

Landless insubordinations

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Abstract

This article aims to understand to what extent what we call *landless insubordinations*, in reference to the strategic actions of the Landless Workers' Movement, align with or diverge from *creative insubordinations*, based on the existing literature in the fields of education and mathematics education. Some examples of landless insubordinations include: the very existence of a social movement composed of landless workers seeking to achieve a popular agrarian reform and social transformation; the proposition of *educação do campo* as a new educational conception in opposition to the hegemonic model of education; and the existence of Itinerant Schools, which are public schools within encampments with a specific educational approach characterized by the organization by cycles of human formation, assessment through descriptive reports, participatory class councils, and a curriculum structure based on the complex method. We conducted theoretical and speculative research using a contrast corpus, based on Gramsci's prison writings. We concluded that, although both forms of insubordination aim to modify reality, creative insubordinations are guided by individual decisions, based on their own ethical principles, whereas landless insubordinations have a collective nature – from their organization at the local level (within encampments and settlements) to their educational proposals and the experiences carried out in Itinerant Schools.

Keywords: Landless workers' movement. Rural education. Itinerant schools.

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Resumo**Insubordinações sem terra****Palavras-chave:**

Movimento dos trabalhadores rurais sem terra. Educação do campo. Escolas itinerantes.

Este artigo tem como objetivo compreender em que medida o que chamamos de *insubordinações sem terra*, em referência às ações estratégicas do Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, se aproximam ou se distanciam das *insubordinações criativas*, a partir da literatura existente nas áreas de Educação e Educação Matemática. Algumas das insubordinações sem terra são: a própria existência de um movimento social, formado por trabalhadores despossuídos da terra, visando a realização de uma reforma agrária popular e a transformação social; a proposição da Educação do Campo como uma nova concepção educacional em contraposição ao modelo hegemônico de educação; a existência de Escolas Itinerantes, que são escolas públicas dentro dos acampamentos com uma proposta educacional específica – organização por ciclos de formação humana, avaliação por parecer descritivo, conselhos de classe participativos e organização curricular por complexos de estudo. Realizamos uma pesquisa de natureza teórica e especulativa, com a utilização de um *corpus* de contraste, tendo como base os escritos de Gramsci do seu período carcerário. Concluimos que, apesar de ambas visarem modificar a realidade, as insubordinações criativas se pautam em decisões individuais, norteadas por seus próprios princípios éticos, enquanto as insubordinações sem terra possuem caráter coletivo – desde sua organização nos âmbitos local (nos acampamentos e assentamentos) e nacional, até na sua proposição educacional e nas experiências realizadas nas Escolas Itinerantes.

Resumen**Insubordinaciones sin tierra****Palabras clave:**

Movimiento de los trabajadores sin tierra. Educación campesina. Escuelas itinerantes.

Este artículo tiene como objetivo comprender en qué medida lo que llamamos *insubordinaciones sin tierra*, en referencia a las acciones estratégicas del Movimiento de los Trabajadores Rurales Sin Tierra, se acercan o se alejan de las *insubordinaciones creativas*, a partir de la literatura existente en las áreas de Educación y Educación Matemática. Algunas de las insubordinaciones sin tierra son: la propia existencia de un movimiento social formado por trabajadores desposeídos de la tierra, que buscan llevar a cabo una reforma agraria popular y una transformación social; la propuesta de la *Educação do Campo* como una nueva concepción educativa en contraposición al modelo hegemónico de educación; y la existencia de las Escuelas Itinerantes, que son escuelas públicas dentro de los campamentos con una propuesta educativa específica: organización por ciclos de formación humana, evaluación a través de informes descriptivos, consejos de clase participativos y una estructura curricular basada en complejos de estudio. Realizamos una investigación de naturaleza teórica y especulativa, utilizando un *corpus* de contraste basado en los escritos carcelarios de Gramsci. Concluimos que, aunque ambas formas de insubordinación buscan modificar la realidad, las insubordinaciones creativas se basan en decisiones individuales, guiadas por sus propios principios éticos, mientras que las insubordinaciones sin tierra tienen un carácter colectivo, tanto en su organización a nivel local (en los campamentos y asentamientos) como en su propuesta educativa y en las experiencias realizadas en las Escuelas Itinerantes.

Introduction

In the struggle for land, advocated by the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), there is also a struggle for education. The MST has been a subversive movement from its very origin. It consequently has been surrounded by disputes, not only for land, but for autonomy, education, and other basic conditions for the survival of its members and the Movement itself.

Using Gramsci's (2024) writings as a basis and the term *insubordination* as a guiding thread, we adopt a speculative research approach (Van Der Maren, 2004; Martineau; Simard; Gauthier, 2001) in which we produce theoretical statements from other theoretical statements that make up the contrast corpus, composed of: theoretical constructions referring to *creative insubordinations* and what we call *landless insubordinations*, in reference to the strategic actions of the MST, especially in education. Based on the oppositions that we identify in these two fields, with examples taken from the literature, we carry out a theoretical analysis and discussion.

The objective is to understand to what extent landless insubordinations approach or distance themselves from creative insubordinations, based on existing theoretical constructions.

Theoretical basis

To undertake the theoretical discussion, we draw on the writings of Antonio Gramsci, especially those from his prison period (Gramsci, 2024), which are based on historical-dialectical materialism to understand the complexity of reality based on existing contradictions, with a view to transform it.

Marx (2011), when proposing his method of analysis and criticism of political economy, in opposition to the classical economists of his time, describes the analytical movement as follows: "[...] the concrete appears in thought as a process of synthesis, as a result, not as a starting point, although it is the effective starting point and, consequently, also the starting point of intuition and representation" (Marx, 2011, p. 78).

Corazza (1996, p. 40) details this method:

These activities of abstracting the parts and reconstructing the concrete whole constitute a single theoretical process of knowledge: going from the real concrete to the abstract, and from this to the concrete conceived by thought, forms a single process, the moments of which imply each other mutually, each of which is realized through the other. [...] Therefore, to go from the abstract to the concrete, as Marx says, without going, at the same time, from the concrete to the abstract, criticizing abstractions, would lead to an empty set of abstractions; but, on the other hand, to go from the concrete to the abstract, at random, without hypothesis, does not lead to a theory either, but only to a set of disordered abstractions [...].

Similarly, Gramsci (2024) describes the movement of overcoming common sense, which he characterizes as disaggregated and episodic, to acquire a unitary and coherent conception of the

world. For him, human reason can overcome a chaotic vision of reality and return it to concrete thought.

Whether in common sense or in its overcoming, Gramsci (2024) situates the collective character of thought and action:

By our very conception of the world, we always belong to a certain group, and precisely to one in which all social elements share the same way of thinking and acting. We are conformists of some conformism, we are always mass men or collective men (Gramsci, 2024, p. 1488).

This understanding is contrary to liberal logic, as stated by Santos (2013, p. 107): “[...] the freedom of the individual is guided and circumspect according to the social being; in Gramsci there is no centrality of the interests of the particular individual as an independent and transcendental being of social reality”. Thus, “[...] the individual and the collective subject are intertwined in a dialectical relationship, in which freedom, inventive subjectivity and spontaneity are not disconnected from 'sociality', necessity and discipline” (Santos, 2013, p. 107).

Gramsci then asks: “of what historical type is conformism, the mass man of which we are a part?” (Gramsci, 2024, p. 1488). That is: of common sense, which is episodic and disaggregated, composed simultaneously of a multiplicity of mass men, of “[...] elements of cavemen and principles of the most modern and advanced science” (Gramsci, 2024, p. 1488), towards a unitary and coherent worldview?

The various ordered conceptions of the world, which differ from common sense, reach the consciousness of individuals through a conscious effort, the first of which is that of the ruling class (Iasi, 2013). As Marx and Engels (1998, p. 48) state, “the thoughts of the ruling class are also, in all ages, the dominant thoughts [...]”.

Thus, in a dialectical movement between the economic structure (or, simply, structure) and the legal, political and cultural superstructure the dispute for hegemony occurs.

In the words of Marx (2008, p. 47),

The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis on which a legal and political superstructure is raised, and to which correspond definite social forms of consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being; on the contrary, it is their social being that determines their consciousness.

For Gramsci (2024), the struggle for hegemony takes place in both spheres, and when the search for consent in civil society fails, the coercion of political society acts.

In this process of dispute, organic intellectuals stand out for their role in transforming common sense into a coherent worldview that supports a particular class's bid for hegemony. According to Gramsci (2024, p. 1626), “All men are intellectuals, one could say, therefore; but not all men have

the function of intellectuals in society [...]”. He considers this function to be assumed by two groups: traditional intellectuals, trained by educational institutions “[...] to promote the so-called 'high culture', in all fields of science and technology” (Gramsci, 2024, p. 1626); and organic intellectuals, who “give homogeneity [to the social group] and awareness of their own function in the economic field” (Gramsci, 2024, p. 538).

Method

This research has a theoretical and speculative nature, from the perspective of Van Der Maren (2004) and Martineau, Simard and Gauthier (2001). Developing speculative research demands mental work to produce theoretical statements based on other theoretical statements, that is, researchers, based on studies and reflections on the topic investigated, aim to construct, through writing, theoretical statements (Van Der Maren, 2004).

According to Passos (2015, p. 32),

One of the central issues of speculative narrative research is the ability to produce a new question, to propose a new analysis based on the interpretation of previous texts and rigorous arguments. In a way, it is a way of telling a story about the researched topic. (Passos, 2015)

Passos (2015) mentions the three main axes that support speculative research: interpreting, arguing, and telling. As Martineau, Simard, and Gauthier (2001) posit, the exercise of constructing theoretical statements based on other statements requires the actions of interpreting and arguing, but also of telling a new story about these statements.

Although speculative research aims at theorizing without the use of empirical data, it cannot be done without material—without previously produced theoretical statements. The *corpus* of previously produced theoretical statements can be constituted in three ways: a single *corpus*, an intertextual *corpus* and a contrast *corpus*. The single *corpus* is used when the purpose is to discuss a theme or concept from the same author and from the same perspective. The intertextual *corpus* is used when the purpose is to discuss a theme or concept from different authors, whose interaction of information is convergent, or from the same author who produces information on the same theme but from different perspectives. The contrast *corpus* is composed of statements from authors who have different points of view on a concept or event, revealing divergences in their assertions (Van Der Maren, 2004).

For data analysis, according to Van Der Maren (2004), speculative research can take three methodological approaches: conceptual analysis, critical analysis, and inferential analysis. Conceptual analysis aims to identify the meaning and possibilities of application of a concept or notion; critical analysis seeks to evaluate a set of theoretical statements in order to highlight gaps,

contradictions, assumptions, implications and consequences, often not made explicit by their authors; and inferential analysis seeks to develop new theories based on those already known or to extend theories to other fields of application, beyond their original field, through the addition of inferred theoretical elements (Van Der Maren, 2004).

This research uses the contrast *corpus*, thus enabling, as Van Der Maren (2004) states, to shed light on the richness of gaps and tensions in the statements, through a critical analysis. In our case, these statements revolve around the term *insubordination*. On the one hand, *creative insubordinations*, well established in the educational literature, and, on the other, *landless insubordinations*, a term coined by us to refer to the strategic actions of the MST, especially in education.

Corpus

Two sets of theoretical constructions are part of the contrast *corpus* of this research. The first set refers to *creative insubordinations*, a terminology that began to be used in scientific research in Education in the 1980s, especially in ethnographic studies on risks taken by school principals in the United States, responsibly challenging established orders, with a view to dealing with everyday situations. More recently, creative insubordinations began to be addressed in research in mathematics education, focusing on the teacher, who, in a similar way, opposes norms that could, in some way, compromise teaching and learning in mathematics classes. The second set of this *corpus* we call *landless insubordinations*¹. This expression does not exist in the literature, but we use it to refer to the strategic actions of the MST, especially in education – amply documented in scientific research. In what follows, we list some of these actions that subvert the established order in society, which, by analogy to the first set, were called insubordinations.

Creative insubordination

The literature on creative insubordination, specifically in the field of education, began in the 1980s in the United States, particularly with research that examined the actions of school principals who sought to subvert certain established orders in order to solve everyday problems encountered in schools (Crowson; Morris, 1985; Haynes; Licata, 1995; Keedy, 1992; Morris *et al.*, 1981; Pellicer *et al.*, 1990).

In Mathematics Education, we highlight research focusing on teachers' professional actions, presenting creative insubordination as a way to handle certain situations in their practice

¹In an oral communication presented at the event International Conference on Creative Insubordination in Mathematics Education (Icocime 3), held in Rio de Janeiro, in 2023, we present this expression and some examples that are in this article.

(D'Ambrosio, 2015; D'Ambrosio; Lopes, 2014, 2015; Gutiérrez, 2013, 2015, 2016; Lopes; D'Ambrosio, 2016).

For example, Gutiérrez (2015) conducted a study with future teachers during their classroom internship experiences, analyzing their decision-making process regarding whether or not to take risks in practices of creative insubordination, particularly when working with historically marginalized student groups in the U.S. context. The author concludes that three factors influence this decision: the possibility of changing others' ways of thinking and acting, the presentation of an identity that they can be proud of, and the opportunity to model bystanders' behavior in order to advocate for themselves.

In a compilation of strategies for creative insubordination, Gutiérrez (2016) presents several possibilities for mathematics teachers who question established norms for teaching and learning mathematics when they believe those norms are not in the best interest of their students. Some of these strategies include: seeking allies, such as other teachers; implementing certain actions without informing others until the desired outcome is achieved; and using tools originally designed to maintain the status quo in a subversive way to achieve their objectives².

D'Ambrosio and Lopes (2015) open a debate on creative insubordination in Mathematics Education within the Brazilian context and argue that it can be a resource for teachers and researchers in response to educational bureaucracy. In this regard, they advocate:

[...] a practice of Mathematics Education driven by social, economic, political, ethical, historical, and cultural issues. This perspective is linked to the sensitivity to recognize the different forms of Mathematics that emerge in various contexts and require new attitudes and actions from mathematics educators. These actions are not predetermined—they need to be created through interaction and dialogue with their peers (D'Ambrosio; Lopes, 2015, p. 13).

Thus, creative insubordination is

an act of opposition and, generally, a challenge to established authority when it stands against the well-being of others, even if unintentionally, through incoherent, exclusionary, and/or discriminatory determinations. Creative insubordination is being aware of when, how, and why to act against established procedures or guidelines (D'Ambrosio; Lopes, 2014, p. 29).

In general, research on creative insubordination in Mathematics Education shares the understanding that these actions, which challenge the established order in a creative and responsible way, are necessary for teachers to carry out their work in alignment with their ethical convictions. Gutiérrez (2015, 2016) proposes a mirror test, which consists of looking at oneself in the mirror every day and asking: "Am I doing what I said I would do in education when I entered this profession? And, if not, what am I planning to do about that?" (Gutiérrez, 2016, p. 58).

² Gutiérrez (2016) refers to the term coined by author Audre Lorde, "Master's Tools."

In this sense, individual freedom, inherent to each person, can be the key to change—whether in school, in the classroom, or in something that affects students. While the collective moves in one direction, the individual can move in the opposite direction, as long as they remain true to their personal principles.

Landless Insubordinations

Since the beginning of the 16th century, with the Portuguese colonization, Brazil's history has been marked by land concentration. Initially, the Portuguese government granted lands in Brazilian territory as hereditary concessions, creating enormous estates that were used to produce goods of international interest through the enslavement of African populations brought to Brazil by the Portuguese.

By the 19th century, with the approaching end of the slavery regime, mainly due to external pressure, and “[...] to prevent the future abolition from allowing former slaves to take possession of the land, the first land law in the country was enacted in 1850. [...] Law No. 601 of 1850 thus became the baptism of land concentration in Brazil” (Stedile, 2011, p. 22-23). As a result, land came to be regarded as a commodity, meaning it could only be acquired through purchase – therefore, restricting access to it for much of the formerly enslaved population and indigenous peoples.

During this same period, a policy of “whitening” the population was implemented, with incentives for the settlement of the territory and food production, particularly by European immigrants. Later, in the mid-20th century, the intense mechanization of agriculture, essentially monoculture, exacerbated the rural population's crisis in accessing work.

Social movements organized themselves to address these issues – initially on a regional level, as seen in the conflicts in the regions of Canudos, in Bahia, and Contestado, in Santa Catarina, or with groups such as the Peasant Leagues and the Movement of Landless Farmers (MASTER), as well as land occupations like Encruzilhada Natalino, in Rio Grande do Sul.

During the country's re-democratization period, in 1984, at a meeting in Cascavel, Paraná, the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) was officially established as a national movement. Its objectives were: to fight for land, to fight for agrarian reform, and to fight for social change in Brazil.

Considering the entire history of previous social movements advocating for popular agrarian reform, we identify the founding of the MST as the *first landless insubordination*, which is an insubordination against the very social structure: the organization of landless workers aiming to change the land distribution structure of a country built through the concentration of power and capital – and, consequently, land. The main, though not the only, form of action of the MST, designed to pressure the government to guarantee the right to land as established in the 1988 Federal Constitution, is through the occupation of unproductive private land. This struggle for the realization of a popular

land reform, “[...] shakes the very social structure of a country marked by latifundium, a relative of slavery” (Caldart, 2012, p. 32).

As Caldart (2001, p. 208) states, “perhaps it is this radicalism, in the struggle, the way, and who is carrying it out, that provokes an immediate stance in society: people are either against or in favor of the MST’s actions; but generally, they do not remain indifferent to them.”

In addition to land occupations, the MST has sought, over the years, to secure basic rights for rural populations, such as education, guaranteed by law (Brazil, 1996). By the late 1990s, a movement emerged, articulated by MST militants and other social movements, for a quality education for rural people – which until then had been characterized by either a lack of or the extreme precariousness of formal education. What was called “rural education” began to be understood as “*Educação do Campo*” due to a shift in the conceptualization of the subject.

About this, Caldart (2009, p. 39) states: “*Educação do Campo* emerged as a critique of the reality of Brazilian education, particularly the educational situation of the Brazilian people who work and live in rural areas.” She explains that this is not merely an educational proposal, “but as a critique of education in a historically determined reality, it affirms and fights for a conception of education (and of the rural)” (p. 40). This represents the *second landless insubordination* – a counter-hegemonic proposal that opposes the model of education imposed by the state on rural populations.

Contradictions and antagonisms between the propositions of *Educação do Campo* and the public policies implemented – or, alternatively, between social movements and the State – produces tensions (Caldart, 2009). Within these tensions, we identify a group of insubordinations that create counter-hegemonic escapes from what is imposed as the hegemonic norm. To illustrate this, we consider the specific case of the Itinerant Schools of Paraná.

Land occupations carried out by the MST are central to advancing agrarian reform; they serve as a means of denouncing the failure to fulfill the social function of land. For this purpose, families organize themselves to settle on large estates, initially on a temporary basis – these are the encampments. Alongside these families are children and young people of school age. Within this migratory movement, a persistent issue arises concerning which school will accommodate these students. Reports frequently describe situations in which they face discrimination in schools and encounter difficulties in accessing education due to transportation conditions in rural areas (Domingues; Sachs, 2023).

In this context, Itinerant Schools are established within the encampments, which are unpredictable locations that may relocate if the encampment moves to another area or faces eviction. In the state of Paraná, in particular, the legalization of these schools was the result of an intense negotiation process with the State Department of Education, followed by submission to the State

Education Council, leading to their approval in December 2003. This is the *third landless insubordination*: public schools within encampments for landless children and youth.

The Itinerant Schools of Paraná have a specific educational proposal, based on the philosophical and pedagogical principles of the MST (MST, 2005). Within this proposal, *several forms of landless insubordination* can be identified: organization by cycles of human development, assessment through descriptive reports, participatory class councils, and a curriculum structure based on the complex method (Freitas, 2009).

The cycles of human development are a way of organizing school time based on Vygotskian developmental theory – an act of *insubordination* against the predominant model at the public education. Although grade levels are maintained as an imposition, it is understood that students develop at different paces rather than necessarily in the same way within a single year (MST, 2013). Within each cycle, from early childhood education to high school, which lasts two to three years, there is no grade retention; in cases of specific needs, at the end of each cycle, students may attend the so-called Intermediate Class, held in an alternate shift, to address any remaining gaps. This represents yet another form of *landless insubordination*.

In addition, there is a fundamental change in student assessment: grades are replaced by descriptive reports. These reports are documents individually prepared by teachers throughout the academic period to record each student's learning, development, and difficulties (Santos; Sachs, 2023). The goal of the descriptive report is to provide this information to various stakeholders: the student, their parents or guardians, and also the teachers who will receive the student in the following period.

The absence of grades is a major act of *landless insubordination*, it rejects the individualistic vision of education imposed by the state in favor of a collectivist vision where students are not ranked against each other nor are they encouraged to learn through a system of external rewards.

As Camini (2009, p. 167) states,

[...] the central category of the capitalist school is evaluation, which translates into productivity. It is through evaluation that the control of capital, as a social relation, is legitimized over the education provided by the school, affecting teachers, principals, parents, and students. This control is defined far from the classroom and is distributed in such a way that it goes unnoticed. Understanding its intricacies and predominantly classificatory characteristics, as well as its ideological implications in education, is a duty of those who seek to envision a new school model.

Sapelli (2013) reports that the State Department of Education initially did not accept the lack of grades in the Itinerant Schools of Paraná, arguing that it was a system requirement. The MST's Education Sector disagreed and suggested that, in that case, the system should be changed. The impasse was resolved after the approval of the political-pedagogical project of the Itinerant Schools by the State Board of Education, allowing numerical grades to be replaced by descriptive reports.

In another act of *landless insubordination*, the Itinerant Schools also altered the format and goals of class council meetings, so that they would be more responsive to the local community. About this, in an interview with Domingues (2023, p. 74), a teacher states:

[...] unlike a class council where we sit with teachers only to discuss whether a student's grade is high or low, in the itinerant school's class council, we sit with the parents, students, coordination staff, and teachers. It's not just me evaluating the student – the student evaluates me, evaluates the coordination, the administration, and even the person preparing the meals. It's a way for us to exchange appreciation, to say, "this is important, this was good, this wasn't good." I remember [...] the first participatory councils I experienced here, where students truly had the freedom to say, "So, teacher, does he use diverse materials?", "Does he not? How does it work?". They have the space to say, "The teacher does this, the teacher doesn't do that, we work in this way." And they also evaluate themselves because students ask each other, "And you? How was your approach? Was it appropriate? Was it not? What can you do to improve?". So, I think that when you get to the plenary, where you self-evaluate before evaluating someone else, you become more careful before pointing fingers and judging others because you, too, are being evaluated. That's what struck me the most from the first moment I got to know the school – and what made me fall in love with it – was the participatory class council.

As Sapelli (2013) explains, these class council meetings became a time and space for dialogic assessment, in which all individuals involved in the process participate: students, parents or guardians, teachers, coordinators, and the Education Sector of the encampment. All students take part – not just those at risk of failing. The existence of such a collective represents an act of *landless insubordination* against the hierarchical and individualistic logic commonly found in schools.

Finally, the curricular organization of the Itinerant Schools of Paraná became yet another site for *landless insubordination*. Inspired by the experience of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics from 1917 to 1931, it is structured through the "complex method" which aims to address the complexity of reality from multiple perspectives (Freitas, 2009). Specifically, various fields of knowledge (e.g., mathematics, history, science) contribute to the study of what is called a "portion of reality" (MST, 2013).

The aim is to overcome the isolation of fields of knowledge from each other and from the objective reality of students. For example, the subjects of Portuguese, Spanish, Arts, Physical Education, Geography, Science and Mathematics are organized around the portion of reality "food production", intended for the eighth grade of Middle School (MST, 2013). Over the course of a semester, teachers address pre-established topics that contribute to the understanding of that portion of reality. The complex method is yet another act of *insubordination* against the dominant educational model, in which there is often no dialogue between different areas of knowledge.

Thus, *landless insubordinations* are based on a collective conception of social transformation, in which the school and educational processes are a fundamental part of their struggle.

Discussion

For the discussion we wish to undertake here, to be transparent, we begin by presenting contradictions³ expressed in the *landless insubordinations*.

The *first landless insubordination* mentioned was precisely the way this social movement operates – occupying land to pressure the government into carrying out a popular agrarian reform. The most recent data we accessed on this issue comes from 2019, organized by DATALUTA Network, which compiles information on encampments, rural settlements, protests, and the foreign ownership of land in Brazilian territory. A comparative analysis over the years reveals a significant decline in land occupations, especially from 2004 to 2019. In 2004, 496 land occupations were recorded, while in 2019, the number dropped to 43. This decline is also observed in the number of rural settlements created each year. For example, in 2005, 872 settlements were established, whereas in 2019, there were only two (Núcleo de Estudos, Pesquisas e Projetos de Reforma Agrária, 2020).

Despite the decline in land occupations and, consequently, in the creation of new settlements, this trend does not correlate with a decrease in land distribution inequality in the country. As shown by the Gini index, this inequality has remained consistently high over the years⁴ (Núcleo de Estudos, Pesquisas e Projetos de Reforma Agrária, 2017, 2020).

The *second landless insubordination*, represented by the movement *Educação do Campo*, is filled with contradictions, as already pointed out by Caldart (2009). As a popular movement becomes incorporated into public policies, it simultaneously represents both victories and advancements in society while also conforming to the established order.

The impasse is related to the growing trend (understandable within the logic of the society we still live in) of strengthening, in the discussion and (precarious) implementation of public policies for *Educação do Campo*, the logic of the system in general. This leads to pressure to strip it of its original emancipatory content and expand its regulatory dimension, seeking in every possible way to fit into the established order demands that actually belong to the “counter-order.” (Caldart, 2009, p. 56).

This also happens with Itinerant Schools, which constitute the *third act of landless insubordination* listed here. As indicated by Sapelli (2015), these schools have made more progress in their proposals than in their actual pedagogical practice. She highlights the contradictions between

[...] those who clearly understand the role of the school, which should position itself in the class struggle in favor of the working class from the perspective of its emancipation, and those who believe that its stance should support the maintenance of the current process; there is a tension between the social movement and the State, each defending the interests of the class that guides them [...] (Sapelli, 2015, p. 141-142).

³ Here, we use the concept of contradiction from the perspective of historical-dialectical materialism.

⁴ In 1998, the Gini index for land distribution in Brazil was 0.838; in 2019, it was 0.821 (Núcleo de Estudos, Pesquisas e Projetos de Reforma Agrária, 2017, 2020).

Regarding the *various acts of insubordination* present in the educational proposal of the Itinerant Schools, we can identify some contradictions. Santos and Sachs (2023) highlight problems in the development of descriptive reports, which are sometimes written in a vague and non-individualized manner, compromising their function in the evaluation process. Specifically in relation to the evaluation in Mathematics, Santos (2023) indicates that some teachers use summative evaluation and even assign grades to students, to later prepare descriptive reports – which can be explained by their previous experiences and the training they have received.

Concerning the creation of the curriculum document based on complex method, Sachs, Nogueira, and Souza (2023) point out inconsistencies between the justifications provided and the mathematical content included in the syllabus – undermining the idea that subjects should not exist as ends in themselves but should contribute to the study of real-life contexts. Based on a documentary analysis and interviews, the authors present topics that are not related to the portions of reality, but that, because they are part of a state curriculum, needed to be included in the complex method. One example is the presence of quadratic equation and biquadratic equations in the complex whose portion of reality deals with “Processing and processing of production”, without justification for this.

As Sachs and Ferraiol (2022, p. 150) state:

These contradictions can be attributed to certain conditioning factors, among which we highlight two: the precarious nature of teacher hiring for these schools, leading to high turnover among professionals; and curricular limitations, which hinder more significant transformations in the implementation of the educational proposal and are reinforced by curricular frameworks and external evaluations.

This is what they call “education among *latifundia*”: “The *latifundia*, understood both metaphorically and literally, are the result of policies of a bourgeois state that operates to maintain class domination” (Sachs; Ferraiol, 2022, p. 150).

It is clear that contradictions limit the transformative power of the landless insubordinations – both in terms of changes in the educational process, the organization of schools, and the curriculum, as well as in the structure of society. Resistance is to be expected: at the level of the superstructure, which includes education, hegemony maintains the *status quo*; meanwhile, at the level of the infrastructure, political, economic, and repressive coercive forces also operate (Gramsci, 2024).

The tactic of creative insubordinations is distinct. In the words of a school principal who participated in one of the pioneering studies on this topic, “I don’t break any rules; I just bend a few now and then” (Morris *et al.*, 1981, p. 147, authors’ emphasis). It is about “eating from the edges,” acting discreetly and strategically to achieve the desired goals. As a consequence, then, less resistance is expected.

Obviously, this does not mean that insubordinations are always successful. In a case presented in the study by Morris *et al.* (1981), a principal who needed to dismiss one of his four assistant principals chose the most senior and qualified one, but, according to him, the least competent. When questioned by his superior about the decision, he stated that he was thinking about the people involved – since this assistant had a qualification that the others lacked, he would have no difficulty being reassigned to another school. Despite this pretense, which served to avoid future conflicts with the assistant that might arise if the real reasons were disclosed, the maneuver did not work.

In other situations, actions may succeed for a period before losing momentum. Gutiérrez (2016), for instance, reports the case of a school in the United States where most students were Latino and spoke Spanish at home. This school adopted a methodological approach to teaching mathematics that emphasized group work, students presenting their problem-solving strategies on the board, and the possibility of communicating mathematical ideas in Spanish during lessons. However, at a certain point, the school district decided to change the methodology, shifting the focus to standardized test results. Some teachers who wanted to maintain the previous teaching approach proposed to the administration that their school serve as a “control case,” meaning they would keep their methodology, and their results could be used as a comparison for the district. The proposal was initially accepted and upheld for some time, but eventually, it was abandoned, and the school was required to follow the district-wide recommendations.

Still, unlike the landless insubordinations, these objectives are placed at the individual level – hence the mirror test. In this way, the actions (of the principal, the teacher, the researcher) are guided by their own ethical and philosophical principles (Gutiérrez, 2015).

The MST is characterized by collectivism – whether in encampments and settlements, where a group of families forms a grassroots nucleus, each with a male and female coordinator, and decisions are made to ensure everyone's participation, with the right to vote; or in the various sectors⁵, which address specific topics and exist not only within encampments and settlements but also at regional and national levels.

When, in the settlements, the Landless Workers seek to build new social labor relations and new formats for life in rural communities, they affirm a culture centered on the well-being of the collective and, therefore, oppose the absolutization of the individual, which is a dominant characteristic of capitalist society (Caldart, 2001, p. 216).

Thus, the social movement itself is understood as an educational principle (Caldart, 2001, 2012).

This is a dispute for hegemony among the peasants:

⁵ The sectors are: Mass Front; Training; Education; Production; Communication; Projects; Gender; Human Rights; Health; Finance; International Relations; Culture; Youth; LGBT Landless.

The construction of the hegemony of the subaltern classes through a project for a new form of social organization, whose emphasis consists of the education of the masses and the production of organic intellectuals, constitutes a fundamental element for the formation of a national-popular will, and consequently, for the organization of intellectual and moral reform, which, strictly speaking, are functions of the modern prince, of the political party of the subaltern classes, according to Gramsci (Aliaga, 2022, p. 68).

Through strategies to fight for popular agrarian reform and the transformation of society, “[...] the MST concretely assumed the functions of a party of the subaltern classes insofar as it effectively represented their interests, achieving political and economic gains for the group as a whole, based on broad political objectives” (Aliaga, 2022, p. 25).

In terms of education itself, the MST's proposal aims not only to educate a new generation of rural workers but also subjects who are aware of the exploitative relations of the capitalist system, among which are its organic intellectuals (Roberts, 2018).

Collectivity is also present in MST schools, such as in the Itinerant Schools, both in decision-making (for example, in participatory class councils) and as part of the student formation process. In this way, individual acts of creative insubordination, or even those by a group of teachers, are not compatible with a collective decision, respecting the existing organization. When this happens, that is, when professionals act on their own, following their convictions, tensions arise.

In his research, at an MST school, Lopes (2020) reports the immediate reaction of the community's teachers, who had collectively constructed the educational proposal years earlier, at the state level, when a coordinator, who had recently arrived at the school, said that she would remove some things related to the history of the settlement from the political-pedagogical project, because it was too long. She could have done this without telling anyone, using the tactic suggested by Gutierrez (2016), but she probably raised the issue failing to imagine that her idea would not be accepted by the other teachers.

There is always a risk, in individual decisions of creative insubordination, that a person's particular conception does not contribute to – or even harms – the implementation of a collective project. In this case, the counter-hegemonic education project proposed by the MST was developed in a collective and organized manner, following its philosophical and pedagogical principles.

Despite these differences, D'Ambrosio and Lopes (2015, p. 11) highlight that “assuming a collaborative perspective for professional actions can enable mathematics educators to produce more meaningful and relevant knowledge, linked to the real educational context.”

The struggle for education within the MST, in many cases, achieves results even before the issue of land is resolved. This fact allows MST members to develop a keen awareness of the educational complexity elucidated by D'Ambrosio and Lopes (2015), which encompasses the

dissemination of scientific knowledge in contrast to teaching as an institutional, social, historical, and political practice.

Another point to be discussed regarding creative insubordination is the emphasis placed on the concept of responsible subversion. D'Ambrosio (2015) argues that the term is comparable to the concept of creative insubordination.

The challenge to myths and pre-established concepts of what a child's school experience should be – resulting in breaking rules and educational policies for the child's well-being – is a political act and is what we call responsible subversion or creative insubordination. (D'Ambrosio, 2015, p. 4).

In the MST's Itinerant Schools, the breaking of rules and policies in favor of education – and, consequently, in favor of the children – is also present, grounded in the understanding that emancipatory education aims at social transformation (MST, 2005).

The notion of responsibility, emphasized by D'Ambrosio (2015), stems from Freirean perspectives, guided by caution when developing actions that could generate inequalities and exclusions. The author argues that “creative insubordination is legitimized by being centered on professional practices grounded in ethical foundations” (D'Ambrosio; Lopes, 2015, p. 3). However, when justifying subversive teaching or educational actions under the lens of responsibility, it is essential to understand the theoretical, political, historical, and ethical foundations that support them.

Final remarks

When we coined the expression *landless insubordinations*, we sought to establish relationships between existing research on the actions of the MST, as a social movement with over 40 years of existence, with emphasis on what refers to the education it proposes, and the literature on *creative insubordinations*, especially in Education and Mathematics Education.

This is what we did in this research, based on Gramscian theory, with the aim of understanding to what extent landless insubordinations approach or distance themselves from creative insubordinations, based on existing theoretical constructions.

We conclude that, although both aim to change reality, creative insubordinations are based on individual decisions (by directors, teachers, researchers), while landless insubordinations have a collective character.

In the MST, the collective is expressed from its organization at the local level, in camps and settlements, to the national level, through various decision-making bodies. Specifically in the MST's educational proposal and in the experiences carried out in the Itinerant Schools, the collective takes precedence over the individual both in the projection of the future, that is, in the elaboration of its

philosophical and pedagogical principles or curriculum, and in school practice, as with participatory class councils.

In Gramsci's terms, the MST forms its organic intellectuals in the social movement itself and also in its schools, through which it wages a dispute for hegemony in the working class.

Despite this fundamental difference between creative insubordination and landless insubordination, we believe that creative insubordination can contribute to the *collective* formulation of confrontations in the educational field by the MST. The experiences reported may present ways of dealing with adversities, which, as we have described, are many, in the implementation of a proposal that opposes the predominant model.

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