

# Aesthetic education and social organization: theater in the Licentiate Degree in Countryside Education

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## Abstract

This article addresses the teaching and learning dynamics of theatrical language in 2 courses of Licentiate Degree in Countryside Education (Licenciatura em Educação do Campo – LEDOC) – at the University of Brasília (Universidade de Brasília – UnB) and the Federal University of Piauí (Universidade Federal do Piauí – UFPI). What is common between these two courses is the work of Terra em Cena, a theater and audiovisual collective that operates as a university outreach program and a research group, based on popular education methodologies and on Political Theater (Theater of the Oppressed and Dialectic Theater). Experiences of working with student groups and creating theater groups in rural communities are described and analyzed, in order to see in which aspects theatre education contributes to qualifying educators from an emancipatory perspective. It is verified that adopting the Theatre of the Oppressed, as a method and education content, potentiates the LEDOCs as cultural resistance fronts and as a crucial domain for expanding the Brazilian popular education.

**Key words** countryside education; popular education; licentiate degree; theatre of the oppressed.

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### Conhecer: debate entre o público e o privado

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## Formação estética e organização social: teatro na Licenciatura em Educação do Campo

### Resumo

Este artigo aborda a dinâmica do ensino e aprendizagem da linguagem teatral em 2 cursos de Licenciatura em Educação do Campo (LEDOC) – da Universidade de Brasília (UnB) e da Universidade Federal do Piauí (UFPI). O que há em comum nesses 2 cursos é a atuação do Terra em Cena, coletivo de teatro e audiovisual que funciona como programa de extensão e grupo de pesquisa, a partir das metodologias de educação popular e do Teatro Político (do Oprimido e Dialético). Experiências de trabalho com as turmas e de formação de grupos teatrais nas comunidades rurais são descritas e analisadas, com o objetivo de compreender em quais aspectos a formação teatral contribui com a formação de educadores em perspectiva emancipatória. Verifica-se que a adoção do Teatro do Oprimido, enquanto método e conteúdo de formação, potencializa as LEDOCs como *fronts* de resistência cultural e como âmbito fundamental de alargamento da educação popular brasileira.

**Palavras-chave** educação do campo; educação popular; licenciatura; teatro do oprimido.

## Educación estética y organización social: teatro en la Licenciatura en Educación del Campo

### Resumen

Este artículo aborda la dinámica de enseñanza y aprendizaje del lenguaje teatral en 2 cursos de Licenciatura en Educación del Campo (Licenciatura em Educação do Campo – LEDOC) – de la Universidad de Brasília (Universidade de Brasília – UnB) y de la Universidad Federal de Piauí (Universidade Federal do Piauí – UFPI). Lo que es común entre estos 2 cursos es el trabajo del Terra em Cena, colectivo de teatro y audiovisual que actúa como programa de extensión universitaria y grupo de investigación, basado en metodologías de educación popular y del Teatro Político (Teatro del Oprimido y Teatro Dialéctico). Se describen y analizan experiencias de trabajo con las clases y de creación de grupos de teatro en las comunidades rurales, con el objetivo de comprender en qué aspectos la formación teatral contribuye con la formación de educadores en perspectiva emancipatoria. Se verifica que la adopción del Teatro del Oprimido, como método y contenido educativo, potencia las LEDOCs como frentes de resistencia cultural y como un ámbito crucial para expandir la educación popular brasileña.

**Palabras clave** educación del campo; educación popular; licenciatura; teatro del oprimido.

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# Education esthétique et organisation sociale: théâtre dans le Baccalauréat en Éducation à la Campagne

## Résumé

Cet article traite de la dynamique de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage de la langue théâtrale dans 2 cours de Baccalauréat en Éducation à la Campagne (Licenciatura em Educação do Campo – LEDOC) – de l'Université de Brasília (Universidade de Brasília – UnB) et de l'Université Fédérale de Piauí (Universidade Federal do Piauí – UFPI). Ce qui est commun entre ces 2 cours est le travail du Terra em Cena, collectif de théâtre et d'audiovisuel qui fonctionne comme un programme d'extension et un groupe de recherche, basé sur les méthodologies d'éducation populaire et du Théâtre Politique (Théâtre de l'Opprimé et Théâtre Dialectique). Expériences de travail avec des groupes d'étudiants et de création de groupes de théâtre dans les communautés rurales sont décrites et analysées, afin de comprendre en quels aspects l'éducation théâtrale contribue à la formation des éducateurs dans une perspective émancipatrice. Il est prouvé que l'adoption du Théâtre de l'Opprimé, comme méthode et contenu éducatif, potentialise les LEDOCs en tant que fronts de résistance culturelle et en tant que domaine crucial pour l'expansion de l'éducation populaire brésilienne.

**Mots-clés** education a la campagne; education populaire; baccalauréat; théâtre de l'opprimé.

## Introduction

This article addresses the qualification of educators in licentiate degrees in Field Education (Educação do Campo – LEDOCs)<sup>1</sup>, of the Federal University of Piauí (Universidade Federal do Piauí – UFPI), Campus Bom Jesus – License in Social and Human Sciences – and the University of Brasilia (Universidade de Brasília – UnB), Campus Planaltina – License in Languages –, focusing on the teaching and learning dynamics of theatrical language, within the research and university outreach program Terra em Cena<sup>2</sup> (Villas Bôas, Campos, Pinto, 2017). In this program, we focus our efforts on socialization of the cultural production means along with the peoples from the countryside, in order to contribute to the construction of counter-hegemony not only through the Political Theater (Dialectic Theater and Theater of the Oppressed)<sup>3</sup>, but using popular audiovisual language.

We think that art, in addition to an intersubjective human right, is an inalienable part of the people's struggle, as an ingredient of its self-understanding, self-expression, and self-determination. So, artistic learning is in charge of popular sectors, as a living praxis through which workers enter the scene to narrate the world from their perspectives, something

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**1** The LEDOCs are part of the affirmative action policy; they are courses exclusively aimed at rural workers and traditional communities, such as quilombola and Indian territories.

**2** The research and university outreach program Terra em Cena is registered in the UnB's University Outreach Deanery and in the research groups directory of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico – CNPq) and it has a formal link to the UFPI through the University Outreach Project Peasant Scenes [Projeto de Extensão Cenas Camponesas].

**3** In this article, we focus on theatrical education. For more information, see Coletivo Terra em Cena (n.d.).

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which includes the ideological dismantling of 'official' history and its recreation as a space-time of possibilities. From this viewpoint, the epistemological and methodological issues of aesthetics are amalgamated with those of politics, the creativity gained is increased through critical reflection, the social research produces challenges and it is challenged by formal research and popular expression and also acquires social organization aspects. These dyads, inherent to this educational work perspective along with political art, mark both the products and the processes of cultural making, thus constituting the primary element to build a democratic political culture, convergent with popular power.

From this viewpoint, mastering artistic languages is an assumption of countryside education, an educational expression of historical materialism, which is part of the tradition of Brazilian popular education since the 1990s, as a result of the demands of peasant peoples and their collective organizations for the right to education. Conscious that education should be a humanizing social practice, which extends the possibilities of expression and emancipation of all the people, such peasant organizations have disputed and still dispute an omnilateral and comprehensive educational project<sup>4</sup>, which articulates what capital split: life and work, corporeity and historical consciousness, school and environment, nature and society. The peasants' reality and experience constitute the starting and the arrival points of countryside education, which is guided by the affirmation of a free and socio-bio-diverse workers' society.

When describing and analyzing in this article the Political Theater experiences of the Terra em Cena along with the LEDOCs of the UFPI and the UnB, we asked ourselves:

- To what extent has it been possible to contribute to this formative intentionality of countryside education and to the organizational processes it presupposes?
- Which are the limits between the purpose set by the program and the outcomes achieved along with the LEDOCs?
- What possibilities are forged?

In seeking to answer such questions, even without any conclusive intent, we resort to the experience systematization method, chosen because this allows us to think better on our practice itself, picking up elements to improve it.

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**4** It is a concept defined by Karl Marx, as opposed to unilateral education, to demarcate characteristics necessary for workers' education. Unilateral learning refers to educational processes controlled by the bourgeoisie and aimed at workers, so that they are physically, intellectually, and morally incorporated into the sociometabolism of capital; their various human needs are overcome by the need for accumulation. On the other hand, omnilateral learning is concerned with overcoming the bourgeois sense of education, in order to educate workers' reason, sensibility, and corporeity, so that, relying on socially accumulated knowledge (in science, art, and technique), they are freely associated, as owners of their own destinies, acting with the creative and reflective potential of their whole being.

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## The method: knowledge made out of experience

The systematization of experience, conceived herein from the perspective of Holliday (2006), is a strategy of building knowledge through popular education, which takes as its object the concrete social practices, where popular sectors stand out advocating their rights. Addressed as historical phenomena in constant change and dispute (of classes), these practices show to be instances of social organization producing a common sense and generating counter-hegemonic knowledge and power patterns. They announce ways of life and existence resilient to capitalist exploitation, alienation, and expropriation, they are obstacles to the multiple dynamics that legitimize it in a combined way (machismo, racism, etc.). At the same time, they are experiences crossed by external and internal contradictions, revealing the incorporation of exclusion and prejudice patterns by the popular segments themselves, which are not exempt from reproducing oppressive behaviors in the field of emotions and their relations.

And because of these myriad of situations, Holliday (2006) claims that these are complex and contradictory social practices, which need to be known and communicated, precisely to allow them to be improved through the effort of consciousness. In order not to lose their emancipatory goals, such experiences cannot relegate the reflexive exercise to the background, since it is key to objectify good-quality action. It is necessary to recognize the imbricated action-reflection-action bond as a must, where the cognoscent act is based on a specific method – the *dialectical method* –, chosen by means of the very dialectical legality of the phenomenon to be understood.

From the dialectical focus, the systematization of experiences presupposes that the subjects who dynamize these experiences act intentionally to, by detaching from their work, resume their goals, recount them, and analyze them. Detaching means producing lenses that allow us to visualize the vicissitudes of experience, its internal and contextual processes, its particular and universal aspects, its historical and contextual conditions. And, as important as demarcating such oppositions, we seek to explain them as part of a whole, showing the relations between them. Thus, the relations show up as actual tensions and micro-history emerges as a modifiable, balanceable point in and constitutive of macro-history.

It is about assuming the connection between theory and practice as the epistemological mainstay of experience systematization, in a movement that Freire (2003) named as 'ad-miration' when dealing with the social worker's role in the process of change, producing knowledge made out of experience. Such an approach presupposes that: a) the real is not an established piece of information, but a historical, modifiable construction; b) people are not born ready, they are socially educated subjects; and c) the knowledge act, the more participatory and willing to capture the movement of reality, in the society-nature relationship,

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elucidating mediations and nuances, antagonisms and continuities, the more rigorous it will be. And it is precisely on this rigor that lies the method's: allowing the visualization of political-pedagogical strategies that make practices better. The systematization process itself, as a participatory dialogue between (theoretical and practical) forms of knowledge, is a pedagogical gain for subjects, a potentiator of experiences. This gain can become more robust if associated with assessment and research. According to Holliday (2006, pp. 40-41, our translation), systematization, assessment, and research must go hand in hand; the first two provide an initial point of object conceptualization, which is amplified by the research, as "a process of broader and deeper theorization [...] The research enriches the interpretation of direct practice that systematization provides, with new theoretical elements, allowing a higher degree of abstraction and generalization."

In the case of this study, we reached a first level of elaboration and interpretation of the Terra em Cena's experience, along with the LEDOCs of the UFPI and the UnB, pursuing the following aspects:

- a) The starting point: we resume, as participants in the Terra em Cena, the program's goal and the records we have made of the program's actions in reports, field notes, etc.;
- b) We define the initial questions, demarcating which central aspects of this experience we are interested in systematizing: when looking at the Terra em Cena's practices, we are particularly interested in grasping its role along with the licentiate degrees and the limits and possibilities of working with theater for the qualification of countryside educators;
- c) We resume the lived process: we reconstruct the stories and the facts, as well as the Terra em Cena's strategies, in the course of its 9-year existence;
- d) We expose the core reflection: we punctuate the central concepts that sustain our work (countryside education, Theater of the Oppressed, and Epic Theater), and, in the light of them, we synthesize, analyze, and interpret the process;
- e) We communicate the point of arrival: we draw conclusions and make public the outcome by means of publication, collecting evidence that allows us to advance in our work and contributing to the performance of other popular theater collectives, linked to the LEDOCs.

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## The Terra em Cena's emergence context: the role of social movements and the Licentiate Degrees in Countryside Education

The Terra em Cena's history can only be properly told if we come back to the very process of the LEDOCs' emergence in Brazil, within the scope of social movements for an emancipatory educational project, directed by peasants aimed at them: countryside education.

The political and pedagogical proposal of countryside education was consolidated in Brazil in the mid-1990s, starting with adult literacy courses and primary education in rural settlements and, in the next decade, it entered other peasant territories and Higher Education. From the outset, these initiatives were funded by the Brazilian federal government, grounded in the purpose of contextualizing the learning focus and knowledge building in accordance with the needs of populations from agrarian reform settlements, quilombola and riverside communities, as well as forest-dwelling peoples, among others.

The National Education Program for Agrarian Reform (Programa Nacional de Educação da Reforma Agrária – PRONERA), a pioneering public policy for countryside education, was created in 1998, under the Ministry of Agrarian Development (Ministério de Desenvolvimento Agrário – MDA), as a demand generated by the 1st National Meeting on Agrarian Reform Education [1º Encontro Nacional de Educação da Reforma Agrária], held in 1997 at the UnB. The context consisted in the pressure of social movements for greater investment and concrete measures to promote agrarian reform taken by the federal and state governments, after a worldwide commotion caused by the massacre in Eldorado dos Carajás, which killed 21 landless peasants in the State of Pará, Brazil. The feature required by such subjects in the PRONERA dispute, which marked the program, was that of participatory nature and parity. The movements began to join the PRONERA's implementation processes and to define the pedagogical and operational directions of educational projects, with a voice and parity vote in relation to the other executing agencies and managers.

Starting from a rich social and pedagogical flow resulting from this process, the need to qualify peasant teachers from the perspective of countryside education became increasingly latent, as highlighted in the 2nd Conference for a Countryside Education [2ª Conferência por uma Educação do Campo], held in Luziânia, Goiás, Brazil, in 2004.

Based on deliberations of this conference and pressure by social movements from the countryside linked to the Brazilian Peasant Route [Via Campesina]<sup>5</sup>, a Permanent Working Group, resorting to participation of the Technical Institute for Teaching and

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**5** Landless Rural Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – MST), Peasant Women's Movement (Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas – MMC), Small Farmers' Movement (Movimento de Pequenos Agricultores – MPA), Dam-Affected People's Movement (Movimento de Atingidos por Barragens – MAB), among others.

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Research of Agrarian Reform (Instituto Técnico de Capacitação e Pesquisa da Reforma Agrária – Iterra), is created in 2005 along with the Department of Continuing Education, Literacy, and Diversity of the Ministry of Education (Secretaria de Educação Continuada, Alfabetização e Diversidade do Ministério da Educação – SECAD/MEC), in order to meet this demand. The movements asked for affirmative measures taken by the government in the scope of countryside education, because they thought that, in order to consolidate the agrarian reform process in Brazil, it would be necessary to reverse the poor conditions of teachers' qualification in rural schools. The conquest of good-quality education in rural areas, concerning possession, settlement, and quilombola communities, was seen, since the onset of the struggles for countryside education as indispensable (although not decisive) to prevent migration of the peasant youth to urban hubs.

The following year, the MEC decided to invite universities to participate in a LEDOC's pilot experience, arranged by knowledge area and organized in an alternation regime.

In 2007, the first LEDOC initiative was launched in the UnB, in a partnership with the Iterra, a center with extensive experience in alternation courses, at the High School and Higher Education levels, which adopts the conception of work as a factor of production and education. It is worth recalling that since the beginning, the pedagogical project focus in the LEDOCs does not correspond to the cost reduction discourse, as if education by area was a strategy aimed at allowing a single teacher to replace a set of teachers required by the subject-based teaching. In this regard, Caldart (2011, p. 97, our translation) points out that interdisciplinary learning, although having a relevant value in terms of knowledge defragmentation, is not the main element that characterizes the LEDOCs' proposal:

[...] the central role of the political-pedagogical project of the Licentiate Degree in Countryside Education [LEDOC] does not/should not lie on the issue of teaching by knowledge area: it is only one of the tools chosen (within certain historical circumstances) to develop one of the dimensions (teaching) of the educators' qualification project that manages to think of the ways to change the school through the accumulation of reflections already existing on the domain of Countryside Education and especially the peasant social movements. [...] Qualification for teaching by area should be anchored in a project to change the current school's modus operandi, aiming to contribute especially in the thinking of two of its key aspects, which are bringing a different rationale for the constitution of a plan of studies aimed at the curricular defragmentation by constructing a rather organic link between studying within the school and the life issues of its concrete subjects, and the reorganization of the teaching work in order to overcome the teachers' individual and isolated work culture. And both aspects must be guided by an idea of education and school linked to our broader formative goals, as a working class, and grounded in a historical-dialectical approach to understanding reality and the knowledge building way.



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The central role to change the current school's modus operandi carries with it an affirmation and a denial. It denies the capitalist school, inspired by the factory, the army, and the church, revealing its vocation and intent to educate a disciplined herd, while distorting the critical and creative potential of peasantry, bringing mischief to class consciousness. The need to establish a school that meets the peasants' educational specificities is affirmed, appreciating their identity, without losing the commitment to the constitution of class membership. In this sense, historicity is a key element. And insofar as the school takes historicity as a factor that constitutes it, but not circumscribed to it, making it relevant beyond its walls, it becomes necessary for the political pedagogical project of peasant movements (Caldart, 2012).

The LEDOC, in order to collaborate in the rural school construct, must fulfill three functions, in an interconnected way: qualify for teaching (interdisciplinary, gathering the subjects' social theory-practice dimensions, coming from school knowledge to class consciousness), for school management (articulating the pedagogical political projects – PPPs – to the school work's organization and method), and for dynamizing community educational processes along with peasant families for the deployment – technical and organizational – of sustainable development projects, at the same time that the agribusiness project is criticized.

Starting from the pilot experiences, as well as the demands created after the promulgation of the Operational Guidelines for Primary Education in the Rural Schools, in 2002, the Support Program for Higher Education in Licentiate Degree in Countryside Education (Programa de Apoio à Formação Superior em Licenciatura em Educação do Campo – PROCAMPO) was approved in 2006 and started operating in 2007, linked to the MEC. As part of the PROCAMPO, public notices are issued to urge universities to include, in their lists of undergraduate courses, the LEDOCs, arranged by knowledge area and organized in an alternation regime.

Also relying on the inductive strategy, in 2012, the MEC consolidated the National Program of Countryside Education [Programa Nacional de Educação do Campo], which, according to Leher (2015), although favoring the quantitative expansion of the licentiate degrees, marked major qualitative retrogressions, from a political and pedagogical viewpoint of countryside education, resulting from reckoning between government and agribusiness:

Affecting university autonomy and the autonomy of the movements themselves, the State, faced by the critical nature of such initiatives, tries to subordinate them to a technical rationality to eclipse the ethical-political, epistemological, and theoretical dimensions of these courses. This was the meaning of the regulation for new courses supported by the PRONERA, such as the National

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Program of Countryside Education (Programa Nacional de Educação do Campo - PRONACAMPO) and the National Program for Access to Technical Education and Employment (Programa Nacional de Acesso ao Ensino Técnico e Emprego - PRONATEC Campo, Lei 12.513/2011) led by employers' federations, by means of public notices. Devised as concessions to agribusiness, the public notices do not require the presentation of projects resulting from prior dialogue between the university and the movements, shaping the deep-rooted one-dimensional relations (Leher, 2015, p. 3, our translation).

The LEDOC of the UFPI, Campus Bom Jesus, emerged in 2014 in this context where the sectors related to agribusiness make strides in the educational area, disputing the hegemony needed to advance the agricultural frontier over the peasant territories. However, gradually, relying on the work of trade unions, pastoral actions, and movements and on admission to the course of teachers engaged in the countryside education movement, a dispute in the LEDOC of the UFPI is underway, in the sense of integrating it into the original conception of countryside education, and loopholes have been created so that popular voices, from peasant organizations, appear in the course.

These collective subjects who, at least initially, dispute the LEDOC of the UFPI, are in charge of showing that agribusiness takes over peasant communities in the Cerrado, from where both the students of the LEDOC of the UFPI and of the UnB come from, operating in a violent and expropriatory manner and require that the course is managed by means of a critical approach, revealing the tortuous paths of the local agrarian issue.

Thus, in a partnership with progressive professors of the courses, the movements propose a dual role to the licentiate degrees, i.e. helping to read reality in the very process where it takes place and to generate in the peasant reality people-driven educational and organizational mechanisms, capable of increasing their levels of consciousness and, as part of it, their ability to act. Such requirements bring direct effects on the alternation process of the licentiate degrees.

The alternation pedagogy was proposed as a means of consolidating the LEDOCs, in order to serve a non-urban audience, whose life and work (mainly agriculture) are closely related to nature cycles, but also considering the epistemological assumptions of countryside education. In this sense, based on alternation, the courses have their times divided into two complementary moments: the School Time (ST), in which students concentrate for a certain period in the university structure to study full time, and the Community Time (CT), in which students fulfill part of the subjects' timetable at each course stage by pursuing theoretical and practical work in their original community and in the local rural school.

The adoption of this system seeks to observe working time in the countryside, the time for planting and harvesting, and the working pace of students who, in many cases,

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already work as teachers in the schools of their communities, and this requires the course's professors to monitor students from each region covered by the LEDOC. However, in addition, alternation allows the actual, objective problems tackled by the communities to become study objects and field of students' intervention.

Through this alternation dynamics, and resorting to articulated collaboration and action along with the peasant movements, the work of the Terra em Cena enters peasant communities.

## **The Terra em Cena: collective construction**

The course's license in Languages was built, to a large extent, through the accumulated experience of working with the movements' culture and artistic languages, with a greater emphasis on the dynamics adopted by the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra - MST), through actions taken by the National Culture Collective [Coletivo Nacional de Cultura] and the MST's National Theater Brigade "Patativa do Assaré" [Brigada Nacional de Teatro do MST Patativa do Assaré], the organization's theatrical front, created in a partnership with Augusto Boal and the Rio de Janeiro Theater of the Oppressed Center [Centro de Teatro do Oprimido do Rio de Janeiro] (Villas Bôas, Corrêa, Hess, Costa, & Bastos, 2010).

In 2010, after the first 3 years of the undergraduate Licentiate Degree in Countryside Education of the UnB, we concluded that it was necessary to go on with the theatrical work, in addition to the time allocated to theater in the course subjects. After this realization, we created the Terra em Cena (Villas Bôas, Campos, Pinto, 2017), as a university outreach project; the students and alumni began to participate in the project and act as triggers of the theatrical process in their communities, as workshopers, as theater group coordinators, or as members of them, in short, as animators and organizers of a practice that produces and brings groups and plays to their communities.

It was through this method, directly inspired by Augusto Boal's work along with the MST's National Theater Brigade "Patativa do Assaré," and resorting to alternation processes, that gave room for the creation, initially, of the group Art and Culture in Motion [Arte e Cultura em Movimento], in the Settlement Virgilândia [Assentamento Virgilândia] (linked to the Struggle for Land Movement - Movimento de Luta pela Terra - MLT), the group Consciousness and Art [Consciência e Arte], in the Settlement Itaúna [Assentamento Itaúna] (linked to the National Federation of Agricultural Workers - Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura - CONTAG), Art Kalunga MATEC [Arte Kalunga Matec], in the community Mill II [Engenho II] (linked to the quilombola movement), and we also incorporated the Brigade Sowers [Brigada Semeadores], from the Settlement "Gabriela

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Monteiro” [Assentamento Gabriela Monteiro], belonging to the MST in the Brazilian Federal District and Surroundings.

In parallel to capillary action within the communities, the Terra em Cena committed to strengthen partnerships with other collectives of Political Theater in Brazil and, since 2013, it started to get involved in activities along with the Augusto Boal Institute [Instituto Augusto Boal] and to participate in the Latin-American Meetings of Political Theater [Encontros Latino-Americanos de Teatro Político].

Starting in 2014, the Terra em Cena became a university outreach program and its history was marked by the intensification of interconnections, both nationally and internationally, to other research groups and collectives of Political Theater: in September 2013, we participated in the 6th Meeting of Brazilian Education and Marxism [VI Encontro Brasileiro de Educação e Marxismo], coordinating a mini-course and staging a play of Forum Theater, in October 2013, at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro – UFRJ), the 1st Latin American Meeting of Political Theater [1º Encontro Latino Americano de Teatro Político], organized by the Augusto Boal Institute. Also, in 2014, the collective was invited by the Companhia do Latão to participate in the 1st International Seminar Theater and Society [I Seminário Internacional Teatro e Sociedade], when the International Theater and Society Network [Rede Internacional Teatro e Sociedade] was consolidated and the need for regular meetings was pointed out. Thus, in December 2015, the Terra em Cena hosted in the UnB, in a partnership with other groups and professors, the 2nd International Seminar Theater and Society [II Seminário Internacional Teatro e Sociedade]<sup>6</sup>, gathering about 100 people, among collectives, researchers, and teachers from Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay.

In April 2015, a member of the Terra em Cena participated in the IV edition of the Óprima, a meeting of Political Theater groups that takes place annually in Portugal, and in that edition it received members of groups from more than 15 countries.

In this context, the formative and organizational ability of the Terra em Cena was strengthened and it started working along with other courses of the UnB, besides the LEDOC. That was the case of the Agrarian Residency Program of the Universidade de Brasília (UnB, 2015) and the Youth Residency project, both of them linked to the countryside education praxis.

Such experiences have potentiated the program’s action in the field of culture, social education, and social organization through theatrical language and the creation or strengthening of theater collectives; the grassroots work along with settlements, camps, and quilombos was gaining new vigor. An evidence of this advance was the publication of the book *Teatro político, formação e organização social* (Rocha, Villas Bôas, Pereira

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6 See public report (Universidade de Brasília [UnB], 2015).

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& Borges, 2015), which socializes the technical and theoretical forms of knowledge of theatrical language.

By consolidating the methodology of theater education in the alternation regime, the Terra em Cena began to influence other LEDOCs, expanding to Piauí, particularly to the LEDOC of the UFPI, Campus Bom Jesus. Such an expansion took place in the early 2018, through the university outreach project Peasant Scenes/Terra em Cena [Cenas Camponesas/Terra em Cena], created by a professor who is a Terra em Cena member and approved in a contest in the UFPI.

In the context of a network action between the LEDOCs of the UFPI and the UnB, the theatrical agenda was included by us in the qualification of educators in the Human and Social Science area in Piauí, producing great mobilization and involvement among students (peasants), who had never had a similar experience. We constituted the cast of the Peasant Scenes: the experience of the Terra em Cena in the Brazilian Federal District had already taught us that, in the specific process of theatrical language experience, grounded in socialization of the means of production, language immersion is indispensable for future educators, from multiple perspectives and work positions and not only from the workshopper's viewpoint. Thus, the experience of being an actor or actress in a cast, of staging plays in the repertoire and presenting them on a regular basis, as well as the experience of constituting and coordinating a group, managing theatrical plays, and devising dramaturgy, are constituents of the formative process.

In order to give visibility to the productions by the collectives linked to the Terra em Cena, but also to bring them closer to other groups, from the perspective of constructing popular artistic resistance networks, but also of expanding the formative opportunities in theatrical and video languages, we started organizing the Land on the Scene and on the Screen Festival [Mostra Terra em Cena e na Tela], since 2013 (Villas Bôas, Pinto, & Campos, 2017). As an example, we highlight the program of the 3rd Festival, held in 2018 in the UnB: it was a unique opportunity to meet all the theater groups linked to the LEDOCs of the UFPI and the UnB, but also to independent groups from the Brazilian Federal District. Plays were staged, such as *Luta Nossa, Camponesa!* (by the Coletivo Cenas Camponesas), *Se Temos Tanta Riqueza, Porque Somos Pobres?* (by the Coletivo Vozes do Sertão Lutando por Transformação), *Mulher da Roça* (by the Coletivo Arte e Resistência Jovem), among others. Taken together, they were characterized as an effort to grasp the agrarian issue and the representation of its imbroglios outside the keys to the drama.

From the social issue's viewpoint, the plays evidenced agribusiness as a border crossing means in the Central-West and the Northeast regions, which expands its deleterious action on the Cerrado, not only with monoculture, workers' enslavement, land grabbing, contamination by agrochemicals, and consequent loss of socio-agro-bio-diversity, including the heritage of the Creole seeds. It became clear in the didactic and discussion-based

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aspect of the plays that the accumulation of agribusiness increasingly comes from mining and private appropriation of traditional lands, legitimized by the bourgeois media and legal apparatus. In the structure aspect, the greatest contradiction found involved agribusiness and the peasant agriculture model; formally, choruses, prologues, and jokers were present. When exploring nuances of this structural contradiction, the plays also showed the ideological crossroads that mark peasantry, phagocytized by the idea that agribusiness interests everyone. Thus, the narratives were formulated between oppositions and totalities.

In addition to these moments, the festival is a formative and solidary collaboration space, resorting to a program of workshops offered by theatrical companies that are partners of the Terra em Cena; as an example, we registered the choir workshop (typical element of the Epic Theater), provided by the Cia. Burlesca. The participants' commitment consisted in socializing the content learned in the workshops with their respective groups, aiming to strengthen their work autonomy through the theatrical language.

The self-management aspect was shown in other moments of the festival, being key for the meeting of collectives to consolidate the Terra em Cena Network of Popular Theater and Audiovisual Arts [Rede Terra em Cena de Teatro e Audiovisual Populares], linked to the Our America Network [Red Nuestra América]. Among the various agreements, the collectives reached a consensus on the need to provide their actions with public visibility, through the blog of the Coletivo Terra em Cena, to maintain the multiplication process in rural communities and schools, as well as to reaffirm the cultural exchange strategy between the LEDOCs of the State of Piauí and the Brazilian Federal District. The strategy of exchanges between the two was based on the 1st LEDOC Culture Seminar of the UFPI [1º Seminário de Cultura da LEDOC da UFPI], organized by the Collective Cenas Camponesas, with decisive presence and collaboration of Terra em Cena members, who played the role of workshoppers and lecturers.

In order to strengthen the cultural field as a front of resistance and reinvention of peasantry and the LEDOCs, people referred that the 4th Land on the Scene and on the Screen Festival [4ª Mostra Terra em Cena e na Tela] will take place in Bom Jesus, Piauí, Brazil, and this has already led the collective Cenas Camponesas to a self-organization process, also for staging a new theatrical play. Landowner Farmers [Fazendeiros de Posseiros] were selected as primary text, to be adapted and characterized to explain to the audience the characteristics of land conflicts and effects on the region, the subjects involved, and the weapons with which they fight. Although it is a play adapted by the Grupo Filhos da Mãe... Terra from an epic text written by Bertold Brecht, in the Cenas Camponesas' version the text will culminate with Forum Theater.

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## **Adjusting the lenses to look and see, to analyze the experience underway**

In order to better understand the experience of the Collective Terra em Cena, we briefly resume the theoretical-methodological bases of countryside education, Theater of the Oppressed, and Dialectic Theater (or Epic Theater).

Countryside education is a genuinely Brazilian educational praxis, built on collective struggles of peasant social movements, for recognizing rural people as subjects of right to education, from an emancipatory perspective. From this viewpoint, the countryside education builders disputed public policies at all education levels, establishing it as a new chapter of Brazilian pedagogical history, but at the same time joining the popular education tradition (Caldart, 2012).

Underlying this process to consolidate countryside education there is a clear notion that popular agrarian reform is impossible without tracing rural development routes antipodean to agribusiness, opposed to the construction of rural realities full of goods and empty of life. In other words, popular agrarian reform points to the need for political agroecology, which supposes peasants to control not only the land, but all the means of production needed for their autonomy (economic, cultural, social, environmental) and the resilience of agroecosystems, that is, necessary to their ways of life. Regarding this need there emerges as a first-order agenda for the peasant movements the consolidation of educational rights, to teach the people that constitute, with their work, the peasant territoriality.

The historical legacy of four pedagogies was mobilized to provide countryside education practices with a basis: socialist pedagogy, alternation pedagogy, the pedagogy of the oppressed, and the movement pedagogy. Under these foundations, the understanding that countryside education is a praxis grounded in the following educational principles is consolidated: a) work; b) the struggle; c) history (and memory); culture; and e) self-organization. It is intended that the subjects of the educational process recognize themselves as makers of history and act as bearers of the seeds of the future, grasping the world in its contradictions and possibilities, from the perspective of science, art, and technique, taking a critical standpoint.

From this viewpoint, the Epic Theater and the Theater of the Oppressed co-exist with the perspective of countryside education.

Although already extensively addressed by authors like Costa (1996) and Villas Bôas (2014), it is worth resuming some characteristics of these languages, key to our exposition.

Bounded under the generic term Political Theater, the Epic Theater (Brecht, 1967) – whose greatest exponent is Bertolt Brecht – and the Theater of the Oppressed (Boal,



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1996) – created and disseminated by Augusto Boal – are popular artistic expressions, where workers stand out, which provide a critical and aesthetic approach to the issues and themes of exploitation, rehearsing forms of liberation. In opposition to the bourgeois drama (major substance of the cultural industry), whose theme and aesthetics contribute to alienating consciousness, to naturalizing inequalities, and to reifying the world, the Political Theater has an emancipatory intentionality, which only makes sense in the unbreakable relationship content-form, in order to put the spectators in a state of alert, of reflection.

In this sense, the Political Theater requires some aesthetics that seek estrangement, instead of the spectator's identification with the scene, preferring anti-illusionism rather than realism; rather than closeness and identification with the characters' self, critical detachment and the perception subjectivities are scrutinized in collectivities, constituting themselves through and encompassing social antagonisms; instead of a leading individual, the set of workers; instead of the present time and the conflict dissolved in dialogue, the historical time and the conflict as a permanent dynamics of the class society.

This is a materialist-historical and dialectical theatrical tradition, which presupposes that, for constructing counter-hegemony, the control of means of cultural production by workers is as necessary as the means of material production; the issues of symbolic order constitute the pulsing heart of popular struggles, give vitality to the objectification of consciousness, therefore, they must be addressed by popular struggles.

If the challenge is for the workers to own the cultural means of production, they must be trained for it, they have to live a pedagogy of theater, which presupposes another social division of labor, based on self-management, and commitment to socialize the forms of learning acquired with an increasing number of workers: the counter-hegemonic narratives need a wide scope to become a weapon in the class struggle. In this sense, the exercise of multiplication is, for instance, in the Theater of the Oppressed, an inseparable part of theatrical methodology, which mobilizes a set of games and theatrical exercises, in order to prepare plays capable of scratching the audience's aesthetic perceptions and meanings, often crystallized by ideologies and scenic forms that the cultural industry conveys massively in social life.

Thus the theater becomes a tool of collective organization that, although doing no miracle, is an indispensable aspect of political struggle and, in many cases, it is the struggle itself. It helps not only to critically interpret oppression, but to go beyond it.

From such a perspective, these theatrical modalities were adopted as part of the pedagogical strategy of the peasant social movements, with an emphasis on the MST, which, in the process of arguing for countryside education, including undergraduate courses in countryside education, have guided education through/for theater.



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## The route's analysis

In the following analysis, we sought to think through the constraints and challenges of the educational and organizational process of the Terra em Cena with the LEDOCs, highlighting issues related to the following themes: a) alternation; b) aesthetic form and social form; c) aesthetic mediation and historicity in education; d) overcoming the hegemonic patterns of reality's representation to qualify educators; e) theater in the understanding of Brazilian structural problems; and f) inspiration for popular self-management, the role of joint networks. Finally, we report a method of theatrical work, based on the case of the collective Cenas Camponesas, in an attempt to exemplify one of the many processes of creation and development of theater groups that mark the plural history of the Terra em Cena.

## School Time and Community Time

### ***Alternation and theater as elements for reconfiguring the teacher-student relationship and self-organization in the communities***

The progressive accumulation of experiences with the work done in ST and CT in the LEDOC, in general, have allowed teachers and students of the UFPI and the UnB's courses to evaluate by using objective criteria the relationship between the two formative times, hence the emergence of the following questions:

- To what extent have ST phases prepared students for the contradictions and challenges they face in CT, in the targeted insertion actions they develop at school and in the community?
- Have teachers been able to organize accumulated knowledge to convey it as a response to the emergency demands of the territories, which, in order to be the target of intervention, must be seen in their historical development?
- That is, what and how people study and teach the students aiming at a theoretical and historical understanding and to intervene in the debate on these issues and contradictions?
- Does the education process prepare for the intervention?

On the edge, these questions concerning the possibility of developing a transformative praxis through the productive articulation between the two formative times of the course; inquiries that, in addition to the LEDOC's set, are basically interesting to the Terra em Cena, because it allows us to think of the constraints and possibilities of working with theater

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(either through course subjects or university outreach activities) and its implications in theatrical organization and education in the communities.

Thinking through these questions, we take as a starting point one of the features of the alternation regime, which becomes a potential opportunity for re-signifying the school and learning space: that the relationship established between educators and students in the classroom during the ST phases is different from that established during the CT.

In ST the responsibility for managing the pedagogical process is taken by the teacher and it is circumscribed to her/his subject; she/he is the intermediary player of the school apparatus in the classroom and, although the methodological proposals are interactive, i.e. the teacher's role of emitter and the students' role of receiver, they constitute the basis of support to the learning system focused on the spatial universe of the classroom. Even if experiences from outside the school space, in the communities where the students reside are brought into the debate, it is the teacher who establishes the criteria for analysis and validation of dynamics outside the school within this institutional apparatus. Roughly, the teacher stands out in the learning process.

During the CT, we detected in many cases an attempt by teachers and/or students to transfer this universe to the space outside the classroom. For instance, in a task of delivering a seminar presentation to the community, students behaved as if they were in a simulation exercise, concerned with the fact that the teacher would take the educator's role back. And, sometimes, educators thought that this might be their function. In these cases, the community invited to these activities takes a secondary position and the political potential of this action is relegated to the background in face of the formal and strict concern with the good performance during the exercise.

Starting from these contradictions, we come to see that, during CT, the relation between the educator and the students should not be the same as in the classroom, because, in the students' territory, the actions proposed before the community inevitably take a political nature, requiring an interdisciplinary look and an engaged attitude. All of them play the role of protagonists in a transformative project, which requires, insofar as problems detected in the community or in the relationship between it and the formal municipal, state, and federal authorities are identified and systematized, and this becomes a matter for collective preparation of measures to tackle the challenges at stake.

In such cases, everyone must recognize that the initiatives undertaken are not just practical learning exercises for a mere replication of what is done in the classroom. The cause and effect relationships between actions must be measured with maximum accuracy and, in order to do this, problems of a conjunctural order must be analyzed from a historical perspective.

In face of the understanding of the relationship between teachers and students in the two phases of alternation pedagogy, we began to emphasize the interdisciplinary and

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self-management nature implied in this method of CT follow-up work. It enables knowing the contents and methods of the other subject components and areas – either related to teaching, research, or university outreach –, in order to interconnect to each other and to establish commitments to the communities, something which would hardly be feasible during ST phases.

In the case of theater subjects, of theatrical university outreach workshops, etc., interconnected to the Terra em Cena, several of these issues found fertile ground for growth.

First, because in the work to survey themes for improvisation, laboratories, and construction of scenes, the students' experience in their communities and at schools is the starting point. The problems faced by the rural communities become study objects and themes for dialectical and didactic representation in theater. Second, because working with exercise and theatrical games changes since University Time the relationship between teachers and students in theater disciplines, as all of them are parts of a collective construction process. Third, because the very proposal of self-management of theater collectives linked to university outreach projects and to teaching, and of their closeness to social movements, educates all teachers and students to overcome epistemological and power gaps, which characterize the capitalist educational relations.

Therefore, the scenes and plays become, above all when they involve Forum Theater, key elements in the conjunctural analyses of the STs, besides being formative experiences and inspirational references for the political organization of the population. They are not a recipe for action, since the theatrical form leaves contents and outcomes open, focusing their interest in awakening the audience's reflection ability and the perception that there are alternative ways of political action, which can be built by the people.

Moreover, the very self-organization mode of the theater groups belonging to the Terra em Cena, based on self-management, contributes to this purpose of social organization.

## ***History mediated by aesthetics: working with theatrical language***

Working with the artistic languages is regarded as a strategic datum in the qualification of countryside educators, to the extent that one of the two areas of license offered to students in the licentiate degree of the UnB is the area of Languages and in the course of the UFPI it is the area of Social and Human Sciences – the project Cenas Camponesas mobilizes notorious interest of students and teachers.

There are already articles that detail the assumptions, methods, and results of work in this area (Villas Bôas et al., 2010), therefore, in this article we limit ourselves to mentioning the general assumption that guides the work with artistic languages in the licentiate

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degrees, describing briefly the ongoing experience of theatrical language related to the process of perceiving the structural conflicts of Brazilian society.

We work with the assumption that art not only portrays the real as it is supposed to be, it can show in aesthetic terms that the real is a historical construction, not natural but political, so it can do more than inform within the borders foreseen by the universe of ideology, it can educate, pointing out something that is beyond the established system, as a destabilizing force of the real, which suggests the paradoxical possibility of constructing a memory of the future, from a re-reading of the past and the preparation of an antisystemic perspective resulting from the structural recognition of contradictions that have accumulated from the past to the present. Art allows reorganizing experience and our ability to give meaning to the historical dynamics in which we are inserted.

Just like literature, Brazilian dramaturgy expressed dead-locks and decisive moments of the country's social dynamics, anticipating, if compared to the treatises of interpretation in Social Sciences, critical perception about our permanent condition of peripheral country in the world system, guarantee of modernity and progress of the colonizing center. What opens room for the possibility that theatrical works are taken as historical documents is not the sphere of content as a reflection of the social process, but the dialectical mediation between aesthetic and social forms, expressed by the permanent friction between drama and epic in the works' structure.

Studying every work of these mediations enables us to apprehend and systematize central aspects of the functioning of ideology in Brazil and the hegemonic, secularly consolidated power structure. Social mechanisms of rationalization of inequality and naturalization of violence in a society based on slavery, as the myth of racial democracy, the mild consciousness of the country's backwardness by means of the promise that the tragic specificity of our condition would entitle us to a privileged position in the concert of nations and the mediation of favor-based politics are issues that emerge from theatrical works since the mid-19th century.

In the laboratories and workshops of the Terra em Cena, improvisations of scenes that establish or highlight contradictions with the dramaturgical text were asked. Sometimes, improvised situations evidence the unconscious nature of ideology reproduction, insofar as the critical outcome expected by the group has an opposite, dramatic effect, although the procedures worked on may belong to the epic family. In other cases, improvisations seek scenic means to discuss alternatives for solving problems, and the debate is fertile ground for historical circumstances and the consciousness feasible in each context. The exercise exemplifies how potent and promising is the bond that theater can establish with Social and Human Sciences in Brazil.

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## ***Fighting hegemonic patterns of reality representation: thinking about teacher qualification and the school's role***

One of the challenges that emerged during the studies and debates of the *culture and communication sectors* of the MST was how to adopt a counter-hegemonic perspective of approach to reality interconnected to a proposal capable of addressing the specificity of the survival mode of rural populations. How can we enable these two dissonant movements to dialogue dialectically, at the same time?

In the essay *O direito à literatura*, after defining the concept of literature in a broad sense<sup>7</sup>, Candido (2004, p. 175, our translation) highlights:

(...) just as it is not possible to have psychic equilibrium without dreams during sleep, there may be no social equilibrium without literature. In this way, it is an indispensable factor of humanization and, thus, confirms men in their humanity, also because it acts largely in the subconscious and the unconscious. In this sense, it may have an importance equivalent to that of conscious forms of intentional inculcation, such as family, group, or school education.

So, one of the challenges for courses that address the area of Languages and even for courses in Social and Human Sciences is the aesthetic and political qualification of educators, so that they are able to demystify the hegemonic meanings of works and programs, by grasping the dialectical relationship between *aesthetic form* and *social form*. Candido (2004, p. 178, our translation) explains the emancipatory potential of the critical perception of this relationship, currently overshadowed by ideology:

In usual words, content works only due to form, and form virtually carries within itself an ability to humanize because of the mental coherence that it presupposes and suggests. The originating chaos, that is, the raw material from which the producer has chosen a form, becomes order; hence, my inner chaos is also ordered and the message can act. Every literary work presupposes this overcoming of chaos, determined by a special arrangement of words and making a meaning proposal.

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<sup>7</sup> Candido (2004, p. 174, our translation) defines Literature as follows, in this essay: "I will name literature, as broadly as possible, all creations of poetic, fictional, or dramatic touch at all levels of a society, in all kinds of culture, from what we call folklore, legend, joke, to the most complex and difficult forms of written works from the great civilizations."

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The predominant practice of teaching languages in the conventional school apparatus runs in the opposite direction: the works from several languages are selected exclusively by content, that is, by what they are supposed to approach, ignoring the formal dimension, that is, the issue of how such content is addressed. Thus, the formative and de-ideologizing specificity of the critical study of Languages is buried and the teaching of Arts and Portuguese Language is offered only as a support for the other knowledge areas. In turn, the teaching of Human and Social Sciences, apart from the aesthetic issue, loses the ability to explain the complexity of the cultural industry and of all hegemonic processes, as a symbolic achievement of bodies, minds, and hearts.

Therefore, it is common for Arts teachers to be asked by the Social and Human Sciences to ‘help’ explaining a particular social phenomenon through a ‘small theatrical play,’ or songs are selected exclusively by what the lyrics say or, also, movies are selected to replace the teachers’ class, as an illustration of contents, not as a matter for reflection itself. These are symptoms of our structural deficiency in the field of teaching in the area of Languages, but also reveal deficiencies in the areas of Human and Social Sciences, as well as a complete fragmentation of teaching and school work.

Williams (1979, p. 121, our translation) states that the “real condition of hegemony is effective self-identification with hegemonic forms.” If so, one of the first steps in counter-hegemonic action is political and aesthetic education, which enables people to wonder about what seems natural, to denaturalize their gaze in relation to what is usual, and realizing that a consensual worldview is indeed the worldview of the ruling class, take individual and collective steps to construct attitudes and forms of reality representation from an anti-systemic perspective.

Thus, the work of the Terra em Cena, with Epic Theater and Theater of the Oppressed, not only in the LEDOC, in the area of Languages, but in the area of Social and Human Sciences, is concretely a counter-hegemonic education that, conducted along with the rural communities and schools, helps educating the aesthetic sense as an inseparable part of the political sense.

### ***Theatrical praxis and the dramaturgical register of the country’s cycles of conservative modernization***

The experience of the MST’s National Theater Brigade was determinant for organizing the theatrical work of the Terra em Cena, along with Countryside Education, because it is grounded in transference of the means of production of theatrical language, aiming at the creation of groups and multipliers in the areas of agrarian reform and due to its systematic approach to the spectacle rationale.

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In this method there is a praxis, which implies direct analysis of ongoing social experience, studying the way of life and the transformation of this social matter into a theatrical form, organizing the contradictions of economic, political, and social dynamics, in an aesthetic form, with potential to unveil issues that do not seem to be so clear in other forms of discursive organization concerning reality. Work effectiveness takes place when the process outcome manages to produce critical images of reality, other viewpoints, different from those sedimented by hegemonic patterns of reality representation.

There are two possible paths for this to occur. First, it is based on the experience of turning data of reality into a theatrical play, allowing this observation to be detached from the correlations of forces and the structural determinants of daily life. That was the case of the first theatrical work by the Cenas Camponesas in the UFPI, with the play *Luta Nossa, Camponesa!*, which addressed digital land grabbing in southern Piauí, evidencing a new agribusiness expedient to carry out the old peasant expropriation through the policy of the Rural Environmental Registration [Cadastro Ambiental Rural] (whose database does not intersect with that of the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform – Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária – Incra).

However, when working with a particular group progresses, it is also possible to trigger debate about the dilemmas of Brazilian experience underway starting from the fertile, albeit discontinuous, legacy of Brazilian dramaturgy.

Like literature, Brazilian dramaturgy expressed dead-locks and decisive moments in the country's social dynamics, anticipating, if compared to the treatises of interpretation in Social Sciences, the critical perception of our permanent condition of peripheral country in the world system, guarantee of modernity and progress of the colonizing center. What opens room for the possibility that theatrical works are taken as historical documents is not the sphere of content as a reflection of the social process, but the dialectical mediation between aesthetic and social forms, expressed by the permanent friction between drama and epic in the works' structure.

Studying every work of these mediations enables us to apprehend and systematize central aspects of the functioning of ideology in Brazil and the hegemonic, secularly consolidated power structure. Social mechanisms of rationalization of inequality and naturalization of violence in a society based on slavery, as the myth of racial democracy, the mild consciousness of the country's backwardness by means of the promise that the tragic specificity of our condition would entitle us to a privileged position in the concert of nations and the mediation of favor-based politics are issues that emerge from theatrical works since the mid-19th century.

Working with the dramaturgical text begins with a collective reading of the play and it goes on with a debate scene by scene about the relationship between the social content and formal structure of the play. In an interleaved manner, laboratory sessions for

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interpreting and staging are based on improvisation exercises starting from the play read. From a dialectical theater perspective, through the critical elaboration of the social gesture, students try to formalize in a scenic way the contradictions inherent to the social process turned into plays.

As there is no interest in a closed outcome statement, taking the form of a final product resulting from the work, we invested in the continuous process of reflection and practice with the texts worked on, prioritizing the teaching of exercises and games useful for the various situations that students will find inside and outside the classroom. When devising procedures aimed at an experiment-assembly, we emphasize varied text adaptation possibilities, trying to establish connections to contemporary dead-locks that emerge as unfolding of problems addressed by the plays. That is the case, for instance, with the work *O Escravocrata*, written by Artur Azevedo in 1884, and *Mutirão em Novo Sol*, published in 1961 – with a collective writing that brought together Augusto Boal and Nelson Xavier, among others.

In addition, we held seminars on the birth of comedy in Brazil, the National Historical Drama, the Magazine Theater, the Black Experimental Theater (Teatro Experimental do Negro – TEN), and the experiences of Political Theater of the Popular Culture Center (Centro Popular de Cultura – CPC) and the Popular Culture Movement (Movimento de Cultura Popular – MCP), to historically situate the works analyzed and to enable an understanding of the historical development of the issue. The demand for this type of proposal came from the students themselves, aware of the risk of material content-based organization, but concerned to convey the structuring knowledge of the aesthetic legacy and the historical and conceptual foundations of theatrical language.

When working with the play *O Escravocrata*, published in 1884, written by Artur Azevedo and Urbano Duarte as a play advertising the abolitionist campaign<sup>8</sup>, for instance, although the authors define this play in terms of its political function, engagement in the struggle for slavery abolition in the title itself materializes the choice for structural reduction of the epic conflict in the narrow borders of the dramatic form. *O Escravocrata* referred to in the title suggests that this is the story of a slave-owning protagonist. The sequence of scenes is characterized by a permanent confrontation between the epic dimension of social and commercial relations in a slave society and the dramatic conflicts of the family nucleus of the character Salazar, the slave-owner. In the laboratories, improvisations of scenes that

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**8** The authors state in the last paragraph of the prologue: “we do not wish evil to the Conservatory; we recognize its right, and bow our heads. To the extent that we are fully convinced that, by force of effort and argument, we would achieve the happiness of looking at our drama under the spotlight. But these procedures would be so time-consuming, and the abolitionist idea walks with such disbelief, that perhaps on the day of the first representation of *O Escravocrata* there would be no slaves in Brazil. Our play would cease to be an audacious piece of propaganda, in order to become a mediocre literary speculation. We would not have the glory, which we aspire to, to have contributed to the small impulse of our feathers to the collapse of the black fortress of slavery” (Azevedo & Duarte, 1884).



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establish or highlight contradictions with the dramaturgical text were asked. Sometimes, improvised situations evidence the unconscious nature of ideology reproduction, insofar as the critical outcome expected by the group has an opposite, dramatic effect, although the procedures worked on may belong to the epic family. In other cases, improvisations seek scenic means to discuss alternatives for solving problems, and the debate is fertile ground for historical circumstances and the consciousness feasible in each context. The exercise exemplifies how potent and promising is the bond that theater can establish with Social and Human Sciences in Brazil.

In the 1960s, theater played the role of socializing the experience of workers' struggle, for workers, and acted as a vehicle for integration, inasmuch as, by means of its specific mode of production, not only the content of clashes was conveyed, but also the very process of producing the works. Theater played, at the time, the role of communication and intervention means organically linked to the demands of the segments engaged in class struggle, providing via dialectical mediation between the matter of the social process and the aesthetic form a critical reading of the Brazilian experience in progress, which was not seen in other language manifestations, such as the form of news and the political-partisan documents, that is, in that context, theater participated in the process as a productive aesthetic force.

Therefore, it is no wonder that one of the early actions of the military dictatorship was the annihilation of cultural and political movements guided by the transfer of the means of production of many artistic languages to workers, such as the CPCs and the MCP. At stake there was nothing less than the dispute over the hegemonic forms of reality representation, because workers recognized the strategic nature of also fighting in this trench. The Terra em Cena is inspired by the methodological and political proposal of these organizations and it seeks, through formative action in the aesthetic field, to reestablish the links between culture, art, education, learning, and social consciousness, in a dynamics within the alternation regime of countryside education.

### ***Political, cultural, and pedagogical articulations: building networks and organizing exhibitions***

The exchange of experiences with other academic groups and with the movement's cultural brigades opened key horizons for the *university outreach program*, which came to realize that the articulation between theater and audiovisual language could contribute to the strategic horizon of the Terra em Cena. This was intended not only as an ancillary line of recording the theatrical work, but as a form of aesthetic expression, a major work of dispute in the ideological field and attempting to reach out to a wider audience than that allowed by theatrical action.

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From the LEDOCs' viewpoint, this strategy makes it possible for the groups to circulate with their scenic work, in order to generate potentially pedagogical processes with the rural schools, insofar as they stimulate the study of social issues and the gaze's learning.

Within the LEDOCs themselves, the construction of theater networks that bring courses from various universities reinforces the idea that educating the senses, aesthetic education, is a dimension of political education needed in any area of license. And this reinforcement has practical characteristics, which are reflected, for example, in the Terra em Cena Exhibitions, which acquire, from the year 2019, an itinerant nature.

### ***The case of the Collective Cenas Camponesas: an example of method in the plural history of the Terra em Cena***

The first play written and staged by the cast of the Cenas Camponesas *Luta Nossa, Camponesa!*, addressed the impacts of agribusiness on rural communities in the far southern state (e.g. Laranjeiras, Rio Preto, Vão do Vico), synthesizing a long research on the social issue and on the form of its representation. The process of understanding and creating the group was articulated through study groups, theatrical workshops, thematic seminars, and exchanges with the Terra em Cena.

The workshops were held during the ST, characterized by the use of games and theatrical exercises, aiming at the de-mechanization of the body and the innate aptitude ideology, of the talent for theater. Gradually, the group matures towards bodily self-consciousness and its potentialization in the scenic processes in various popular spaces. Each sequence of exercises was succeeded by a round of reflections, so that students notice the pedagogical intents of the activity for the theatrical purpose. The driving role of the workshops gradually became rotating between the group members, so that everyone appropriated the Theater of the Oppressed system.

The workshops took place prior to the staging of play and, in parallel with the other learning dynamics, became the group's fundamental spaces for experimentation and cohesion. However: a) knowing theoretically what it was showed there is a need to experience the Political Theater; and b) theatrical learning demands a human being's comprehensiveness in her/his relationship with the others, a conscious corporeity came to be constituted. And, in this sense: a) the work will be open up to group work, to trust, experience workshops by being present is key; and b) it is necessary to immerse in the workshop's time-space to awaken the senses and de-automate the body, opening the flank of creative processes. Therefore, we incorporated as a strategy to establish the working space, in the workshops, a previous and fast moment of guided meditation, based on breathing and concentration, with the aid of aromatherapy and music. In many moments, we use this

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group availability period to carry out creative visualizations, transporting the group so that it already sees itself acting in a conscious and organized way in popular spaces, with the play *Luta Nossa, Camponesa!* and other texts. Concentration proved to be key for a good progress of the session, avoiding repetition of the random laughter behavior, the dispersion attitude, often an expression of escape formed by the psyche when participants were asked to be subjects, coming out of oppression situations, coming in deep contact with oneself and the other. The limiting beliefs introjected in various ways throughout the experiences that sediment machismo, racism, and other forms of violence and prejudice, often lead workshop participants to see themselves as inefficient, ineffective, etc. It is necessary not only for the consciousness exercise, but also for intersubjective reeducation, to collaborate in overcoming these standards – theatrical workshops were major strategies in this regard.

All the subsequent work of creating and staging the play was facilitated by this initial strategy of workshops, actors' preparation moments, helping the group to overcome the obstacles to the liberation of expressivity, as well as to be involved in the analysis of processes that the Theater of the Oppressed require.

Without leaving the workshops, the group entered a new phase, i.e. rehearsals and the characters' preparation. Dramatic readings and a few sessions of study on classic plays belonging to the Political Theater and popular theater – we read and watched videos of montages, surveys on peasant gestures and clothing at the Bom Jesus free fair of – were held as an aesthetic support for the play. The great concern was that students, who are also peasants, saw their class of origin from another viewpoint – the *plastic perspective* –, being careful not to generate caricatures when representing peasantry, to produce, in the scene, the intentionality of wonder, of detaching. On the other hand, studying the play *Sociedade Mortuária*, by the CPC, re-staged after a theatrical study by the Companhia do Latão, which deals with the creation of Peasant Leagues [Ligas Camponesas], has proved to be important as a study strategy, from a historical perspective, both regarding the very history of the Brazilian theater struggle and from the perspective of structural problems in the country, particularly the agrarian issue.

Articulately, we began our musical surveys in order to make the play more engaging and, at the same time, didactic. This was an important moment to expand the musical repertoire of the group of students, stimulating them to leave their comfort zone and to know the richness of non-market driven musicality that characterizes our popular culture.

The play circulated in Piauí and in the Brazilian Federal District, being presented to the academic community and peasant communities.

Through the interconnection of the Cenas Camponesas/Terra em Cena to the course's teaching processes, particularly to the Internship subjects of (II and III), Agroecology, and Integrative Seminar, the students involved in the project began to act as multipliers of the Political Theater in their communities and rural schools, during the CT.

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Multiplication is based on replication of the workshop system learned during the ST and on the stimulus and organizational support for the creation of new theatrical groups. Due to the participants' interest in the new groups, the workshops often focus on the agrarian issue in Piauí. When dealing with such a theme, the LEDOC multipliers not only deepen their reflections on a specific theme of their education in Social and Human Sciences, but increase their cultural and theatrical repertoire. To teach theater, they have to know theater; only by improving their own senses and putting them in favor of a scenic creative process, the LEDOC members can become multipliers. They launch themselves into the search for musical, imagery, and body references that the cultural industry does not offer them.

It was with this repertoire enriched by the experience that the Cenas Camponesas acted organically in the 3rd Land on the Scene and on the Screen Festival [III Mostra Terra em Cena e na Tela]. The festivals, held since 2013, were created to increase the visibility of works by the groups linked to the Terra em Cena, but also of other popular theater and video producers, highlighting the collective works resulting from the LEDOCs.

## **Final remarks**

### ***The specificity of the praxis of working with theater and theater as a potentiator of the emancipatory aspects of countryside education***

The experiences covered in this article show to be a practical field of knowledge, a consequence of assimilation by the Brazilian public university of the demand for teacher qualification at rural schools, based on the creation of social movements in the *countryside education* proposal, as a policy public, theoretical category, and pedagogical proposal (Caldart, 2012).

What we have found over the years of systematic work with theater in the teacher qualification process in countryside education and the creation of groups in communities is that theatrical work engenders a specific praxis, which enhances the various physical and mental, emotional and rational dimensions implied in the cognitive learning process of aesthetic education aimed at the polytechnic and omnilateral learning and it also develops the political and social skills needed for the collective work culture, the processing of reality data, in order to identify the contradictions of the social process, focusing on the feasible forms of intervention with real data.

The body, put into action by physical training, by the activities in public spaces, by the interaction with the other work members, is activated in the same way as the

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intellectual dimension is called to turn reality data into a theatrical form, consciously using the aesthetic procedures needed for building forms of reality representation, but, in a way that is detached from hegemonic patterns. These patterns are sedimented in our imaginary through permanent action of the cultural industry, which acts systematically in a violent way, disqualifying and delegitimizing all forms of collective action (Costa, 2007).

In the circumstances where theatrical work was assimilated as an education method and as a form of political action in the LEDOC, by the Terra em Cena, which joins a broader development process adopted by social movements, the process proved to be powerful as a political education and a social organization method, not only for the collective directly involved, but with resonance for the community as a whole, insofar as the group shows up as an element producing a political culture grounded in a local and inner reference concerning the community and the movement, acting in a contentious way in relation to the aesthetic standards and the political and value-based codes of dominant culture. This power, to a certain extent, has been possible in the context of the LEDOCs whenever social movements are interconnected to universities and when the theatrical groups of licentiate degree students, through alternation, take a multiplier commitment along with the institutions.

The effective process of transferring the means of production in permanent dialogue with the populations' cultural roots in the territories allows the communities to represent themselves in face of the world, based on particularities of the life dynamics, inserted in the totality of the systemic dynamics. The theater and video languages allow the mediations of these dimensions to be represented, contributing to build this other counter-hegemonic symbolic field.

The adoption of Political Theater as an education method and content in the LEDOCs, through teaching and university outreach, potentiates the licentiate degrees themselves as a cultural front through which countryside education is reaffirmed as popular education, aligned with peasant emancipation.

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