

Curriculum and the MST: knowledge conflicts and strategies in the production of subjects

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ABSTRACT – Curriculum and the MST: knowledge conflicts and strategies in the production of subjects. This article focuses on conflicts around the knowledge offered in the curriculum of two schools of the MST *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (Movement of Landless Rural Workers) and the strategies present therein to produce subjects. It belongs to the field of curriculum in post-critical thinking, incorporating conceptual tools of Cultural Studies and the studies of Michel Foucault. The argument developed here is that although the power-knowledge relations forged in the curriculum of schools investigated have been marked by a predominance of sanctioned knowledge, there is an effort to introduce and teach other knowledges that contribute to develop attitudes in the subjects that are of strategic importance for the production of the *Sem Terra* (Landless) subject. **Keywords: Curriculum. Field Education. MST. Power-Knowledge. Production of Subjects.**

RESUMO – Currículo e MST: conflitos de saberes e estratégias na produção de sujeitos. Este artigo trata dos conflitos em torno dos saberes disponibilizados nos currículos de duas escolas do Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) e das estratégias ali inscritas para a produção de sujeitos. Insere-se no campo do currículo na vertente pós-crítica, incorporando ferramentas conceituais dos Estudos Culturais e dos estudos de Michel Foucault. O argumento desenvolvido é o de que apesar de as relações de poder-saber forjadas no currículo das escolas investigadas serem marcadas pela presença predominante dos conhecimentos autorizados, há ali um esforço de ensinar outros saberes que contribuem para disponibilizar algumas posições de sujeito que são de importância estratégica para a produção do sujeito Sem Terra.

Palavras-chave: Currículo. Educação do Campo. MST. Poder-Saber. Produção de Sujeitos.

Ou isto ou aquilo

Ou se tem chuva e não se tem sol
ou se tem sol e não se tem chuva!
Ou se calça a luva e não se põe o anel,
ou se põe o anel e não se calça a luva!
[...]
Ou isto ou aquilo: ou isto ou aquilo. . .
e vivo escolhendo o dia inteiro!
[...]
Mas não consegui entender ainda
qual é melhor: se é isto ou aquilo.
Cecília Meireles (2002, n.p.).

The dilemma between *this and that* expressed in Cecília Meireles' poem in epigraph seems to reappear in the curricula of many schools of the Brazilian rural areas. There are, after all, many contemporary discourses that describe what must be taught in these schools. On the one hand, activists of the movement and researchers on the theme demand a *different* school (Ribeiro, 2013) that takes into account the cultures, interests and needs of people living in the rural areas (Ribeiro; Paraíso, 2012). On the other hand, the "[...] logic of performance that has driven the thinking and curriculum practices in schools" (Paraíso, 2010, p. 132), and that determines to a large extent what must be taught in them – and, therefore, how the curriculum must be like –, has also exerted its power over teachers and other people involved with education in rural areas. The dilemma between *this and that* was also present in the two MST schools studied in the research that forms the basis of this article¹.

The research developed here belongs to the field of curriculum studies under an approach that is conventionally labelled as post-critical (Silva, 1999). Apart from using concepts from the field of curriculum studies, the research draws inspiration and conceptual tools from the Cultural Studies and from the work of Michel Foucault. In methodological terms, it makes use of procedures from ethnographic research for "the production of information" for the research (Meyer; Paraíso, 2012, p. 16), and from elements of a discourse analysis of Foucauldian descent in the analysis of the information produced. During the fieldwork, three classrooms were observed, all from the first series of fundamental education which, because they were multi-seriated, were organized in one classroom catering for the first and second years, one for the third year and one for the fourth and fifth years. One classroom was selected in the MST camp, also multi-seriated, catering for the third, fourth and fifth years of fundamental education.

One day, during a class in the settlement school with first and second year pupils, around 30 math operations are written on the blackboard. – Let's see who's going to get it all right, okay? – Tomorrow we'll do the seven and the eight, study hard! On a different day, in the third

year classroom, a chocolate cake was made. It was used to teach quantities, fractions and text styles. In the camp school, in the third, fourth and fifth years, the solution of operations and problem situations was taught making use of money bills that were in the math book. During the observations, we often heard things like: – I want to see the copy of the text in a nice and crafted handwriting, you hear me?; or still: – Be quiet! Everybody facing forward, no looking at the colleague’s desk, because we are doing a dictation now, said the first and second year teacher (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Fieldwork notes (FN) - during Math and Portuguese classes)².

At the same time, it was possible to see during the field observations of this research the teacher’s home turn into a dormitory for pupils, because they were going to wake up during the night to *watch the Moon* and later the *sunrise*. It was also possible to see the event called *Tea with Poetry*, in which Cecília Meireles and the struggle for land were brought together, alongside Manuel de Barros. We could see Vinícius de Moraes writing music with Patativa do Assaré and with the Land Reform. The MST flag atop a tractor decorated the stage where pupils and their fathers and mothers marched singing and reciting poetry. During the intervals, a *performer* spoke of the struggle for land and of the Land Reform (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - FN). It seems that in responding to the dilemma between *this and that*, the curricula of the *Acampamento Esperança* (Hope Camp) and *Assentamento Coragem* (Courage Settlement)³ chose to work with *this plus that* or with *all this and also that*.

A pupil surprised and moved his teacher in a geometry class saying that he would use all geometrical figures in the drawing she asked them to do, just as Pablo Picasso had done in his cubist paintings. The night trip in the back of a truck in solidarity to fellow Landless workers who had been evicted and were now at the roadside was considered as a day of classes. Discussion about “why the struggle for land is important in Brazil” complemented the contents of the textbook. The “relief of the Camp” was studied to learn about “agribusiness, Land Reform and rural flight” (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - FN). In the Camp and Settlement, school classes had a lot of *this and also that!*

Situations like these observed during the investigation conducted, from which we present here only a fraction, mobilized the discussions developed in this article bringing elements into the analysis of power and knowledge relations inscribed in the curricula of a camp school and of a settlement school of the Movement of Rural Landless Workers (MST). The need to gather/select knowledge to teach in these schools puts in action conflicting power games, since it entails choosing which knowledge is more or less valid for a given group.

In the schools studied, the curriculum practices revealed that, in the power relations constituted, a set of dualisms – universal versus particular, countryside versus city, popular versus scientific, right ver-

sus wrong – is brought into action by the discourses that circulate therein. However, these dualisms are often not simply opposed to each other, but rather support each other, intercross and complement each other. In the curricula studied, the opposition between knowledge called universal and the particular knowledge of the group places the countryside and the city in sharply distinct camps and at the same time defines what is right or wrong within each of the knowledge fields in one space and in the other.

It is worth mentioning that the knowledge labelled as universal is understood here as the result of the choices of a group, in the same way that the knowledge called particular is also the knowledge of a group. Universal knowledge is produced amidst power-knowledge relations. Therefore, it is not general at all, it does not cover everything, it does not cater for every culture, it does not have a general, absolute and neutral character. It is nothing more than the result of choices and exercises of power, just like any other knowledge. The knowledge called universal is therefore also particular, and it is only considered universal because through the power relations they have been imposed as universal. We consider that this knowledge demands very specific lifestyles and subject attitudes that need to be generalized in order to guarantee the intended universality of the values, lifestyles and subject attitudes propagated by the knowledge itself. The subject attitudes are understood here as “[...] the discursive attitudes that, literally, [...] construct the subject in the same operation that endows him/her with a discursive position” (Larrosa, 2002, p. 66), being possibly unstable and changeable.

Putting into question the knowledge called *universal*, Grignon (1995) says that the school tends to certain monoculturalism by attributing value to knowledge purportedly universal. Thus, in order to avoid operating with this logic and considering that this knowledge was largely transformed into disciplinary knowledge (associated to the different disciplines that comprise the majority of contemporary curricula), we opted for calling it here disciplinary knowledge. It is useful to observe that the disciplinarization of knowledge has very precise objectives: the idea is “[...] to establish limits, to leave the innominate out, to divide and put in competition one knowledge against the others, certain subjects against others, [...] to naturalize and legitimize power relations, relations of domination that certain groups exercise upon others” (Varela, 2002, p. 93).

So, what should be taught/learned in MST camp and settlement schools? This or that? Mathematical operations or the struggle for land? Grammar or Land Reform? Textbooks or music? Where should one teach/learn? In the classroom or on the roadside? What knowledge is more valid and less valid? Daily life knowledge or scientific knowledge? Popular knowledge or disciplinary knowledge? Faced with such questions, the argument developed here is that, despite the fact that power-knowledge relations forged in the curricula of schools studied were

marked by the dominant presence of sanctioned knowledge linked to the different curriculum disciplines, there is an intense effort to introduce and teach other knowledges that contribute to divulge and construct the Landless subject. In such composition of knowledges, non-school knowledge is also adapted and taught in the schools studied in a way that ends up modifying the curriculum practiced, even when working with such knowledge inside the curriculum disciplines. It should be noted that *alternative knowledge* introduced in the curricula investigated and analyzed in this article was present only in Geography and Science classes.

When making available certain knowledges in the curricula of the schools studied, some given marks, modes of acting and behaving constitute certain subject attitudes that are made available to the Landless. Knowledge results from a construction of power itself, of struggles in the exercise of power which, as is proper to it, “[...] no one knows for sure who has it; but one knows who does not have it” (Foucault, 2007, p. 75). Thus, through the social practices produced one can “engender [...] totally new forms of subjects” (Foucault, 2009, p. 8).

These forms of subject are configured in certain attitudes made available in the curricula analyzed. So, for example, by electing certain ecological or health knowledges against the latifundium and by giving it prominence in the curricula investigated, at least three subject attitudes are required in the discourse studied: the attitude of an ecological subject, the attitude of a healthy subject, and the attitude of an anti-latifundium subject. These attitudes have great importance in the discourse of the MST, because they come together in the production of the Landless subject that is explicitly aimed at.

Ecological Knowledge in the Curricula Studied

What should be learned/taught in the schools of the MST camps and settlements? How does the knowledge elected to be present in the curricula researched teach ways of being Landless? Which practices, conducts and ways of understanding the world are taught/learned in these curricula? The MST discourse about education puts some demands upon the curriculum of its schools. Among them, a set of principles stands out linked to the way in which people work and relate to each other in their environment. It is required in the curricula that children serve as an example to other people. In this context, non-school knowledge enters in dispute with school knowledge, even though the objective is one of articulating knowledge of interest to the Landless with knowledge from the curriculum disciplines.

This conflict about priorities is constantly present in the speeches of the Landless and of the teachers that were part of this study: “In order to think our school we need to think what contents we want to teach” (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. Tânia’s speech⁴, FN). One of the Landless

people stated that it was “necessary to think the curriculum, to think the need to advance the curriculum” (Maria, FN, September 2010, n.p.). She also said that “in the classroom, we have to experiment a little bit with everything” (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Maria’s speech, FN). The composition proposed requires a curriculum that, as one of the teachers put it, invites experimentation. “[...] Experimenting, however, does not mean leaving aside the MST principles” (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Maria’s speech, FN). Such experimenting goes in the direction of the demands of the MST discourse that suggests “to teach by doing, that is, [...] to prepare equally for manual and intellectual work” (MST, 2005, p. 34).

In this way, the Landless develop their *agency* in the curricula investigated here to guarantee the teaching and learning of knowledges of school disciplines without leaving aside the MST objectives. Agency is understood here as “[...] the identification and establishment of connections among routines, habits and techniques within specific domains of action and value” (Rose, 2001, p. 51). In this sense, curriculum is the space of learnings that propagate repertoires of conduct, vocabularies, judgement systems, and specific ways of living in the world. In Science classes, for example, the water-related contents are associated to the pupils’ daily lives, whilst teaching the ways of being Landless.

The teacher begins class by asking if anyone knew why World Water Day is celebrated on 22 March. [...]

– *Does anyone here have a watercourse, a lagoon or some water mass in their lands?* Asks the teacher.

– *We have a deep hole at home full of water,* says Pedro.

– *In my dad’s place there are lots of river heads,* says Jessica.

– *How does your father take care of them? Is there any vegetation around?*

Asks the teacher, and explains: plants will give shade around them and preserve the water necessary to stop the river head from disappearing. That is why we should not destroy vegetation around river heads.

– *No, there isn’t, but he’s going to plant some,* answers Jessica (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Settlement Class, FN, March).

The ecological discourse employed in class points towards “[...] an ecological ideal, a personal and social utopia guiding decisions and lifestyles of those who adopt, in some measure, an ecological orientation for their lives” (Carvalho, 2007, p. 3). Jessica seems to have learned the lesson by saying that her father would grow vegetation around the river heads, for they guarantee, according to the ecological discourse, the revitalization of the area. The discourse added by the teacher says that one needs to work on the recomposition of the flora of the area, preferably with native species (Eco, 2008)⁵. An attitude of ecological subject is thus made available in the Science class, which also caters for the MST discourse, since the latter is often associated to environmental causes.

A way of living was, therefore, taught to the Little Landless⁶ during the Science class, when the teacher brought in the ecological discourse, showing that the Landless displayed a different attitude. The ecological

discourse activated here demands a “[...] subjectivity oriented by a sensibility towards the social and environmental, a model for the formation of individuals and social groups capable of identifying, problematizing and acting in response to socio-environmental issues (Carvalho, 2004, p. 18).

Along these lines, teacher Marina said: – Here in the Settlement, we know how to take care of the land. When we got here, lots of river heads were dry because people did not care, but we grew vegetation around them, we made sure that today we would have water for the land plots (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - In the Settlement school, FN, March). An ideal regulating the ways of behaving is put into action. Borders are established between practices seen as better or worse. It is not enough, however, in the attitude of an ecological subject, to take the right position. A multiplying action is also required.

- We [they] the Landless know what we have to do; we have to teach other people who still don’t know. It is not enough to take care of the river heads; other attitudes are important. Who can tell me which ones?
- To close the taps, says Roberta.
- To take one-minute showers, says Tião.
- To avoid poisoning [the soil], says Pedro (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Settlement, FN, March).

The ecological discourse employed starts from the use of *the right* and *the wrong* to help subjects (re)formulate their attitudes. In fact, the subjectivation processes require acting upon oneself and upon others. Thus, after learning the lesson, it must be disseminated, so that each person becomes a multiplying agent of the correct action. These knowledges taught in the curricula investigated, which require commitment of the Landless to the environment, also circulate outside the school space. In the 5th National MST Congress a letter of commitment was made public to “defend all river heads, sources and drinking water reservoirs”. [Because] water is a gift of Nature and belongs to humanity” (Fato Social, 2007, n.p.). The ecological knowledges, in what concerns more specifically environmental education, were disciplinarized through time, even if some people defend that they should be practical, based on people’s daily lives, and should not be turned into school contents (Ribeiro, 2007). By converting them into disciplines, they are more easily controlled, circumscribed and disseminated in spaces with specific objectives.

Statements about the better way to live, with an environmentally correct attitude, are reiterated in the lessons of the curricula investigated, both within and outside the classroom. The ecological discourse, through the power it has over society, works to reinforce the MST’s political stance, including their position against latifundia. To the MST, it is important to discuss and defend environmental actions, so that through this discourse the Movement takes position in favor of small farmers.

Apart from that, there has been a whole strategy of involvement of society in favor of MST causes, as shown in a report publicized by the movement on the Internet entitled *Movimentos e organizações do campo exigem vetos à MP – Medida Provisória – do Código Florestal* (Movements and land workers organizations demand veto to the Forest Code Provisional Act”). The report brings parts of an MST declaration repudiating president Dilma on points of the text of the Provisional Act dealing with the Forest Code.

As it is, the text protects irregular large landowners and speculators that produce nothing out of the land. The *Brazilian society* sees as the only alternative the president’s veto to the points that privilege the agribusiness to the detriment of environmental sustainability and of the production from family and small farmer agriculture. Only by doing so the president will be guaranteeing food security, environmental sustainability and the *defense of Brazilian democracy*, seriously threatened by the totalitarian power of agribusiness (MST, 2012, n.p., our emphasis)⁷.

In this context, which speaks of the whole of Brazilian society and no longer of a specific group, it seems that the demand for certain behavior gains more weight. Thus, the teaching/learning refers to exemplary attitudes, precisely because they carry the label of the Landless, as explained by the teacher: “We, the Landless, who know what we have to do, we have to teach other people who still don’t know” (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Settlement Class, FN, April). The knowledge of the Landless, transformed into school knowledge, gains an important space of dissemination that can give more credibility to the knowledge itself by incorporating it into the school curriculum.

It is through the articulation of knowledges, therefore, that the Landless are required to exercise dominion over themselves, in which it is necessary “[...] to dominate one’s own will, in the service of character, through the inculcation of habits and rituals of self-denial, prudence and reckoning” (Rose, 2001, p. 44). Avoiding the use of pesticides gives an example of such prudence, since we know that organic produce is generally smaller and takes longer to be produced and harvested (Zé Folgado Blog, 2012, n.p.). Therefore, deciding to avoid pesticides means refusing what is easier and often more profitable in favor of a cause, of a different political reasoning and of an alternative economic logic.

Ecological knowledge usually requires from the Landless a certain way to relate to the environment – in the use of the land and in the relationship of people with it –, which is in accordance with the precepts of the MST. After all, it has already been publicized that the MST has produced a different way to live on/from the land by “[...] constructing a different relationship, a relationship of care and alterity with biodiversity” (Ribeiro, 2012, p. 14). This is how a set of ecological knowledges defining *right* and *wrong* are established and categorized, so that subjects are objectivized in power-knowledge relations. More than that,

this knowledge is not restricted to the curriculum knowledge of different disciplines, because it is re-signified and joins strategically other knowledges to produce the Landless subject that must also be ecological.

Sanitary Knowledge in the Curricula Investigated

The sanitary discourse is activated in the curricula investigated amidst contents of the different curriculum disciplines. The sanitary discourse relates both to models of “[...] knowledge about the structure of diseases and their causes, and to practical proposals for intervention of sanitization and reorganization of the physical space” (Melo; Beltrame; Heberle, 2010, p. 97). There is in this perspective a “[...] concern with the hygiene of the family, of the environment in which they live, work and circulate, creating an organizing discourse that seeks to create general norms for the population” (Oliveira, 2003, p. 14).

The sanitary discourse appears in the curricula investigated with the objective of controlling attitudes in the name of the care of the population.

When returning from break time, the teacher asks the pupils if those tires spread around the yard represent some kind of danger. They all promptly answer yes.

– They keep larvae of the dengue mosquito, teacher.

– So, what can we do? Asks the teacher.

– Set them on fire, answers Ítalo.

Diane immediately retorts:

– We cannot set them on fire, boy.

– Throw them away far from here...

– Of course not, do you want other people to get ill? So, what are we going to do? Says the teacher.

– We can bury them, shouts Tião.

[...] The teacher raises reflections about the care we must take with stagnant water in the Settlement to avoid dengue (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Settlement Class, FN, April).

It was agreed with the class that the tires would be buried, but before they left the classroom the teacher asked if the pupils remembered how many people had been infected by the dengue mosquito in the previous year. The reason people got sick, according to her, was their own carelessness. That was why they had to bury the tires. After all, “each one must do their part, she said” (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Settlement Class, FN, April). The teacher’s speech reiterates the sanitary discourse about dengue, which is also intensely disseminated in other spaces, particularly in the media. The practice of sanitary control and intervention requires an attitude of healthy subject that takes care of oneself and of the others.

Clearly, this subject attitude is constantly reiterated in the media. It is possible to see in it, for example, a physician making use of

the sanitary discourse to say that “the fight against the mosquito that carries dengue achieves positive results when each citizen brings onto him/herself the responsibility to help in the maintenance (cleaning) of the space they inhabit” (Correio do Estado, 2011, n.p.)⁸. This discourse is often articulated with the political discourse that says that “it is of no use for the population to place on the public power the responsibility to fight against dengue. Society needs to take part in this process” (Portal RG, 2011, n.p.)⁹. Statements like these are repeated in the Science classes in the curricula investigated.

Through the knowledges made available in the curricula investigated, the Little Landless are asked to reflect on their actions to avoid risks to the population. In this case, such discourses put in action practices of control that do not work individually, but in a collective manner. The pedagogical practices develop subjectivation processes in which each pupil establishes his/her relation with him/herself by assuming the responsibility towards the environment where he/she lives and towards the health of the community.

Apart from that, Q & A activities were used by the teacher, who invested in guiding the pupils' conducts. In the school yard, while they located and buried the tires, the teacher asked: “who dug up the tires? Do you think that attitude was correct?” The pupils blamed themselves, but eventually concluded that that action was not correct and that it should not be repeated (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - FN, April). The teacher therefore stimulated the practice of reflection about actions seen as incorrect. The pupils were, in this way, prompted to recognize the error, and asked to decide about what had been publicized as the common good.

The reflection raised by the teacher focused also on how to redeem oneself for the wrongdoing, since children promised never to dig up the tires again, in addition to creating ways to eradicate dengue sources in the settlement. These pedagogical practices require self-governance, demanding that the subjects speak about their actions, “[...] not as objects examined, but as confessing subjects; not with respect to a truth about themselves which is imposed to them from the outside, but in relation to a truth about themselves that they themselves must actively contribute to produce” (Larrosa, 2002, p. 54). In this curriculum practice, “[...] confession and exposition of the self, the exemplarity and the disciplined [are] incorporated to the person in a variety of schemes” (Rose, 2001, p. 38), in this case, self-inspection, exposition of the self and self-formation.

The subject is encouraged to take on himself the responsibility of a care that is not individual, but collective. We can say that an exercise in biopower is underway here with the objective of governing the population (Veiga-Neto, 2010). More than that, contemporary biopower concerns itself with *making live* (Rabinow; Rose, 2006). Such power endeavor in the MST brings forward the fact that “[...] biopower does not

emerge from, or serves to support, a single block of power, dominant group or set of interests” (Rabinow; Rose, 2006, p. 32).

In summary, sanitary knowledges are used in the curricula investigated to regulate the bodies which, in their turn, act upon the environment, normalize practices, evaluate behavior, separate, compare and hierarchize ways of being as more or less acceptable. These knowledges, however, even though present in academic discourses, assume a different character in the curricula studied. After all, the objective of this discourse is the production of a Landless subject committed to the precepts publicized in the MST discourse: a healthy life and healthy population.

Knowledges about Land Reform and the Demand for an Attitude of an Anti-latifundium Subject

“The latifundium has renewed itself, and today manages a modern system called agribusiness that controls the land and the production” (MST, 2012, n.p.)¹⁰; “we are not going to teach agribusiness” (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - FN, March)¹¹; “the school has an important place in the struggle for Land Reform” (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - FN, November)¹². Statements like these are put in action to disseminate very specific ways of understanding the Land Reform in the MST. These statements disseminate practices and make available desirable marking points to the Landless in the curricula researched. After all, “no ‘focal point’, no scheme of transformation can work if, through a series of successive concatenations, it does not insert itself, in the end of the day, into a global strategy” (Foucault, 2006a, p. 110). Curriculum is, within this scheme, one of the mechanisms for the transformation of spaces, subjects and ways of life in the MST.

Geography classes in the curricula investigated gain special importance in disseminating the knowledges that require an attitude of an anti-latifundium subject. This attitude displays several marks of the attitude of ecological subject, reiterating the association between the care of the environment and the discourse of the Land Reform. Despite the many intersections, there is something striking in the anti-latifundium attitude: the attitude contrary to the actions of the large landowners regarding the use and possession of the land. The struggle for Land Reform and for the right to land is central, requiring from the Landless ways of understanding their relation to the environment in a different way from that of the large landowners.

The classes at the Hope Camp were more intense in fostering the attitude of an anti-latifundium subject when compared to those at the Courage Settlement, corroborating what Marcia, one of the Landless, said: “in the camp everything is more intense. The situation itself of confrontation, of struggle and daily suffering, makes everything more

sensitive” (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - FN, June). At the Camp, through knowledges from the Geography classes, pupils learned about the transformation of the rural space, making use of a text present in the textbook adopted by the school. The contents in this case were the use and occupation of the land. They opened up a variety of possibilities for discussion, so that the teacher could fulfil the requirements of the MST discourse about Land Reform.

This discourse said that the school should take responsibility to form a “subject committed to the Land Reform, to the construction of a popular project. The school has to commit itself to this project”, as stated by Landless Maria (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - FN, March). Along these lines, the camp teacher exploited the subject through questions and answers, asking her pupils to observe the area surrounding the school.

- Do you remember that when we built the school there was a hill here, and now it's quite flat? Why is it like that now? Asks the teacher.
- Because there was rain, and we stepped on the ground, said Ivan.
- Teacher, when they put a lot of cattle here, these hills are all going to be like this, flat?
- Yes, I think so. With no vegetation or anything, the rain came and carried the soil away. Cattle came and stomped it, cars came as well, and it got like this. Says Betânia.
- The more their life got better, the big farmers, the worse nature got. Completes the teacher (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Camp Classes, FN, June).

In this episode, the teacher was talking about terrain and, equally, about lessons that were part of the Land Reform agenda as, for example, when the teacher said that the farmer *made nature worse*. With the *appropriation of knowledge* about Land Reform, there is an inversion of relations previously established with the State as when, for example, in the 1970s there was a “near extinction of small farmers movements” (Fernandes, 2008, p. 1). In this sense, even if book contents are very frequent in the classroom, and even if disciplinary knowledge is emphasized, the act of re-signifying them, presenting other knowledges, other forms to understand them, adding characters and meanings, works as an important tactic in the disputes that characterize the Landless.

The procedure of taking pupils to observe the Camp under the teacher's guidance brings contents about terrain, prescribed by the textbook, but also teaches what happens with the environment when it is in the hands of large landowners. Certain principles are understood as better than others, because a given way of living is desired within the Movement. Even if the contents worked in the classroom have been extracted from the textbook, the analyses explored demonstrate the attempt to problematize the book's statements, adding other knowledges to them, such as in the episode previously described. Other contents, which are usually present in the books, also received different analyses and connections with the life of the Landless, for example, the discussion about World Water Day.

– What did you see at the river head? I want to know what causes that source to be there. In the past, it had plenty of water, but people destroyed the vegetation and it dried up. After the settlement, people took care of it, no longer burned the vegetation, did not remove any trees, and then the water came back. We at the Settlement have a special task, because we work with the land, with nature, with the woods. If we do not know how to deal with nature, with the land, who is going to take care of it? The people from the city? If we do not take care of the land we will help to continue destroying the environment. [...] If we think that other farmers are burning the woods, and we do the same, how will we be able to live here? In a heat like this? We have to give an example to the others too. If we care for it, we'll always have it (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Settlement Class, FN, March).

The idea disseminated is that, because they are Landless, the relations they establish with the use of the land and with the care for nature are different, requiring from them a different attitude to face the circumstances of their lives. Here, ecological knowledges reaffirm precepts from the knowledges of the Land Reform that are inseparable in the discourse of the MST, sometimes even merging into each other. The teachings disseminated in the Science classes, when they contrast actions in the Settlement against those in the city and by big landowners, put in action the MST discourse that opposes agribusiness¹³. To the Land Reform, there is in the countryside “a dispute between these two worlds of agriculture. – The agribusiness and – a different form of agriculture, which is environmentally sustainable and produces a healthier fruit”, [through] Land Reform, – or – [...] of much older forms of possession and occupation of the land”¹⁴ (Görgen, 2012, n.p.).

Thinking about the importance of the care for the environment, Friar Görgen (2012) says that “[...] the Land Reform is now more necessary than ever” (Görgen, 2012, n.p.). For him, Land Reform pertains to reconciling sustainable food production and the preservation of the environment. In summary, knowledges of the Land Reform are intimately related to ecological knowledges in the production of the Landless subject.

The investment in re-signifying the knowledges presented in textbooks seems of great importance in the context of the Land Reform for, as demonstrated by Nabarro and Tsukamoto (2009), when they analyze the contents of Land Reform in Geography textbooks, these knowledges are distant from the debates favored in areas of camp and settlement. The textbooks emphasize the “economic activities developed in the rural area, and in the end [...] (show) a text disconnected from the context, [...] at no moment do they speak of the struggle for land and of rural social movements in Brazil” (Nabarro; Tsukamoto, 2009, p. 19). Therefore, the knowledge about Land Reform disseminated in the textbook enters in competition with the knowledges about Land Reform proposed by the MST and valued in the teacher’s discourse.

The pedagogical practices used in the Hope Camp do not neglect the knowledges present in textbooks. This happens independently

of the teacher analyzing critically the texts in the books. After all, although she introduces other knowledges, when the teacher goes back to the textbook she instructs her pupils: *read this text [from the Geography textbook] and then answer the questions that follow it; do the activities* (Camp Class, FN, June 2010). In this context, it is not unusual that knowledges added to the curriculum, which might be considered alternative knowledge, face up to “[...] knowledges and discourses that make use of supposedly universal categories to talk about everything without referring to real processes” (Varela, 2002, p. 93).

The speech of one of the Landless, a father of pupils at the school, reveals the power struggles between knowledges in the school curriculum:

You see, in the Settlement [...] the school works with a State curriculum, but it also works a little bit within reality. It uses methods based on the reality of the settlement children. This already happens. It is not how we would like it to be. There should be more work on it. But we know about the challenges and difficulties of working with what is not in the curriculum tables (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Fábio's speech, FN, November).

The definition of what is allowed, forbidden, and imposed by the curriculum puts in play the authorization of knowledges that are under dispute in the Landless discourse.

Along the same lines, the school practices described by one of the Landless, who was a teacher at the school, bring evidences of the struggle of particular knowledges of the MST for some space:

I used to teach at the Settlement school and I did several activities outside the classroom, exploring the environment where pupils live. We did the mystical, we sang the Movement's songs, but many parents did not understand, they said that that was not classes, and that their children needed to learn to read and write. But they were also learning that. I used themes from their daily lives to teach the contents, but there are people who still don't understand it (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - FN, March).

If, on the one hand, there are people who defend the importance of working with particular knowledges, as indicated by Fábio's speech, on the other hand, as shown in the teacher's speech, the authority of the disciplinary curriculum leads to the disqualification of practices that come closer to MST knowledges. It becomes clear that “human beings are not the unified subject of some coherent government regime that produces people in the way it imagines” (Rose, 2001, p. 48). Instead, they are questioned by different practices that subjectivate them differently (Rose, 2001).

In this battlefield, re-signifying contents seems to be more acceptable than to include and exclude contents. After all, there were no objections to the classes that dealt with re-signifying school knowledges normally worked with, instead of including others, despite the fact that knowledges about Land Reform, with their contents against the latifun-

dium, were not documented in the political pedagogical project of the two schools researched. However, these knowledges were particularly present in the Geography and Science classes observed.

In the Camp, when bringing into the scene the owner of the land occupied by the MST, demands for the attitude of an anti-latifundium subject are made available, while children are already beginning to make other compositions about this theme, as shown in the following dialogue.

- The landowner here was poisoning the soil to kill this *assa-peixe* (*Veronica polyanthes*) to improve their lives, isn't it? But he ruins nature! My father said that he is going to plant *braquiária* (*Brachiaria decumbens*) for the cattle. Comments Diego.
- And what happens when the cattle starts trampling on it? Asks Betânia.
- They'll carry the soil away, making a ditch. It's going to be erosion. Says Ivan.
- And where does this soil go? Insists Betânia.
- To the roads, to the rivers. The pond is full of sand, I saw it. It blocked the brook. I rode my bicycle over it, there is no more river. Affirms Diego (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - Camp class, FN, June).

Diego and Ivan show evidences of having understood the content worked with, distinguishing what is right from what is wrong, according to the discourse of the MST about Land Reform. By assessing the actions of the landowner, the pupils reflect upon ways of living, upon life choices, upon how they should guide their conduct. They demonstrate that they have learned the lessons of the discourse taught to them, being themselves at the same time products and producers of knowledges and practices. In so doing they assume the attitude of an anti-latifundium subject.

There is an epistemological power at work here. It is the power to “extract from individuals a knowledge, and to extract a knowledge about these individuals subjected to an outlook, and controlled by [...] different economic, political, and judiciary powers” (Foucault, 2009, p. 121). The pupils noticed the teacher's approval of their comments, which seemed to get the children excited with the teachings. The teacher used this enthusiasm to bring forward a new content from the book.

- What are chemical fertilizers and natural fertilizers? Asks Betânia.
- The things they use to make plants grow quicker are the chemical ones. The natural one is cow dung, goat dung... Like the ones we use, says Ivan.
- And what about chemical inputs, what are they?
- It is a chemical product they use in the planting.
- And what about soil management, what is it?
- It's working the land, weeding it, like we do here, completes Ivan (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - FN, June).

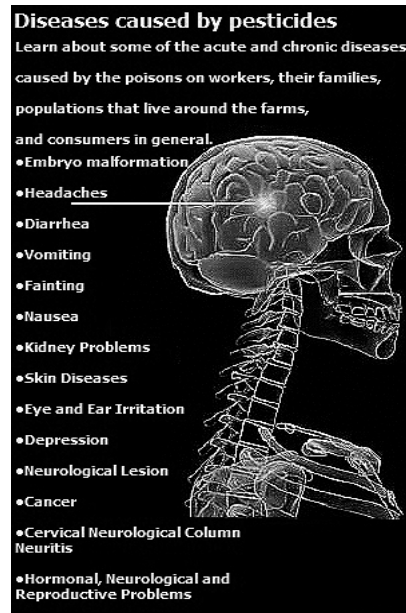
The agroecological discourse assumes the centrality of the composition, without abandoning the discourse of the Land Reform, as-

suming that they complement each other. This discourse disseminates the idea that agroecology is a field of knowledge that “promotes the ecological management of natural resources through forms of collective social action [...], through proposals of participative development starting from the sphere of the production and alternative circulation of its products” (UFRGS, 2012, n.p.). Thus, the knowledge about chemical inputs made available in class is in opposition to the discourses of agroecology and of the Land reform, because agribusiness is commonly associated to the use of these inputs. Therefore, in the attitude of an anti-latifundium subject one needs to learn about these contents.

The partnership between these two discourses is assumed by the MST, as publicized in an article on the newspaper *Ambiente Brasil*: “the MST has given important contributions to consolidate the agroecological movement in our country, [...], when it approved in its 4th National Congress conducted in Brasília agroecology as one of its main flags” (Ambiente Brasil, 2001, n.p.). By seeing agroecology and the Land Reform as positive, the curriculum practices take position qualifying certain actions and knowledges and disqualify others. Disapproving the actions of the landowner, which in the MST discourse are associated to agribusiness, creates other meanings for the knowledges expressed in the textbook. A set of rules of conduct, either implicitly or explicitly, is therefore made available in the curricula investigated. Certain regime, that is to say, *a whole art of living* (Foucault, 2006b), that may include bodily as well as moral orders is put into action and, in its turn, requires “a manner of problematizing behavior” (Foucault, 2006b, p. 93).

For example, in a campaign against the use of pesticides in which the MST took part, the scientific discourse was mobilized as a way to validate the knowledges made available by the MST. The Movement states that “pesticides cause a range of very serious diseases that affect rural workers, rural communities and the population in general, who consume food with toxic substances and develop many illnesses” (Ambiente Brasil, 2011, n.p.). Alongside this text the image below is presented, clearly based on the medical/scientific discourse.

Figure 1 – Campaign Against the Use of Pesticides



Source: Ambiente Brasil

The demand for stopping the use of pesticides is validated by the medical discourse, which reiterates the assertion that they are harmful to people's lives. Other discourses validated by academia are added to declare, for example, that the use of pesticides is the result "of a set of political choices made by the country, which hark back to the 1960s" (Ponto de Pauta, 2011, n.p.), as stated by Flávia Londres, author of the book *Agrotóxicos no Brasil: um guia para ação em defesa da vida* (Pesticides in Brazil: a guide for action in defense of life).

In view of these statements, Geography knowledges seem to disseminate discourses from different fields – political, medical, environmental –, making available information that are not in textbooks and that are used by the teacher in the camp. The attitude of an anti-latifundium subject is required by the discourse of agroecology, which denounces agribusiness in a report on the MST website: "The expansion of this model of agricultural production is responsible for deforestation, poisons food and contaminates the population" (MST, 2011, s/p)¹⁵.

Such discourse is reiterated when a Landless woman says that "we have to invest in healthy food for school meals, with no pesticides. All we have to do is to buy products from our own producers" (FN, March 2010, n.p.). In this line of thinking, the Camp teacher asked her pupils Ivan and Diego if the poison used by the landowner was bad for the health. They promptly answered that it was, that it was healthier to use dung (FN, June 2010, n.p.). Thus, the curriculum makes available behaviors

and practices desirable to the attitude of an anti-latifundium subject which, in its turn, reaffirms hallmarks of the attitude of an ecological subject. In such power struggles, what is interesting is “to interrogate the relations between economic and political structures in our society, and the knowledge, not in its true or false contents, but in its power-knowledge functions” (Foucault, 2007, p. 118).

By making available in the school curriculum the attitude of an anti-latifundium subject, the Landless are then taught precepts that oppose behaviors linked to the latifundium, which are often associated to the disregard for health and to little concern with the population. By doing so, the MST also denounces certain policies that favor large landowners, such as, for example, the “tax exemption for pesticides in Ceará since 1997” (MST, 2012, n.p.)¹⁶. Therefore, generally speaking, knowledges about the Land Reform disseminated in the curricula investigated establish opposition to ways of relating to the environment adopted by large landowners, and offer a different logic of care, in which actions, even individual ones, must guide themselves towards the collective good.

This and that...

What should then be taught/learned in settlement and camp schools of the MST? How to plant? How to work with computers? How to take care of the animals? How to use materials in a lab? Should they be taught how to work the land, or should they learn so-called universal contents? The duality of *this or that* seems to be fuelled by discussions about production in the curriculum of the schools studied here. The disputes, associations and discourse productions in the curricula investigated often bring the *this or that* to the surface.

As mentioned, the *alternative knowledges* introduced in the curricula studied were observed only in Geography and Science classes. In view of that, we might say that there is still some difficulty to separate the particular knowledges that they wish to teach in the MST curriculum from the knowledges already made official by the school. This fact demonstrates the strength of official knowledges. However, by putting into circulation discourses that require the attitude of an ecological, healthy and anti-latifundium subject, the *Landless subject* is delineated, required and produced. This subject is produced in the combination of several subject attitudes that are always recomposed, reorganized and recreated.

A set of attitudes are required from this subject. Its existence demands, in general, a critical thinking in the face of the situations experienced in their daily lives. A moral behavior is expected that cannot be reduced to mere obedience to a set of rules, since it also requires a relation of the subject with him/herself. “This relation is not simply ‘self-awareness’, but the constitution of oneself as a ‘moral subject’, in

which the individual circumscribes a part of himself that constitutes the object of this moral practice, defining his position in relation to the precept he respects” (Foucault, 2006b, p. 28).

The subject attitudes disseminated in order to produce the Landless subject escape, however, from the precepts that try to determine choices for this or that in the curricula. Thus, the dispute about which knowledges should be regarded as more valid in the curricula ends up blurring a supposed dualism of knowledges: universal and particular, school and MST. A specialized knowledge about what is considered correct is constituted, putting into action moral systems of obligation and interdiction: this and that should not be done. This is part of the art of governing that “[...] is fundamentally linked to the discovery of a truth and to the objective knowledge of this truth” (Foucault, 2010, p. 46). In this way, one invests in the production of a “category of individuals also specialized in the knowledge of this truth” (Foucault, 2010, p. 46).

It is important to note, however, that the curriculum practices analyzed here, despite the fact that they do not propose completely distinct knowledges for the Landless, eventually produce an orientation and a different way of dealing with such knowledges. The speech of a Landless woman is illustrative: “the contents, they are made different with creativity” (Ribeiro, 2010, n.p. - FN, March). Therefore, by changing the way of working with contents, by adding information and showing other ways of understanding them, processes of subjectivity are undoubtedly put in play, differentiated attitudes of subject are required, a distinct reasoning is made available.

It is also important to register that the relations of subjectivation are changeable, that attitudes of subject made available are sometimes not assumed, and that knowledges and powers resist conformation. Therefore, the objectives proposed are not always achieved, because resistances are produced, triggering “the insurrection of subjected knowledges” (Varela, 2002, p. 93). After all, the field of curriculum has already shown that content and form are intimately articulated in the curriculum. If the form changes, it has effects upon contents (Paraíso, 1995).

We should also remember that “the fact that a curriculum is universalist, or not universalist, does not make it, in itself, something to be repudiated or valued. There are problems that both kinds of curriculum can engender” (Santos, 2009, p. 12). In this way, trying to establish curriculum limits between particular and universal knowledges, even imaginary ones, results in conflicting strategies. On the one hand, it is convenient to bring into existence a differentiated culture within the MST, a fundamental step for the very survival of the Movement and strengthening of the group, as well as for the maintenance and justification of the existence of schools in the camps and settlements. On the other hand, seeking a unity and closure for the group around supposed

specificities separates those on the inside from those on the outside, creating a distance that can be counter-productive with respect to the struggle for equality.

Nevertheless, establishing rigid curriculum limits does not seem to be strategically convenient to the Landless in this power-knowledge game. On the contrary, it seems more useful to the MST to have a conveniently organized transit between the different knowledges. Moreover, why should we not believe in the power and possibility of *this and that* acting together in the curricula?

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Notes

- 1 The research described here was conducted for Vândiner Ribeiro's doctoral thesis entitled *Currículo e MST: relações de poder-saber e a produção da subjetividade lutadora* (Curriculum and the MST: power-knowledge relations and the production of the fighting subjectivity) presented to the Graduate Program on Knowledge and Social Inclusion of UFMG in February 2013 under the supervision of Marlucy Alves Paraíso (see Ribeiro, 2013).
- 2 The fieldwork notes were not numbered; we have kept the several files that comprise them (in digital format, as well as manual and oral recorded/transcribed), according to the possibilities of an ethnographic research that took place in various spaces.
- 3 Names of places are all fictional here.
- 4 The names by which the Landless people who took part in this study are referred here are all fictional.
- 5 ECO. Revitalização de nascentes e de mentes (2008). Available on: <<http://www.oeco.com.br/reportagens/20220-revitalizacao-de-nascentes-e-de-mentes>>. Accessed on: 04 October 2011.
- 6 To the MST, the *Little Landless Children are Boys and Girls who Have in their Formation the Working Class Identity, They are the Sons and Daughters of the Struggle that Inspire the Movement Itself* (Crianças Sem Terrinha São Meninas e Meninos que Têm na sua Formação a Identidade da Classe Trabalhadora, São Filhos e Filhas da Luta que Inspiram o Próprio Movimento). Available on: <<http://www.mst.org.br/especiais/32>>. Accessed on: 12 October 2012.
- 7 MST. Movimentos Sociais e Organizações do Campo Exigem Vetos a MP do Código Florestal. Available on: <http://www.mst.org.br/Movimentos-e-organizacoes-do-campo-exigem-vetos-a-MP-do-Codigo-Florestal>>. Accessed on: 12 October 2012.
- 8 CORREIO DO ESTADO. Médico Sanitarista Fala sobre a Dengue nesta Sexta-feira. By Roberto Costa. On 29/07/2011. Available on: <http://www.correiodoestado.com.br/noticias/medico-sanitarista-fala-sobre-a-dengue-nesta-sexta-feira_119281/>. Accessed on: 03 October 2011.

- 9 PORTALRG. Speech by the president of the Municipal Health Foundation of Teresina in the report “FMS Alerta: 82% dos focos de mosquito da dengue estão dentro de casa”. Available on: <<http://www.portalrg.com.br/noticia/fms-alerta-82-dos-focos-de-mosquito-da-dengue-estao-dentro-de-casa-62783.html>>. Accessed on: 03 October 2011.
- 10 MST. A renovação do latifúndio e seu novo sistema: o agronegócio. Available on: <http://www.mst.org.br/A-renovacao-do-latifundio-e-seu-novo-sistema-o-agronegocio>. Accessed on: 21 April 2012.
- 11 Tânia – conversation at the settlement (Field Notes, March 2010).
- 12 Maria – interview (Field Notes, November 2010).
- 13 Agribusiness is here associated not only to agricultural high-technology, but especially to “[...] its tendency to control ever larger areas of the country and, at the same time, to concentrate business in companies controlled internationally” (Leite; Medeiros, 2012, p. 82).
- 14 MUNDO JOVEM. Reforma Agrária, mais Necessária do que Nunca. Available on: <<http://www.pucrs.br/mj/entrevista-07-2007.php>>. Accessed on: 12 November 2012.
- 15 MST. Campanha Contra o Uso de Agrotóxicos. Available on: <<http://www.mst.org.br/book/export/html/11494>>. Accessed on: 20 October 2011.
- 16 MST. Agrotóxicos Livres de Impostos Causam Problemas à Saúde. Available on: <<http://www.mst.org.br/node/10603>>. Accessed on: 10 October 2012.

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