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## The Social(*ist*) Pedagogies of the MST: Towards New Relations of Production in the Brazilian Countryside

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**Abstract:** This article explores the social(*ist*) pedagogies of the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST), a large agrarian social movement that fights for socialism in the Brazilian countryside, meaning that workers own their own means of production and collectively produce the food and other products necessary for their communities' survival. Over the past three decades, activists in the movement have developed an alternative educational proposal for rural schooling that supports these new social relations of production. Drawing on major theories of reproduction, cultural production, and resistance in the field of education, I argue that three theorists—Paul Willis, Paulo Freire, and Antonio Gramsci—are critical in assessing the role of schools in processes of social reproduction. I examine four components of the MST's social(*ist*) pedagogy: the incorporation of manual labor into public schools; the promotion of collective learning; counter-cultural production; and linking schools to concrete political struggles. Drawing on Willis, Freire, and Gramsci, I argue that the MST's educational proposal is a limited but real attempt to interrupt dominant social relations of production in the Brazilian countryside, thus representing a unique example of social pedagogy in the 21 century.

**Keywords:** social change; social justice; critical theory; popular education; rural youth; rural education.

### **Las pedagogías socialistas MST: para la producción de nuevas relaciones en el campo brasileño**

**Resumen:** Este artículo analiza la pedagogía social(ista) del Movimiento de los Trabajadores Rurales Sin Tierra (MST), un movimiento social rural en Brasil, que está luchando por el socialismo en el campo, es decir, una sociedad en la que los trabajadores son los dueños de los medios de y trabajar colectivamente para producir alimentos y otros productos necesarios para su supervivencia. Durante tres décadas, los activistas del movimiento para desarrollar una alternativa educativa para las escuelas rurales que admiten estas nuevas relaciones de producción. Uso de las teorías de la reproducción, la producción cultural y la resistencia en el campo de la educación, el argumento teórico de que tres son esenciales para analizar el papel de las escuelas en los procesos de reproducción social: Paul Willis, Paulo Freire y Antonio Gramsci. Se analizan cuatro aspectos de la pedagogía social(ista) del MST: la incorporación de la escuela al trabajo manual; pedagogías colectivas, la producción de la contracultura, y la conexión entre la escuela y de una estrategia política. Usando Willis, Freire y Gramsci, sostengo que la propuesta MST educativo es un intento limitado pero real para perturbar las relaciones sociales de producción dominante en el campo brasileño, y por lo tanto, representa un ejemplo importante de la pedagogía social en el siglo XXI.

**Palabras clave:** Justicia Social; teoría crítica; educación popular; juventud rural; reforma agraria.

### **As Pedagogias Socialistas do MST: Para Novas Relações de Produção no Campo Brasileiro**

**Resumo:** Este artigo analisa as pedagogias social(istas) do Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), um movimento social rural no Brasil que está lutando para socialismo no campo, ou seja, um sociedade onde os trabalhadores são os donos dos meios do trabalho e produzem coletivamente a comida e outros produtos necessários para sua sobrevivência. Durante três décadas, militantes no movimento desenvolverem uma proposta alternativa da educação para as escolas do campo que apoiaria estas novas relações da produção. Utilizando os teorias de reprodução, produção cultural, e resistência no campo de educação, argumento que três teóricos são essências para analisando o papel das escolas nos processos de reprodução social: Paul Willis, Paulo Freire, e Antônio Gramsci. Interrogo 4 aspetos da pedagogia social(ista) do MST: Aa incorporação do trabalho manual na escola; as pedagogias coletivos; a produção da contracultura; e a ligação entre as escolas e uma estratégia política. Usando Willis, Freire e Gramsci, eu argumento que a proposta educacional do MST é uma limitada mas real tentativa de interromper as relações sociais da produção dominante no campo Brasileiro, e por isso, ela representa uma exemplo importante da pedagogia social no vigésimo primeiro século.

**Palavras-chave:** justiça social, teoria crítica, educação popular, juventude rural; educação do campo; reforma agrária.

## Introduction

Once the revolution happens in the schools, the people can make the revolution in the streets, however this link is not always necessary. In China, in Cuba, in Russia, without going through the schools, the people were able to create revolution in the street. But, in a country like Brazil it is necessary to create a minimum general critical spirit, a universal citizenship and a collective desire for radical change in order to achieve the utopia of constructing a new society that either becomes a reformed socialism or a revolutionary socialism. I prefer the latter alternative.

Fernandes, F. (MST, 1996, p.1).

We must be cautious in concluding that the school is the pivotal site for the preparation of those warm, gendered, concrete bodies that actually enter production still less read back this accomplished transition as the main class logic of what goes on in schools. Willis, P. (1977, p.53).

In this article I analyze the educational pedagogies developed by activists in the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (*O Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, MST), a national social movement consisting of over one million women, men and children.<sup>1</sup> Brazil is a country characterized by historical inequalities in land ownership, wherein a small elite owns the majority of land and millions of poor rural workers are landless. Since the early 1980s the MST has contested these inequities in land ownership through occupations of large unproductive land estates, in which hundreds of landless families enter privately owned lands, set up makeshift camps, and refuse to leave, seeking from the government legal rights to live on the land. The MST is famous around the world for its success forcing the government to redistribute land to over 350,000 families across Brazil (Wright & Wolford 2003). Less well known, however, is the movement's simultaneous struggle for the right to free primary, secondary and tertiary education for all children, youth and adults living on MST settlements and camps.<sup>2</sup> These educational initiatives are not only a fight for access but also an attempt to construct a link between rural schooling and the movement's larger political goal: the establishment of socialist relations of production in the Brazilian countryside.

In the first quote cited above, the Brazilian Marxist sociologist Florestan Fernandes argues that creating schools that develop students' critical consciousness is essential for promoting revolutionary change, especially in Brazil. In the second quote, the British education scholar Paul Willis expresses skepticism and caution about assuming that schools play any direct, pivotal role in the structuring of social relations. I begin with these two quotes in order to bring front and center the major tension that will be present throughout this article: the importance, on the one hand, that MST activists place on their radical educational project and its potential to disrupt capitalist relations of production in rural areas of Brazil, and the reality, on the other hand, that schools are only one of the many sites that mediate the diverse forms of cultural production that produce the capitalist social relations of production the movement wants to disrupt.

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<sup>1</sup> In this article I do not go into detail about the history of the MST and the struggle for land. For further information see: Bradford and Rocha, 2002; Wright and Wolford, 2003; Ondetti, 2008; Wolford, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> "MST settlements" are areas of agrarian reform where land has been expropriated by formerly landless families. "MST camps" are areas of land that families are occupying, but to which they do not yet have the land rights.

In this article I outline the MST's educational proposal, which has been developed by collectives of MST activists throughout Brazil over the past thirty years. These educational practices are diverse and locally situated in distinct regions of the country, with particular agrarian histories. These educational practices are also interconnected and reflect three decades of national, regional and local collaborations between self-declared *milитantes da educaç o do MST* (MST educational activists), who have created a set of philosophical and pedagogical principles for rural schools in their communities. I argue that these educational principles—while at their best contested, negotiated and only ever partially implemented in any school—represent a concrete attempt to interrupt social reproduction.

In order to make this argument, I first contextualize the MST's educational project within the field of popular education, and social pedagogy more generally. Second, I provide a brief overview of the theoretical discussions concerning education's role in reproduction, resistance and accommodation. This section of the paper will cover a range of authors, but will end by suggesting that three of these theorists are most appropriate when "traveling to the field" and discussing the MST's educational project: Paul Willis, Paulo Freire, and Antonio Gramsci. In the third section I provide a brief history of how the MST first got involved in these educational struggles. Then, I critically examine the MST's educational goals using the theories of reproduction and resistance outlined in the first part of the article. This analysis draws on secondary sources, primary literature produced by the movement, and my own nine weeks of field work in the summer of 2009.<sup>3</sup> In the conclusion, I reaffirm my argument that although schools are only one site contributing to social reproduction—and that this site is continually contested—the MST's educational project represents a real attempt to transform the productive relations currently dominant in the Brazilian countryside.

## Social Pedagogy, Popular Education and Social Movements

According to Petrus (1997), there has been a huge expansion in the field of Social Pedagogy over the past few decades, and in many European countries "social education" is now considered a constitutional right. Several universities have even created courses on social pedagogy that are requirements for pursuing bachelor degrees in education (Esteban 2005). However, as Petrus (1997) and Carreras (1997) argue, there are many different and contrasting ideas about what social education actually is, ranging from a method to socialize and assimilate marginalized populations into mainstream society, to an attempt to help oppressed groups transform that society. The goal of this article is not to give a comprehensive analysis of the contemporary debates surrounding social pedagogy, but rather, provide some context for how the field of social pedagogy has been taken up in Brazil, and its relationship to popular education.

Ribeiro (2006) writes that the field of social education only emerged with force in the 1980s and 1990s, as a part of the process of re-democratization in many countries. Unlike popular education, which emerged from within social movements, non-governmental organizations, and other civil society groups, the promotion of social education came predominantly from university initiatives. For example, many universities have created extension programs that allow students to work as "social educators" with youth and adults who do not have access to schooling. Costa (2006) writes that this increased interest in social education on the part of state institutions in Brazil is in part a result of legal shifts, most significantly the passage of the "International Convention to the Right of Children" by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989, and subsequently, the

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<sup>3</sup> Since the summer of 2009, I have spent 17 additional months doing dissertation research in Brazil on the MST's educational initiatives during 2010 and 2011. This paper, however, only draws from the data I collected in the summer of 2009.

passage of Brazilian law 8069/90, the “Statute of the Child and Adolescent.” Ribeiro (2006), however, is critical of these state initiatives, arguing that there is a contradiction between the implicit critique of institutions common in the field of social education, and the fact that most social education initiatives have been developed in connection to the state.

In contrast to social education, the history of popular education in Latin America has emerged, for the most part, outside of the state sphere. In fact, Kane (2001) argues that the most important feature of popular education—and the least understood in Europe and the United States—is the organic link between popular education and “popular movements.” In other words, what makes popular education unique is its direct connection to collective action. In Brazil, the origins of popular education are most often traced back to the work of Paulo Freire, and the pedagogical theories he developed during his literacy campaigns in the Northeast of Brazil in the early 1960s. Since then, popular education has been utilized by social movements and civil society organizations throughout Latin America, from Catholic priests following the liberation theology tradition (Berryman, 1987), to Sandinista educators in Nicaragua (Arnove, 1986), to women organizing in city peripheries against patriarchal relations (Kane, 2001). These diverse activist groups use popular education to develop political consciousness and capacity for critical reflection, while also strategizing, through these educational spaces, about concrete actions communities can take to contest structural inequities and build a more just society.

Despite the distinct intellectual and practical histories of social pedagogy and popular education, the current uptake of social pedagogy among Brazilian academics has blurred the lines between these two fields. For example, the director of the Paulo Freire Institute in São Paulo, Professor Moacir Gadotti, has been active in organizing several conferences on social pedagogy over the past decade. He writes that social pedagogy “is a counter-pedagogy, that attempts to install a new culture, the culture of solidarity, that is able to neutralize the trivialization of life that Brazilian elites are accustomed to” (preface of Graciani, 2001, p.13). Maria Stela Santos Graciani, the author of *Pedagogia Social da Rua* (2001), equates social pedagogy with Freirean pedagogy. In an article presented at the I International Congress of Social Pedagogy in São Paulo, she writes, “social pedagogy is characterized as a radical project of social and political transformation” (Graciani, 2006, p.2). Similarly, Maria de Gloria Gohn, a Professor at the State University of Campinas, argues that—following Paulo Freire—there are three phases in the work of a social educator: 1) Diagnosis of the social problems of a community; 2) Elaboration of a process of community participation for the analysis of these problems; 3) Implementation of a proposal to take action to address these problems (Gohn, 2010).

Although Gadotti, Graciani, and Gohn are all referring to social pedagogy and social educators in these texts, the characteristics they attribute to this educational approach is parallel to the way other scholars describe popular education. In fact, the three “phases of the work of a social educator” (Gohn, 2010) could have been taken directly from Kane’s (2001) description of popular education in Latin America (p.39-44). As these excerpts illustrate, the boundaries between the field of “social pedagogy” and “popular education” are currently blurred. Therefore, from this perspective, the MST’s educational proposal should also be considered a type of “social pedagogy,” since the history of the movement’s educational initiatives are directly connected to the popular education tradition in Brazil (Kane 2001). An important difference, however, is the sphere of intervention. While popular education and social education have traditionally been relegated to the informal realm (Gohn, 2010, Kane, 2001), the MST’s educational project is unique in its attempt to take these informal experiences and implement them within the state public school system.

In this article, I analyze the MST’s educational proposal as a particular type of social pedagogy that has developed—from within a social movement and not within a state institution—over the past three decades. However, similar to Ribeiro (2006), I think it is important to recognize

that the MST's vision of "social" is different than traditional understandings of social pedagogy. Rather than any form of social pedagogy, the MST's educational proposal is specifically a social(*ist*) pedagogical proposal. In other words, the MST's educational proposal is linked to a vision of socialism in the countryside in which workers own their own means of production and are able to collectively produce the food and other products necessary for their communities' survival. Ribeiro (2006) elaborates on these differences, writing that while social education is primarily an urban initiative coming out of state institutions, "the MST is inspired by the *social pedagogy* [emphasis mine] in the experiences of Pistrak and Makarenko, in revolutionary Russia, . . . they have as their principles the reality, work, and the self-organization of the students." The MST's educational proposal is undoubtedly a social(*ist*) pedagogy, connected to a history of popular education, while also linked to an alternative vision of social(*ist*) relations of production. In the rest of this article I attempt to answer the following question: what is the potential for the MST's social(*ist*) pedagogies to interrupt the reproduction of capitalist relations of production in the Brazilian countryside, and produce a new socialist society? In order to answer this question, I draw on the literature on theories of reproduction and resistance in education.

### Theories of Reproduction, Resistance and Accommodation in Education

Theories of reproduction in the field of education have a long history, and can only be understood in contrast to the liberal educational paradigms that these theorists were contesting. This liberal paradigm of education in the United States can be traced back to the common school movement in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when there was a concerted effort to centralize control over rural schools that were considered to be run in a haphazard and arbitrary manner. Horace Mann, one of the leaders of the common school movement, believed that curriculum could be universalized and that schools should be used to preserve and sustain a democratic society. He wrote, "the Common School, improved and energized, as it can easily be, may become the most effective and benignant of all the forces of civilization" (Mann, 1848). This liberal educational paradigm, still extremely prevalent today, views schools as "neutral" institutions that provide students with access to the knowledge and skills needed to integrate successfully into society (Durkheim, 2002; Parsons, 1970).

Central to this paradigm is the proposition that once schools provide equal access to both a common curriculum and teachers that meet a universal standard, it is reasonable (and fair) to judge students based on their individual merit, work ethic and natural intelligence. Implicit in this proposition are ideas of individual freedom, the autonomous and rational mind, and a modernist outlook of continual progress. Even more "progressive" strands of this liberal paradigm, such as John Dewey's theories of experience and education, are closely tied to this idea of incremental and inevitable progress. Issues of power, conflict, ideology, culture and politics are most often absent from these liberal educational theories.

Theories of reproduction in education contest this paradigm and analyze how schools function in the interest of the dominant class. One of the first theorists directly analyzing the role of education in social reproduction was Louis Althusser, a Marxist philosopher who analyzed the relationship between ideology and the state. Althusser (1971) posed the following question: *what is the reproduction of the conditions of production?* Building on Marx, Althusser claims that every social formation must not only reproduce the productive forces, but also the existing relations of production. In order to understand this process of reproduction, Althusser divided the State Apparatus into two parts: the repressive State apparatus (RSA), which includes the government, administration, army, police, courts and prisons, and the ideological State apparatus (ISA),



encompassing religion, systems of public and private schools, the family, media, culture and several other state apparatuses. While RSAs function through violence and repression, ISAs function through ideology. Althusser argues that no state can hold power for an extended period of time without exercising control over the ideological State apparatus (Althusser, 1971, p. 20). In this same essay, Althusser argues that in mature capitalist societies it is the *educational ideological apparatus* (replacing the church) that has become the most important apparatus of the state for reproducing capitalist relations of production.

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of Althusser's theories in generating subsequent debates in education over the role of schools in social reproduction. Another important contribution was *Schooling in Capitalist America* by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976), which empirically illustrates how the values, norms and skills taught in schools *corresponded* to those existing in the capitalist workforce. Through "pluralist accommodation" there is a tendency for teachers, especially in periods of economic change, to alter educational values and goals in directions that conform to the new economic rationality and emerging social relations of production (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 237). For example, parents concerned with their children's economic future will support a vocational education tailored to emerging markets. Together, Althusser and Bowles & Gintis provide a convincing argument about the process through which schools maintain capitalist relations of production. However, as Henry Giroux (2001) argues, these theories "fail either to define hegemony in terms that posit a dialectical relationship among power, ideology, and resistance, or to provide a framework for developing a viable mode of radical pedagogy" (p. 86). This is where theories of cultural reproduction in schools becomes critical.

A starting point for analyzing cultural reproduction in schools is Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron's (2000) seminal work, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. Bourdieu and Passeron introduce the idea of "cultural capital" in schools: the field of rules, relationships, linguistic and cultural competencies that proclaims itself as objective while actually representing the values of the dominant class. In this perspective, culture is the mediating link between ruling-class interests and everyday life; schools, through their appearance as impartial and neutral, are able to sort students based on the cultural capital they have (or do not have) upon entering school.

Paul Willis (1981), another important cultural production theorist, acknowledges the importance of Bourdieu in introducing the realm of culture in theories of reproduction, but he critiques these theories, stating: "Because of the total separation granted to culture, and education's complicit role in its maintenance, the economy appears (though off stage) as the basic fixed universe to which culture is added" (p. 54). In addition, Willis argues, culture for Bourdieu is equated with bourgeois culture. Willis contests this unidirectional and one-sided treatment of ideology and culture, and in doing so provides a theory of resistance.

In *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs*, Willis (1977) is focused on understanding the cultural production of a group of youth—the lads—in a school in England. Through in-depth ethnography, Willis shows how the lived cultural production of the working class is also a form of creative resistance and agency. These youth are acutely aware that the dominant culture in the school is not *their* culture, and they are engaged in a daily rebellion against school authority, through which they create a counter-culture within the school. This counter-school culture eventually contributes to the lads' willingness to enter the workforce as working-class men. However, unlike other theories of reproduction, this correspondence was never inevitable. Willis is theorizing resistance by focusing on the limited penetration of the dominant ideology and contested process of cultural production among working class students. In an article to his critics, Willis (1981) expands on his critique of economic determinism:

Patterns of the development of labour power for a specific kind of application to industry must in every generation be achieved, developed, and worked for in struggle



and contestation. If certain obvious features of this continuous reproduction and ever freshly struck settlement show a degree of visible continuity over time this should not lead us to construct iron laws and dynamics of socialization from this mere succession of like things (Willis, 1977, p.183).

In this statement, Willis is pointing out the error in assuming an automatic process of social reproduction. He acknowledges that different processes of cultural production are continuously changing, challenged, and reconstructed. This implies a constant process of contestation and struggle, even if, in the end, similar social relations are produced. Willis argues that “social reproduction”—what he defines as the “replacement of that relationship between classes which is necessary for the continuance of the capitalist mode of production” (p.59)—is at a high level of abstraction and concretely means very little. By focusing on the “somewhat independent logics” of *cultural production* Willis is allowing for an exploration of openings and possibilities.

Paul Willis offers a theory of resistance that takes seriously the cultural production of the oppressed classes. He defines cultural production as “the creative use of discourses, meanings, materials, practices, and group processes to explore, understand, and creatively occupy particular positions in sets of general material possibilities” (Willis, 1981, p.59). Willis analyzes how this cultural production resists and contests both the dominant ideology and the social relations of capitalist production, while also acknowledging that these processes may eventually work to reinforce the same ideological beliefs and social relations. As I explore the MST’s educational project, I will draw on Willis for two purposes: 1) To analyze the diverse and resistant counter-cultures that are being (consciously and actively) produced by the MST in rural public schools; and, 2) To remember the limited influence a single site of cultural production has on social reproduction in these rural areas.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the MST’s educational project, I will introduce two more theorists of resistance that are important for this article. The first is Paulo Freire, the educational theorist most associated with the development of the field of critical pedagogy in the United States and popular education in Latin America. Freire’s work is both a critique of the current way education works in the schooling system to reinforce systems of oppression, as well as a theory of how education can become be a “pedagogy of the oppressed” that helps people collectively fight back against the inequalities they face. Freirean pedagogy is a dialectical process that involves spaces for learning based in peoples’ historical and social realities, direct action that works towards intervening in these realities, and additional spaces of learning that revisit these realities and discuss further means of intervention. Over the past few decades the use of “Freirean pedagogy” has become fashionable among progressive public school teachers around the world.

I argue that rather than positing Freirean theory as a disconnected pedagogical intervention in schools that can magically contest the dominant ideology and create revolution, Freirean theories are better understood as part of a political strategy that must be connected to a political movement. This understanding of the role Freirean pedagogy can play in social change is similar to Gramsci’s (1971) analysis of the war of position versus the war of movement. While a war of movement refers to taking over state power, the war of position happens in the “trenches” of civil society through a slow and continual process of garnering consent for an alternative hegemonic project. However, as Burawoy (2003) writes, Gramsci is never clear on the “exact mechanisms, leading to this new configuration of ditches, fortresses, and earthworks” (p.216).

Although Gramsci does not specifically outline how a war of position can be waged by the working-class, he does mention some important actors in this process. One of those actors is the “organic intellectual,” who becomes the “organizer of the masses of men” (Gramsci, 197, p.5). Gramsci writes that every social group creates “one or more strata of intellectuals which give it

homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields” (p.5). This organic intellectual not only attempts to sway minds, like traditional intellectuals, but also participates in the practical and material life of working-class populations as an organizer. In order to create a new stratum of intellectuals among dominated classes, it is necessary to elaborate the intellectual activity that exists in everyone, to develop the kernel of good sense that exists within common sense. Freire, through his pedagogical suggestions, provides us with a concrete strategy for how this “critical elaboration of intellectual activity” can take place.

In contrast to Gramsci, discussions of Freirean pedagogy in schools are often disconnected from the material reality of the students and concrete political actions. Freire himself said that pedagogy without praxis (practice and action) just becomes words, “blah, blah, blah” (Freire, 2002). In order to ensure that Freirean pedagogy does not become disconnected from collective struggles, it is necessary to unite Gramsci with Freire. As Hall (1996) writes, “No ideological conception can ever become materially effective unless and until it can be articulated to the field of political and social forces and to the struggles between difference forces at stake” (p.42). Therein, Freirean pedagogy becomes a political strategy in a war of position that is necessarily and always connected to a material reality and class struggle. This political/educational strategy does not necessarily occur in the formal school system. In fact, government-administered public schools are perhaps the last site in which this educational project is likely to take place. As Freire reminds us, implementing a liberatory educational project requires political power and therefore carrying out this form of education in schools prior to revolution is difficult (Freire, 2000, p. 54). Therefore, schools remain important institutions of social reproduction, while the struggle to break those exploitative relations of production remain outside the public school walls.

Unless, of course, you have a large social movement with enough political power and autonomy in relationship to the state where it can begin to take over public schools and implement a Freirean/Gramscian political strategy in the formal school system. This is where I would like to begin my discussion of the MST, drawing on Willis, Freire and Gramsci throughout the analysis. First, Willis reminds us that students “are not passive bearers of ideology, but active appropriators,” illustrating both the possibilities and the limits of the production of counter-cultures in schools. Second, Freire gives us a language to talk about what a radical education project might look like, while also being the major theoretical foundation for the educational proposal the MST has developed for schools in their communities. Third and finally, Gramsci reminds us that a socialist educational project must, at all moments, be connected to a political strategy that contests material realities and hegemonic relations of capitalist production.

### **The Social(*ist*) Pedagogies of the MST**

In this section of the paper I discuss the MST’s educational proposal—the contemporary social(*ist*) pedagogies of the movement—and the ways in which these pedagogies represent a concrete challenge to the reproduction of capitalist social relations in the Brazilian countryside. The MST has produced dozens of publications that discuss the movement’s pedagogical and philosophical beliefs about education, and this paper is in no way a summary of all of those educational goals. Rather, through an analysis of several of the documents I collected in the summer of 2009 as well as my participant observation in schools on MST settlements, I analyze a few components of the MST’s pedagogy most relevant to the discussion of social reproduction and resistance. To begin, however, I briefly describe how the MST first became engaged in this educational struggle.

**Unintentional Beginnings: *What do we do with all of the children?***

According to the official story MST activists tell, the first MST schools came about not because of a coherent educational proposal, but due to the parents' preoccupation about the number of children running around the landed encampments during the late 1970s and early 1980s. At first, the parents tried to entertain the kids with different games, sometimes incorporating educational activities as well. Soon, however, people began to question what the communities were going to do with so many children and no schools (Caldart, 2004a). One woman involved in a MST occupation in 1983 said, "There were hundreds of children running wild, with nothing to do all day long, getting up to mischief. We carried out a survey and found there were 760 school-age children in the camp and 25 qualified teachers among the women. It made sense to set up a school" (Bradford & Rocha, 2002, p.114). Caldart (2004b) discusses how, at first, many MST activists resisted the idea of schooling inside the settlements and camps. This was because of their previous experiences in schools, where they had been marginalized and made to feel stupid. However, families began to realize that public schools were an important part of advancing the fight for land.

The issue came to vote in an assembly, and the majority of families decided that they should ask the state authorities to set up a school. "Even then at this early stage they were clear on one essential point: education was the responsibility of the authorities" (Bradford & Rocha, 2002, p.114). The local and state governments, however, claimed that they could not set up any schools because the camps were illegal. Although in many settlements families decided to construct their own schools, movement activists continued to demand that the local authorities appoint teachers and provide funding for school supplies and infrastructure. Members of the movement frequently occupied government education offices until their demands for teachers and school supplies were met. In many regions, state and municipal governments caved into these demands.

As government teachers were sent to their communities, MST activists began to face a new dilemma: the teachers were often unsympathetic, and even antagonistic, to the MST's struggle for agrarian reform. Some teachers even began telling the students that their parents were criminals (Bradford & Rocha, 2002). Consequently, the educational debate within the movement turned to how MST activists could train teachers to be more sensitive to the needs of the movement.

Caldart (2004a) divides the emergence of schools in MST communities into three phases. In the first phase MST families mobilized for the right to education, through direct action that forced the state to deliver on this public service. In the second phase, MST activists began to organize into collectives in order to discuss and articulate a specific pedagogy for the movement, and to begin training teachers to use this new pedagogy. The third phase was the incorporation of the school into the everyday preoccupations of the landless families, in order to make sure that none of these schools became "*uma escola qualquer*" (just any kind of school). This meant that families living on MST settlements and camps were asked to form regional education collective that could send representatives to statewide education collectives, which would then form the national MST education sector. In 1987, at a national MST meeting, this National MST Education Sector was officially created, providing a space for a more systematic reflection on the educational experiences already occurring in MST settlements and camps.

Despite this national coordination, an official MST manifesto on education was not written until 1997.<sup>4</sup> This document was created at the first "National Encounter of Educators for Agrarian

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<sup>4</sup> Many other documents were published prior to 1997. One of these first educational texts, published in 1990, is called "Our Struggle is Our School" and includes several testimonies of teachers who worked in the settlement schools throughout the 1980s. Another important text was written in 1991, immediately after the MST's 6<sup>th</sup> national meeting, when education first appears as a central political goal of the entire movement. In

Reform,” which took place in the capital city of Brasília. At this meeting there were 700 participants, which included educators from MST camps and settlements, youth and adult students in MST literacy programs, pre-school teachers and other MST activists. There were delegations from 19 states, which were chosen during a series of precursor meetings held at the state level (Caldart, 2004a). The participants at this national meeting wrote the “Manifesto of Educators of the Agrarian Reform to the Brazilian People,”<sup>5</sup> outlining the movement’s educational proposal. Over the next decade the MST’s educational proposal became nationally recognized as *Educação do Campo*.<sup>6</sup>

### Aspects of the MST’s Educational Proposal

As I outlined in the previous section, schools as institutions of cultural production hold a real yet limited potential for challenging the dominant relations of production. I argue that the MST’s educational proposal for rural schooling pushes the limits of this limited potential. I make this argument by focusing on four major components of the MST’s educational philosophy.

**Intellectual versus Manual Labor.** In the introduction of the book, *Pedagogia do MST* written by MST activist Rosali Caldart (2004a), the governor of Minas Gerais in the 1920s is quoted: “For cultivating land, to dig with a hoe and to take care of cattle it is not necessary to know a lot of words” (p.7). Caldart begins her book with this quote in order to express how, as early as the 1920s, there was already a belief in the separation between manual and intellectual labor. Over the next eight decades Brazil experienced rapid economic growth and industrialization that coincided with a massive migration from rural to urban areas. In 1940, less than 32 percent of the population lived in cities; however, by 1991 75 percent of Brazil’s total population was urban (Plank, 1996). For the Brazilians who remained in rural areas, hunger and malnutrition increased as the Brazilian government pushed many small landowners off their land in an attempt to increase the dominance of mechanized agricultural industries (Wright & Wolford, 2003). Brazilian *campešinos* (rural peasants) were forced to sell their labor power to these large industries, and consequently, there was minimal investment in rural schooling, since Brazilian elites did not see a clear need for educating these rural workers.

This drastic separation between intellectual and manual labor is one of the defining characteristics of capitalist development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 1900s, Fredrick Taylor wrote *The Principles of Scientific Management*, where he described a management process through which employers can create a more efficient labor process. The development of this scientific management was a means of extracting the highest possible labor surplus value from the worker. In *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974), Braverman (1998) writes about the central component of scientific management, the separation of conception from execution:

As human labor becomes a social rather than an individual phenomenon, it is possible . . . to divorce conception from execution. This dehumanization of the labor process, in which workers are reduced almost to the level of labor in its animal form . . . becomes crucial for the management of purchased labor. For if the workers’ execution is guided by their own conception, it is not possible, as we have seen, to enforce upon them the methodological efficiency or the working pace desired by capital . . . This should be called the principle of the separation of *conception* from *execution* (p.113-114).

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1996 another document was published, “Principles of Education in the MST,” written shortly after the third MST Congress in 1995.

<sup>5</sup> A translation of this manifesto is included in the appendix of this paper.

<sup>6</sup> This name, “Education of the Countryside,” indicates an education “of” of the countryside, constructed within the reality of the countryside, not simply an urban education “in” the countryside.

As Braverman describes, the separation of conception from execution is alienating to the worker. It rejects the worker's ability to envision the entire production process, and thus, the worker simply becomes the executor of pre-determined tasks.

One of the basic components of the MST's educational project is the rejection of this separation between intellectual and manual labor, an idea partially taken from the Soviet educator Moisey Pistrak (Pistrak, 2000). In a document produced by the MST, *Principles of Education in the MST* (MST, 1996), education for work and through work is outlined as one of the ten basic pedagogical goals of the movement. The document states, "Work has a fundamental value because it is the world of work that generates income, that helps us identify as a class, that makes possible the construction of new social relations . . . When we say that our education tries to create subjects of action, we meant subjects that are principally workers." The document continues, stating that schools should encourage students to be involved in both manual and intellectual labor, to develop a love for work and to understand the difference between relations of exploitation and relations of social cooperation. The MST encourages students to engage in both intellectual and manual labor, to create a "new stratum" (Gramsci, 1971) of farmer intellectuals in the countryside.

This educational goal casts schools as not only functioning on the level of ideology and ideas, but also the sphere of material reality. Schools are directly implicated in a pedagogical process of changing students' daily labor processes. In an essay on questions of culture, Gramsci (2000) writes about the importance of this joining of intellectual and manual labor in schools. "The worker studies and works; his labour is study and study is labour . . . Having come dominant, the working class wants manual labour and intellectual labour to be joined in the school and thus creates a new educational tradition" (p.72). The MST's attempt to join manual and intellectual labor in the Brazilian public school system is an example of the "new educational tradition" Gramsci believed would develop once the working-class became dominant.

While I was in Brazil in the summer of 2009 I visited a high school, the Educator Institute, where the MST has a high degree of autonomy in the administration of the school.<sup>7</sup> One of my first observations was the lack of any of employees at the school—no janitors, secretaries, administrative assistants or cooks. When I asked about how the daily tasks of the school got accomplished, I was told that the students themselves are responsible for all the daily tasks in the school. These tasks ranged from cleaning up the classroom, to cooking lunch, to actually managing the class schedule and facilitating classroom discussions. All of the manual tasks necessary for a school to function were considered important components of the learning process. Rather than schools simply being "ideological apparatuses," as in Althusser's conception, for the MST schools are also spaces of work that allow for alternative social relations of production to develop.

### Education for Cooperation

Another important component of the MST's educational philosophy, which also contributes to the development of new social(*ist*) relations of production in rural areas, is the vision of education as the learning grounds for cooperation. The MST publication (1996), "Principles of Education in the MST" states: "Most of the time students learn the culture of individualism, of isolation and of conservatism that we carry with us. This is why it is necessary to have an education intentionally based in the culture of cooperation and the creative incorporation of lessons about the history of the collective organization of work." Again, this promotion of cooperation is not simply at the

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<sup>7</sup> This high school, the Educator Institute, is located in the center-north part of Rio Grande do Sul, in the municipality Pontão. Unlike most schools on MST settlements, the Educator Institute is not in the public school system. It is affiliated with a federal institute, which offers it legal recognition, but also allows the MST to administer the school without very little interference.

ideological level, but through the actual activities the students are involved in each day at these schools. In locations where the MST has a high degree of autonomy over school administration, such as the Educar Institute, students are organized into small collectives that are referred to as “base nucleuses” (*núcleos de base*, NBs). As opposed to schools being spaces where “individuals” come together, the NBs—small student collectives—are seen as the organizational base of the schools. If any individual has an issue, problem, or question, he or she first discusses it with the small collective and then the collective brings the issue to the larger school community.

When discussing the importance placed on the “collective” and collectivity within the school, MST activists frequently quote Anton Makarenko. Makarenko was a Soviet educator who was put in charge of organizing several schools for orphans after the Bolshevik Revolution (Bowen, 1963; Makarenko, 2001; Makarenko, 2004). Makarenko took the idea of the worker collective and applied it to the schools he was administering. In a presentation about the MST’s educational experiences, given by a member of the statewide MST education collective in Pernambuco, Makarenko’s vision of the collective was quoted: “The collective is a live social organism, and because of this, it possesses organs, attributes, responsibilities, correlations and interdependencies between its parts. If this does not exist then it is a crowd, a concentration of individuals.”<sup>8</sup> This quote is important because it makes a clear distinction between a group of individuals, and a true collective that takes on its own characteristics and attributes distinct from the sum of its parts. Through organizing schools in student collectives of “base nucleuses,” the MST attempts to emulate the vision of collectives as living organisms, different than a sum of individuals. The hope is for students to experience what it means to submit ones individuality to a larger collectivity.

This emphasis on the collective was obvious in my week-long observation of a university-level geography course, organized through the federal program PRONERA (the National Program for Education in Areas of Agrarian Reform),<sup>9</sup> in a partnership between the MST and the State University of São Paulo (UNESP). Each day the students were given equal amounts of collective and individual assignments. For example, one morning the professor assigned four questions the students had to answer collectively about the readings they had been assigned the previous week. They split up into their “base nucleuses” (NBs) and began the process of answering these questions. I joined a group and participated in approximately 10 hours of debate about the questions the professor had assigned. The students were devoted to this collective process, and it was not until late into the night that they actually began to write up the answers that they had discussed that day. Accustomed to a United States educational context, in which group work most often means splitting up the questions and answering them individually, I was struck by the students’ dedication to this collective process of knowledge production. Caldart (2004b) writes that, “when the school functions as a collective of learning, where the collective assumes co-responsibility of educating the collective, it becomes a space of learning not only in forms of cooperation, but principally in a vision of the world, a culture, where it is ‘natural’ to think in the well-being of everyone and not only yourself” (p.100). Although student NBs are not present in every public school located on a MST settlement,

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<sup>8</sup> This is taken from a power point presentation that an MST activist in Pernambuco presented during the summer of 2009. The activist allowed me to copy the power point onto my computer after the presentation.

<sup>9</sup> PRONERA is a federal program that was created in 1998 to give youth and adults living in areas of agrarian reform more access to schooling. One of the major components of this program is the development of university courses specifically for students in areas of agrarian reform. These courses are organized through a series of intensive “study sessions,” over four or five years, with a particular university course. For example, the State University of São Paulo (UNESP) geography course I refer to was in its fifth of ten two-month periods of study the students have to go through to graduate. The MST has a high degree of influence administering these university courses in a way that aligns with the movement’s own educational proposal.



and although they do not always function as smoothly as they did in this geography course, the MST's pedagogical emphasis on "the collective" challenges individualized social relations and offers as an alternative collective work processes.

### Counter-Cultural Production in Schools

Paulo Willis (1981) defines cultural production is the "creative use of discourses, meanings, materials, practices, and group processes to explore, understand, and creatively occupy particular positions in sets of general material possibilities" (p.59). For Willis, cultural production is distinct from cultural reproduction, which is the way in which these processes operate to reinforce general ideological and social beliefs. Processes of cultural production and cultural reproduction are also different than social reproduction, defined as the continual renewal of the relationships between classes necessary for the continuance of the capitalist mode of production. Willis writes that cultural production is only one of the ways in which social reproduction is finally achieved. In his ethnographic account of cultural production in a school in England, Willis analyzes how the lads at this school creatively produce a counter-school culture that challenges the dominant ideology in these schools. Although this cultural production represents creativity and resistance, it still contributes to reinforcing the dominant ideological beliefs that facilitate the lads willingness to accept working class jobs.

The critical point in Willis's analysis is that resistance may exist throughout the process of cultural and social reproduction, despite the eventual outcomes. For Willis, this opens up the possibility for thinking about the potential for radical change. He writes, "What is specifically missing and should be our positive task is some notion of the 'counter-hegemonic' cultural principle that might link forms of cultural production into their own connected ideology against forms of oppression" (Willis, 1981, p.65). In this statement, Willis is arguing that the goal for educators is to link distinct and situated moments of counter-cultural production into a coherent ideology that can contest oppressive power relations. Although these moments of counterhegemonic culture are always being produced, often they "just flood over and are gone" (Willis, 1981, p.65). Therefore, the goal of a radical educational project is to create a stronger link between these diverse forms of cultural production, and a larger political intervention. The MST's educational project is attempting to do exactly this: drive a wedge (Willis, 1981) between these creative moments of cultural production occurring in their schools, and the reproduction of exploitative capitalist social relations.

There are two methods through which this "wedge" between cultural production and social reproduction can occur. On the one hand, educators can harness aspects of counter-cultural production that are already existent in schools, such as the lads' rejection of dominant ideologies in schools, and try to develop this into a collective ideology against forms of oppression. On the other hand, educators can try to make schools into institutions that *intentionally* produce counter-cultures that are *already* linked to ideologies that contest oppressive capitalist relations. The MST is consciously engaged in this latter process. I will discuss one aspect of this intentional cultural production in schools on MST settlements and camps: *mística*.

The word *mística* refers to the musical and theatrical performances that are performed at the start and end of every school day, before MST meetings, during evening social events, and at other times throughout the school year. Branford and Rocha (2002) explain the concept of *mística* in the following way:

Music and song had been a part of the movement from the very beginning, when progressive Catholic priests had encouraged the families in the camp to reshape Catholic rites to make them relevant to their own struggle and culture. The leaders were already aware of the importance of these activities (which they were beginning



to call *mística*) in motivating the *sem-terra* and helping them forge a collective identity. The *mística* expresses the optimism and determination that spring from our indignation against injustice and from our belief in the very possibility of building a new society. For this reason, it isn't simply entertainment to help us escape from the disappointments and difficulties of everyday life. It is an injection of vitality, which gives us determination and daring so that we can overcome pessimism and push ahead with our project of including the excluded in the liberation of the Brazilian people (p.29-30).

The performance of *mística* before MST events, activities, and in the classroom is a creative way in which the community can collectively remember its struggle. By singing the MST national anthem together, or a song that comes from the settlement's particular rural popular culture, the community reflects on its history as well as coming together to artistically express its determination to change unjust circumstances. *Mística* not only occurs in schools but at all MST events and meetings. *Mística* can include dance, poetry, video, theatre and other forms of artistic expression that promote a sense of common history and struggle. It has become a national MST pedagogy to use *mística* as a creative way to build community, reflect on popular culture, and maintain optimism about the possibility for social change.

After attending a MST meeting on education, Brazilian educational theorist Miguel Arroyo (2004) describes how impressed he is with the focus on culture within the MST's educational spaces. He writes that, as educators, we have to think about the cultural matrices that are connected to rural ways of life, and we have to incorporate and produce this culture within our pedagogical project. In schools on MST settlements, students are in charge of presenting *mística* performances from a very young age. These performances are never repeated; they are produced and re-created daily through a collective process of reflection in which students must incorporate aspects of their local rural culture into an artistic performance that links this culture to a larger political project. Here is an excerpt from my field notes describing an example of *mística* in a school.

First each NB had to announce if everyone in their collective was present, and then each NB led a chant about social justice, raising their left hand into the air.

Afterwards the *mística* began, which involved students coming in with books and pulling four or five people into the circles with these books surrounding them, announcing through a poem the importance of studying for the revolution. Then some students came in with farming tools, and sang about the importance of production for their struggle, placing the tools in the center of the circle and pulling a bunch of other students into the circle as well. Then they held up the MST flag, along with the Via Campesina and CUT flag and we all sang the MST national anthem. Then their science class began (Field notes, Summer, 2009).

In schools located on MST settlements and camps, *mística* has become a daily practice, a normalized way to start and end every school day. The MST's incorporation of *mística* in schools is an attempt to help students creatively use local discourses, practices and symbols to "come to a collective, mediated, lived awareness of their conditions of existence and relationship to other classes" (Willis, 1981, p.58).

However, MST activists are not satisfied with isolated moments of counter-cultural production. As Willis suggests is necessary, the movement is also trying to link this cultural production to a coherent vision—of socialism in the countryside—that has the potential to disrupt the reproduction of the social relations of capitalist production. Of course, the MST's intentionality in producing counter-cultures is only one of many forms of cultural production in MST schools. As Willis (1977) reminds us, "Social agents are not passive bearers of ideology, but active appropriators

who reproduce existing structures only through struggle, contestation and a partial penetration of those structures” (p.175). The complexity of this process became evident to me as I watched a debate between students and teachers about an upcoming social event. The students, despite their political formation and the emphasis in the school on rural culture, wanted to play hip-hop music at the party. The teachers—dedicated MST activists—were concerned that the students did not want to have traditional music, which celebrated their peasant origins. In the same way that the dominant ideology of the state cannot fully penetrate the lads’ in Willis’s school, the efforts of dedicated MST activists to help young students produce counter-cultures in schools will also have diverse, contradictory and unpredictable outcomes.

### Schools as a Gramscian/Freirean political project

The final component of the MST’s educational project that I will discuss is the vision the movement has of schools as being part of a larger political strategy of redistributing land and contesting dominant models of development in rural areas. In the official mission statement of a public school in the Western part of Rio Grande do Sul, the first five pages of the fifteen-page document discusses the history of the school. This history includes a description of the land occupation that occurred in 1994, in which landless workers decided to occupy property owned by the Brazilian airline, VARIG. The school document discusses the strategy involved in deciding to occupy this land, the fact that VARIG was in debt to the Brazilian state, and that MST activists thought this would give them some political leverage over the government. The MST families eventually won the rights to this land, which (as the mission statement outlines) then initiated a fight for access to water, a school, roads and other public services. There are dozens of other political fights that the MST has engaged in since the school’s founding, and all of these struggles are continually updated in the school mission statement.

Why does the mission statement of this public school have so much description about the previous political struggle of the community? The school principal, also an MST activist, explained that schools play a critical role in creating *militantes* (activists) for the movement, and therefore, remembering this history and MST political strategy is important. The “Pedagogy of Social Justice” is one of the first goals outlined in the school mission statement: “We need to think of practices that help to educate and fortify in our children, adolescents and youth, the human posture and the values learned in struggle: nonconformity, sensibility, indignation for injustice, social contestation, the daily creativity against difficult situations, and hope.”<sup>10</sup> This explicit focus on social justice and political struggle within the public school system corresponds to the Gramsci/Freirean framework that I outlined in the first part of the article. Engaging in a “pedagogy of the oppressed” is *not* simply about promoting dialogue and drawing on students’ previous experiences in the learning process. In addition to these pedagogical methods, a Gramsci/Freirean struggle means linking this educational process to a “War of Position” in which students are encouraged to directly contest the material reality and oppressive social relations of capitalist production in which they are living.

In the *Principles of Education in the MST* (1996), this link is also discussed. The document states that people often believe education and politics should not be mixed, because this will “contaminate the minds and hearts” of children and youth. However, as the document goes on to argue, this separation between educational and political processes is actually alienating to youth because it teaches them that nothing can change. If politics and education were de-linked on MST settlements and camps, this would result in a separation between the movement and the schools. Instead, schools should encourage the “ethical indignation of unjust situations,” with curriculum that

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<sup>10</sup> Projeto Político Pedagógico (PPP) of state high school Joceli Correa, located in Jóia, Rio Grande do Sul.

intentionally contribute to the political and ideological formation of the students, and class solidarity (MST, 1996).

As these documents illustrate, a central goal of the MST's educational proposal is transforming students into organic intellectuals, or in other words, permanent persuaders and organizers in their communities (Gramsci, 1971). However, as Gramsci warns, this is an extremely difficult task: "If our aim is to produce a new stratum of intellectuals, including those capable of the highest degree of specialization, from a social group which has not traditionally developed the appropriate attitudes, then we have unprecedented difficulties to overcome" (Gramsci, 1971, p.43). Despite these challenges, the process that Gramsci describes is precisely the task that MST educational activists have taken on. Currently, there are MST activists across the country specializing in law, medicine, history, geography, pedagogy, literature, communication, and social welfare. The movement's goal is for this educated youth—the "new stratum of intellectuals"—to return to the countryside as MST activists dedicated to improving the quality of life of their communities. Continually reminding students, from a very young age, of the past struggles that were critical in constructing the schools in which students they are studying and the communities in which they are living is part of the MST's pedagogical attempt to keep youth active in the movement.

### **Conclusions: Treading the Line between Optimism and Pessimism**

The school does not transform reality, but it can help in forming the subjects that are capable of transforming society, the world, themselves. If we do not succeed in involving the school in this movement to transform the countryside then it will certainly be incomplete. (Caldart, 2004, p.107).

This paper has engaged the following question: what potential do the MST's social pedagogies have in disrupting the reproduction of capitalist relations of production in the countryside? I have argued that schools do have a (limited) potential to disrupt dominant social relations. In the case of the MST, this disruption means uniting the historical separation between "conception" and "execution" in the labor process, replacing individualism with collective forms of work, producing counter-culture in schools, and linking schools to a coherent political strategy. The MST's educational proposal, however, is only ever partially implemented in practice, and is thus incomplete and filled with uncertainties. As Willis (1977) illustrates, there is a fine line between acknowledging the potential schools have to contest oppressive social relations, while also recognizing that schools are only one of many sites that mediate diverse forms of cultural production that contribute to social reproduction. In an article filled with optimism, I end on a pessimistic note from my field notes:

I spent four days at the Educar Institute, getting to know the students, spending time in their classes, playing soccer, and working in the fields. The Educar Institute is organized in small base nucleuses that are in charge of the internal organization and functioning of the school. As these students told me, it is often a shock for a lot of the students who come to the school at the age of 14 or 15, and find themselves with the responsibility of not only attending school but also making sure the school itself functions. This includes cleaning bathrooms, cooking, organizing social activities, overseeing disciplinary issues, recording everything that happens in the school every day (including my visit), and helping with the internal organization of the classroom, for example, keeping time for the teacher and facilitating class discussions. This also means that the students are extremely busy. They are in class everyday from 7:30 AM to 6:30 PM, in addition to the normal study time a high school requires, as well as all

of these additional tasks. Due to this regiment, every session several students drop out of the school and go back to their settlements and camps to attend regular high schools where the MST is not an active presence (Field Notes, Summer, 2009).

The school I refer to in these field notes is in many ways the “ideal” MST school. Funded through PRONERA, the Educar Institute functions as a boarding school in which students come for three-month study periods twice a year over four years to earn their high school degree. Unlike the constant battle MST activists usually have with state and municipal governments over the control of public schools located on settlements and camps, in the Educar Institute the movement has almost complete autonomy. However, even in this “ideal” context, the MST’s educational project is only ever partially successful, and every year MST youth become disengaged and leave the school.

Although the MST’s educational project, in conjunction with the movement itself, has real potential for disrupting the reproduction of exploitative relations of production in rural areas of Brazil, this is by no means a simple, predetermined, fully or even partially successful process. While Freire and Gramsci give us a language to talk about why the MST’s educational project is an important political strategy that should be taken seriously, Willis reminds us that students are never “passive bearers of ideology,” but rather, “active appropriators.” Therefore, any educational intervention that MST activists or other progressive educators promote will be taken up, interpreted, and reconfigured in unforeseen ways. However, it is the dynamism and uncertainty of this process that also represents its potential. As MST activists commonly says, “the movement is in movement with the movement” (*a escola esta em movimento como o movimento*). At a theoretical and abstract level, I have argued that the MST’s educational proposal illustrates how innovative social pedagogies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century might contribute to concrete political and economic transformation. At a concrete level, however, the effects of the MST’s educational reforms and the social(*ist*) pedagogies they are implementing in public schools are still unknown.

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## **Appendix A:**

### **Manifesto of Educators of the Agrarian Reform to the Brazilian People<sup>11</sup>**

In Brazil, we have arrived at a historical crossroads. On the one hand there is the neo-liberal project, which will destroy the Nation and increase social exclusion. On the other hand, there is a possibility of the organization of a counter movement and the construction of a new project. As part of the working class of our country, we need to take a position. For these reasons we have written this manifesto.

1. We are educators of children, youth and adults of Camps and Settlements in all of Brazil, and we place in our responsibility the fight for Agrarian Reform and social transformation.
2. We manifest our profound indignation of the misery and injustice that is destroying our country, we share the dream of constructing a new development project for Brazil, a project belonging to the Brazilian people.
3. We understand that education alone does not resolve the problems of the people, but it is a fundamental element in the process of social transformation.
4. We struggle for social justice! In education this means the guarantee of public education for everyone, free and of a high quality, from preschool education to the University.
5. We consider the end of illiteracy not only to be a responsibility of the state, but also a question of honor. For this reason we are dedicated to this work.
6. We demand, as workers within education, respect and professional value and dignified conditions for our work. We want the right to think and participate in the decisions about a political education.
7. We want a school that is preoccupied with the questions of our time, and that helps to strengthening social struggles and create solutions to the concrete problems of each community in the country.
8. We defend a pedagogy that is concerned with all the dimensions of the human being and that creates an educational environment based in the action and the democratic participation and in the culture and history of our people.
9. We believe in a school that can awaken the dreams of our youth, can cultivate solidarity, hope and the desire to always learn and teach and transform the world.
10. We understand that in order to participate in the construction of a new school, we the educators, need to construct collective pedagogies with political clarity, technical competence, and humanist and socialist values.
11. We struggle for public schools in all Camps and Settlements of Agrarian Reform of and we defend the pedagogical right these schools have in the participation of a Landless community and its organization.
12. We work for a school identity specific to rural life, as a pedagogical-political project that will strengthen new forms of development in the camp, based in social justice, agrarian cooperation, the respect for the environment and the valuing of landless peasant culture.

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<sup>11</sup> Taken from Caldart (2004a, p.265-266).



13. We renew, in front of everyone, our political and pedagogical dedication to the causes of the people, and especially with the struggle for Agrarian Reform. We continue to maintain alive the hope and honor of our Country, our principles, our dreams.
14. We join with all people and organizations that have dreams and projects for change, because together we can create a new education in our country, an education based in the new society that we have already began to construct.

**MST**

**Agrarian Reform: A Struggle of Everyone**

1<sup>st</sup> National Encounter of Educators of the Agrarian Reform  
We pay honor to the educators Paulo Freire and Che Guevara  
Brasilia, July 28-30, 1997

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