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Grosso, Luís Antonio; Taquetti, Camila Lopes; Silva,  
Gabriela Santos; Moraes, Lívia de Cássia Godoi  
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## **Occupations in Espírito Santo, Brazil in 2016: adolescence, protests and formative practices**

**Luís Antonio Groppo<sup>i</sup>**  
**Camila Lopes Taquetti<sup>ii</sup>**  
**Gabriela Santos Silva<sup>ii</sup>**  
**Lívia de Cássia Godoi Moraes<sup>ii</sup>**

<sup>i</sup>Universidade Federal de Alfenas (UNIFAL-MG), Alfenas/MG – Brazil

<sup>ii</sup>Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES), Vitória/ES – Brazil

**ABSTRACT – Occupations in Espírito Santo, Brazil in 2016: adolescence, protests and formative practices.** As part of a national research, this paper aims to interpret the history of student occupations in Espírito Santo (ES), Brazil in 2016 from reports collected with 8 young people who occupied schools, taking into consideration the categories: generation, youth and political subjectivity. The predominantly popular and feminine profile of the occupiers, the characteristics of the movement in ES and the impacts of the occupations for those who participated in them were identified. Occupations, especially in terms of formative practices, had a decisive impact on the school trajectory of these young people and influenced a certain continuity of their action in the political sphere.

**Keywords: Student Movement. High School. Adolescence.**

**RESUMO – Ocupações no Espírito Santo em 2016: a adolescência, o protesto e as práticas formativas.** Como parte de uma pesquisa nacional, o artigo interpreta a história das ocupações estudantis no Espírito Santo (ES) em 2016, a partir de relatos colhidos em oito entrevistas com jovens que ocuparam escolas, com base nas categorias geração, juventude e subjetivação política. Se identifica o perfil predominantemente popular e feminino das e dos ocupas, as características do movimento no ES e os impactos das ocupações para quem participou delas. As ocupações, em especial por meio de suas práticas formativas, impactaram decisivamente na trajetória escolar de tais jovens, assim como influenciaram certa continuidade de sua atuação na esfera política.

**Palavras-chave: Movimento Estudantil. Ensino Médio. Adolescência.**

## Introduction

In the spring of 2016, Brazil faced a wide national movement of student occupations. This wave of radicalized struggles by the occupiers happened at the national level, in the immediate context of the coup that removed Dilma Rousseff from the presidency and the subsequent announcement of counter-reforms that led, among other political actions, to the freezing of the resources of basic social policies for twenty years (approved as Constitutional Amendment 95/2016) and the promulgation of the High School Reform project (approved by Law No. 13,415/2017, radically altering the Brazilian Law of Directives and Bases of National Education). For young students, such measures meant the intensification of the deterioration in their living conditions, especially the precariousness of high school.

As part of the national research entitled *Secondary School Students occupations in Brazil in 2015 and 2016*, this paper addresses the student occupation movement that took place in Espírito Santo state (ES), Brazil. To this end, eight interviews were conducted with young people who participated in the school occupations, using a script that has been adopted throughout the country in such types of research. From the interviews, it was possible to identify the profile of the occupiers, the characteristics of the movement in ES and the impacts of the occupations on the school and political trajectories of those who participated in them.

This study is justified by the fact that there are only few academic works addressing the case of Espírito Santo (ES): only three works, one paper (Alvim; Rodrigues, 2017) and two book chapters (Stocco; Moraes, 2018, Losekan, 2019). These are important studies that support our historical look at the occupations in ES.

The data and reports herein are compared with some analytical categories that have been important for the research, namely, the generation following the concept by Karl Mannheim and the dialectic of the juvenile condition and the political subjectivity according to J. Rancière, which are in accordance with the ideas of A. Melucci and G. Pleyers about the social movement and youth.

## Occupations in Espírito Santo (ES) and the Youth Generation

Having started in Paraná state in October 2016, occupations by high school students in ES, Brazil were part of the national wave of occupations that happened in the second semester of this year, subsequently affecting other 21 states and one federal unit of the country until December. In ES, the repercussion of the mobilizing agendas of the national wave were also the main factors that motivated student struggles, namely: the fight against the Constitutional Amendment Project (PEC) 241/2016 (later named PEC 55 by the Senate), which predicted a freeze on primary expenditures (approved as Constitutional Amendment 95/2016) and the High School Reform project resulting from Provisional Measure 746/2016 (approved by Law No. 13,415/2017).

The struggle of high school students in ES was triggered by the convergence of these national agendas with local agendas and dissatisfactions made explicit in the school routine, such as the lack of school structure, the implementation of the “Escola Viva Program”<sup>1</sup> and the hostile relationship with the school board. Another specific agenda sent to the state was the demand for a state university, since ES did not have one yet. Occupiers also emphasized that the occupations were also political opportunities for channeling their incipient attempts at sociopolitical organization as a result of the debates they had been promoting about the political situation, whether autonomously or conducted by the school, and the identification with the feminist struggle, given their participation in previous protests. Such processes contributed to the articulation of small groups of high school students to conduct the initial occupation process in schools.

When highlighting this autonomous organizational element prior to the occupations, Alvim and Rodrigues (2017, p. 17) approaches the movement “Legalize legging”, organized by a feminist collective at the Federal Technical Institute in Linhares, ES, as well as the cinema club “Nome Provisório”, in a traditional college in Vitória, ES. Two occupiers we interviewed mentioned these actions. While Hope (one of the interviewees) pointed out that the “Legalize legging” movement also took place at her school, Student Autonomy, who was a participant in the film club, also mentioned the closure of the cinema club and its reopening outside the school. According to her, a School Council meeting was called, but the members that would possibly be against the closure were not notified about it:

By unanimous vote, the cinema club was expelled, it could no longer hold sessions. But it didn't stop there. The educators started calling the parents of those who participated in the cinema club saying that this movement was teaching their children to be rebellious, to be gay. [...] Whether we like it or not, parents are more influential, so they totally believed and forbade their children to go to the cinema club, because the cinema club started to hold sessions outside the school and in other schools (Student Autonomy).

Losekan (2019) provides estimates on the teaching units occupied in ES in October and November 2016, ranging from 50 to 62. One of the students interviewed stated that the lawsuits reached 57 schools and institutions. Most of the occupations took place in the municipalities of Greater Vitória (Vitória, Vila Velha, Serra, Cariacica and Viana). However, there were also records in Cachoeiro do Itapemirim, São Mateus and Colatina (Stocco; Moraes, 2018). Although most of the occupied places were state schools of primary education that also offered secondary education (high school), the first occupation in ES took place at a Federal Technical Institute in São Mateus on October 11th. Ten days later, the first state school occupied was an important institution in Vitória, which served as a real trigger for occupations in ES, including the adhesion of students from the federal university with campi in Vitória and

São Mateus. As in the other units of the federation, high school students opposed to the regressive measures of Temer government:

The high school student movement put on a show; it was a slap in the face of the entire social movement of Espírito Santos. It was a show because nobody expected [...] that those who would start the process of opposition to Michel Temer's reforms [...] would be the high school students. [...] Everyone expected that university students of the federal university would do it, but this time it was different (Hope)<sup>2</sup>.

A striking feature of the occupations in ES was their severe judicialization, with the state government and the Public Prosecutor's Office of the state leading this process and making the occupation something illegal. In contrast, the Public Defender of ES sought to mediate the relation between students and public authorities. An example is the successful agreements that allowed the 2nd round of municipal elections to be held in occupied schools, on October 30th (Losekan, 2019). A similar trend regarding the guarantee of the elections was observed in other states of the country.

The same did not happen with the National High School Exam (ENEM). Without any attempt of dialogue across the country and with the intention of delegitimizing and undermining the movement, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), with the endorsement of the commercial media, changed the planned dates for the application of ENEM in schools that were occupied. Right and far-right organizations and movements, such as the Free Brazil Movement (MBL), as well as supporters of the "School without a party", also began to act systematically in ES with threats, aggressions and attempts to invade schools (Stocco; Moraes, 2018).

Despite the Public Defender's actions and in view of the increased number of occupations, the Public Ministry and the state government opened several lawsuits against the occupiers in the Juvenile Court and in the State Treasury Courts. They obtained a judicial opinion for partial eviction on November 3rd: the expulsion of occupiers that were not students of the school and the return of classes beside the occupation spots. On November 11th, the court finally ordered the complete eviction within 24 hours, which should be monitored by the State Department of Education (SEDU) and the school board. However, it was not respected in all locations. This judicial opinion also generated great fear due to the possibility of holding parents and guardians accountable, with the application of fines.

A court injunction came up, forcing us to vacate and stating that we would be fined. This destabilized the movement in addition to all the pressure we were already suffering. Then we started to get discouraged. [...] One day SEDU went to school [...] and the final decision taken in this meeting with SEDU and the school board was the eviction (Revolution).

A group of students then decided to occupy SEDU's own headquarters on November 18th, a dramatic event that ended with a new court decision on November 25th. Students stayed outdoors, even un-

der heavy rain, without access to toilets and drinking water, which consequently caused diseases and even one hospitalization due to hypothermia. They even delivered a list of claims to the State Human Rights Secretary before the peaceful eviction from SEDU, which ended the movement in ES.

The occupation movement of the high school students was part of a cycle of worldwide youth protests that began with the Arab spring of 2011, alongside movements such as Occupy Wall Street and Indignant Movement, whose first expression in Brazil was the 2013 protests in Brazil (June Journeys) (Pleyers, 2018). These are political expressions that help to reveal part of the profiles of the current young generation.

It seems relevant to know the concept of generation by Karl Mannheim (1982) to understand the meanings of the current political expressions of youth. For Mannheim, a generation is formed from social and historical experiences lived in common by a group of people during their youth. These experiences generate a set of memories and experiences shared by individuals of similar age, which will be used for decision-making and attitudes throughout their lives.

The shared generational experience, however, does not involve a single response or a uniform generation. In fact, it usually produces different generation units, some of which being actively expressed in the political sphere (Mannheim, 1982, Corrochano; Dowbor; Jardim, 2018). This is the case of the young generation that lived this wave of protests in the 2010s, formed in the midst of a global financial crisis that has been happening since 2007 and resulting from an expression of the structural crisis of capital, which has given rise to a new cycle of neoliberal reforms, deepening the flexibility of work and the precarious ways of using the workforce, alongside the crisis of representative democracy in several countries in the world, including Brazil.

This generation seems to have originated at least two generation units in Brazil, each with very different ethical-political conceptions. Despite their enormous ideological differences, both seem to have emerged during the 2013 protests. One of these generation units has a progressive character and appeared in the first events of 2013 with demands for urban mobility and against the increase in public transport fares. The other generation unit, which has increasingly gaining conservative and far-right characteristics, took the streets in a second moment of the June Journeys, when these protests greatly expanded their agendas and number of participants and the commercial media started to support the mobilization although trying to confer it an anti-party, moralistic and nationalist configuration.

The progressive generation unit again expressed itself in student occupations, which began in December 2015 in São Paulo and lasted until December 2016, later reappearing in the manifestations of September 2018 against the far-right presidential candidacy (#nothim) in acts against cuts in education in May 2019, in anti-fascist protests in June 2020 and in the stoppage of application deliverers in July 2020. On

the other hand, the conservative, far-right unit, strongly supported by various members of the bourgeoisie—such as business foundations, fundamentalist religious leaders and politicians—organized itself in liberal movements such as the MBL and other initiatives such as the “School without a party”, reoccupied the streets in favorable demonstrations for the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2015 and 2016, and was active in the campaign that gave victory to an obscure far-right candidate in the 2018 presidential elections.

To be fully understood, it is necessary to consider other social markers besides age that characterize the generation unit that expressed itself in the high school occupations, including those in ES in October and November 2016. In fact, both generation units abovementioned have striking correlations with indicators such as social class, gender, race, sexual orientation and religion. Concerning the occupations, as we will discuss later, they were a set of largely popular and feminist protests. They were not concentrated only in central schools and in middle-class neighborhoods, but strongly appeared in the suburbs and popular neighborhoods where most high schools and their students are located. No wonder that they also largely expressed popular and high school feminism, not forgetting the great presence of black and non-heterosexual people. Meanwhile, the tendency of high school boys, even in the suburbs, was to support the winning candidate of 2018, according to the study by Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco (2018) on adolescents from Porto Alegre.

We can consider that both the progressive and far-right generation units helped to update the so-called dialectic of the youth condition (Groppi; Silveira, 2020). According to this idea, youth has a double and contradictory face: on the one hand, socialization agencies (including schools) are homogeneous collectives by age which aim to confer certain meaning to the transition to maturity; on the other hand, young subjects can constitute these groups, recreate values and rethink determined trajectories, attributing new and sometimes divergent meanings to their own youth age.

The far-right unit is also seen as an anti-system, including the support of an apparently anti-political politician, even though both the generation unit and the elected president have been serving very well as instruments to consolidate an anti-popular and highly regressive project in terms of social, political and environmental rights. In contrast, the progressive generation unit expressed in its occupations an attempt at radical, although temporary, re-signification of the student and adolescent condition, the school as a whole and the meaning of teaching. This commitment, as we will see below, was as important as the movement's national anti-regressive agenda in the second half of 2016.



## Students and the Occupations

To understand the meaning of the occupations for their protagonists, 8 face-to-face interviews were carried out in the 2nd semester of 2019 by the research team of ES. The team managed to get in touch with the potential participants in the study and received positive answer, in particular, from occupiers who were at the federal university in ES (in their capital), which helps to explain the fact that 7 of them were attending undergraduate courses. They were 16 to 17 years old when they occupied their schools in 2016. Reflecting better on the gender, racial and sexual orientation characteristics that marked the occupiers interviewed, of the 6 women only 2 self-declared white and only 1 heterosexual. Earth's occupation, according to her, was "[...] incredible, as it was a female and LGBTI+<sup>3</sup> occupation." From the socioeconomic point of view, the interviews reflected the characteristics of the discourse of the public high school students throughout the country, which was markedly popular since they were daughters and sons of different fractions of the working class. Finally, we sought a certain diversity in the municipalities, types of schools and forms of participation, and included in the study: 4 municipalities (Cariacica, Serra, Vila Velha and Vitória); suburban and central schools; students with different tasks and degrees of participation; and independent students, militants or those who became militants after the occupation. Table 1 presents these and other data.

**Table 1 – Characterization of occupiers from ES that participated in the interviews (2019)**

Pseudonym	Description	Occupied school	Task in the occupation	Current situation
Revolution	Male, white, homosexual, 19 years old when interviewed. Family income (FI) of 1.5 minimum monthly wages (MW)	Middle-class school in a neighborhood in Cariacica	In a school without a student union, he participated in a general commission that organized the occupation. He also occupied SEDU and participated in the manifestation in Brasília against PEC55.	He studies Nursing. He participates in the student directory. He sympathizes with the Communist Youth Union (UJC), but has postponed membership.
Discovery	Female, black, heterosexual, 20 years old. FI of 2 MW	Same school as Revolution in Cariacica	She performed several tasks, with emphasis on the dialogue with the electoral judge and the Public Prosecutor.	She is an undergraduate student. She participated in the UJC for some time.



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Hope	Female, black, homosexual, 19 years old. FI of 1 MW	Central school in Vitória, the first occupied school in the state	She mainly acted in the security committee. She also occupied SEDU.	She is studying Pedagogy. She is a militant in the Popular Brigades.
Earth	Female, white, homosexual, 20 years old. FI of 1 MW	Central school in Serra, where she studied, and central school in Vitória (the same as Hope).	A militant of the Popular Youth Uprising (LPJ), her occupation occurred during an effort to recreate the student union. She worked in political articulation and communication. She also occupied SEDU.	She is studying Social Sciences. She deepened her activism in the LPJ.
Student Autonomy	Female, black, bisexual, 20 years old. FI of 1.5 MW	School from a middle-class neighborhood in Vitória	School without student union. She performed leadership roles in the occupation.	She is an undergraduate student. She approached the Black Collective movement.
Collective	Female, black, bisexual, 20 years old. FI of 1.5 MW	A school in the suburbs of Serra	In a school without a student union, she performed various tasks, such as organization of activities, security and legal contacts.	She is studying Social Work. She participates in the National Association of Social Workers (ENESSO).
Transformation 1	Male, brown, homosexual, 20 years old. FI of 4 MW	The same school as Collective, in Serra	He performed several tasks (food, cleaning, organization of activities).	He is studying Biological Sciences and working at the Academic Center. He sympathizes with left-wing parties, but he has not joined.
Transformation 2	Woman, black, homosexual, 20 years old. FI of 4 MW	Suburban school, where she studied, and central school, both in Vila Velha	Her school's student union was against the occupation. She occupied her school for 1 week. She worked in communication (audiovisual production).	She started Theater and Letters, but abandoned the course. She approached the Unified Socialist Workers' Party (PSTU), without joining, as well as a Feminist Collective movement for some time. She is the only one currently working in the public cultural sector.

Source: Research team from ES.

## The Dynamics of Occupations

In view of the first data from the national survey on high school student occupations, we outlined a typology of the occupied public schools, creating 3 categories. Each type of school seems to have largely influenced the dynamics of its occupation:

a) Suburban schools, which in many cases were pioneers in the movement in their state or municipality, but which tended to receive fewer materials and less pedagogical, political and legal support from organizations and supporters, as well as less media attention. The relative invisibility of these occupations made it even more difficult to find contacts for the interviews. Collective and Transformation 1's school, in Serra, and Transformation 2's school, in Vila Velha, were included in this category.

b) Central schools or schools located in middle-class neighborhoods, which given their social or spatial proximity or political interest received much more attention from organizations and supporters, mostly in an attempt to make the occupation a coalition between independent students and representatives of different organizations (party youth and student entities). The other 4 schools of the people we interviewed fall into this category.

c) Prestigious schools, with tendency to have the occupation organized and led by a given student entity or party youth, either for being already rooted in the institution or due to the political visibility that it could gain from the action. Numerically, this is the type of school with less frequency despite having received great attention from public opinion and the media. None of the schools of the people we interviewed fall into this category. However, from the information obtained, it appears to have been the case of the federal institute in São Mateus and a traditional state school in Vitória, at least.

In ES we found another important datum about schools: the influence of the school's different cultures, which has a certain relationship with the types of schools mentioned above.<sup>4</sup> This marked central and older ("traditional") schools, such as the conservatism of the Autonomy Student School in Vitória, or the search for academic "excellence" of the first state school occupied in Vitória (Hope's school). In turn, suburban schools tended to be characterized as those with a precarious structure, yet with great formative and political impact by the teachers' performance.

Historically, it was a nuns' school, so it still has this religious issue. The board itself, the coordination, the pedagogical body had this religious content in their way of educating, in their way of dealing with certain matters (Student Autonomy).

The school did not have everything, something was always missing. The teacher had to improvise these things, but it was a good training, because the teachers there were very committed and always showed interest in learning. [...] The teachers there were very engaged with social causes, so

they were always exposing things that happened in their daily lives, they always talked to us about these things, instigated us to have a more critical sense (Transformation 1).

The data on types of schools occupied and their different cultures helped us to understand the specific or most significant agendas in each occupation. Account must also be taken of the reactions of the school boards; even when they had a progressive or democratic tendency, they felt frightened by the risk of retaliation by public authorities.

Demands related to the school's infrastructure alongside more general demands tended to mark the suburban schools, as well as Revolution and Discovery's school in Cariacica, which had been operating in an improvised building during the renovation of the old building. At Transformation 2's school in Vila Velha, in the face of the attitude of the board, who closed the school without any warning due to their fear that students were preparing for the occupation, the movement precipitated, having as the main agenda the board's replacement. The case of Vila Velha is also interesting because teachers, still on the street on account of the locked gates, began to explain to students the reasons for the movement-explanation that continued the following day in an assembly inside the school that culminated in the decision for occupation. Other justifications for the mobilization are very relevant, explaining its own forms of collective action: to be part of the national movement, supporting other schools already occupied in Serra and in the state (Collective); to prove the maturity of the occupiers and the authenticity of the movement itself, or according to Autonomy, "to show that we had cognitive autonomy".

For Losekan (2019), occupiers played subjectivation games between two roles: on the one hand, they challenged authority (governments, school board, teachers and even the family, when they were against the occupation); on the other hand, they showed seriousness in the search for legitimacy for the protest. The author highlighted the occupiers' concern that the protest was not seen as an act associated with "riot" and vandalism. In this way, they tried to demonstrate maturity despite their ages and certain social expectations, establishing orderly routine and exhibiting "good manners", such as the ban on alcoholic beverages and the disclosure of rules on social networks. If they sought to exercise creative and transgressive rebellion, they feared ridicularization for not being seen seriously. Hope's report endorses this analysis:

I wanted to follow a whole pattern so that it didn't affect occupations, because I think we have to have discipline, you know? Not at all times. Sometimes not having discipline is important as well. But I think that we need to have discipline in certain things. In that space, if we didn't have discipline, for example, to know that we couldn't smoke cigarettes inside, that it was a school and that there were several underage people inside, this could hinder the occupation process (Hope).

Lusaka's (2019) lucid analysis, reiterated in detail by Hope's report, seems to offer new perspectives on the dialectic of the youth condition. Social institutions have some caricature images that are classically mobilized in youth protests. Since the 2013 protests, with the support of the commercial media an amalgamation between the image of the "delinquent teenager" and that of the "radical youngster" has been sought: the "vandalism". The subjects of those social protests started being called "vandals", and the cameras and political speeches were persistently trying to find examples of depredation and violence coming from the protesters. It was no different with the high school student occupations, with the aggravating factor that the adolescent age reinforced the caricature of delinquency and reiterated the supposed childishness of the movement.

Against the usual meaning given by the social and school routines, as well as the reactions of the media and constituted powers, the occupiers wanted to reconstruct the image of adolescence and the student condition in the occupations. In fact, since the great repercussion of the "rolezinhos" ("little strolls") in 2014, and mainly with the student occupation movement, there has been in Brazil the rise of a new political subject who tended to be little valued or made visible: adolescents and high school students.

Poor young people from the suburbs did not intend to create a political event with their "rolezinhos"; instead, they just wanted to have fun and socialize. However, police repression, initially legitimized by social sectors offended by the occupation of consumption space previously restricted to middle class and elite, triggered an important public debate (Barbosa-Pereira, 2016). The occupations, on the contrary, greatly led by those who were called "vedettes" in the "rolezinhos" and funk dances, had consciously political objectives (Pinheiro-Machado; Scalco 2018).

Both events, especially the occupations, challenged the common notion of adolescence. The adolescent condition tends to be associated with a pre-political and even pre-social state, with a mere propaedeutic, preparatory value, that is, a time when people would only have learning and training to become, only when adults, citizens or political subjects (Castro, 2009).

Now we are talking about another subject who, according to the current "police order" in the terms of Rancière (1996), would have no voice or capacity for action in the public sphere. This exclusion related to the poor, workers, women, black people and immigrants among others has already been made in the past, and sometimes it happens again in the present. The occupiers were the transfiguration of people who added several markers of exclusion from public sphere: they were adolescents, high school students from public schools, mostly from the suburbs and poor neighborhoods, mainly working daughters and sons, predominantly women and with a large participation of black and LG-BTI+ young people. Especially in the second half of 2016, people who

added various attributes of exclusion from the political world became, even for a moment, the main political subjects, leading the greatest mobilization against the regressive measures of the Temer government, a government seriously illegitimate.

However, for Rancière (1996) it is precisely the political manifestation of those who are not considered political beings that establishes the true “politics”, that is, politics as a manifestation of dissent, action and discourse that disrupt, even if for a established time, the sensitive world or the order of things. At the same time, politics as a dissent dissociates, separates or displaces the coincidence between the person’s subordination in the social and economic contexts and his/her exclusion from the public sphere and collective decisions, as it causes the unequals in socioeconomic life to be equals during the time of dissent.

That is why adults confronted by occupations, such as political and school authorities—who until then tended to consider the students as pre-political or less rational beings (since they were developing adolescents)—were forced to dialogue with students, or at least argue about the agendas of the occupations.

However, even the supportive subjects had to surrender to the irresistible egalitarian dynamic that most occupations adopted. Militants, whether young or not, from left-wing parties and unions, had to submit to the autonomy of each occupation, conducted by independent students and put themselves at the service of the occupiers, being under risk of expulsion from the school. Although at least two occupations claimed having guidance from student entities (federal institute and prestigious college in the capital), in ES (as in the whole country) the vast majority of occupations had an autonomous nature, including the first state school occupied in Vitória, which even prevented party and entity flags, but not the presence of militants (Stocco; Moraes, 2018).

All of the interviewees stated that the occupiers were the protagonists of this struggle, that the occupations had autonomy in relation to traditional political organizations (student entities, parties and unions), but not the isolation. Several political organizations established supportive relationships, whether in the structural (important factors that guaranteed the stay in schools, especially food) or in the political-organizational field (with regard to suggestions for improving political action), as well as legal guidelines. However, attempts at instrumentalization were refused by the occupiers.

Among these traditional movements, the interviewees cited: political youth linked to left-wing political parties—UJC (linked to the Brazilian Communist Party [PCB]), LPJ (guided by the non-electoral Popular Consultation party) and UJS (Union of Socialist Youth, oriented by the Communist Party of Brazil [PCdoB]); progressive parties, such as the Workers’ Party (PT) and the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL); unions, such as the Bank Workers Union and the University Servers Union; a union center—the Single Central Organization of Workers (CUT); and less present but not absent, official student entities, such as the Brazil-

ian Union of High School Students (UBES) and the National Union of Students (UNE).

As already mentioned, central schools had great support from these organizations, especially those in Vitória, which were closer to the centers of political articulation. In turn, at Collective's suburban school, in Serra, "no organized collective or political party contributed, especially because it was a school that was not well known and from the suburbs, far away". In this school, the support gained from the local community was fundamental, something that not all schools had, or had only in part.

There was also the support of part of the school teachers, who in some cases were enthusiastic about the occupations, besides helping through financial and food donations. In several cases, parents and guardians also mobilized resources for the occupiers' permanence in the schools. Professors and students at the federal university also provided support through financial donations and training activities. The Tutelary Council, the Justice and Peace Commission (CJP), the Brazil Bar Association (OAB) and the Human Rights Center (CDDH) were listed as supporters, especially through legal guidelines on rights, care and (im)possibilities in a process of this nature.

It is clear that the material support and guidance from formal organizations provided to the occupiers were fundamental, something recognized by the subjects of the action where this happened, that is, the non-suburban schools. However, it is possible to foresee another recurring effect of social movements on social and political institutions: the possibility of innovation. While listing the possible effects of social movements on the political system and the society, Melucci (1994) highlights the indirect and diffuse impacts of collective actions on political and social organizations, such as the creation of new political leaders and the production of new organizational models, which are even incorporated by companies, public services and schools. With their non-hierarchical organizational forms and participatory decision-making processes, occupations can inspire not only the renewal of school institutions, their curricula and methodology, as we will see ahead, but also the political organizations, such as parties and unions, and not just those that formally represent students.

## Conflicts and Challenges

In ES, the movement in the legal field undermined the occupations inside. Led by the state government, they cut off water and electricity in some occupied schools. In the interviews, the fear that parents or guardians would be fined was recurrent. Earth reported that SEDU representatives even called occupiers' parents. Especially in the suburban schools, police pressure was constant, along with the need to negotiate with drug dealers. In relation to the police, intimidating attitudes were mentioned, including sirens turned on at night and even aggres-

sions during eviction from schools in Vila Velha. Fear was certainly a destabilizing factor. Earth remembered the pressure on her “mental health”, while Transformation 2 said, “I was not physically attacked, only psychologically. My emotional was very hurt”.

The interviewees also mentioned some disagreements during the occupations caused by inexperience in political actions and tiredness due to the duration of the movement and fears, although they were considered minor problems and were soon solved. In suburban schools, on the other hand, difficulties with food were more frequent. There were cases where more central schools transferred part of their donations to suburban schools.

The tensions and conflicts that occurred between the students and the schools’ board and part of the teachers, who expressed opposition to the occupations, for example, through attacks on social networks were more intense. In some schools, the community, including a relevant part of the parents and guardians, turned against the movement, which posed as a challenge for the permanence of the occupation. According to Earth, there were cases of parents who expelled from home daughters and sons who were part of the movement. Three occupiers cited the performance of the Eviction Movement, composed even by some students from their own school that invaded it and attacked girls.

When the occupiers reported their frustrations, they highlighted the actions of the police, the aggression by the Eviction Movement, the oppression of the board and part of the teachers, and the threats of invasion and application of fines. The falsity of the representative democracy (by not entirely representing the interests of most people) and the little support from student bodies (in Revolution’s school) were also mentioned.

Another painful moment was the eviction from the schools. According to the interviewees, this process was “tense”, “sad” and “quick”: in Revolution’s school, the decision of the court caused fear, given the threat of imposition of fines, destabilizing the occupation; in Earth’s school, despite the sadness caused by the injunction, they ended the occupation with soiree, rap and poetry; in Discovery’s school, before the injunction occupiers went to the federal university to seek guidance and organize themselves, but found the school already vacated when they returned; in one of the schools that Transformation 2 occupied, the police used violence and dragged some boys.

These conflicts, challenges and frustrations lead us to remember that according to Pleyers (2018) the cycle of youth protests in the 2010s has always pursued first the formation of anti-progressive movements and second the greater repression by police forces compared to the previous cycle—the anti-globalization movement in the 1990s.

The alter-activists of the 2010s plunged into the battle for a better world in a particular historical context and faced largely underestimated forces early in this decade. Seven years after the start of a global wave of social movements



for democracy, the political and social scenarios are far from the democratic hopes that have mobilized millions of citizens. Not only did progressive movements fail to overthrow the powers they opposed, but we also face a strengthening of repression, authoritarianism and conservatism. With this change of situation, a new wave of questions arises about the perspectives of social movements, which are filled with optimism in view of the appearance of so many progressive actors. The above phenomenon does not invalidate the centrality of social movements in the 2010s; however, it reminds us that we cannot focus analytically only on progressive actors, but it is also essential to better include conservative actors and promoters of global financial capitalism among the social movements we study (Pleyers, 2018, p. 16).

In the case of the occupations in ES, we could still add to the second element a more active presence of other subjects from political society, especially the judiciary, sometimes defending the movements, but in general acting to delegitimize and even criminalize them. Throughout the occupation movement, political powers learned how to undermine occupations in different ways: by judicial means, both using the alleged defense of property and the threat of imposition of fines to those responsible for “abandonment of the incapacitated”; actions in conjunction with the commercial media, such as the postponement of ENEM in the occupied schools; or even the articulation with far-right movements—especially the MBL—such as the Eviction Movement in Paraná state, with numerous threats and aggressive invasions of schools in several states. Finally, the occupiers who participated in acts in Brasília and other capitals against PEC55 in November 2016 suffered enormous police repression, which would be repeated in April 2017 during the protests against the Labor Reform.

There is still a third element of this cycle of youth protests: their meager, concrete and immediate political results, which tend to cause enormous frustration and anguish to the protesters. So far, this frustration has marked more the interviewees of the occupations that happened in the second half of 2016 than those with a state character, which occurred between December 2015 and July 2016.

## **Training and Learning**

In the interview script, the question about what was most rewarding leads us to the topic of political and personal training provided by the lessons learned during participation in the movement. Hope even highlighted “the pedagogical character of the movement”, amid other reports that also stated that the initial feeling of sadness replaced, over time, the feeling of victory for having being able to mature individually and collectively, as well as having produced self-knowledge, known their own rights and discovered that the agendas of the suburbs have the power to start a national movement.

The same happened with the objectives of the occupation, whether they would have been achieved or not. The answers pointed to subjective and collective achievements. Among the collective achievements, they cited the organization, the collective mobilization and the capacity to express indignation: “We conquered a spring for high school students” (Hope); “We showed that a common neighborhood on the suburb is able to participate in a national movement” (Transformation 1). Among the subjective achievements, they mentioned maturity, personal fulfillment and growth, knowledge of politics and rights, possibility of meeting people and making friends and information about public higher education.

We became more mature, we learned to live together there, we grew a lot as a person and citizen, we acquired a lot of knowledge beyond the conventional that is taught at school. We learned to be hands-on and take care of the school, to do things like weeding the school and to have a voice too—we could talk to the judge of the regional electoral court (Revolution).

We have found in the interviews and bibliography about occupations, numerous and diverse training activities. We have classified these activities into two major types: workshops and “big lectures”. In ES, we can highlight lecturers, teachers and students of public institutions of higher education, as well as militants of youth parties and collectives.

The workshops adopted participatory methodologies that brought together teachers and students, as well as knowledge and practice. They tended to address non-curricular or curricular content that, due to its political or controversial character, had been neglected: social and political issues, High School Reform, literature, music, plastic arts, zumba, yoga, photography, bicycle mechanics, feminism, male chauvinism, loneliness of black women, black youth, LGBTI+, homophobia, mental health, higher education and university.

As for “big lectures”, they tended to recreate traditional methodologies and more usual content, especially preparation for ENEM. It is also possible to mention the political and legal guidelines provided at moments similar to classes or lectures, or during assemblies by militants from party youths and student entities, as well as by legal professionals linked to unions and even public bodies, such as the Public Defender’s Office. Finally, it is important to mention cultural and leisure activities, such as film screening at the cinema club and plays, as well as musical performances, including names that were known regionally.

Occupiers also highlighted the formative impact desired by the occupation organization and conduction. Transformation 2 addresses the deconstruction of male chauvinism practiced by boys, not only during the workshops, but also during the occupation, when they had to do some tasks traditionally associated with women. In turn, Hope reported the affirmation process of the girls by showing that a more free and democratic educational process was possible and recognizing how much she owed to the occupation, including in her professional choice:

I think everyone left the occupation happy, with a nice personal construction. But I think for the boys it was a really bad experience, because when we talk about male chauvinism I understand that it affects men first, and then women, [...] Since young age, boys are repressed all the time by male chauvinism, like, men don't cry, men don't play with dolls [...]. And then the boys get there and [...] they have to help cook, clean, help with things that they learned from a young age that are tasks for women. I think the biggest exchange that we had was between us; it was not a person who was outside our environment, it was not a professor who had a doctorate and spoke, but an exchange that we had with each other, regarding our experiences (Transformation 2).

The occupation provided spaces for very reflective debates, [...] very politicized, so when the occupations ended, those people were no longer the same. Many girls [...] who were still stuck in this damn sexist, patriarchal system, after the occupations they were much more free because of so much debate. [...] It was a very transformer and pedagogical moment. I thank the occupations for showing me that there is the possibility of healthy, participatory, democratic, dialectical, pedagogical teaching and learning processes. And the occupations were fundamental for the choice of my profession and for the way that I see it today (Hope).

Revolution, in turn, emphasized how important the occupation was for the self-acceptance of his homosexual orientation: "The occupation had a lot to do with my self-acceptance of sexuality, my sexual orientation. Actually, I already knew who I was, but the occupation made me realize that everything is okay, like, it's something normal, diversity exists, it's okay to be like that".

In the list of learning and formative impacts they stressed, we again noted the self-learning of suburban high school feminism, the deconstruction of hidden male chauvinism, the right to participate, the ability to dialogue and the value of autonomy. Thus, we reached a conclusion similar to that of Alvim and Rodrigues (2017, p. 1): "[...] student struggles produce outlines of autonomous teaching, learning and coexistence, involving the construction of a horizontal education, prefiguring collective forms of freedom and responsibility guided by the horizontality of decision-making processes, and consequently rehearsing a democratic educational culture." However, this emphasis on autonomy did not prevent co-learning or re-signification processes of very different aspects in the dialogue with militants, activists, teachers and legal professionals, including political and social rights, the legitimacy of non-heteronormative sexual orientation, the practice of other educational forms and the elaboration of personal projects in higher education and professional achievements.

In either case, the occupation movement is another example of the enormous creative capacity of youth movements, regarding their revealing and denaturalizing potential that adults tend to consider natural, imponderable or more rational: "While we apply and execute what an anonymous power decrees, young people ask where we are going and why" (Melucci, 1997, p. 13).

It is not by chance that Alberto Melucci (1997, p. 12) reinforce that collective actions, especially those involving young people, are capable of “revealing what the system does not express by itself: the heart of silence, the violence of the arbitrary power that dominant codes always assume”. The main message of these youth collective actions is their very existence, namely, the announcement that other paths are open. They do this by imploding the distinction between the instrumental and expressive meaning of actions, because in social movements “the results of the action and the individual experience of new codes tend to coincide” (Melucci, 1997, p. 12).

In the words of Reguillo (2013), these are prefigurative actions that seek coherence between the act or protest itself and the social relations they want to institute. In this way, they escape from the purely strategic orientation, typical of the revolutionary party, making action merely an instrument to achieve a certain goal. That is why the effectiveness or influence of the prefigurative youth protest is not measured only by the immediate results in the political system, or even by the achievement of a specific agenda. By these measurements, the movement in ES would have brought only frustration and a feeling of defeat, something that the interviewees also presented, but not exclusively. When considering what the subjects of the occupations reported about which victories they have won, including those that transcended the expressed agendas, and mainly what they have learned, we have another point of view: the transformation of oneself and the knowledge of the world and the power of the collective. And this will continue to happen when we analyze the impacts of this experience on their trajectories.

## Political and Educational Trajectories

The most visible impact on the trajectories of the people interviewed was related to higher education. Before the occupations, they tended to see the public university as something very distant from their realities. Some even believed that they would have to pay tuition. However, as the federal university was a meeting point for student movements in that period, most part of the occupiers discovered that they could occupy this space, that it was also a place for black, poor and LG-BTI+ women, that it was not only for “conservative, elitist, middle-class people”, that there was also room for progressive, diverse and inclusive education.

Concerning the trajectory of political participation, we heard some testimonies about the frustration caused by the defeat of the movement’s national agenda. Other reports addressed more intimate and personal transformations, including admission at the university:

When the occupations were over, I went into a very deep sadness and felt a very strong feeling of frustration with the process. I dedicated myself a lot, I spent 22 days sleeping at my school; in fact, several people were in this situation. I had problems with my family. I thought that the occu-

pations would change the world and I kept thinking daily, 'we are making history' [...]. Actually, we certainly made history, but what I expected from the occupation process was not achieved [...]. Only today I see several very positive results, not in relation to Brazilian politics, but to the individual transformations that the occupations provided. Obviously, I am very grateful to the occupations for my admission at the university. I got to know political beings, revolutionary beings. I realized that my school was an environment with incredible people, incredible teachers and incredible students (Hope).

However, at least among those we interviewed there was a (re)approach to political organizations or youth groups, although not necessarily in the form of militant engagement nor in a permanent way, as shown in Table 1. In relation to party youths, Earth deepened her militancy at LPJ and Hope joined the Popular Brigades; in turn, Transformation 2 connected with PSTU and Discovery with UJC, but they did not join. Of the student entities, Collective and Transformation 1 joined student unions. With regard to the youth groups, Autonomy approached the university's Black Collective and Transformation 2 worked in Women's Collective for a while.

It was possible to note that among the people interviewed this approach to political organizations and collectives was less regular and homogeneous than being admitted at the university. However, the intense politicization fostered by their participation in the occupations (which was reported in the interviews) is undeniable, either in a democratic or progressive sense: even though the majority of the occupiers had already expressed some previous interest in politics, they had never had any kind of political participation or partisan involvement. Additionally, all of the people interviewed said they had voted for center-left candidates in the 2018 presidential elections.

Occupations treated as "politics" in the sense of Rancière's ideas constitute processes of political subjectivity that, instead of affirming or creating identities, put them on hold or cross them. For this reason, Rancière (2014, p. 72) also defines political subjectivity as disidentification.

Political subjectivity is the collective elaboration that occurs through the recognition of being 'between' identities, and not from the appreciation, strengthening or crystallization of a given identity. It is an improper property characterized by its negativity (for something it cannot be) and constitutes an impossible equation capable of questioning, on the one hand, the arithmetic equation, which balances losses and gains, and on the other hand, the geometric equation, which justifies merits by associating a quality with a social position (Miranda, 2013, p. 271).

Certainly, when the provisional time for politics ends, people resume preexisting identities, or they seek and assume others. But the experience of occupying has been remarkable, as seen in the interviews. At different degrees and in different ways, it impacts the occupiers' educational trajectories, political opinions, family relationships, sexual

orientation and religiosity among other aspects. Their identity reconstructions will always be affected by this experience.

More importantly, since we are dealing with adolescents, generally from lower classes (who when returning to social order tend to have less freedom to choose), the effects of political subjectivity can be seen in the medium and long terms as an experience recorded in their memory and body. This is something that Rancière (1988) found among subjects of the French proletariat in the nineteenth century, who were left apart from the hitherto recognized political community. Depending on the opportunity, the experience of political subjectivity can at any time leave the state of latency and be re-signified and mobilized, either by adhesion to new collective actions and opening to new processes of political subjectivity or for the necessary reconstruction of identities along their life cycles.

## Final Considerations

This paper aimed to analyze the meaning of the occupations and the impact of this experience according to the point of view of the occupiers from the Espírito Santo state, Brazil in 2016. To this end, it presented the insertion of adolescents in a movement with national anti-regressive agendas, to which state agendas were also added later, related to the forms of education weakening assumed in ES, as well as with local agendas, which denounced, depending on the school, the precariousness of the school infrastructure and the authoritarianism of the school board.

Additionally, this study sought to understand the occupation movement as a political expression of a progressive generation unit, both facing and being opposed by a conservative generation unit. In this way, we can conclude that the dialectic of youth does not necessarily generate autonomous or rebel youth groups, movements and values, but when it does, it does not necessarily create left-wing or progressive products. Conservative and even fascist youth mobilizations may even appear, even when they imagine themselves as challenging and innovative, such as the far-right groups that participated in Eviction Movement in 2016 and that have been a source of support for the current president.

The student occupation movement, which took place in 2016 in ES, was very similar to what happened in other Brazilian states. It was a moment of political mobilization and self-training that were extremely relevant for the individual stories of those we interviewed, as well as for the Brazilian history. The occupiers from ES built the strongest struggle movement in the state in the last decade, demonstrating the strength of organized (especially self-organized) youth. This group of young people spoke directly with secretaries of state, legal professionals, political representatives of different parties, leaders of social movements, military police and local media.

The participation of such adolescents in a political action that generates dissent and is capable of challenging governments, question-

ing the judiciary and reorienting even the praxis of left-wing political organizations constituted a powerful process of political—and consequently formative—subjectivity. The formative process brought by this experience currently marks the performance of such young people in other spaces, whether in the university or in political organizations and youth collectives. This process has also impacted the definition of their personal projects, school trajectories, sexual orientation and religious identity among other aspects. Once again, we emphasize that the importance of a social movement, especially that involving the youth generation, cannot be measured only by the victory of its immediate agendas, but also by the influence on the biography of its subjects and the social and political innovation that it can promote, although in a subtle and deep way, such as the movement of high school student occupations.

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## Notes

- 1 A kind of prototype of the MP74 in ES, proposed by the state governor Paulo Hartung (Stocco; Moraes, 2018).
- 2 The people interviewed were given pseudonyms based on the word chosen by them to define the occupations.
- 3 It is a terminology that refers to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex population.
- 4 “For Forquin, the school’s culture concerns the internal world of the school, the production and management of symbols, rites and languages, as well as the established modes of regulation and transgression” (Falsarella, 2018, p. 622).

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**Luís Antonio Groppo** holds a PhD in Social Sciences from the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp), Adjunct Professor at the Federal Universidade Federal de Alfenas (UNIFAL-MG), Researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). Coordinator of Working Group 03 (Social Movements, Subjects and Educational Processes) of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education (ANPED). Privets, Minas Gerais.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9324-7672>

E-mail: [luis.groppo@gmail.com](mailto:luis.groppo@gmail.com)

**Camila Lopes Taquetti** has a degree in Social Work, is a doctor at the Postgraduate Program in Social Policy at the Federal Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES), member of the Center for Studies in Social Movements and Practices (NEMPS).

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1300-9421>

E-mail: [ctaquetti2@gmail.com](mailto:ctaquetti2@gmail.com)

**Gabriela Santos Silva** is a Social Sciences student at the Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES), CNPq Scientific Initiation Scholar, member of the Work and Praxis Research Group.

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2654-3575>

E-mail: [gabis.sufes@gmail.com](mailto:gabis.sufes@gmail.com)

**Livia de Cássia Godoi Moraes** is a Professor at the Department of Social Sciences and at the Postgraduate Program in Social Policy at the Federal Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES), coordinator of the Work and Praxis Research Group.

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8284-6605>

E-mail: [livamoraes@outlook.com](mailto:livamoraes@outlook.com)

Editor-in-charge: Fabiana de Amorim Marcello

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