “perform identities” through literacy. For him, the idea of performance emphasizes that, rather than having a single stable identity that I present to the rest of the world, my sense of identity is external and socially contingent. Depending on the social context I find myself in and the social script I believe I should follow, I negotiate and adjust my identity.

Rather than discussing the stability or not of students' identities, this idea of identity as a performance associated with literacy helps us think of the memorials, specifically this first part when students are communicating who they are and where they come from, as a moment when they are negotiating aspects of their identity adjusted to a specific audience.

Students’ narratives describe endurance, strength, moral family values, and a love for rural life. The individual heroic acts of their past generations create the idea that those families are fit for the Struggle. They have survived individually or as a family and, consequently, they are ready for a collective Struggle. In that sense, students’ writings reveal they are selecting events and adjusting them to their audience, the collective community of the MST.

While these students are negotiating their identities, they build awareness of their positionality. By writing about themselves and their families to show individual strength, moral family values, and love for rural life, they root their identities as peasants, who will later be able to vocalize the collective discourse for social justice together with the MST. The final part of the

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85 Williams, ed., 5.
memorials shows this type of discourse where they show their positionality as peasants who are in the struggle for agrarian reform.

The discourse for social justice aligned with the struggle for agrarian reform appears in the memorials as part of students' narratives about their schools. Sometimes students position themselves as participants in the struggle for agrarian reform or other platforms; at other times, they validate practices that are found in democratic processes (elections, debates, assemblies, and others) where they feel their voice is heard. Eduarda, for example, understands that her school is a place where "we have the opportunity to give our opinions about any type of subject. We also know our rights as citizens [and] we participate in several social struggles…"86 She associates the horizontal process of debating, her access to civil rights, and her participation in social struggles as part of the same political process. However, she still does not know how to name it.

The relationship this writer establishes with the text can be read through Sharon Marshall's claim for the writing that invites a "fishing for ideas"87 is allowing her to describe and associate ideas without worrying much about how they will communicate to the audience.

Marshall claims that "critical inquiry begins at home, and that those inspirations, preoccupations, or questions that arise in private contemplation — in mind and on the page as in private freewriting— can be a powerful impetus toward, and even form the basis of, future learning, reasoning, arguing, and writing for an audience."88 The memorials are not freewriting,

86 Eduarda Alves Silveira, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1A18)


88 Marshall, 18.
but Marshall’s ideas about how private writing can serve as the basis for a future argument can help us understand the relationship between the personal and the public in passages like Eduarda’s. Similarly, Carlos tries to develop language to explain how he sees his school connected to an idea of democracy where everyone is included.

When I finished middle school, I went to another school called Patativa do Assaré High School, a school of the countryside where they teach and show the reality and the education of the countryside. [It's a school] where we can have our opinion and [where we] have to respect each other; where we have democracy, and an understanding of the countryside where we live. It's a school that helps us advance personally and professionally, to be whatever we want in the future. They also show we have to respect people as they are, for their character, and not [discriminate] by color, sexuality, gender, social class … This school is different from the others, it shows us what we want to be in a way we start noticing the world around us, realizing it is good to live in the countryside. It gives opportunities to this social class [poor rural workers] who is so undervalued nowadays and which, besides all the difficulties, will never give up wanting a better education.89

As Carlos describes, justifies, explains, and argues, he builds the language around the idea of democracy. He is trying to think, as he writes, about how he sees democracy materializing in the school project he is part of. He realizes that the discussions and learnings he has in this school project have taught him "to start noticing the world around us" and to see life in the countryside differently. His writing tries to build language to qualify this countryside and the rural workers by associating both with the MST discourse. Both rural workers and the countryside surface from his writing as elements of the MST discourse that criticizes the understanding of the poor rural workers as a historically undervalued social class, classified as "unemployed," "illiterate," and "undereducated."

89 Carlos Eduardo Sampaio Marreiro, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1A7)
The memorials in these sections about school and community are the mid-way between the private writing of students' personal and past generations (Memorials' sections "The Self" and "Family") and the public writing of the research papers. As they rehearse for the public writing, students are trying to write for an audience and to persuade themselves at the same time. They are persuading themselves in a sense they are building reasoning that circumscribes their lives in a larger frame. This means they are making sense of their lives through the writing of their memorials. As they write to explain and persuade (themselves and the audience), they build their positionality as landless workers in the struggle for agrarian reform and embrace the discourse of the MST for social justice.

**Community and dreams for the future**

In the parts of the memorials where students describe their dreams and projects for the future — “Perspective and Projections” section— we read them describing their dream of going to college as something that can be possible thanks to their individual effort and family support. The history of survival of their family’s past generations seems to be what justifies the students’ comfortable situation in the present: they are the ones who can study and dream of a better future. So, their dreams have three main characteristics: first, going to college and having a career; second, helping their parents financially and/or taking care of older parents; and third, getting married and having children.

When students write about their dreams, they seem to be worried about finding a good job to achieve financial stability first, then trying to achieve the other objectives: “My dreams are
to finish high school and then, God willing, I will move to São Paulo\textsuperscript{90} to look for a job. After some time, I’ll have made enough money to go to college.”\textsuperscript{91} Therefore, even though students are the first generation to have food security and some life structure that allows them to be in school without having to work, the ghost of poverty still haunts them, and the solution is still in the South, the industrial São Paulo.

However, even though almost all of them say they want to go to college (in Canindé, probably, the closest city with universities), they also mention they want to come back and build a family and live near their parents and siblings. The countryside where they live now seems to be a place for them to live in the future, but the farm work is not in their professional plans. They want to become lawyers, veterinarians, nurses, doctors, and teachers, among others, a dream that is shared with their families, like Francisca Gabriele's: "I intend to finish [high] school, and I dream of going to Med school, to be a pediatrician because this has always been my dream and also my mother's. But for now, I need to work anywhere else to pay for the college and the courses I want to attend.”\textsuperscript{92} Their thinking about the future seems to be more that of having an individual chance in life and not having to struggle as their parents did.

In terms of writing, this section of the memorials is one of the moments when students communicate to their audience (and to themselves) a break, a shift in the narrative of survival

\textsuperscript{90} The largest metropolis in Brazil, approximately 1,800 miles from Canindé (the school county), São Paulo is historically the destiny of poor populations migrating from the Northeast of the country looking for jobs.

\textsuperscript{91} Antonia Biana Queiroz Lira, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1A12). Here I believe the student needs money to go to a private college or, in case she manages to enter the public university, be able to study without having to work, a rare situation in Brazil.

\textsuperscript{92} Francisca Gabriele Guerra Vieira, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1A19)
from the past generations. So, by presenting their past generations as stories of struggling and, consequently, of themselves as individuals that come from this line of survivors, they have built an ascending line that will culminate in their dreams of going to college. In that sense, their past generations’ stories mimic an original myth, where (grand) parents were denied their citizenship—materialized in the basic needs that many citizens (urban, mostly) shared but they didn’t—and struggled to survive physically, looking for food and water every day. The next generations, as a continuation of that line, advance in another type of struggle, the effort to graduate and go to college. By doing so, students in this first year of the PEP research program somehow position their needs in a hierarchical body-mind, physical needs/mental needs, and body labor/mental labor logic that permeates their personal narratives of the past. They are at the top of an ascending evolution line.

**Writing from the personal**

The memorials are finished products of the PEP program in the first year of high school, but they are developed throughout the year in blocks, guided by prompts from the teachers. In this sense, students write each section and move on to the next until the text is finished, without major revisions. This writing through time gives us the opportunity to think of the memorials as writings that are processes of rehearsing ideas and language for research in a continuum, from private writing to public writing. As we saw, the memorials are the entry room to the research process from two perspectives: the writing that begins to become public in the ending sections ("Community" and "Perspective and Projections") and the researcher's point of view that starts to be built as a positionality, incorporating the MST discourse.
Above all, students start examining their lives from the most intimate circle ("The Self" and "Family" sections) to more public ones ("School," "Community"). They are invited to write about these topic-sections, but they are not asked to revise them in the end. Instead, these sections of the genre seem to serve the purpose of shaping the self-deliberation that provides students the opportunity to think as they write, investigate their lives, understand themselves, imagine, to rehearse as if no one else were there. They approach public writing at the end of the memorials as they start talking about a bigger reality, and their language shifts to a more persuasive one. As they move from the personal to the public, which will culminate in the research papers later (Years 2 and 3 of high school), they have already built positionality that fits the political discourse of the MST and are ready for research. However, the personal narratives in their memorials, as in the narrative Paulo Freire told before concluding that language was the route for the invention of citizenship, are not just an illustrative preamble to scientific research. In fact, research for the MST pedagogy is the one the individual invests themselves with, and the personal is always evidence.

This way of looking into the bigger reality from the personal is suggested by many scholars that investigate the relationship between writing and thinking. The writing that blends memory, reasoning, and imagination that is found in freewriting (Marshall93), focused

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freewriting (Wallack\textsuperscript{94}), and in the use of personal narrative as evidence (Spigelman\textsuperscript{95}), suggest an approach to knowledge that starts from private writing and from the disclosure of personal narratives. Here I examine these authors’ main ideas as lenses to understand the memorials as personal narratives written to explore ideas, build reasoning, and positionalities.

Sharon Marshall advocates for the use of freewriting in composition courses to allow the “fishing for ideas,” the surfacing of the “chaos within” that connects the individuals with the world in a more unfiltered way. She mentions scientists from the past that relied on personal experience, imagination, and intuition to build scientific arguments (da Vinci, Newton, Curie, Einstein). When exploring one’s thoughts through writing, students allow the free transit between memory and reasoning, rational construction of arguments and categorical opinions buried within, objective descriptions, and imaginative recreations. Marshall suggests this type of exploratory writing offers the opportunity to apprehend any topic, subject, or theme through the most basic faculties, in the conscious and the unconscious, where the borders between memory, imagination, and reasoning are blurred. The two examples below show different ways of introducing the community where students live. In the first excerpt, Maria Joice's writing tries to communicate how her community was founded, but she ends up doing writing that mixes the result of her field research with her research process.

Nobody knows who founded my community, nor who were the first members. The oldest member was mister Chico Zoro, but he passed away last year. I asked a member of the


\textsuperscript{95} Candace Spigelman, Personally Speaking: Experience as Evidence in Academic Discourse (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004)
community if they knew how this land was conquered, but they didn’t know, so I think there is no registered information about this. The other people I asked didn’t know either. Maybe mister Chico Zoro knew all about the Serra\textsuperscript{96}, but unfortunately, I cannot ask him because, as I told before, he passed away.\textsuperscript{97}

Maria Joice is writing to herself and to the audience at the same time. However, as she cannot offer specific information about her community origin, she gives a justification for that. She does that through language that retells the process of gathering information and then shares with the reader the problem that prevented her from finding the origin of her community. A member of the same community, Eduarda says "My community is called Serrinha do Limoeiro and I couldn’t find all its history, just about the small village where I live, called Sítio do Meio. Well, I’m going to talk a bit about it, it was founded in 1948 by mister Francisco Zorobabel, best known as Chico Zoro…”\textsuperscript{98} Eduarda’s approach to the missing information about the community she shares with Maria Joice, Serrinha do Limoeiro or just Serra, is to give information about her small village inside the community. Eduarda decides to adjust the task of informing about the community's history, attending to the demands of the genre —the memorial's section is called "The Community", after all— but, just like Maria Joice, she cannot avoid the writing that explores the problem of not having the information to tell the story. This kind of relationship between author and writing is similar to what Marshall describes, although here the authors are not "fishing for ideas" but rehearsing the public writing that comes with the genre.

\textsuperscript{96} Serra means a mountain chain, but here she uses it as a geographical reference to her community and a short for the community's full name, Serrinha do Limoeiro.

\textsuperscript{97} Maria Joice Soares Delfino, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1A17)

\textsuperscript{98} Eduarda Alves Silveira, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1A18)
Borrowing Chaim Perelman’s ideas that “self-deliberation offers [a] model of sincere and honest reasoning, where nothing is hidden, no one is deceived, and where one only triumphs over one’s own uncertainties,” Marshall argues that the self-deliberator is someone who is at the same time speaker and audience, as in a pre-argumentative process. Therefore, when the act of writing about oneself is also an act to “fish for ideas,” to rehearse one’s thoughts, and to explore a topic from different angles, the individual who writes is at the same time the speaker and the audience of their thoughts. In the case of Maria Joice and Eduarda above, they are at the same time communicating to an audience and building this “honest reasoning” Marshal and Perelman describe.

The argumentative aspect of this exploratory writing can also be understood from the lenses of Nicole Wallack and Candice Spigelman. Nicole Wallack’s claim that “the majority of students want to think, want to learn, and want to understand their world better,” suggests that the use of focused freewriting in class as an important tool in “challeng[ing] them to act on these desires concretely,” also helps us see the connection between personal writing and critical thinking. Drawing on Matthew Goulish, a theater performer, Wallack explores processes of writing to read that, just like Marshall’s advocate for multiple ways of approaching an object


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(through memory, imagination, etc.), they would allow writers/thinkers to read “by using our eyes, our ears, our imaginations.”

Wallack understands that the act of reading is enhanced by the writing that puts students in dialogue with the reading, in the process of meaning-making. Her claim is that by focused freewriting the reader-writer approaches the reading personally. She explains how the difference between comprehending and apprehending texts helps us see the relationship between writing and reading differently. She points out that "reading comprehension impl[ies] that there are right or wrong answers," that in the word comprehend “we find it contains com (together) and prehendere (to seize, grasp, or comprise).” This means that the reader-writer who comprehends is “grasping the wholeness of a text or set of data.” She explains that apprehend, on the other hand, comes from the same root prehendere but is changed by the prefix ap (to, toward). Choosing the definition from the Oxford English Dictionary, she invites us to think of the writing-to-read relationship as one in which the writer is asked to apprehend:

- To learn, gain practical acquaintance with
- To become or be conscious by the senses of (any external impression)
- To feel emotionally, be sensible of, feel the force of
- To lay hold of with the intellect: a. to perceive the existence of, recognize, see; b. to catch the meaning or idea of; to understand

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101 Wallack, 35.
102 Wallack, 33.
103 Wallack, 33-34.
104 Wallack, 34.
105 Wallack, 34.
This way of approaching texts by apprehending them personally allows students to disrupt and expand the rhetorical function of the memorials and the research papers. Inserted in a research program that is not traditional, be it because it is circumscribed into prescribed modes of thinking or because it serves the purpose of solving a concrete problem (a socially necessary work), the memorials and the research papers allow writing that comes from students’ apprehension of evidence, data, community history, and others. The "texts" used by students in their writings are many times collective memory, mainly considering that these communities have counted on oral memory since always. In that context, a text that is read through writing usually comes with the writer in it, that is, the writing-reading of those texts are acts of approaching personally, of *apprehending*, in Wallack’s words.

This reiterates the argumentative force of exploratory writing proposed by Marshall and Perelman and offers us the metacognitive aspect of this procedure. By seeing themselves as thinkers, students raise awareness of their own thinking process. There is a learned experience in this process, beyond the reading/writing: students write to read their lives, their evidence, and their world. And they learn they can test their ideas by writing, that writing is a dimension of reading, and both instances of thinking.

So, the self-deliberation typical of the memorials functions, too, as an argumentative act. The subject who narrates their experience does so by arguing (selecting, dismissing, persuading himself). By doing it, they learn about themselves. The self as an argument for research is a product of internal deliberation. The self of the writing is a new self, already engaged in the critical reading of reality from the MST ideological framework.

Therefore, the memorials are opportunities for the students to review their past, rename their present and dream of their future. Some memorials show students in a divagation that
distances from the genre features, but the writing proves fruitful, leading the thinking to conclusions that are important to the writer. These moments, windows into students' intimacies, reveal how private writing constitutes ways of approaching important assertions. In the "Perspective and Projections" section of his memorial, Luis Felipe takes us to his final thought about the (im)possibility of following more than one career through a reverie-type of reasoning (emphasis mine).

I want to make my family proud of me; I want to make people smile at me; I want them to think I’m nice and nothing more, nor less, than anyone else. I want to love and be loved, too, I want to be human and be treated like any person. And for tomorrow, I want happiness, to smile with my friends; I want my mother's warm hug, my grandma's sweet smile, and the strength to keep going myself. When I finish high school, I’ll go to college, psychology, or drama school. In fact, I don’t know, there are many options. I wonder if being one, I could be all.106

Moments like this, when students talk to themselves, are frequent in many memorials. However, when they start talking about their communities, we see a shift in tone, and the writing becomes more public. Students seem to feel the need to introduce their communities as an object of study, as a topic they approach from outside, as researchers. In fact, at this point, students go on a field research and interview community members, but also use their families' stories and their own experiences to compose the evidence that will describe their community as a collective group engaged in the Struggle. Now the past generations that were narrated as individuals who lived a life of poverty and had no actual options other than survive are the ones who get together to change their situation.

We will see students describing their community meetings as democratic spaces where community members have a voice and fight for what they want by actively engaging in the

106 Luis Felipe de Sousa Rodrigues, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial, emphasis mine). (1A10)
Struggle. These individuals are the parents, uncles, aunts, and grandparents of the students who are writings these memorials. The same ones whose narratives of survival at the beginning of the memorials seemed to have had no agency in life. We know that these past generations changed and learned to engage in the political fight through the MST political training and grassroots work. We also know that these students are witnesses of this collective life and struggle in their everyday life. Thus, why do student-writers decide to describe their parents’ past as a landscape of poverty with individual struggle (section "Family" at the beginning of the memorials) and, in contrast, today’s poverty as the result of social and political forces that oppress them (Section “Community,” in the final part of the memorials)? Being aware of this larger social picture does not make them reflect upon their parents' past and re-signify their history? The answer to this question is in the process of writing for research. Even though students have been witnesses of collective organization and discourse that explains their reality in terms of the struggle for social justice, it is by writing about it that they will build thinking and a voice that meets this discourse.

**The Personal as Evidence**

Candace Spigelman claims that personal experience can be used as evidence in academic discourse. She uses the terms *personal writing*, as well as *experiential writing* and *personal narrative*, “to refer to the ways in which writers make sense of their lives by organizing their experience into first-person stories.”

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build thinking to enter any future public argumentation — even the argumentation that comes with the reading of texts, as Wallack suggests. Instead, looking at the issue from the reception point of view, she claims academic discourse is richer when it is mingled with personal narratives.

Advocating in favor of using experience-based writing in composition classes, Spigelman draws on scholars that claim more critical educational practices and argues that these practices would restore students' authority over their voices that are frequently silenced. In an effort to show the benefits of this practice for both readers — who would see the evidence from alternative angles — and writers, who would have opportunities to “vocalize previously silenced voices.”

Even so, Spigelman points to the need for experiential writing in opposition to abstract essentialist writing that is typical of scientific genres. For that, she draws on Jane Hindman, who advocates for the personal in academic discourse: “… Hindman explains that supporters of the personal observe the tendency of abstract (scientific) discourses to objectify both writers and subjects, stripping discourse of its ‘materiality.’” In fact, Hindman's concept of "embodied writing," personal academic writing that involves the "discursive practice of recover(y)ing this essential(ist) tension between compositional selves and positions," would reintegrate materiality into certain spheres by putting concrete personal narratives side by side with academic discourse. However, both Hindman and Spigelman advocate for the use of the personal narrative when framed by the academic discourse, which means the reception of this personal

108 Spigelman, 24.
109 Spigelman, 26.
narrative is circumscribed in (future) argumentative actions. In that sense, they are not personal narratives *per se*, isolated, but argumentative ones.

Considering the memorials are arguments of the self, with students being arguers and the audience at the same time, and the writing being a thinking (learned) experience (Marshall and Wallack), the memorials are personal narratives that are not isolated either. They are part of a research program, a future (and present) argumentative act. In that sense, they are personal narratives that claim some of the same things the research papers do. Above all, they argue for the existence of these landless peasants-in-struggle for social justice whose lifestyles, modes of thinking and making sense of life are legitimate ways of producing knowledge and explanations for the problems they see in their community.

**Students’ relationship with their community and school: their first field research**

When writing about their community, students show they value their culture and history. The narratives describe beautiful geographical landscapes and traditional parties; community events and issues; the habits connected to farming and to church. Students seem to know about these events from being eyewitnesses or actively participating in them.

In the community section, we see a more descriptive, analytical tone in which students point out problems of the past and how they are solved now. Almost all of them describe communities that started with no running water and now electricity, in isolated places with difficult access. Schools were old farmhouses and students would be transported by Pau-de-
Arara trucks. They also explain how they see the social organization of their communities, groups of settlement members deciding together and demanding solutions from government institutions. Differently from the family description, they recognize that community issues are solved by the collective organization and persistent political struggle for a better quality of life.

Antonia Iris' Memorial is an example of how these students see the benefits of this kind of political collectivity: "when the community decides to demand solutions for the problems we have there, we debate among the community members."

Therefore, although they narrated their parents' struggles with the inevitability of lack of infrastructure in the past, students choose critical lenses to write about their community problems of today. Showing a shift in tone and attitude, students read the problems of today as part of a systematic process of marginalization or bad management of tax money, understanding that it is through the collective struggle that they will achieve better living conditions and social justice.

Hellen lists several problems in her community and connects them to solutions that depend on permanent pressure from the collective groups in the settlement, detailing how these meetings are carried out.

In the community we see many problems, for example: there is no sewage network, no health center, and no health service. … Besides that, there are no streetlights and no schools nearby. And one of the greatest difficulties of my community is the lack of safe passage in the wet part of the Batoque river because the river floods every winter, and the

\[111\] Pau-de-Arara means, literally, “macaws’ perch” and comes from the way these birds were transported to be sold in the colonial times, tied to a perch. This term is currently used to refer to trucks that are used to transport workers who are packed in the truck’s bed sitting on a plank without any safety. It’s irregular but still very much used in the countryside.

\[112\] Antonia Iris Cruz Castro, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1C8)
community members cannot leave the community by land, since the river surrounds the settlement. In order to solve these issues, the community got organized in 1982 and founded a collective members’ association. … They meet every last Sunday of each month and it is through this association that the members of the community collectively try to fight for improvements for the community. When they want to demand something, they meet, write, and sign a petition. The president of the association takes it to the mayor.  

In fact, memorials show there was betterment in life conditions of almost every community due to two main reasons: federal programs, such as Luz Para Todos or Cisternas, and the collective social organizations of the rural populations that pressure federal agencies for specific demands. The examples above show how students recognize that the better conditions they have now depend on their collective organization. When students describe the meeting of their collective settlement organizations, we can see they understand the force of the collectives in organizing the work of the settlement and in prioritizing the demands and political pressure they will make on public agencies and institutions. Students are eyewitnesses that the collective has political power. Alice’s memorial describes the collective meetings’ objectives.

My community … has a collective that debates about everything that happens in the community. They make suggestions about collective tasks for everyone. Through the meetings, they achieve better results in the community farming, they discuss where they

113 Hellen Lima Guerra, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1C7)
114 Light for All, a federal program implemented during Henrique Cardoso administration (2000) and expanded during Lula da Silva’s administration that provides electric energy to poor households in remote places with no access to electricity.
115 Cisternas is a federal program implemented during the Lula da Silva administration (2003) that provided low-income families living in areas impacted by frequent drought or very low rain with water tanks to harvest rainwater.
will plant, where each member will plant and how they will plow the land, what they will plant, all is debated collectively by them.\textsuperscript{116}

Alice’s perception of the collective meetings coincides with the MST’s principle of “the collective teaches,” that “the MST collective educates the landless for the concept of collective because it is part of every dimension where the Movement is present.”\textsuperscript{117} She sees her collective community organization as a structure that organizes the farming work of the settlement in a way that is better for all, and that brings better results. And by witnessing this, she learns how to be in a collective, that "nothing is done alone."\textsuperscript{118} Above all, she learns that a collective respects every voice and is built by all. When she mentions they “debate” and “discuss," we can see a young girl learning from the collective she sees her family adults participating in and at the same time experiencing herself this democratic space in her school. When describing the Education of the Countryside school, the characteristic she first mentions is the collectivity: “the most important thing in this school is that it uses [implements] people’s education [students and teachers] by inserting them in a collective, that is, in a collectivity." Alice, like almost every other student in the memorials, sees the community collectives as social, democratic spaces where members are horizontally organized and whose voices are valued.

Different from any demographic description of their community, they start developing thinking through their writing that connects the economic, social, cultural, and political structures together. When describing their communities, students are invited to think about the characteristics, the problems and their communities' history. They do so by talking to the oldest

\textsuperscript{116} Alice Martins Abreu, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (ID8)

\textsuperscript{117} Roseli Caldart, Pedagogia do Movimento Sem Terra: Escola é mais do que Escola (Vozes, 2000), 219.

\textsuperscript{118} Caldart, 219.
members of the settlement, people who are considered the living memory of communities. Many students acknowledge and thank members that helped them by providing information for the memorial, and some report that they couldn't find the information they needed.

In this section of the memorials, students are supposed to investigate, to look for information. By doing so, they learn about their settlement and learn to respect sources of information that are not always part of a school research process: the people in the village. They understand that there is “knowledge” that can only be acquired by asking people who lived or witnessed history; likewise, some peoples’ histories are never told in textbooks. Most of all, their thinking-writing about what they witness and experience helps them “read” their community better.

So, the natural phenomena of a flooded river, as described by Hellen above, could be easily understood as a natural disaster impacting the community, but it becomes a problem to be discussed by the collective members who decide to demand a safer pathway from the government. Hellen is not only reporting; the thinking-on-paper that she does rehearses the reasoning for the future research paper, while at the same time re-signifies her reality. The writing of this section in students' memorials is a moment of more distanced thinking, a less intimate and more public writing. They are shifting from personal individual memory to shared collective experience, and their writing shifts in tone together.

So, the “Community” section of the memorials is the one where we can see students doing the writing for research that approaches the one they do in their research papers. They also need to look for information in a more formal way, that is, they need to interview people they never met before, or look for information from the county office. Their writing in this section and in the section about their school contains a mix of first-person experience and third-person
narrative. In this section, paragraphs have more condensed information, the order of information is not necessarily chronological, with less presence of oral language and dialogue with the reader. The paragraphs alternate descriptions of the community cultural activities, issues, and collective organizations with justifications or explanations. We read from them that they collected information from older members or written sources.

Antonia Andressa, in a clear attempt to use a more formal register, describes the recent betterments in her settlement: "Nowadays, we have advanced in the construction of a new health center for the community. There is a pharmacy, too, but according to statements, it is not located in commercial areas. They are remodeling the sports court and there is a proposal to build a new school in the community. In this case, this school will be full time."119 Comparative writing from the same student in the first part of her memorial, where she talks about her romantic life shows how she has changed in the register:120 “Well, let’s talk a bit about my intimate life. I already had 5 boyfriends — it will make anyone say Oh My! — but it’s true, I never really fell for any of them; there were [boys] for every woman’s taste, except for mine.”121 She might have changed the register because she learned to write in a more formal register throughout the memorial, clearing the written language of any marks of orality and spoken language in the final section about the community. Another possibility is to think of this genre, the memorial, as a text whose internal sections (as designed by the PEP program) invite students to write in different registers.

119 Antonia Andressa Sampaio dos Santos, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial).

120 I added punctuation to this excerpt to make it easier to understand and separate the oral expressions from the sentence.

121 Antonia Andressa, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1A11)
In that sense, "The Self," "Family," and "Perspective and Projections" sections ask students to write about themselves and address an audience, which many times is themselves, and others is the Movement, the school, or even the country, which they address as citizens.

This mixture of description, justification, and explanation that comes in the form of experience lived/witnessed or in the report from interviews constitutes the "personal as evidence" Spigelman claims. The descriptions are not fully objective as in traditional reports or scientific research papers. Personal narratives are not only memories and experiences. This section of the memorials represents a blurring between intimate and public writing that shows students approaching the public writing of their future research papers.

Finally, in the writing about the School of the Countryside (section “School”), we see students’ writing almost totally shifted to public writing for research. This section shows students’ attempts to say what they believe. Just like members of their community giving their opinion in a debate, they are invited by the “School” section of the memorials to talk about the Schools of the Countryside. At this point, although they know their schools by experience, they choose to write from reasoning based on a more abstract argumentation, as if they were giving the definition, a categorical opinion, or sometimes assessing a situation. Bruno, for example, describes the Education of the Countryside from his experience, but his writing is structured as reasoning that addresses an audience and with a more formal register.

I believe that the School of the Countryside is necessary so that it teaches and shows the workers' children that you can live in the countryside without damaging it. [The School of the Countryside] shows all the work that the relatives and ancestors peasants made throughout history. It should teach each young student to read the society critically, knowing their rights and that they have a voice in society. [The school] should teach [students] to be able to see when something is wrong and fight for it to change, because the workers are the ones who move the country. And all this is combined with good
teaching with teachers who are highly qualified to teach the young students to succeed in life.\textsuperscript{122}

Oscillating between description (“[The School of the Countryside] shows all the work…”) and prescription (“It \textit{should teach} each student…”), this excerpt illustrates students distancing from the language of personal narratives and approaching the writing for research. However, the transition from the first-person description (left only in the first “I believe”) and the concrete personal narrative to the more impersonal description and argumentation are given by the introduction of categorical affirmations. As we see, the student changes what he sees into what he thinks there should be in a School of the Countryside. The overall language certainly represents a shift to more public writing but assumes the tone of universal truth, even if we notice the students’ individual experiences guiding their opinion. The discussion about the genre, in the next section, contributes to understanding how students shape their writing from the memorials to the research articles.

\textbf{Part 2 – The Genre Issue: Performative Acts}

The genres chosen for the research program in the School of the Countryside, the memorials and the research articles, are essential elements in the combination of popular, critical education and dominant scientific curriculum. Strategically placed in different moments of the program and of students’ political training, the memorials and the articles invite students to think about their lives so they can act upon them, write about their communities’ history, position themselves, and access dominant knowledge by studying from issues of their reality.

\textsuperscript{122} Bruno Almeida Teles, no title, Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019 (memorial). (1A4)
The thinking that comes with the writing of the two main genres of the PEP research program asks students to do different things. The memorials invite them to think of who they are in this community: to describe themselves and narrate their past experiences, introducing themselves as individuals; to narrate their past generations’ untold stories, allowing them to build stories of survival; and to describe their community, helping them see its problems and the importance of collective organization. The thinking that comes with the writing of the memorials is more intimate, but we see students beginning to engage in a more public writing when they talk about their community and their school. The second main genre of the PEP research program, the scientific articles, will ask students to engage fully in the writing for research and in the MST ideological framework that comes with it.

As containers and organizers of individual thought, these genres allow self-deliberation and critical thinking. As rhetorical devices, they convey students’ self-reflection to themselves, allowing critical reading of their reality and even revision of identity issues. In that sense, they enable the argumentative process that comes with writing that is self-deliberative, as Marshall and Wallack defend, and with the use of their personal experiences as evidence. However, even though memorials and research articles represent a continuum from intimate to public writing, sometimes they combine both aspects in each one of them, and the transition to the critical thinking and inquiry-driven writing that is expected in the research papers that come after the memorials doesn’t always happen.

For the Schools of the Countryside and for the Movement, they express students’ internal movement as they engage in the Struggle as adults-to-be. In that sense, the memorials work as a genre that allows a collective voice to be built, even from an individual private writing. Students write about themselves, but we can see they are responding to prompts directing their thinking to
a reflection about the Education of the Countryside, their communities and the collective struggle. In this context of MST-governed schools, the memorials are a genre that acts as a constrictor and conveyor of the thinking and wording that builds the prescribed discourse of MST, as they allow student-writers to vocalize this discourse.

The analysis of the research articles show that the critical reading of reality developed through the writing of research papers does not represent a critical thinking, in terms of reading the object of research through different angles and critical questioning. Students are pushed to read their realities through the Movement’s critical lenses, which not always happens. The analysis of students’ reasoning shows there are other forces competing with that framework. In that sense, the genre for the scientific research communicates a process of studying, the deep learning that comes from the necessity to solve real problems, but which does not lead to a multiple faceted reading of this reality. It inserts students in the process of reading the reality through the MST critical lenses and engaging in the struggle for social justice. So, in a way this academic genre shapes the building of activists.

Another way of looking into this apparent contradiction between the genre and the writing for research is to think of genres as structures that are more connected to the social act that they perform other than to the features that characterized them. This analysis sees the genre as a social discourse, even if its internal features say otherwise. The memorials, for example, are genres that, in actual discursive events of real life, serve the purposes of immortalizing life experiences that are unique, of people that have certain social relevance, or to reiterate the importance of specific subjects in history. In the context of the Education of the Countryside, they are displaced from their typical rhetorical discursive context to convey and shape the thinking about life of individuals who are not particularly relevant to society in general, as public
figures, nor whose life experience represent significance. However, by having students write about their individual experiences, their communities and family lives, they start thinking about them as unique and important, mainly when they understand this is the beginning of a research process, in which they are also the subjects of investigation. So, the strategic use of the memorials to help build new activists and the use of the research articles to study reality issues from a prescribed point of view can be seen as moments of students’ political training. By writing this genre the students affirm themselves in the Movement.

As for the research papers, they don’t match the typical features of a scientific article, mostly because they convey non-inquiry research and prescribed point of views, but they perform as research articles. This can be understood by the studying character guiding the Education of the Countryside program and by the lens of Charles Bazerman’s concept of genres as performative acts. For these schools, and for the struggle they are engaged in, studying is needed because the landless activist-members are the only ones who can change the perception about their reality. The studying and the thinking, debating, and writing that involves the reflection part of the doing-reflecting-doing modus operandi is, for them, the reading of their reality with the ultimate objective of transforming it. In that sense, the study moments that permeate settlement debates, political training in conferences and study groups, and in the research program of the PEP classes are utterances of this thinking effort to make sense of their realities. As performative acts in which individuals name their realities and at the same time discover themselves as thinkers and knowledge-makers, these genres function as Speech Acts, in the perspective Charles Bazerman elaborates.

For Bazerman, instead of looking for internal characteristics, the genre functions as “standardized forms of utterances that are recognized as carrying out certain actions in certain
circumstances and [imply] standard understandings of situations.” Bazerman criticizes the generic immutable character of genres and suggests typification should take into account less the features of genres and more the circumstances in which they are produced and received. In that sense, “The definition of genres only as a set of textual features ignores the role of individuals in using and making meaning [,] the differences of perception and understanding, the creative use of communications to meet perceived novel needs in novel circumstances, and the changing of genre understanding over time” He uses the Speech Act theory by Austin and Searle to read genres as the way “humans give shape to social activity,” suggesting genres are, per se, speech acts, structures that not only convey or mean things; they do things. This helps us see the research articles as performative acts of research because they are received and recognized as such by a community, and because there is an investigative process in it, although faulty in terms of reasoning from inquiry-driven questions, the internal features.

Also, Bazerman’s claim that genres are structures that vary according to their use and context contributes to understand the role of the memorials in the process of research. For the schools, the purpose of this genre in the first years of high schools is coherent with a process that will culminate into research that intends to transform reality. In the perspective of the PEP research process, the study made and the research produced should serve the ultimate purpose of engaging in the socialist process of seeing reality from a critical perspective. The memorials,


124 Bazerman, 317.

125 Bazerman, 317.
then, are the first step into emerging in that perspective. By writing the genre, students are doing that immersion.

Therefore, the research implemented by the PEP program is not exactly canonical; it places the study developed into a scientific research genre but at the same time displaces or attenuates the genre to accommodate the personal as evidence and the prescribed point of view as critical thinking. If we read this program from the dominant academic-like genres for research, they are faulty. If we read them exclusively from critical pedagogies that advocate for the inclusion of the personal into the hegemonic curriculum, in any form of assets pedagogy, we run the risk of reducing them to affirmative pedagogical practices that are usually found in hegemonic projects of education.
Chapter 3 – The Research Papers and the Emergence of Student-activists

From the beginning of Yasmim and Davi’s research paper, we learn that alcohol addiction “comes from the addicts’ lack of awareness [about its risks], which affects people’s health and family relationships, resulting in verbal or physical aggression.”126 In just one sentence we have the topic of this research paper developed in its causes and consequences without much room for inquiry. Eyewitnesses of this issue in their community, the researchers don’t seem to need any other evidence to justify the addiction they see destroying families in their settlement. Even so, the discussion section of their paper expands on the causes and consequences of alcohol addiction.

One of the citations in the discussion section of the papers attributes some of the causes of addiction to a historical process of cultural assimilation of alcohol, fueled by beverage industries that have aimed at creating larger target public, increasing the amount and type of consumers. The same section suggests a problem in public policies that “exclude the family from the treatment of the dependents, which makes the rehabilitation process more difficult.”127 The research paper concludes by addressing the issue from a collective, public point of view, with evidence that connects individual choices concerning addiction with an industrial agenda and


lack of efficient public policies. So, the same research concludes that alcohol addiction is caused by the individuals’ bad decisions as well as predatory beverage industries and faulty public policies.

There seems to be a contradiction in this reasoning, since the “Introduction” section settles the discussion around causes and consequences related to individual behavior, but the “Theoretical Underpinnings” expands the sources and types of evidence to causes that come from a larger political context. Then, what happened in the authors’ thinking process during their research? Did it evolve from the writing of the introduction to the final sections of the research article? Are authors in-between modes of thinking that include critical reading of reality but don’t fully abandon other vestigial ways of thinking? Can we affirm students are “writing to read” (Wallack) their citation sources and make sense of them? These questions point to contradictions between the introduction and the other sections of students’ research papers and reveal a complexity of competing ideological forces, modes of thinking, social function of research, and writing.

This research paper, like many others analyzed here, suggests a complexity of forces driving students’ thinking and doing research: the role of individual choices in the community, the collective struggle for land through the MST’s political training, and traditional ways of making sense of reality (church values, family). When reading the papers, it is not uncommon to see examples like the one described above, where authors see the same issue through different lenses and don’t resolve it through a single understanding or solution. And it is not difficult to see that one of these competing forces come from the political training of students into the MST’s ideological principles.
Considering these complexities, this chapter will examine students’ research process through their final papers, from their choice of topics to their reasoning, selection, and use of evidence, types of arguments, and language. I examine the main pedagogical principles concerning the research for the MST schools and discuss the limits of freedom student-researchers have in this very specific context. This analysis answers my research questions about topics of research, delineating what is unique about students’ research topics in relation to MST’s ideology and political agenda. It also contributes to understand to what extent this research program helps rural populations regain citizenship and participation in the democracy. Finally, the description of the preparatory cases for the research helps us understand what kind of individual authority these papers show, as students’ research is circumscribed in a prescribed collective discourse.

In that sense, my analysis reveals that the students’ choice of topics for research is not always aligned with the MST, but their reasoning tends to read these topics through critical lenses. I argue that students position themselves as national citizens coming from rural communities with very low investment from the federal government, claiming for their basic rights as citizens. This is seen through students’ selection and treatment of topics, the papers’ “objectives” and “methodology” sections, as well as their argumentation and use of evidence.

My analysis will show that doing research in the Schools of the Countryside involves the use of evidence coming from the peasants’ traditional knowledge, oral tradition, and experience, as well as from written sources. Many times, their reasoning is built from categorical affirmations of opinion rather than evidence-based argumentative writing processes. In this context, language that is not typical of critical thinking modes of reasoning is incorporated as valid ways of thinking and reflecting that can be seen as part of the peasants’ culture. In short,
writing helps students develop thinking from their personal point of view to the one suggested by the MST. This analysis will show that the research papers constitute effective modes of studying and a special kind of research, non-inquiry driven but containing investigative processes.

Students’ research papers are explored through the lenses of various concepts developed by Paulo Freire—limit situations, detached and perceived, critical consciousness, generative themes, hope and dream—in blocks throughout the chapter. My analysis will show how the collective forces driving students’ choices embody their commitment to the MST program in their struggle as marginalized rural populations to regain citizenship and occupy a place in a democracy.

Finally, I will discuss what can be understood as research for the students and the Education of the Countryside program. My analysis will expand on the previous chapter’s discussion on genre, particularly using Bazerman’s lenses to understand how students perform the genre for research. I show how students try to meet the scientific article genre features and the writing for research through one of the internal sections of the research papers (Theoretical Underpinnings) but fail to do so in the other sections. However, the lack of internal features meeting the genre does not prevent these students from performing research. As performative acts (Bazerman) and as a studying process (MST Pedagogy), students engage in a very particular concept of research and these papers can be seen as actual research writings, even if the internal features of the scientific articles are not typical, as the analysis of students’ papers show.
Methodology/Coding

I coded a total of 95 research papers, which included what schools call “research project” and “scientific article,” ranging from 2018 to 2019. The first coding was to map students’ choices of topic, their research questions, types of evidence, and arguments. The papers were coded under six initial categories: topics and motivation for research; declared objectives and perceived audience/stakeholders; communication problems (parts with broken language); arguments and evidence (community responsible/ social justice/ from personal experience/ from witnessing in the community/ from books/ authority discourse); craft (presence of spoken language, register, how students operate the genre); polyphony (how students articulate in writing the community testimonials, experience narrated, references in a text with multiple voices/sources).

The second coding looked for specific parts or moments of students’ writing: verbs, sentences or categorical propositions that showed students’ preconceived views of an issue; causal fallacies; moments where students connected citations with reasoning; types of evidence (statistical, testimonial, anecdotal); marks of attempts to use a formal register; marks of oral or spoken language; students’ initial perception of the issues studied (introduction).
The MST educational principles for research, pre-research work, framework

guiding students’ choice

MST Pedagogical Principles –

The MST’s Caderno de Educação #8 (Education Bulletin)\textsuperscript{128} details the Movement’s principles concerning education. Two of them are specifically connected to the research program of their schools: the difference between teaching and training and the definition of research.

One of the most important principles is the distinction between the concepts of \textit{ensino} (teaching) and \textit{capacitação}, a word that is composed by the word “ação” (action) but whose most common translation to English is \textit{training}. For the MST, \textit{teaching} is characterized by theoretical knowledge taught before action, while in \textit{training} the action precedes the knowledge. Likewise, the one who \textit{teaches} is an educator (a person, a schoolteacher, parents, an author) while the \textit{trainer} is an objective activity, “a kind of situation that challenges the person to learn in order to respond to a concrete problem.”\textsuperscript{129} Finally, the teaching results in theoretical knowledge, while the training results in practical knowledge, in know-how to do (abilities, skills) and know-how to be (behaviors, attitudes, positionings).

In this sense, research, for the MST, has to do with \textit{capacitação}, a training, that is, by doing research you learn how to do things and how to be. The research process trains individuals

\textsuperscript{128} MST. “Princípios da Educação no MST”. Caderno de Educação 8. (São Paulo, Brazil: CEDEM, 1996).

\textsuperscript{129} MST. “Princípios da Educação no MST”. Caderno de Educação 8. (São Paulo, Brazil: CEDEM, 1996), 12.
to have a certain “attitude towards the world, towards the knowledge.” Above all, for the MST, research means “the investigation of a reality, that is, a systematic and rigorous effort to understand deeply (scientifically) what, for us, is an issue.” For the MST, understanding a problem inserted in the reality means studying the situational context of this issue in the present and in the past, and connecting it to other issues that may exist, analyzing the complex network of reality. We see here the synthetic knowledge Saviani defends, in which the contents are connected and always in situated historical-critically, in opposition to syncreric knowledge. The research, then, is a process of placing the syncreric knowledge in critical context and historical perspective, of making synthetic knowledge.

Another aspect of the research described in the Movement’s Education Bulletin is the larger concept of “investigative attitude” embedded in the idea of research.

[the] curiosity towards something you don’t know yet; the search for answers when you are not satisfied with the apparent truth; the ability to connect one idea with another, a problem with another; the interest for studying the history of reality; the ability to make questions, to write what you hear and think… all this needs to be patiently learned and taught.

Therefore, what we see in the Movement’s definition and description of research processes is a combination of study practices, investigative research, and thinking/reflection that comes from

130 MST, 22.
131 MST, 21.
the practice of writing. All this serves the purpose of training individuals to transform their realities and build an attitude of critical reading of the world around them.

Pre-research work, framework guiding students’ choice

Students choose their research topics in the second year of high school. This moment is part of the continuum that starts with the Memorials and the investigation of their personal realities and is followed by classes in which teachers lead discussions about the local reality and, thus, possible topics to be chosen. The process of choosing topics and starting the research varies among the schools, but all of them represent a learning moment, that is, by choosing their topics students already choose how they will frame their research ideologically. This process is consistent with the MST educational principles for research, that establishes that one of the functions of an investigative process is to see the reality through the surface, to understand it deeper. For the MST, understanding the reality issues means reading reality critically, the Freirean consciousness-raising process.

For the landless workers, this means any topic is circumscribed into the critique of the capitalist society/system that sees rural populations as inferior and keeps them marginalized. Therefore, it is important that any topic is viewed through the perspective that breaks with these capitalist values that are “centered on profit and individualism, and instead propose a new
socialist and humanist values.” Among other forms of studying, the political training and the training that comes with research are the means for that.

This process of guiding students to an understanding of their reality through very specific prescribed lenses triggers discussions about freedom of choice. In the memorials we observed how students described their past generations, their community and school, and their dreams for the future. They described the impossibilities of the past and the present context that, even though it is a poor one, it allows them to hope and dream of a future of choice. This duality—the present individual and the dreamed one—is driven by the strong presence of the MST’s ideological framework and its socialist program for specific individuals: the landless of today, the peasants of the future. In order to see how this is built in the research process that starts with the memorials, we will see how the research program guides students to see their reality critically before choosing their research topics. For the MST and the Schools of the Countryside, freedom of choice is connected to citizenship. If peasants’ rights and identity are denied, their only choice is to critique reality and fight to regain citizenship.

Among the four schools analyzed here, two stand out as different ways of leading students to choose their research topic. The first example, from *Patativa do Assaré High School*, is followed by a conceptualizing of *Dream* and *Hope*, according to Paulo Freire. The second, *João dos Santos Oliveira High School*, is followed by the Freirean concept of *consciousness-raising* through *limit-situations* and the *detached* and *perceived*, that will conclude the discussion about freedom of choice.

133 Tarlau et al. “Learning and Transformation: An Overview of Education Within the Landless Workers Movement in Brazil” in *Postcolonial Directions in Education* (Vol.3 no. 1, 2014, pp.18-41), 27.
Patativa do Assaré High School: the MST matrices and the concepts of Dream and Hope

At Patativa do Assaré HS, students choose their topics under the thematic umbrellas presented to them in PEP classes as preparatory work for the research process. These classes present the five formative matrices, ideological references for all the pedagogical and educational work done in the school. Through the classes, students are invited to discuss by exploring the meaning and applicability of those matrices in everyday life. According to the handout given to students, the definitions of the 5 formative matrices are:

a. **History matrix:** it is understood as the cultivation of memory, which is more than just knowing about the past. Memory is seen as something to be made and to be re-written. In the case of rural communities struggling for agrarian reform, creating a memory is deeply rooted in commemorating victories in the settling of landless workers, in creating memorials for the ones who died in confrontation with the police, in reviewing events from the canonical historical narratives, among others.

b. **Culture matrix:** understood as the many dimensions of human life, interconnected. It is through the culture that subjects are conscious of their presence in the world, "turning their material existence into a symbol.” The culture of rural communities involves the “gesture,” the “learning from the example of the other,” the peasants’ way of life, which

134 Patativa do Assaré High School. 2020. Translated and adapted from the handout “Activities for the 4th Week of May: 24-28 of May”, given to students in class.
includes their art, religiosity, ways of producing food, and working the land. The peasant learns through dialogue, “which is more than just exchanging words,” and by observing others like them.

c. *Work matrix:* the dimension of work is connected to the school and the pedagogical process because it is an “ethical-political process of human socialization.” The school understands there should be no separation between work and education; in fact, the school tries to promote an organic relationship between science and work, in the perspective of the Socially Necessary Work and Polytechnical Education. In that sense, educating the future workers means helping them become aware that they belong to the working class. It is essentially a polytechnical education, and it should help subjects connect with other dimensions of life, such as culture, values, and political positionings.

d. *Collective Organization matrix:* essential to the Struggle, the collective organization is what gives new roots and identity to the peasants whose condition of existence, working the land, has been taken from them. They are landless peasants. The collective organization, the MST, gives them a project to fight for, the critical hope that comes from the struggle for land. Besides that, in the context of the schools, it implements a “pedagogy of cooperation,” that comes from the cooperative ways of working in the settlements and the school, and is understood as a “learning cooperative, where the collective takes the responsibility for educating the collective.”

e. *Struggle matrix:* the Education of the Countryside of today comes from the struggle for agrarian reform. The Struggle is a very important matrix for the school since the school needs to further the agenda of the Movement and to make the activists of the future. Therefore, the experiences of social struggle lived by students and their families need to
be incorporated in the curriculum and the school should promote practices that “reinforce values and attitudes learned in the struggle, such as dissatisfaction, sensitivity, indignation at social injustice, social dissent, creativity to solve difficult situations, and hope.”

The formative matrices summarize most of the foundational ideological principles that are at the basis of the Schools of the Countryside’s program. They come from MST’s understanding that these principles need to be materialized in the pedagogical practices of the schools as instruments to promote the “emancipation of subjects.” In the handouts given to students during the classes when the principles are explained, this foundational character of the matrices is also explicitly said, mentioning the MST’s historical fight for agrarian reform along with the Education of the Countryside program: “There is a victory only if there is organization, resistance, and struggle.”

The matrices function as major umbrellas from where the research topics will derive. They are not themes *per se*, but students should connect their themes to one of the matrices, that is, it is not possible to research a theme from a point of view that is not aligned with those of the matrices. In that sense, each matrix does not list community issues of “collective organization,” for example, but any topic chosen in that direction should somehow reveal the importance of collective organization for the Struggle. The analysis of major topics in this chapter will show how students treat topics in their papers and how their argumentation speaks about the matrices. However, as the examples that follow show, some papers also bring other perspectives pointing

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to ideologies and forces not necessarily aligned with those from the MST, such as reasoning that indicates moral values connected to religion or to traditional family ways of raising children. This variety of sometimes conflicting themes and argumentation in the papers show that there are different forces in dialogue, and the study embedded in the research program is a process achieved through the writing of the papers, that is, students study as they write; the research paper is not the end of the process.

It is after these introductory classes to the matrices that students from *Patativa do Assaré* will practice their understanding of each matrix, filling out a handout with the drawing of a tree, the “Problem-and-potentiality-tree,” or just “tree of problems”: a problem/issue they observe (written in the trunk), the possible causes for that problem (the roots), possible consequences/effects (the branches), and potential solutions (the fruit). In the example below, taken from a senior student in 2021, we see that she chooses to make a tree under the *work matrix*. The main issue is *unemployment*; the causes are *alcohol addiction, school dropout, family neglect*; the consequences and effects are *low income, too many children, no career*; and the potentialities are *help, no stress, fellowship* (as in spirit of fellowship), *family*, and *unity* (short for *Unity is Strength*).

Some of the choices made by this student, such as *too many children* (consequence) or *no stress* (potentiality) don’t seem to connect with the matrices. In that sense, teachers do not correct or censor any thinking that comes when discussing about the issue; students are invited to explore causes and consequences freely, even if those are connected to other ideologies. Still, discussions in class favor reasoning that applies the thoughts from the matrices.

This example reveals root causes (alcohol addiction/school dropout/family neglect) associated to social circumstances that are close to individuals, instead of larger contexts — national economy or public policies, for example. This student believes unemployment comes from individual (bad) choices in life, a reading of reality that is not coherent with the critical consciousness promoted by the Movement’s ideological framework. After political training and the beginning of the research process, this student will probably see and vocalize that the root
causes for unemployment come from agribusiness’ low wages, low investment in education for rural workers, lack of public policies for low-income families, or other reasons coming from the MST’s critical lenses.

When analyzing students’ final papers later in this chapter, we will see a more concise argumentation in that direction, showing students learned how to read their world critically. In the case of this student here, we already see a beginning of reasoning that places the potential solutions for unemployment on the collective organization. The student believes the help to overcome difficult situations comes from the collective, even if the problems were supposedly caused by individual bad choices in life. The potential solutions show that help, unity, fellowship, and even family are part of the same collective that supports individuals in this community. Here we see that this student already incorporated what we saw in the memorials, when students witnessed how the collective organization helps the communities in their settlements to find solutions for any type of problem.

In another example —on a graph for better visualization— the causes for poor or lack of education can be understood as coming from a larger context:

Here we see the student addressing structural causes that are connected to the school itself—the building and the institution—by mentioning lack of safety, lack of teachers, poor structure (physical), and few classrooms. The other causes, poverty and poor-quality access roads, are connected to an even larger context, probably the country or the settlement/county.
The consequences/effects show a combination of social problems (illiteracy, school dropouts, low professional development) and individual effects (lack of opportunities).

Through these examples, we see students trying to apply the matrices and, by doing so, to rehearse the positioning and vocalization of the Movement’s critical lenses. They sometimes succeed in choosing causes and consequences for problems that are consistent with the Movement’s ideas, but some of their choices show other competing forces that explain their reality, such as the individual lack of interest or drug and alcohol addiction. This tells us there is some space for students to work on their thinking around an issue in the fashion Marshall and Wallack suggest when they advocate for private or focused freewriting as the place where one can fish for ideas (Marshall) or develop thinking from reading (Wallack). However, the presence of a critical lens that is markedly framed by the Movement’s ideology is consistent in most of the cases. Besides, there is another framework concept that marks students’ understanding of reality: the Freirean concepts of dream and hope.

**Freire: Dream and Hope**

The word *dream*, listed as one of the consequences of poor education in the example above, resonates alone, almost disconnected from the other words and from the cause-consequence logic of this exercise. Fundamental for the MST pedagogical program, the Freirean meaning of *dream* and *hope* are essential to understand why these students are able to engage in this lifelong studying process that only starts in high school.

These students are already living in settlements that were built after years of encampment and struggle for land property rights. They know that the collective force of the MST makes them stronger. As we read from their memorials, they are witnesses of periodic meetings in the
settlement to help families who are struggling. It is fair to conclude that the individual dreams and the collective ones walk hand in hand. Most importantly, individuals can dream because they see the possibility of a future, given by the existence of this collective force of the Movement, that gives them hope.

Observed in many of the students’ papers and in the MST pedagogical documents, concepts of Hope and Dream are those developed by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of Hope*,137 ontological elements that are essential to the Struggle and the process of humanization. For Freire, the right kind of hope is the one that is not detached from reality; it is critical, attached to the Struggle. Hope is connected to a dream, a projected future that makes itself present in the Struggle. It is not ideal and abstract. The dream of the subjects in struggle, intrinsically connected to hope, is like the “world they aspire[d] being announced, somehow anticipated, in their imagination,”138 which, in the example of the student above, could have a double meaning. Since dream is mentioned as a consequence of bad education, or lack of, the most obvious understanding is that it represents “lack of dream,” frustration for not having the proper education that opens for future possibilities in life. Therefore, the first reading is the absence of dream, that is, you cannot dream if you have no education. However, this means something different for the Movement, that draws on Paulo Freire’s concepts of dream and hope. In this context, it is because there is no education and there is hope that the dream exists.


138 Freire, 31.
If we read this in the context of the MST struggle for humanization and Paulo Freire's understanding of *dream* and *hope* — the ability to use “imagination and conjecture about a different world than the one of oppression”¹³⁹ — we may see this student rooting their dream in the exact problem that prevents it from turning into reality. Already circumscribed in the Movement’s ideology, the student’s dream comes from the critical understanding of their condition. This is only possible from the perspective of the struggle for a better education that allows *hope* and *dream*.

This is different from “lack of opportunities,” for example, that makes the subject passive, at the mercy of circumstances. For this student, opportunity (of jobs? Career? Study?) is something that "lacks" if you are not served with education, because of concrete structural problems of the school/settlement and poverty. The consequence “lack of opportunities” slightly differs from the others, suggesting a disruption from the other elements that are direct consequences of bad education. This disturbance happens because “lack of opportunity” is a term much associated with non-critical, common-sense thoughts about life in general and what people should do to “succeed in life.” In Brazil, the common saying about education is that you must study to have a chance in life. Embedded in this logic is the propaganda of meritocracy: if you work hard, you will have good opportunities and succeed. Conversely, if you do not, you have no opportunities. This is not explicitly said there, but there is an echo of this liberal logic of labor market/meritocracy in the Portuguese expression “*falta de oportunidade* / lack of opportunity.”

Therefore, in the tree of problems sketched by this student, we have some causes and consequences attached to the critical reading of reality guided by the teaching of the matrices but also some thinking that might come from other modes of thinking or frameworks. Clearly, there is a learning process of understanding reality through the MST critical lenses in progress, but at the same time, other forms of framing reality remain as vestigial forces driving students’ thinking. In the reasoning of students’ papers, this dialogue between forces driving to the center of the Movement’s ideological core and forces pointing outwards the Movement become clearer.

*João dos Santos Oliveira High School: choices from the Inventory of Reality*

This learning of how to read reality from a critical perspective also happens at *João dos Santos Oliveira High School*, where the process before the research is more teacher-centered but equally connected to larger themes. Teachers of the other two disciplines in the diversified part of the curriculum, OTTP (Organization of Work and Production Techniques) and PSC (Communal Social Practices) introduce the students to the possibilities of larger themes for research based on the *portions of reality* selected for that school year (the study complexes). After that, PEP teachers work on the research process with students, which includes writing the project for the research, the field research/action, and the final paper. The list below is an example of a portion of reality and its sub-portions.

*Portions of Reality 2021*

Agroecology
a. From peasant to peasant (a teaching technique based on shared learning)
b. Healthy eating
c. Water
d. Social Technologies
e. Soil
Each item above is followed by a full explanation documented by teachers indicating how each portion of reality should be understood. Although students don’t receive these full descriptions, they are taught in lectures by the teachers, in the preparatory classes that precede the choice of topics for research. The description below is an example of how the sub-portion item “healthy eating” is understood by the school in the *Inventory of Reality*. As we can see, the definition of healthy eating for the MST schools is already connected to the Movement’s ideological framework.

**Healthy Eating**

The dominant mode of production in the Brazilian agricultural system is made to give profit to big landowners and great corporations in the agribusiness. This logic doesn't consider the population's health and respect for natural resources and the environment. In that sense, “Healthy eating: a right for all” is a call for a struggle that comes from the need to challenge today’s reality, and it calls for our commitment to the struggle for a project that opposes the agribusiness’ mode of production. This challenge requires the democratization of access to land in its social function, the collective property of natural resources, and a sovereign project of agriculture that prioritizes the production of healthy produce by the peasant agriculture for the whole population.

The education needs to include in the schools’ curriculum the commitment to debate the modes of food production, the care for the field, for nature, and humankind. The health of the people who work the fields and of the people who consume the produce need to be discussed with the entire population who are numb to such a strong attack, irreversible to human health and the environment. This offensive comes from the agribusiness mode of production that places Brazil as number one in the world as the country the most consumes pesticides, with statistics pointing to a rate of 7 liters of poisonous substances

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141 Small farming
consumed by every Brazilian per year. This is even worse if we think that most of the pesticides used in food production in Brazil are banned in other countries.

Given this unscrupulous scenario, we need to guarantee life quality for the people who work the land, for the people who consume the food, and for the environment. Agroecology is the mode of production that opposes agribusiness, promoting the use and preservation of creole seeds, as it is a tradition among families and peasants, recognizing traditional, peasant, indigenous, and quilombola\textsuperscript{142} populations. This helps families to keep working their own lands, proving it is possible to cultivate crops and raise animals respecting nature, eliminating the use of pesticides, transgenic seeds, and other products of the so-called green revolution.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IS A RIGHT of every nation, that is, the Brazilian population has the right to decide upon and develop its ways of producing food, respecting the ecologic diversity. And the school should contribute with an everyday practice that opposes the hegemonic monopoly of agribusiness’ mode of production and of the mass media that alienates the population with manipulative propaganda. We should dare to stand up for the benefits of healthy eating and the local food, and we should reject the common misleading propaganda of unhealthy food. It’s important to understand that healthy eating is intrinsically connected to the way this kind of food is produced, distributed, and prepared; to the knowledge about the nutritional necessities of the body; to the food composition and its effects in our organism; and the healthy eating habits. Finally, it’s important to understand that fighting for agroecology is fighting for life.\textsuperscript{143}

This description of one item in the subportions of the Inventory of Reality demonstrates that the themes are already embedded in an ideological framework from where students’ research topics will derive. It is similar to what happens with the matrices in Patativa do Assaré HS, although here the themes are more concrete. Both matrices and the Inventory of Reality constitute an effort to read reality from a Marxian perspective that sees humans as historical beings engaged in class struggle. Therefore, there is no ideal individual, nor ideal “healthy eating,” if we take the

\textsuperscript{142} Community of former slaves that escaped and resisted the slavery of colonial period, forming settlements that have autonomy today.

\textsuperscript{143} Adapted and translated from João dos Santos Oliveira High School, \textit{Inventory of Reality}, 2021.
example of this entry of the Inventory of Reality described above. In it, we can see how the community described what they see as healthy eating in its relationship with other elements that compose the totality of the issue, such as the peasants who produce these foods, because “It’s important to understand that healthy eating is intrinsically connected to the way this kind of food is produced, distributed, and prepared,” as the document says. This document constitutes an example of synthetic knowledge, in the perspective Dermeval Saviani urges us to adopt, where different isolated pieces of knowledge (organic food, healthy eating habits, modes of production, peasants’ ways of living, ecology) are studied in relation to one another.

According to this perspective, the object of knowledge, healthy eating, can only be understood in its dialectic relationship with forces that oppose and complement it, that suggest other angles of understanding, that bring historical context to it, etc. The definition of the object of knowledge is not an ideal one; the totality is not the sum of parts, but the relationship among them. For the community fighting for a more human condition of life, it is essential to see that healthy eating cannot exist if there is no healthy body for the rural workers who produce the food. This description, produced by the school community along the years, is part of the Inventory of Reality and represents how they see the issue of healthy eating interconnected to other issues, but at the same time this effort to define and write it down shows us this is a content to be learned. The critical reading of reality, the Freirean renaming of reality depends on the proper identification of limit-situations as these. By combining political training with research, the PEP program starts to materialize the idea of studying as the process through which students change themselves and their reality.
Freire’s consciousness-raising

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire details the process of reading reality critically, the *naming* of the world, as an essential part of the critical education that will trigger transformation: “To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming.” This process of naming for the first time, of reading reality, for Freire, is not spontaneous; it requires the critical understanding of obstacles as *limit-situations*, circumstances that will enable subjects to see their reality as a problem, and then to act, to give this reality a new *naming*. *Limit-situations* are not any kind of situation, but conditions that are historical and represent a limit to the oppressed people’s emancipation. By identifying and reframing situations as historical conditions that have acted to limit people’s freedom, oppressed people are able to see reality differently. In this new reading of reality, the situations are seen as limit-situations.

The *renaming* of reality in the Education of the Countryside constitutes a consistent and permanent effort to engage students and community in critical understanding of their reality and in the Struggle that comes with it. In the PEP program, then, these preparatory classes function as moments when limit-situations may surface. From the students’ reflections about reality emerge the larger themes that “both contain and are contained in limit-situations.”


146 Freire, *Oppressed*, 102.
The “thematic universe” of Freire is a complex network of themes, “the concrete representation of many ideas, values, concepts, and hopes [in dialectical interaction with their opposites], as well as the obstacles which impede the people’s full humanization.”\footnote{Freire, \textit{Oppressed}, 101.} In the case of \textit{Patativa do Assaré High School} discussed before, students read their reality by placing community problems under the matrices that work as a critical filter for the objects they name. So, when selecting any problem for the problem tree, students are being asked not just to find possible causes, consequences, and potentialities of those issues. By reading the issues through the filter of the matrices they are looking at their reality through critical lenses, rehearsing their positionality, and, ultimately, embracing the MST political discourse. By transferring this mode of reading situations of reality in a synthetic way, they will hopefully be able to see how other \textit{limit-situations} of their everyday lives are connected and interact with other situations and themes, constituting a large thematic universe. In the process adopted by \textit{Joao dos Santos Oliveira High School}, where students choose topics from the Inventory of Reality, student-researchers have their topics already positioned in interaction with other themes.

Both programs suggest the Freirean process of decoding, in which reality is split into parts to be described critically to be reassembled again. For Freire, this juggle between portion and totality is crucial to the \textit{conscientização}, the consciousness-raising, that cannot happen “without the unveiling, revelation, of objective reality as the object of cognition of the subjects involved in [the] process.”\footnote{Paulo Freire, \textit{Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed} (Translated by Robert R. Barr. n.p.: Bloomsbury Revelations, 2014). Kindle, 92.} The \textit{limit-situations}, according to Freire, can be those that

\footnote{Freire, \textit{Oppressed}, 101.}
sometimes are perceived as barriers that cannot be removed or as obstacles that people do not wish to be removed. It is only by distancing themselves from the *limit-situations* that people will be able to objectify them and see them as *detached and perceived*. By doing so, the *limit-situations* become obstacles that people know exist and need to be broken through. It is in this sense that Freire understands the present, existential, concrete situation. It’s not any context coming from students’ community; instead, it is a context inserted in the process of consciousness-raising. The situational aspect of the cultural elements, the students’ positionality, cannot be separated from the cultural elements that students bring to school practice.

The two processes of preparatory classes for the research are very similar in at least one important aspect: they teach students how to read their reality critically by teaching them how reality should be read. In *João dos Santos Oliveira HS*, students choose under which *portion of reality* their research topic will be, considering each portion is already inserted into an explanatory definition like in the “Healthy Eating” example. This process is not triggered by problems students see in their communities, like the process described in the tree of problems from *Patativa do Assaré HS*, but it considers the problems and potentialities already surveyed by students and the community in the Inventory of Reality previously made. The descriptive document containing the Portions of Reality brings definitions, historical context, and other aspects that insert each entry of this Inventory into the MST’s ideological principles. Therefore, students who are willing to research any topic concerning healthy eating, for example, will have to write about healthy eating in relation to agroecology, organic food, among other aspects defined by the Portions of Reality document. These two examples of preparatory classes for research in the PEP program indicate some aspects of students’ writings after they choose their topics: that they are already inserted into ideology that favors the collective over the individual;
that they are in the learning process of reading reality critically in which the writing for research is a continuation; that the connection between research and real life problems is narrow and should be interdependent and; that students’ thinking also include other forces from other ideological frameworks.

Topics chosen, point of view, evidence, arguments

The graph below shows the research topics chosen. Among the research papers, there are partial articles — schools call it “research project” — which are first drafts written by students in second year, who still need to develop the final written article in their third year. These research projects have the following sections fully developed: introduction, objectives, methodology, and theoretical underpinnings. Final research papers are now individual, but the 2019 papers were still the last ones made in groups or pairs. They include the same sections from the projects (with apparently no revision) and the sections “Results/Discussion” (missing in some of the papers), and “Final Considerations.”
Based on the topic presented in the titles, I coded each paper into one of the categories below:

1. **Health (includes mental health/addictions):** topics that are treated as health problems but at the same time as behavior issues, such as drug addiction.

2. **Education/social issues:** topics that are related to broad education issues (the importance of sports in education, for example), or specific problems (struggling with mathematics, for example). It also includes social issues such as bullying, violence, discrimination against LGBTQ people, and racism in the school context.

3. **Settlement/infrastructure:** topics related to the conditions of roads, the lack of good health centers for the communities, or any other issue related to poor public policies in the settlements where they live.
4. Environment: topics related to the environment and specific environmental problems of the communities such as pollution of specific rivers and deforestation.

5. Farming: topics that address the implementation of new techniques for crops or animal farming, analysis of issues related to this in the settlement, and others.

6. Community history: topics that include the history of settlements or descriptions of communities.

As described before, the process of choosing the topics from the Inventory of Reality or the formative matrices is an attempt to ground the student in a critical study of reality, a process that is not always apparent in the treatment of topics found in the papers. However, the research papers reveal most student-researchers oscillating between points of view implicating the problem in one of the matrices’ framework and perspectives associated to and individual choice, with strong link to personal experience. We see students thinking about their community problems and making an effort to read this reality through the Movement’s critical lenses, but this competes with other ideological forces, ending in a text that combines different kinds of thinking.

This effort probably comes from the process students are going through, the learning of writing for research that comes together with political training. They are expected and trained — the tree of problems is an exercise, after all — to exercise the thinking that explains the portions of their reality as products of class struggle, capitalism, agribusiness, marginalization of rural populations, among other ways of thinking reality connected to a socialist project of education, designed by a grassroots social movement. It is natural, then that they come to the reading and writing moments of the research not with questions in mind. Instead, the reading is a process of looking for evidence to support their points of view and the writing process is the bringing into
words of questions they already have answers for. This raises questions as to whether the research papers are actual products of an inquiry-driven research process, and to what extent the topics are developed into research questions.

**Students playing the genre but doing private writing**

We certainly can affirm that the inquiry is not present in students’ writings as questions when they introduce their topics in the beginning of their papers. However, there is a dispute between different modes of thinking, between belief systems, in the thread of thinking moves of students’ papers. The thinking-on-paper in students’ writing for research allows students not only to apply the MST’s prescribed thinking but also to explore their own thinking. What we see in students’ blurring between competing belief systems and the Movement’s critical lenses is a learning process that happens as students move from personal to public writing. This progressive and processual political training, as it is embedded in the research program, transforms the research process. Therefore, even though there is no research question in students’ papers, they are invested in the process of investigating their realities through critical lenses.

They are told to see the reality from the MST ideological framework in classes before the research. They practice this reading of reality in the exercises where they choose their research topics. Then they start writing and still, they explain their topics through declarative sentences containing other belief systems. But, as their writing advances to the sections of the papers where they are supposed to work with evidence and support their claims, they switch their thinking to a critical reading of their reality, and their writing style to a more public one.
Maria Imaculada and Millena believe the causes of drug addiction is to be found in the individual process of socializing, for “The period of adolescence is when young people become weak because they are living a moment of experimentation and are looking for new things that's why they are the group closest to the drugs.” In this context, the family is seen as the cause (if it does not show support) and the solution (if it shows support), because “the teenager needs to have the family’s affection and understanding. Many times, the family doesn’t give support and the teenager suffers silently and gets away from their friends and thinks that taking drugs is the only way of feeling better.”

The authors see drug consumption’s root causes as those naturally coming from the teenagers’ phase in life, the period of adolescence, a (natural) “moment of experimentation” when teenagers (naturally) “become weak.” The second excerpt shows causes (family’s lack of support) and implied solutions (family support) for this issue coming from family and friends’ interpersonal relationships. The evidence that supports these students’ claims is not there. In fact, it is there as the invisible experience behind the categorical propositions that characterize their language, but as a writing for research that should present evidence as in a public writing, it is not there. These students rely on what they already believe to develop the understanding of this issue.


Romário and Guilherme, whose paper is on a similar topic, agree that "the consumption of alcohol is more notorious among young adults and teenagers. In this phase, the adolescents are curious to experience the sensation either because of family problems or heartbreak, they end up choosing the wrong method to help them forget their problems." Writing as if this kind of experience were known or common to everyone, researcher-authors also choose not to address the issue from a public point of view, that is, to explain these addictions as a public health issue. They write as if they were talking to themselves, or to other teenagers that think like them, an audience who would share the same explanations for these issues.

These examples, taken from research paper’s introductions, show how students’ immediate reasoning to make sense of the problem their topics address is to look for causes and consequences in the inter-relationships of family or friends' circles, or in the individual themselves. Even if the issue is a larger social problem, it is usually treated as something that needs to be solved by the individual and was caused by their natural developmental stages or the family's way of raising the children. The point of view chosen by the student-researchers in the beginning of their papers show an underlying mode of thinking that does not coincide with the Movement’s ideological framework. The School of the Countryside formative matrices, for example, would suggest dealing with this issue of alcohol consumption as circumscribed into a discussion about cultural habits of rural populations, public mental health, or even inside the History Matrix concept.

151 Romário Rocha Oliveira and Guilherme Vasconcelos Lima, Alcohol Abuse Among Young Adults and Teenagers in Cachoeira dos Lessa and Bom Sucesso Communities (Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019) (research paper) (3D8).
As students move from the introduction to other sections in which they need to find evidence to their reasoning, they shift their understanding of these topics and start reading the through critical lenses, approaching the MST discourse. However, they do not revise their introduction, and the papers conclude with these competing modes of thinking coexisting.

**Private writing coexisting with writing for research**

In some other cases, we see students attempting to treat their topics from a distance or a more critical perspective. The two excerpts below, from the same research paper, show students oscillating between attributing individual or natural causes for issues (excerpt 1) and addressing the topic as a societal phenomenon (excerpt 2).

1- Teenage pregnancy is a reality that comprehends all social classes, it is considered a social problem to be faced not only by the family but by the entire society. For many young people, the early pregnancy becomes a fact only to bond the loved person to you, not having the knowledge about how to take care of a child and even less being psychologically and financially prepared, in many cases, the girl has no family support.

2- Early pregnancy is making sexual life more common in contemporary society, however [it's important to] address this theme to avoid big consequences such as low level of education or school dropouts, social exclusion from society, difficulties in finding a job, among other aspects.\(^{152}\)

The attempt to address the issue as a larger social problem “that comprehends all social classes” is soon directed to individual or family choices and conditions, emphasizing that the strongest consequence is the lack of family support. The authors, Emilly and Eduardo, call attention to the

public social aspect of early pregnancy but fail to express a causal relationship: “Early pregnancy is making sexual life more common in contemporary society.”

This paper shows student-researchers trying to develop writing for research that builds reasoning from evidence, with long passages cited from psychology websites that describe adolescence as a stage in life when individuals go through a period of transformation. They also cite counselors who recommend that professionals and parents do not reprimand these adolescents. They look for social or political causes for the problem that could be applied to more realities (all social classes, school dropouts), but their thinking still revolves around the personal and family inter-relationships. They cannot see the issue from the point of view of culture, or health, for example, or under any formative matrix.

This example shows an interesting language situation. The students are making a clear effort to build argument from evidence and to use language that subordinates the thinking to the citations. They also try to use a more formal register. For example, when making a declarative sentence conveying thinking from common belief—“For many young people, the early pregnancy becomes a fact only to bond the loved person to you,” they choose “become a fact,” a failed attempt to replace the low-register (in Portuguese) “happens.” They also use “for many young people,” which gives more credibility to their statement as they try to expand their personal experience to more people.


These authors are trying to move away from categorical propositions and use language and writing that is open to hypothesis, subordinate to evidence, built from arguments, and other elements of writing for research. At the same time, they are trying to select language from a formal register, by using terms that are not associated with conversational spoken language. Above all, students’ writing is becoming more public and less private, with students trying to position themselves as researchers that are arguing to persuade an audience.

Papers whose topics are more connected to the collective life of the community, the structure of the settlement, or larger environmental issues are usually circumscribed into social or political point of view, but not without an effort. The presence of common belief, traditional modes of thinking or individual perspectives and the strong presence of categorical propositions compete with a critical reading of these issues and evidence-based reasoning. One of the most frequent topics in this perspective is the bad service concerning garbage collection. Clecileny decide to frame the issue as a problem of bad management of public service.

The garbage collection in cities or towns is a public service of the city administration, or of private companies hired for that specific function, but this doesn’t work in many places. … When it rains in some small or big cities, we see on the news the flooded cities, people without homes, they sometimes lose everything, furniture, clothes, personal documents, etc. Why does this happen? It's due to storm drains clogged by trash [not collected].

Maria Tainara, however, blames the problem of garbage disposal on the individual members of her community: “When we throw garbage near the reservoir thinking we are getting rid of it [it

actually] makes things worse for the planet. … Instead of throwing it near the reservoir we should think better about what to do so we don’t have so many problems in the community.”  

For Clecileny, the cause for the problem researched is a faulty public service, which brings other public consequences to the community. Maria Tainara claims that the final consequence, flooding and ultimately homelessness, is caused by storm drains clogged by garbage, which is caused by lack of proper garbage collection. She is addressing the political structure of her community, which is even more interesting considering she lives in a settlement that is self-sufficient in many aspects and that counts on collective self-governance. However, this student already learned from the MST political training that the landless workers are citizens-in-struggle, individuals who need to fight to regain their citizenship and to be included in the democracy. One of the struggles is for basic needs and infrastructure.

Clecileny tries to address even larger environmental consequences, saying that this problem brings bad consequences “to the planet.” She approaches the causes of bad waste management from an individual experience — “When we throw garbage in the reservoir” — but somehow associated with the community, with everyone, evident in the use of the first-person plural (we) throughout the text. Later in the same paper, she calls the individual throwing of garbage in wrong places “inadequate destination of waste” and compares this problem in her settlement to statistics from different cities, showing this is a collective social problem. She uses

156 Maria Tainara Delfino de Morais, The Problem of Waste Management in Garrote Community (Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019) (research paper) (2B5)

157 In Brazil, domestic garbage is bagged by each household and left on the curbside in plastic bags to be collected manually by sanitation workers. There aren’t bins. When it rains heavily, garbage bags are dragged by the flood clogging the street drains.
her eyewitness experience but moves to the writing and thinking of research, of evidence-based argumentation. On the other hand, she plays the game of the genre by using evidence and arguments, features of the writing for research, but she claims the solution comes from individual actions and change of attitude —“We should think better”— and not from a deficiency of public service.

The political training of these young activists happens through the process of moving from private writing to public writing for research, where students abandon the discourse that comes from their traditional ways of thinking and re-signify them through a Freirean critical reading of reality. We can see students trying to identify the issues as limit-situations and circumscribe them in a different framework, even if other modes of thinking are still in play.

**The (dis) connection between the introduction and the other sections**

As authors advance their writing to the following subsections of their scientific papers, “Theoretical Underpinnings,” “Results/Discussion,” and “Final Considerations,” they frame their topics into the critical reading of reality taught by the PEP classes before the research process and by the MST political training in general. They select evidence to support their arguments, developing the topic they announced in the Introduction section. However, as almost all papers’ introductions do not have an actual research question, the other paper sections show students working the genre and trying to build reasoning from evidence but only to validate what has already been said in the introduction.

Introductions seem to function as the section where students bring context and justification for this issue to be taken as research topic, in the line of the Socially Necessary
Work concept, where student study what’s needed to be solved in real life. However, when announcing the topic, instead of showing the possible complexities involved in the issue, or in the research question coming from the issue, they state the issue as they see it, in a writing that mimics the tree of problems.

Raimundo and Antonio, for example, writing about the bad conditions of access roads to their settlement, introduce the problem with its causes, “…the access roads in our community are damaged in the winter season. Because of the rain, the roads are full of holes and too smooth, with no structure,” followed by possible consequences, “if the problem is not solved, we won’t be able to go to places like hospitals, schools, pharmacies, among others,” and a suggestion of solution for the problem, “The possible solution is to have the municipality of Paramoti send some machines to repair the roads in the summer.” What we see in these extracts from the same paragraph is that the student-researchers have a predefined position about the object of research since the introduction. There is no research question. Student-researchers are not investigating something, in a sense they are trying to answer an inquiry, but as they move to the Theoretical Underpinning section, they discover something. The evidence-based writing that follows the introduction indicate that students are learning how to build arguments to vocalize their point of view around issues of their community. Therefore, they are not investigating a research topic as a question, but they are looking for evidence that supports their claims that are becoming closer to the MST critical lenses.

The types of evidence found in the papers show students blending evidence that comes from their experience or oral sources in their communities with written sources. Francisca and Maria Janaeli use different types of evidence to build their argument in favor of a better health service in their community. They introduce the paper describing the problem of lack of sufficient health service in their community, stating that “health agents visit the community once a month, and most frequently they visit the sick and the old” and the “nearest health center counts on one doctor, one nurse, and one nurse technician. And the available medicine go to the old people; for the rest of the people, only sometimes.” The introduction also gives details about the distance from the health center and how people must walk to get there, and what they do when they are too sick or too old to walk there. This collection of eyewitness testimonials demonstrates students’ deep engagement in their community. The descriptive details suggest students are attentive to what happens to members of their settlement that have been impacted by the same problem in different ways due to different ages, distance from the health center, access road conditions, lack of money for transportation, or inclement weather. In that sense, we can say they see the problem from many angles. It is not just a description based on their family experience with lack of access to the health center; by enlarging the impact of this issue to different social groups, students build strong evidence that could be perceived and validated by a larger audience.

In the Theoretical Underpinning section, Francisca and Maria Janaeli use the Brazilian Constitution and its articles as evidence to argue for people’s right to universal public health,

159 Francisca Antonia Guerra Sousa and Maria Janaeli Ramos Santos, *Improvements in Boa Vista Community Health Service* (Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019) (research paper) (3B6)
commenting that this individual right is not observed for every citizen the same way. After they state that, trying to use words or phrases from a more formal register, they build on the argument that only the social movements can help reinstate the lost citizenship.

Being active in a social movement is essential to demand the knowledge that constitutes citizenship to bring betterment to citizens, working together to transform some social aspects. Citizenship is a status that considers those who are whole members of a community. The Movement is recognized for demanding that the State and its policies guarantee the lawful right to Health.\(^\text{160}\)

The reasoning that comes after this part articulates two other pieces of evidence, one from a public health specialist and the other from a piece of news, both emphasizing the fact that the Brazilian National Health Service (SUS) should provide health service for all citizens. The authors build on that unfolding the three main pillars of SUS: universality, integrity, and equality. They end this section by restating their community’s right to better quality health services.

Another example of how the writing for research is stimulated and shaped by the genre is Lucas and Francisco’s paper about the lack of health services in São Serafim community. Their introduction opens with their point of view about the topic followed by how they see this issue in their community.\(^\text{161}\)

One of the ways that the issue of inequality manifests itself in the Brazilian society is through the unequal access to health services. Because of this, the availability of these

\(^{160}\)Francisca Antonia Guerra Sousa and Maria Janaeli Ramos Santos, *Improvements in Boa Vista Community Health Service* (Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019) (research paper) (3B6)

\(^{161}\)A note on the translation of this excerpt: the second paragraph had all its sentences and clauses separated by commas in the original in Portuguese, with only one period at the end of the paragraph. I included some other periods to preserve the meaning of sentences and avoid miscommunication.
services, including drugs for the Brazilian population, mainly the poorest people should be at the center of the public policies for Health.

In São Serafim community, the health service is very precarious. It happens only once a month and people have to get there very early to take a number to be seen [by the doctor], but only a few people get to be seen because they give out only a few numbers per day. There are many people in the community and the doctors start working at 9am, which is late for the community members, and in the community, there are many people in need of medical assistance, like old people who have high blood pressure, one of the most common health conditions in the country. There’s also the problem of [the health center] not having enough medicine and some people don’t get the medicine they need, and they have to go to Canindé\textsuperscript{162} to purchase them, but some people don’t have the money to purchase the medicine and they end up not having the medicine they need, and they have to wait until the end of the month\textsuperscript{163} to buy it.\textsuperscript{164}

It is interesting how these students open the introduction by framing the problem they will investigate into larger social issues such as inequality, marginalization of poor populations, who have no access to health, bad management of public policies. The second paragraph of their introduction is a detailed description of what they see as witnesses of their community that struggles to get health services. From the first paragraph, which is more abstract and formally written—including the categorical affirmation “Because of this, … the poorest people should be at the center of public policies for Health”\textsuperscript{165}—they advance to a second, very specific, concrete, and conversational one. The first paragraph, where they state their problem and claims, student-writers’ authority lies in using proper language, in building good reasoning, in addressing issues

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[162] Nearest big city, with roughly 78,000 inhabitants.
\item[163] In Brazil, salary is paid monthly, in the end of the month or in the beginning of the next.
\item[164] Lucas Deiude Cardoso Almeida and Francisco Ricardo do Nascimento Pereira, \textit{Lack of Health Services and How This Affects the Lives of People Living in São Serafim Community} (Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019) (research paper) (3D2)
\item[165] Lucas and Francisco, \textit{Lack of Health Services and How This Affects the Lives of People Living in São Serafim Community}.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
that are relevant. In the second paragraph, they are addressing the same audience, but they use conversational language to talk about their personal experience in the community. Somehow the student-researcher who mirrors scientific reasoning and the community peasant-activist meet in the shift-turning between evidence from experience and argument from critical thinking.

In the Theoretical Underpinnings section that follows this introduction, they alternate written evidence from official sites (governmental agencies, political representatives) with arguments that build the following sequence: 1) authors state health services in the community are bad; 2) citation of a study from a government agency showing cuts in health investment and the impact on society; 3) authors explain how they see this impacting their community and how this led to people not trusting the public, universal Brazilian National Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS); 4) citation describing the universal health system and its advantages; 5) closing argument defending SUS, with authors saying that even a bad SUS is better than no SUS, and “we should fight for better services and not for shutting down this health system.”

After this sequence, the authors say that

the actual situation of the studied community is that we have to be very early in the health center if we want to be seen by the doctor, because there are too many people for fewer numbers that are given out, and it gets worse because the doctors are always late and don’t bring enough medicine with them. The ones that cannot buy it, have no other option.

Their closing argument, then, is a rephrasing of statements they made in the introduction cited above. They conclude what they had already affirmed before they did their research.

166 Lucas and Francisco, Lack of Health Services and How This Affects the Lives of People Living in São Serafim Community.

167 Lucas and Francisco, Lack of Health Services and How This Affects the Lives of People Living in São Serafim Community.
In the following section, they show the results of a survey they made, with graphs and comments after each question, sometimes citing a member of the community interviewed. While showing the results of the survey, they expand on some of the questions answered, building more argumentation for their claims. For example, after they show the graph results for the question “have you experienced a wait of more than a month to be seen by a doctor?,” they comment that the Ceará doctors’ official website published data indicating doctors are not being paid as they should, with salaries due in 12 cities. As “Final Considerations”, authors point that they were able to expose the health crisis of their community but could not take any action because the population is skeptical that the Universal Health System will be good one day.

The writing of these sections shows students exploring the thinking that comes from the difference pieces of evidence. Lucas and Francisco are clearly drawing lines from citations (both from written sources and community survey) to build their reasoning. Their writing explores the evidence well but as independent evidence-reasoning pieces that are not necessarily connected to their initial claims. After a survey question about whether people go to Canindé to be treated, they comment on the universal aspect of the health system and claim that the services should promote equality because they are supposed to be universal, but urban centers have better health services.

What we see in this research paper is students exploring a topic, even if their introduction didn’t narrow a research question. It is because the genre for the scientific research invites them to explore evidence and connect these with their thinking that they do this writing. In some cases,

168 Lucas and Francisco, Lack of Health Services and How This Affects the Lives of People Living in São Serafim Community.
the thinking goes to places that were not expected, and the research becomes the arena of focused freewriting associated with reading, as advocated by Wallack. Wallack urges us to welcome moments of writing for reading when the writer approaches the reading personally, *apprehending* the text with their senses, feeling the force of those texts. Maria Clara and Anderson’s comments (second block) on the evidence cited (first block) illustrates this.

Therefore, everyone pays a tax called IPVA (vehicles and automobiles property tax). Even paying this tax, the roads are in bad conditions, causing damage to the vehicles and accidents, sometimes even bringing risk to life. This happens because the public agencies and the city county do not make the necessary maintenance of the roads, impacting the population whose cars and other vehicles break, causing material losses.

So, the roads need maintenance to be fixed, because the ones that will have the material losses are the community members that need to go to the doctor, [or] to run errands in the urban regions. It’s very difficult for us, students and community members to get to our final destinies because the roads are in terrible conditions, and since we pay our taxes, we have the right to good quality access roads.\(^\text{169}\)

The student-authors not only paraphrase the citation, but they explain how this problem is witnessed by them in the settlement where they live. Their comment shows how they incorporate this secondary source evidence into their own situation, approaching the reading of the evidence through writing in the modes Nicole Wallack suggests, by apprehending with the senses, the memory, the personal implication of the text. The writers see themselves impacted by the bad road conditions described in this piece of evidence, and comment expanding on the description. They even borrow a term from the citation, material losses, a non-conversational term, and offer

their understanding of it in concrete terms, “the community members that need to go to the
doctor, [or] to run errands in the urban regions.”

In other cases, the reasoning is the writing of a thinking that seems to be the
materialization of students’ political training. Lucas and Francisco, in the example about the
health centers discussed above, cite an article published online by Maria do Rosário, a left-wing
member of the Brazilian House of Representatives, reporting on aggressive budget cuts on health
and education. Here I reproduce and translate the beginning of the long citation (first block), and
students’ comments following it.

A study made by the budget consultants for the House of Representatives points
to a drastic cut in public investments in health. According to the numbers
provided by these consultants, the budget cut in the health department will be of
1.2 billion. According to the deputy Maria do Rosário (PT-RS), the head of the
technical department of the House responsible for the budget analysis called
attention to cuts in the health and education budgets, areas that are fundamental to
a sustainable development of the country.

Our community, like many others, is abandoned by the authorities, because we do not
have a quality health service for the population of the countryside, where many old
people live, who need specific health care, as well as pregnant women and children. This
neglect on our community health service has happened for years. People stopped
complaining and got used to this reality and think that the Universal Health System
(SUS) is just a bad thing, dismissing it.

170 Maria Clara and Anderson, Repairment of Access Roads at Fé na Luta Settlement.

171 Lucas Deiude Cardoso Almeida and Francisco Ricardo do Nascimento Pereira, Lack of Health Services
and How This Affects the Lives of People Living in São Serafim Community (Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019)
(research paper) (3D2)
In the comment on the evidence, the authors describe how this national budget cut is impacting their local community life and how this has caused another kind of consequence, a political disbelief of the public universal health system. Later in this section, the authors elaborate on that, building reasoning from the analysis of the political and social impact of the budget cuts that go beyond the bad health service provided.

the SUS is broken and with many problems, but without it there wouldn’t be free access to health to everyone. So, we need to support the SUS and demand its expansion. What is wrong is the lack of investments by the authorities, and not the doctors that give out only ten numbers [per day] to people [in the health center]. Without the SUS it would be worse, we need to fight for betterments, and not for the extinction of this health system.

Students are writing to read the evidence but at the same time they are building language that approaches the MST critical lenses. They acknowledge the concrete problem of lack of quality health care, address the causes and consequences, and position themselves in defense of the public health system (SUS), indicating that the problem is structural (lack of investment) and not superficial (doctors giving out few numbers everyday). In this case, students’ writing helps authors vocalize the discourse of MST activists and join the voices fighting for social justice.

Like almost all the others, students in this research paper did not frame their research topics as questions, but the sections following the introduction show they are looking for evidence to build their argumentation. Likewise, they use their arguments to persuade the audience that they were right in their introductory positioning. In the cases when competing modes of thinking drive students to an understanding of the reality that is not critical, we see a

172 Lucas and Francisco, Lack of Health Services and How This Affects the Lives of People Living in São Serafim Community.
research paper with coexisting thinking. In this context, the introduction shows categorical positionings coming from traditional belief systems and the Theoretical Underpinnings section reveals students deriving critical thinking from evidence. In both cases, students are invited to perform the genre, mainly the section where the writing-thinking gravitates around cited evidence, and the writing for research starts to materialize.

In terms of the thinking that derives from the evidence presented in most papers, students try to build authority as thinkers and activist-members of the MST. The type of reasoning that is very common in the research papers whose topics is less individual and more community-related is strongly connected to these populations’ fight for civil rights. They argue for their rights as rural populations (health services in the countryside vs. in the city, Lucas and Francisco), as poor (money for transportation denying access to health, Francisca and Maria Janaeli), as settlers from agrarian reform (geographically isolated, road conditions), as taxpayers (garbage collection). They claim they deserve access to these services as a means to promote equality. They argue the government institutions should protect and serve them (too). Above all, they are vocalizing the Movement’s discourse and learning how to rename their reality (Freire), by positioning themselves as voices claiming for their place in the democratic system that has historically excluded rural populations.

As shown, students start writing for an audience as they move to these sections where they need to use evidence to support their claims. The categorical propositions that characterize the declarative tone of the introductions develop into argumentative reasoning along the paper, as authors are pushed by the genre to use evidence. Therefore, the writing for research students do in the following sections after the introduction is an argumentative exercise of claiming their rights as citizens. Their main audience is the other activist-members of their community, role
models for these young voices in the collective organization. They need to be heard by them and need to hear themselves, as audiences of their own voices, which begin to shape their political activism.

However, the Theoretical Underpinning section of the research papers is the only one in which we see some features of the research article genre. In that sense, the research aspect of this program is less in the features of the research articles, as claimed by Bazerman, and more in the performative act of their research writing. Students practice an investigative process that starts with the writing of personal narratives and moves on to the acquisition of the Movement’s discourse through the writing of the research papers. Through this, students test their ideas against those of the MST’s modes of thinking and belief system as they find their authority as writers, thinkers, and activists.

**Methodology, Objectives, Final Considerations**

In their "Methodology" section, Francisca and Maria Janaeli explain the two phases of their research: a questionnaire to be applied in the community and lectures intending to raise awareness about health services, as well as organize themselves to demand visits from health agents twice a week. At this point we learn the information that built the strong evidence in the beginning, when authors were able to show how the issue of bad health service impacted many different social groups in their community, came from this questionnaire which is part of the research methodology. We also come to understand, from this example and from many others, that the Methodology section of students’ papers includes an *action*, part of the research to implement a solution for the problem studied. In the perspective of the Socially Necessary Work
and the specific meaning of *studying* for the Movement (the doing-reflecting-doing process), students *study* to find solutions and learn from the process, but their commitment is with making life better and transforming the reality.

According to Shulgin, the Socially Necessary Work requires that the result of any pedagogical practice can be verified in real life. The quality of the pedagogical practice is measured against the actual impact in the solution of the problem from where it originated. So, if a pedagogical practice like a research process starts from a real-life problem, such as the need for a better health service in the settlement, students who develop research to solve it should be assessed against the impact their research had on solving the problem.

In that sense, the Methodology section of students’ papers is strongly connected to the Objectives section. Both indicate researchers are studying because they need to look for solutions for an issue. Each research paper contains a section where students suggest and implement a solution or the beginning of a solution for the problem they treat in their papers. This “solution” is seen as the objective (main or specific) of the research process. The most common objectives are those connected to the process of consciousness-raising. Students believe the solution for many issues is to be able to understand the issue from a critical point of view and then take action to solve it.

So, “methodology” and “objectives” are connected to how the purpose of the research will be implemented, and only sometimes with the research process/paper. The Methodology and Objective sections usually involve at least one of the following: questionnaires and other forms of data collection; lectures and distribution of information in the form of pamphlets or posters; social organization such as committees; organization of educational campaigns; mapping or studies of certain problems to support future actions; preparation of letters and signature
collection to be taken to authorities. It’s difficult to identify the means from the ends in the research process. In fact, students seem to research to identify the causes and consequences of problems in their community they need to read critically, but these objectives are also the methods to transform their reality. Francisca and Maria Janaeli’s research objectives are unattainable through their research, but reveal their commitment to larger social struggles:

**Main Objective:** raise awareness among the community to demand a better health service in our community. **Specific objectives:** identify the problems caused by the lack of health services in São Serafim Community; talk to the members of São Serafim Community about the lack of health service; demand a better health service for our community.

The objectives of this research are not connected to the writing piece in the “Theoretical Underpinnings” section, where the author develop arguments to claim for the constitutional right to universal health care for all. Similarly, the objectives and methodology of almost every research paper are actions to be carried out during the process of writing the paper with the intent to solve the problem that constitute the topic of research, the issue in the students’ community that originated the research in the first place. This perspective is coherent with the Socially Necessary Work concept, where students learn because there is something in real life to be solved but seems to be disconnected from the writing piece.

Both “Objectives” and “Methodology” parts of the research complement each other. These are the sections of the research papers that show the “field” part of the research: they announce students will hold a community meeting, visit elementary schools, collect signatures for a petition, and so on. Likewise, “Results” and “Final Considerations” mention what has been

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achieved from those actions although there is no description of the content of the lectures, pamphlets, posters, meetings, or any other performance, except for the questionnaires, that are attached to the research papers with results graphs.

Maria Clara and Anderson, in their paper “Repairment of access roads at Fé na Luta Settlement,” claim that the taxes paid by citizens should be used for repairing the roads, bringing evidence from official documents that regulate this issue. Their declared objectives are: “to show the problems and what needs to be done with the roads so that people can travel on them,” “to promote debate among the community, calling attention to the road conditions,” and finally “to collect signatures for a petition.”174 In the “Final Considerations” section, students affirm that “[this] project was done by debating and discussing the topic with the community, by collecting signatures to be sent to the proper public officials, that is, the municipality, so that they can come with the machines and repair the roads.”175 The “Final Considerations” section works as a kind of self-assessment of the research process and objectives. From this assessment, we learn that the discussion developed in the Introduction and Theoretical Underpinnings sections feed the debate made with the community and work as study sections for students, who will literally speak for their audience, in community meetings where they present their research and organize collective actions to solve the problems.

The research conducted by students and their thinking process in the text is strongly connected to the reason why the research was conducted in the first place, the Freirean concept

174 Maria Clara Ribeiro Almeida and Anderson Coelho da Silva, Repairment of Access Roads at Fé na Luta Settlement (Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019) (research paper) (3B3)

175 Maria Clara and Anderson, Repairment of Access Roads at Fé na Luta Settlement
of critical reading of reality by decoding its parts and reassembling in the totality to transform reality. Students are researching because they need to see their reality as a *perceived detached*, as “a problem that requires a new naming”¹⁷⁶ so they can act upon and transform it. The MST pedagogy that understands research as a process of *capacitação*, a training where students learn how to be (attitudes, and how to do (skills, abilities) through “a kind of situation that challenges the person to learn in order to respond to a concrete problem.”¹⁷⁷

The research process, then, is not a search for unknown answers to complex issues or questions. It is the study of an issue, a looking deeper, a thinking through writing, the incorporating of an understanding that helps them read their realities critically, so they can act upon it. It is, above all, the doing-reflecting-doing modus operandi that constitutes the idea of *studying* for the MST. It’s a process of describing their realities (renaming) and trying out possible solutions. Above all, it is the dreaming of possible solutions, and the Freirean hope that they will happen, not by passively waiting but by engaging in the collective struggle.

The discussion about the evidence/argument and the objectives/methodology of the research papers suggests the student-authors are implicated in the Movement’s ideological framework, even with the constant presence of other belief systems and modes of thinking. Even when bringing evidence from different ideological frameworks, papers show that students are in the process of trying to read their reality critically. Most papers bring reasoning that reveals a critical reading of reality, which doesn't challenge default modes of thinking directly but offers a

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critical perspective that imposes itself as the right way of making sense of reality. In most cases, authors investigate community problems building their authority as Brazilian democratic citizens concerned with their rights and at the same time aware of the country’s historical marginalization of rural populations and engaged in the struggle for agrarian reform. The “objectives,” “methodology,” and “Final Considerations” sections reveal how students position themselves as individuals who are part of a local community-in-struggle, as members of a larger movement fighting for agrarian reform, and as Brazilian citizens fighting for their rights in a democratic nation that has historically excluded rural populations. Above all, as affirmed by Francisca and Maria Janaeli, “Participating actively in a social movement is essential to demand the knowledge that constitutes citizenship.”\textsuperscript{178} These students are becoming aware that what they need to regain citizenship is knowledge, and the Movement is the only path to it.

\textsuperscript{178} Francisca Antonia Guerra Sousa and Maria Janaeli Ramos Santos, \textit{Improvements in Boa Vista Community Health Service} (Patativa do Assaré High School, 2019) (research paper) (3B6)
Chapter 4 – Literacy and democracy

Participating actively in a social movement is essential to demand the knowledge that constitutes citizenship.
–Francisca and Maria Janaeli, Patativa do Assaré High School.

As we come from the readings of students’ memorials and research papers of the Education of the Countryside program, we see the MST ideology and pedagogy shaping the PEP research program from beginning to end: the presence of personal narratives as the beginning of the research, the guiding classes on the formative matrices, the Inventory of Reality, the reasoning in their writing for research, the choice of evidence, the concept of *studying* disrupting the idea of research. As we examined students’ writings, the Movement’s practices, their theoretical sources, we see how literacy is at the center of the political training process for these student-activists. However, some of my research questions concerning citizenship, democracy, and freedom can only be answered considering the MST’s historical and theoretical background, and the analysis in Chapters 2 and 3. Therefore, this final chapter feeds from the previous ones to answer these remaining research questions: To what extent does this research program help rural populations regain citizenship and participate in the democracy? And how do the Movement’s pedagogical practices challenge or confirm other practices and concepts of popular education?

The connection between education and democracy, or education and social justice, are central to the debate among Critical Pedagogical practices. In that sense, the MST educational project contributes as a program that aims at reaching a more diverse and larger group of rural populations. The implications of the Education of the Countryside program in the current debate on Critical Pedagogies are discussed here from the optics of two concepts: generative themes and context. These concepts are foundational to the Movement’s practices and were discussed in previous chapters through the theories feeding the Movement’s pedagogical practices (Socially
Necessary Work, Freirean limit-situations, and the Movement’s idea of studying from the concrete issues of reality).

Current discussions on students’ right to non-standard languages (Conference on College Composition and Communication, 1974) and how these languages are autonomous idioms and not the language of poverty (Geneva Smitherman 1995; 2017), on multiculturalism (Min-Zhan Lu 1994; Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner 2000) and on decoloniality (Mignolo 2007; 2020) have contributed to the debate of literacy and democracy. From different perspectives, these scholars suggest we build a truly democratic school system by incorporating students’ particularities into the educational system —except maybe for Mignolo, whose studies on decoloniality and de-westernization urge us to look for new (decolonized) epistemologies. If applied to the context of literacy and schools, these studies represent efforts to establish more democratic learning environments, including different modes of thinking, epistemologies, social and cultural backgrounds.

In Brazil, the Education of the Countryside program was created by the MST’s educational department, to institutionalize and expand its program for all rural populations, not only the ones living in areas of agrarian reform. The specific analysis of the research program made in this thesis shows the dispute between the writing for research as dominant curriculum and the critical pedagogical practices that validate personal narratives and competing modes of thinking. From this perspective, I would like to examine the possibilities and limits of this project’s institutionalization.

Part 1 of this chapter discusses how the institutionalized Education of the Countryside program and the political social movement work as bidirectional vectors through the PEP program. I assess the research program from a collective and longitudinal perspective.
Part 2 of this chapter assesses the Movement’s research program in its intersectionality between literacy, curriculum, context, and democracy. I draw on Freire’s generative themes and compare to the Education of the Countryside idea of context and importance of curriculum. The discussion about curriculum and context are fundamental to understand the Movement’s point of view concerning citizenship, freedom, and democracy.

**Part 1 – The collective Teaches the Collective**

Through the analysis of the 2019-2020 research papers and memorials I discussed how the Education of the Countryside program dialogues with dominant curricula and competing modes of thinking. These current practices may represent not a contentious pedagogical coexistence between a utopian pedagogy and a canonical research program, but the beginning of a pedagogical practice that is specific for this community. The MST educational department tries to implement their idea of studying and their concept of research in dialogue with dominant curriculum. The learning result from their research program cannot be fully assessed yet, but the discussion elicited from the daring pedagogical design they propose is visibly a contribution to current debate on critical pedagogical practices.

Students’ memorials told us there is a lively community with members supporting each other. That families make decisions together, discussing, debating, and organizing themselves to fight for what they want. In fact, while I write this, Aline Oliveira, one of the landless workers who has been cooperating with my research, sent me photos of the meeting they are having in her encampment. There are four photos, taken in sequence. Figure One shows how a teenage boy (red shirt, on the right) approaches the group of adults having the meeting and sits outside the
circle, to observe (Figure 2). The meeting happens in the middle of the makeshift tents, under a big tree, all participants sitting in a circle and one of them taking the minutes (Figure 3). They always take the minutes of their meetings and keep them in their records.

Figure 1. A meeting at Esperança da Terra encampment under a tree with the black plastic tent on the back. (Photograph by Aline Oliveira, Paracuru, Ceará, March 2022).
Figure 2. Teenager observing from outside; meeting at *Esperança da Terra* encampment under a tree with the black plastic tent on the back. (Photograph by Aline Oliveira, Paracuru, Ceará, March 2022).

Figure 3. Women taking the minutes of the meeting. (Photograph by Aline Oliveira, Paracuru, Ceará, March 2022).
There is also a child walking around, sitting to listen in figure 1, and another boy helping with the writing of letters asking the supreme court to suspend their eviction orders in Figure 4. We can imagine there are other children and teenagers hearing from their tents or nearby.

Figure 4. The writing of letters to the supreme court. Young boy helping write the letters. (Photograph by Aline Oliveira, Paracuru, Ceará, March 2022).

These adults from the photos are probably like the parents and grandparents of the memorials’ student-authors we examined in Chapter 2, the generation that couldn’t go to school when they were young. Now, they learn how to make sense of their reality through moments like this, a political training that happens in the discussion about the urgent matter of the day. Their thinking does not happen in writing for research, but in oral discussions with other community members, in their political actions, in their work in the fields, and in their homes among family members.
These adults’ children, just like the teenager in the photos, learn from the collective organization of their settlements and camps by observing, by working in the fields, by trying their voice in the youth collectives, by marching in protest as every other settler, by occupying other lands or public agencies to pressure for action. This learning from the example, from observing the others do in the collective, pushes them to follow the example, as if they were receiving knowledge handed down from the previous generation. Therefore, when they go to the Schools of the Countryside and they meet the language of reading and writing for research in the PEP research program, they already have started thinking critically.

In this part, I discuss two findings from the research made in this thesis. The first finding is the connection between literacy for research and political training. The second is the connection between school and community, in a sense that the Education of the Countryside can only be materialized if we consider the community’s context, be it the settlement or/and the social movement.

In the memorials, we saw students positioning themselves as individuals with dreams and hopes for the future; as members of a community and a family that helps them fight for their basic rights; and as activist-members whose voice is heard by their social movement. It is because the writing of the memorials (and of the research papers, too) happens throughout the year without students revising the first sections when they get to the end of it that we can follow their thinking evolving from its first sections to the final ones. As students built their ascending narratives of emancipation, we understand they see themselves as capable of reaching for their dreams from individual effort and community support. The initial tone of the memorials shows students trust in the support of their families and on themselves as essential to fulfil their dreams. However, as the final sections of the memorials invite students to write about their communities,
and for that they need to go on field research, they start looking at their context. The writing of their communities and their schools is the moments when they read their communities through the writing of the memorials, and later they do this more deeply through the writing of their research papers. It is a moment when students understand themselves and their contexts. For them, context is the material life of the settlement and the collective social movement that is in constant struggle, a life that needs to be better.

**Contexts: The issue of generative themes, the socially necessary work, and a tentative of polytechnical education**

One of the MST’s pedagogical principles says that schools should “organize the curriculum around situations that require practical answers from students.”\(^{179}\) This document, written in 1996 by the MST Educational Collective, almost ten years after the first attempt to organize the MST educational department, understands the connection between practice and theory as one of the main pillars of the schools they want to build, and Paulo Freire’s *generative themes* as one of the most important concepts in that practice. According to it, the “issues of reality”, the “issues extracted from reality, …around which a study unit is supposed to be developed, integrating contents, didactic, and concrete practices of the students”\(^{180}\) are the starting point of a teaching-learning process.


In that aspect, the MST pedagogical practice materialized in the research papers represents an advance in Freire’s understanding of students’ contexts and generative themes. We see the critical reading or “naming” and “decoding” of reality, in Freire’s terms, that is part of the PEP research process. However, we also see a more detailed and organic relationship between the pedagogical process generated by the themes and the reality where those themes come from. As discussed in Chapter 3 and according to the MST pedagogical principles, “knowing how to research is in the sphere of knowing how to do and knowing how to be,”\textsuperscript{181} and we can see this organic connection between knowing how to do and knowing how to be in the many dimensions during the research process analyzed in the previous chapters, from the memorials to the research articles. The generative themes are not just the beginning of a pedagogical practice. Context and generative themes are not just a starting point of this pedagogical practice; they are the beginning, middle, and end of this particular idea of research.

This effort to transform the reality through the research work students develop in the PEP program represent an effort to implement the Socially Necessary Work in the perspective of the Polytechnical Education outlined in Chapter 1. Both concepts rely on the relationship between real life issue and education, and the necessity to build the “Labor School,” where the school would teach the fundamental concepts of each field of scientific knowledge so that students could have the basis for each line of work in the future. Likewise, the scientific knowledge taught would come from portions of reality, that is, the practical living issue would work as the context or generative theme. In the research process from the PEP program, it is clear how students bring real issues to class and study them through the writing of the research articles.

\textsuperscript{181} MST, 22.
However, the findings of this thesis shows that the results of students’ research don’t actually change their reality. Students’ research topics are intrinsically connected to their reality and come from real concrete problems, but the results as declared in students’ own writings indicate actions that do not fix the issues the research intended to fix. Instead, their research results are actions connected to the Struggle, that is, they claim the solution is always in the collective struggle. Most research papers argue for the need to build awareness around the issues researched, claiming that if the stakeholders of an issue are conscious about the problem—the Freirean consciousness, linked to an action to transform reality—then the issues will be solved. This is one of the limitations of the Education of the Countryside project. The implementation of the idea of context as a place from where students and the school program depart, and to where they both return with the solution, does not fully happen.

However, my research found other results through students’ papers. Although the logic of working from the context to the classroom (and the writing of research), and back to the context does not entail a full concrete actual solution for community problems, it contributes greatly to the future transformation of students’ realities. It is by engaging in the process of writing for research that student make sense of their realities in a way they will be able to continue asserting the existence of the social movement that is the greatest force transforming their lives.

In that sense, the genre chosen is fundamental for driving student-researchers from a more pre-conceived, individual-centered point of view to a more collective critical understanding of reality. The genre—and the reasoning that comes with it—is the main content to be taught in this tentative of polytechnical pedagogical practice. Students study their realities by stretching the possibilities of explaining what they see. By seeing reality as a limit-situation where forces
are in play, they read it through the MST critical lenses. This is done while they are writing. They use the genre to move from the writing of the personal to the public writing for research.

The research they make works as a studying, a moment of writing to understand an issue circumscribed into an ideological framework that comes from the Movement’s understanding of reality and of education. In that sense, the studying promotes access to scientific knowledge—the writing of the genre, the reading of evidence, and other research skills developed—but the inquiry aspect of the research is not fully developed. It’s a study rather than inquiry-based research. However, this does not make the process less investigative. There is an actual intellectual movement of “looking into,” “looking for,” and “finding out,” even if the result is prescribed by the MST ideology.

By going through this process, students bring evidence and build arguments to prove themselves and to their implied audience that they can root the problems they see in causes they learned to see, by critically reading their reality from a socialist and/or democratic point of view. By writing their research papers, they insert themselves as voices in the community and the Movement, showing their ability to understand reality and offering their authorial contribution.

**Part 2 – Freedom, Democracy, and Citizenship**

Students’ research papers repeatedly claim that the issue they are investigating can be solved by having their rights as citizens enforced. The use of evidence coming from sources like the Brazilian Constitution points to one of the Movements’ goals: to regain citizenship. These rural populations are marginalized for many reasons and the struggle is not just for civil rights. In fact, the right to healthy eating, as described by one of the schools’ Inventory of Reality, is not a
right inscribed in any of the country’s Bill of Rights but is a demand from the rural workers who are fighting for a different project of society. Therefore, the MST’s struggle to regain citizenship for rural populations is twofold: to claim the rights as Brazilian citizens and to dream and build the project of a different society.

As discussed, the idea embedded in the term *occupation* for the Movement is not just connected to the moment when the landless occupy unproductive land to live and plant. This is just one of the moments; *occupation* is a process of regaining the right to have education, health, and other basic rights. The School of the Countryside program, derived from the MST Pedagogy, is another occupation, a “shared appropriation,”¹⁸² as Roseli Caldart says, in which the Movement occupies the existing school system without expelling the “current owners of its heritage.”¹⁸³ In this shared appropriation, they dispute projects of education and, consequently, the decisions about what History should be told, whose knowledge is at the center of curriculum, which languages are validated, which symbolic structures are in play.

The underlying idea of the landless workers’ *occupation* of public schools is to combine the demand for the right to education, by using public schools and not building their own, with the demand to have specific education that recognizes them as rural populations in fight for a new society. Caldart, drawing on the historian Alfredo Bosi, borrows his concept of “dimension of a project”¹⁸⁴ to refer to the culture that forges in the present the future life or, in the case of the MST, the characteristic that places these rural workers of the present struggle in the future...

¹⁸⁴ Caldart, 26.
society at the same time. They are landless today moved by a strong presence of their future project. They are not just landless workers waiting for something to happen to them, as in a passive idea of hope and dream. They live the Freirean dream, rooted in the Freirean hope, both feeding from the struggle that makes them move forward.

This concept of school occupation is what ensures the regaining of citizenship by these landless workers historically marginalized as illiterate citizens, as manual laborers, as landless peasants. They are claiming for the right to be national citizens, literate, recipients of scientific and art heritage accumulated by humanity, producers of knowledge, writers of their own History, owners of the means of production.

The occupation of land, on the other hand, is much more concrete. By occupying unproductive land and producing food from agroecological cooperatives, they start implementing this project of a new socialist society, which crashes with the current capitalist agribusiness industries. The collective organization of the MST, their School of the Countryside program, their agro-villas, the fact they became the largest producer of organic rice in Latin America, that their shares can be purchased in the Brazilian stocks market, this all exposes the wound of a democracy that can be different. Their dimension of a project, the already implemented portions of this project are evidence that a democracy that includes all is possible. Their struggle for social justice is, above all, a concrete, material, struggle. For this social movement, freedom can only be possible with citizenship.

One of the most important findings from the analysis of this research program in my thesis is, I believe, the discussion about the centeredness of curriculum in critical pedagogical practices such as the Education of the Countryside program. The pedagogy MST reinvents itself through the Education of the Countryside when it builds a third space between dominant
curriculum pedagogies and non-dominant pedagogical practices. As a theoretical discussion, the coexistence of dominant/non-dominant curriculum is one of the challenges of education in democratic societies. The need to combine dominant or canonical curriculum and standard language with those coming from marginalized groups has created many different pedagogical practices over the past decades. In that sense, I believe the Education of the Countryside offers a great contribution to this debate.

In terms of literacy associated with research, the third space built by this program happens by moving students from the non-dominant writing practices (the memorials) to the dominant research articles without. Validating community practices that have been historically marginalized and unveiling the oppressing processes that dictate dominant modes of thinking is only half the way to emancipation. The Movement combines these elements with dominant curriculum to establish and educational practice that helps these populations to access knowledge that gives them power without losing the critical lenses that make them understand they need to regain citizenship.

For the Education of the Countryside program and, above all, for the MST, the issue of the lost citizenship is primarily associated with land. These are peasants whose modes of living are identified with farming, with cultivating the land. However, they are not just rural workers, labor force technically equipped to plant or farm. Their knowledge about agricultural processes and farming are those of small farmers who control the cycles and procedures of farming, and who have always been able to decide upon what to plant, when, how much, and everything that makes them owners of the means of production. The issue of access to land is fundamental for them to be included in the Brazilian society as peasants, rural populations who have traditionally and historically lived from the land. In that perspective, the Movement understands the first
struggle is for agrarian reform, but it needs to be followed by the access to education, health, and all the other basic needs that help these populations regain citizenship.

In this context, the students who have access to the Education of the Countryside, are gaining an opportunity to think about their conditions as peasants, as landless workers, and as producers of knowledge that is specific to these populations. In the PEP program, this is done through literacy. By writing the memorials and research papers, these landless workers are able to vocalize the MST discourse for the agrarian reform and social justice, build authority as activist-members of the MST and understand their reality critically.

This perspective counts on Saviani’s critique of the new pedagogies—including Latin America’s historical attempts of implementing popular education as non-critical approaches to the problem of marginalization and the role of education in ending it. His proposal of a curriculum-centered critical theory\textsuperscript{185} that places dominant canonical curriculum side by side with critical lenses from a historical point of view is essential to understand the position the Education of the Countryside program occupies in the debate of education and democracy. The Education of the countryside research program tries to implement a program that bridges context and dominant curriculum by moving students from the syncretic to the synthetic knowledge, as proposed by Saviani. For the critical pedagogy discussion that is intended to feed from the practice done in schools like this, these writings are a document of how the writing about the self

\textsuperscript{185} Dermeval Saviani’s proposal is developed into a method, the PHC, Pedagogia Histórico-Critica (Historical-Critical Pedagogy), where he designs specific pedagogical practices to implement a curriculum-centered from a critical perspective.
and the scientific writing can feed from each other and how the non-standard language can coexist with and be a scaffold to genres that require standard public writing.

The third space adopted by the Education of the Countryside program, that invites students to reach dominant curriculum but welcomes disruptions in the genre and other non-dominant practices is the main contribution of the MST education to the debate on critical pedagogies. Mimicking the student-researchers, the MST goes from the private writing of their pedagogy to the public writing of the Education of the Countryside program.
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Curriculum Vita

Ana Maria Portas is a Brazilian teacher and translator. She has worked for more than twenty years teaching in private schools in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Her experience as a teacher provided her with opportunities to experiment different educational practices. The data collected from these practices were transformed into two school materials, a multidisciplinary textbook in the perspective of project-based learning (published in 2020), and a digital material for the teaching of literature (created in 2016). Over the years, she has translated literary books and worked for publishing houses as a consultant for assessing materials and textbooks to be published.