PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS WITH, IN, AND AGAINST THE STATE: THE BRAZILIAN LANDLESS WORKERS MOVEMENT AND LATIN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION: RETHINKING THE MST'S EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

In 2009, Sara Lima, the Executive Secretary of the State Department of Education in Pernambuco, a state in the northeastern part of Brazil, knew that in a few hours, the daily routine of this educational bureaucracy would be turned upside down with the arrival of hundreds of activists from the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (Movimento Sem Terra, or MST). Lima knew this would happen because several MST leaders had called her earlier that day to inform her that they were coming. Lima had worked closely with dozens of these activists over the past year, constructing a proposal for an educational program—known as Knowledges of the Land (*Saberes da Terra*)— that would allow adults in rural communities to finish fifth through eighth grade through accelerated night courses. The program would include the pedagogical practices that MST activists developed to support their political vision, including collective learning, small-farming, agroecological production, and an interdisciplinary curriculum.[1]

The Department of Education of Pernambuco was supposed to begin financing this program, however, everything was on hold due to legal questions. Activists from the MST decided to occupy the Secretary of Education to push forward the process, and they had informed Lima—despite being a top-level appointee of a right-leaning government[2]—because she had been working closely with the movement. Lima represents what Jonathan Fox refers to as an entrepreneurial reformist[3]: a state actor

1 → Curriculum included topics such as "Sustainable Development and Solidarity," "Citizenship, Social Organization, and Public Policies," "Economic Solidarity." MEC, "Projeto Político-Pedagógico: Programa Nacional de Educação de Jovens Integrada Com Qualificação Social e Profissional Para Agricultores (as) Familiares." (Brasília: Ministério da Educação, 2008).

2 → The administration of Jarbas Vasconcelos, Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB).

3 → More recently Fox has also referred to the importance of interlocutors, or "facilitators of two-way communication" between mobilized groups and state reformists. Jonathan Fox, "Social Accountability: What Does the Evidence Really Say?," World Development 72 (2015): 346–61.

with the "willingness and the capacity to initiate and pursue their own interests amid contending social forces."[4]

Shortly before noon, hundreds of MST activists arrived, setting up tents and equipment to camp out for the next few days. According to Lima, the other bureaucrats in the Secretary of Education were appalled, exclaiming, "Everything Sara does for the social movements, and look at what they are doing to her now!"[5] But Lima was not angry. She talked to the lawyers who had been stalling the program, telling them there was nothing she could do to appease the activists. By the end of the day, the program was approved. Lima remembered this series of events fondly: "My colleagues thought the social movement was being ungrateful, but the MST's mobilization helped me, we needed the extra pressure to push the program through." Later that year, dozens of MST activists were hired as the coordinators of this state-funded education program.[6]

POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT-STATE RELATIONS

In this article I reflect on the relationship between social movements and the state, from the perspective of a political sociologist who has done long-term research with one Brazilian social movement, the MST. In other words, I am not only trying to understand the MST itself, but moreover, the broader lessons that the experiences of this movement can teach us about social change. My methodological approach is political ethnography, which, as Javier Auyero and Lauren Joseph write, "look(s) microscopically at the foundations of political institutions and their attendant sets of practices . . . [and] explain[s] why political actors behave the way they do to identify the causes, processes, and outcomes that are part and parcel of political life."[7] I

4 → Jonathan Fox, The Politics of Food in Mexico: State Power and Social Mobilization (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 16.

5 → Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's.

6 → This vignette and quote are from an interview with Sara Lima on April 5, 2011.

7 → Javier Auyero and Lauren Joseph, "Introduction: Politics under the Ethnographic Microscope," in New Perspectives on Political Ethnography, ed. Lauren Joseph, Mathew Mahler, and Javier Auyero (New York, NY: Springer Press, 2007), 1.

explore both the MST's contentious politics, including land occupations and protests, and the movement's everyday politics, which take place in offices, state-civil society advisory boards, and in teacher meetings. The goal of political ethnography is to empirically investigate how "political hegemony is constructed, challenged, and reconstructed."[8]

As this introductory vignette illustrates, the process of social movements implementing their goals within the bureaucratic state-apparatus does not simply involve activists making demands on the state and state actors conceding to those demands. In the MST's case, we observe a social movement that, 1) illegally occupies land; 2) pressures the capitalist state to grant occupying families use rights to this land and to public services; and, most striking, 3) negotiates the right to govern education with the aim of teaching children how to critique, subvert, and practice alternatives to capitalism.

The MST has succeeded, over the past three and a half decades, in pressuring the federal and state governments in Brazil to redistribute land to between 150,000 and 350,000 families.[9] In addition to land, the movement has pressured municipal and state governments to build over two thousand public schools in these new communities, with over eight thousand teachers attending to 250,000 students.[10] The movement has also pressured the government to fund dozens of adult literacy, infant education, and bachelor degree courses specifically for students in areas of agrarian reform, through partnerships with over 80 public universities.

However, *access* is only one part of this educational struggle; the movement is also attempting to *participate in the co-governance* of these programs and promote Freirean-based pedagogical, curricular, and

8 → Auyero and Joseph, 4–6.

9 → Miguel Carter, ed., Challenging Social Inequality: The Landless Rural Workers Movement and Agrarian Reform in Brazil (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford, To Inherit the Earth: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for a New Brazil (Oakland, CA: Food First Books, 2003).

10 → Miguel Carter and Horacio Martins de Carvalho, "The Struggle on the Land: Source of Growth, Innovation, and Constant Challenge for the MST," in Challenging Social Inequality: The Landless Rural Workers Movement and Agrarian Reform in Brazil (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 229–73.

organizational practices in these schools.[11] These programs encourage youth to stay in the countryside, engage in collective agricultural production, and critique capitalism. These goals are an explicit attempt to *prefigure* in the current public-school system more collective forms of social and economic relations that can help to construct a socialist society sometime in the future.

The major argument that I make in this paper is that social movements' strategic engagement with the many state institutions that shape our lives—what I refer to as *contentious co-governance*[12]—is critical to their ability to achieve their economic and political goals. Indeed, I argue that the contentious co-governance of public education is a central component not only of the MST's political strategy, but moreover, their movement pedagogy. In the first part of the article I reflect on my participation in the Latin American Philosophies of Education Society (LAPES) Symposium in 2018, and how the symposium pushed me to think more about the philosophy of prefigurative politics, radical organizing inside and outside of the state, and social reproduction. The next part of the article reconstructs the lineage of prefigurative politics, with a focus on how it transformed from a theory of state engagement to a theory justifying the rejection of state engagement. Then, I offer several vignettes from my fieldwork to reflect on the consequences and possibilities of prefiguring alternative social and political goals within state institutions. In the final section of the article I assess the gendered nature of the MST's educational struggle and how this has led to the transformation of the movement's membership and demands. In the

11 → The MST's educational approach is based on both Freirean ideas and several Soviet pedagogues writing in the early 1920s, including Anton Makarenko and Moisey Pistrak. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2000); Rebecca Tarlau, "Soviets in the Countryside: The MST's Remaking of Socialist Educational Pedagogies in Brazil," in Logics of Socialist Education: Engaging with Crisis, Insecurity and Uncertainty, ed. Thomas Griffiths and Zsuzsa Millei (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012); Rebecca Tarlau, "How Do New Critical Pedagogies Develop? Educational Innovation, Social Change, and Landless Workers in Brazil," Teachers College Record 117, no. 11 (2015); Anton Semenovich Makarenko, The Road to Life: An Epic of Education, trans. Ivy Litvinov and Tatiana Litvinov (Honolulu, HA: University Press of the Pacific, 2001); Moisey M. Pistrak, Fundamentos Da Escola Do Trabalho (São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2000).

12 → Rebecca Tarlau, Occupying Schools, Occupying Land: How the Landless Workers Movement Transformed Brazilian Education (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019).

conclusion, I summarize these arguments and briefly comment on their relevance for the current Brazilian context.

LATIN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION AND THE MST'S EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

In March 2018, I had the opportunity to present my research on the MST as a keynote speaker at the Latin American Philosophies of Education Society (LAPES) Symposium. It was an honor to be invited to the event, which had the overarching theme "Schooling in Latin America: Reproduction, Resistance, Revolution." The LAPES organizers framed the symposium around a series of questions about the role and function of schooling in Latin America. For example, "What roles do schools play during revolutionary moments where new ideologies, social relations and apparatuses replace older ones? How have they served as counter-revolutionary apparatuses?" These provocative questions are central to my own research, which explores how social movements use public schools to increase their capacities for radical social change.

I believe that the existence of LAPES is itself an important political intervention, an attempt to decenter the incessant knowledge production about education in the global north, and re-center the vibrant educational histories, pedagogical innovations, and stories of learning and resistance of the Latin American region. With that purpose in mind, I began my talk acknowledging that I myself am not Latin American, and I did not want to speak for or on behalf of Latin American social movements. I especially did not want to speak on behalf of the MST, a movement of thousands of organic intellectuals[13] and researchers more than capable of presenting about their

13 → Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci used the term organic intellectual to distinguish between people who are considered an intellectual for their profession, such as academic researchers, and the many working-class people who are intellectuals in their day to day life because they shape the visions and views of the people around them. Gramsci writes "Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields." Antonio Gramsci, The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916 – 1935, ed. David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 301.

own struggles.[14]

Rather than speaking about or for Latin America, I shared with LAPES participants some of the lessons I learned from my decade of research with the MST and on the Brazilian state, about the role of schooling in reproduction, resistance, and yes, sometimes revolution. In my book *Occupying Schools, Occupying Land: How the Landless Workers Movement Transformed Brazilian Education*,[15] I address a question central to the symposium: To what extent can social movements, which frequently develop non-formal educational programs to support their struggles, also engage in the contentious co-governance of the public educational sphere and use institutions of schooling to increase their internal capacity and long-term revolutionary goals?

In my talk I suggested that public schools are simultaneously what Louis Althusser[16] referred to as the most important Ideological State Apparatus of the contemporary capitalist era, and also, one of the most important spheres of resistance. Schools are both spaces where youth learn the ideology of the bourgeois and the technologies of self-discipline, and locations where activists can promote critical thinking and self-governance. I made this provocative argument based on more than a decade of research with the MST on what German student activist Rudi Dutschke, drawing on Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, termed the "long march through the institutions."[17] In this case, the long march through the institutions refers to

14 → Some of the publications by MST activists about education include: Rosali Salete Caldart, Pedagogia Do Movimento Sem Terra (São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2004); Edgar Jorge Kolling, Ir Nery, and Monica Castagna Molina, eds., Por Uma Educação Básica Do Campo (Brasília: Fundação Universidade de Brasília, 1999); Alessandro Mariano and J.F. Knopf, "A Autogestão Nas Escolas Itinerantes Nas Escolas Itinerantes Do MST Paraná" (V Seminário Nacional Interdisciplinar de Experiências Educativas, UNIOESTE, Francisco Beltrão, 2015); Erivan Hilário, "A Organização Do Trabalho Pedagógico Da Escola Catalunha No Contexto Do MST" (Graduate Thesis, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2011); Rosali Salete Caldart et al., eds., Caminhos Para Transformacão Da Escola: Reflexões Desde Praticas Da Licenciatura Em Educação Do Campo (São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2010).

15 → Tarlau, Occupying Schools, Occupying Land.

16 → Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus," in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 121–76.

17 →Rudi Dutschke, "On Anti-Authoritarianism," in The New Left Reader, ed. Carl Oglesby (New York: Grove Press, 1969), 249.

MST activists' occupation and transformation of the Brazilian public school system, from infant education to secondary and tertiary schooling.

My talk provoked some thoughtful responses, which I will address in this article. The first response related to an analogy that we had already been playing with the entire weekend, initially motivated by the keynote address of Dr. Catherine Walsh, a senior professor and director of the doctoral program in Latin American Cultural Studies at the Andina Simón Bolívar in Ecuador. For decades, Walsh has written about decolonial pedagogies as well as critical interculturality, critical pedagogy, race and gender, knowledge, and decolonial thought.[18] In her powerful talk to the LAPES symposium participants, she convincingly argued that there was a need for "de-schooling" in Latin America, to confront the deep interconnections between formal education, modernization, progress, and capital accumulation. She highlighted the pedagogies and praxis of existence that emerge in the system's "margins and cracks" that are part of decolonial projects against "capitalism-coloniality's scheme of destruction, dispossession, and death."[19] The LAPES symposium participants returned to this analogy of the "cracks" again and again, asking if the cracks would ever be large enough for all of the pedagogical needs of poor communities; if the cracks could expand enough to destabilize and collapse larger structures; and if the cracks were indeed autonomous and independent of their corrupting surroundings.

This analogy of organizing within society's "cracks" is, of course, in tension with my position that the MST's long march through the institutions is an important strategy for *prefiguring* within the current state system the social and economic relations that can help build a future socialist society. Most often, "prefigurative politics" is understood as "a means of building the new society within the shell of the old,"[20] or in other words, within society's

18 → For example: Catherine E. Walsh, Interculturalidad, Estado, Sociedad: Luchas (de) Coloniales de Nuestra Época (Quito, Ecuador: Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, 2009); Catherine E. Walsh, La Interculturalidad En Educación (Lima, Peru: Ministerio de Educación. Dirección Nacional de Educación Blingüe Intercultural, 2005); Catherine E. Walsh, "Shifting the Geopolitics of Critical Knowledge: Decolonial Thought and Cultural Studies 'Others' in the Andes," Cultural Studies 21, no. 2–3 (2007): 224–39.

19 →See, Catherine Walsh, "Existence (De)Schooled," LÁPIZ 5 (2020).

20 →Wini Breines, Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 52.

cracks. My talk led to renewed discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of "state/no state" or in Walsh's framing "schooling/deschooling" in social change.

Dr. Michelle Glowa, Assistant Professor in Anthropology and Social Change at the California Institute of Integral Studies, was the moderator and discussant of my keynote presentation. In her comments, Glowa drew on Ana Cecilia Dinerstein's theorizing of prefigurative politics in *The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America: The Art of Organizing Hope*,[21] to suggest that rather than "State/no state" the more interesting question is "how does the capitalist state cope with the radical change brought by autonomous organizing."[22] Glowa quoted another LAPES participant, Dr. Ariana Gonzalez Stokas, who asked us: "What are the methods of producing the seeds we need? And how do communities identify sources of seed making?" In this analogy, the prefigurative alternatives in the cracks of capitalist society are also seeds, that can help grow more possibilities in the future. Following Gonzalez Stokas' lead, Glowa asked: "How does the MST's educational work in schools or elsewhere produce seeds that may be organizational tools in the process of building towards the *not yet*?"

Glowa also focused her comments on the role of gender in social reproduction and resistance. Glowa pushed me to engage with the work of social reproduction theorist Tithi Bhattacharya in thinking about prefigurative politics, and in particular, the West Virginia teacher strikes that took place in February 2018. Drawing on Bhattacharya,[23] she commented that teachers' role in both social reproduction through child care and the paid workforce opened up opportunities to use and build upon social and community networks during the strike. For example, teachers were seen packing lunches and serving hot meals to children during the strike, "showing the teacher as an educator through pedagogy that goes beyond the classroom to relationships of social reproduction."[24] In this example, teachers engaged

21 → Ana Cecilia Dinerstein, The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America: The Art of Organizing Hope (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

22 → Glowa citing Dinerstein, 22.

23 → Tithi Bhattacharya, "Bread and Roses in West Virginia," Verso Blog (blog), March 6, 2018, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3669-bread-and-roses-in-west-virginia.

24 → Quoted from discussant comments.

in public forms of social reproduction that elicited support from communities and state officials alike. This led Glowa to ask about the practices that MST activists embrace to prefigure other relations of care and transform how state officials may respond to their work.

Inspired by all these questions and conversations, I decided to explore in more detail the history of the concept of prefigurative politics. In the next section I share my reflections on the lineage of prefigurative politics, and in subsequent sections I illustrate how a more nuanced analysis of the purpose of prefigurative politics is critical for understanding the MST's political and educational strategy.

LINEAGES OF PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS[25]

The idea of prefigurative politics was never intended to discourage social movement activists and party cadre from engaging the state. The origins of the concept of "prefigurative politics" is most often traced to Carl Boggs, and either of his two 1977 articles "Revolutionary process, political strategy, and the dilemma of power" or "Marxism, prefigurative communism, and the problem of workers' control."[26] The concept of prefigurative politics, however, became even more widely popularized by Wini Breines in the two editions of her book *Community and Organization in the New Left: 1962-1968*.[27] Many people referencing Boggs' definition of prefigurative politics, as the "embodiment, within the ongoing political practice of the movement, of those forms of social relations, decision making, culture and human experience that are the ultimate goal,"[28] do so by citing Breines' 1989 book.

25 → Following the LAPES 2018 Symposium, I began exploring the origins of the concept of prefigurative politics, and how scholars and activists have utilized this concept to argue for and against the strategic engagement of state institutions for radical social transformation. I am indebted to my Graduate Assistant Hye-Su Kuk, who did the bulk of the work collecting references and summarizing articles that are part of the lineage of this concept. We are currently writing an article together that goes into a longer analysis of this literature.

26 → Carl Boggs, "Revolutionary Process, Political Strategy, and the Dilemma of Power," Theory and Society 4, no. 3 (1977): 359–93; Carl Boggs, "Marxism, Prefigurative Communism, and the Problem of Workers' Control," Radical America 11–12, no. 6–1 (1977): 99–122.

27 → Breines, Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968.

28 → Boggs, "Marxism, Prefigurative Communism, and the Problem of Workers' Control," 100.

Nonetheless, and the big argument I hope to illustrate in this literature review, is that a close reading of Boggs' original articles shows that his intention was never to promote prefigurative politics as an anti-statist project, but rather, *insist* on the dialectal unity between prefigurative and state struggles.

It was actually Boggs' 1974 article "Gramsci's Theory of the Factory Councils" published in the *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* that first uses the term "prefigurative."[29] In this article Boggs describes what he refers to as a "structural dualism" in Antonio Gramsci's writings, which "combines factory councils and soviets as organs of popular socialist democracy with the revolutionary party as a mechanism of coordination and leadership."[30] Boggs claims that in his early *Ordine Nuovo* writings from 1918-1920, Gramsci emphasized the creation of factory councils (what Boggs refers to as prefigurative bodies), over the contestation of bourgeois institutions, such as parliament, state bureaucracy, parties, and trade unions. For example, Gramsci claimed that trade unions had become a central element of bourgeois hegemony, that could never foster the "abilities of proletarians which make them capable and worthy of governing society."[31] In contrast, the factory councils were the "embryonic Structure of a new socialist order" in which "the form and content of socialist society would be prefigured in the ongoing struggle of workers to transform all aspects of their everyday life."[32] Gramsci argued that the "socialist state cannot emerge within the institutions of the capitalist state, but is a fundamentally new creation in relation to them"[33] According to Boggs, during this period Gramsci saw factory councils as an advance over centralized and vanguardist socialist parties, in so much as they could: 1) counter the tendencies towards bureaucratization; 2) preserve the autonomy and identity of the revolutionary movement; and, 3) "prefigure in their own development the future socialist state."[34]

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29 → Carl Boggs, "Gramsci's Theory of the Factory Councils: Nucleus of the Socialist State," Berkeley Journal of Sociology 19 (1974): 171–87.

30 → Boggs, 171.

31 → Gramsci quoted in Boggs, 174–75.

32 → Boggs, 176.

33 → Gramsci quoted in Boggs, 177.

34 → Boggs, 179.

Up until this point, Boggs seems to be drawing on Gramsci to make an argument in favor of anarchist, autonomous, anti-statist forms of political organizing. Indeed, many scholars and intellectuals, in Latin America and beyond, take the Turin factory councils as a historical example of the importance of autonomous organizing efforts. However, in the next part of this article Boggs argues that Gramsci's emphasis on factory councils slowly shifted to an equally if not more important emphasis on politics, or occupying spheres of bourgeoise political power. Boggs writes that, "Lacking its own political force in the way of a party or a peoples' militia, the council movement was easily encircled and finally crushed. Gramsci concluded that in its syndicalist enthusiasm, *Ordine Nuovo* was too confined to the factories."[35] These events, along with the rise of Fascism, led Gramsci to focus on the war of position within bourgeois institutions.

Boggs claims that Gramsci was the first to develop a concept of prefigurative struggle, or prefigurative Marxism (although Gramsci does not use this terminology), through his theory of the factory councils. The memory of the factory councils inspired similar organizing efforts among anti-authoritarian activists in the Soviet Union, the council movement in the Spanish Civil War (1936-19439) and in Italy (1943-1947), and within U.S. New Left in the 1960s.[36] Nonetheless, Boggs argues that Gramsci's "overriding concern was to synthesize the two levels rather than to contrast them – to bring together the organizational and spontaneous, the political and economic, the party and councils … Gramsci thought it possible to ground a vastly different kind of party – an authentic mass party – in the reality of the councils."[37] In summary, Boggs introduces the idea of prefigurative politics in the 1970s, not to promote it *over* other forms of struggle, but rather, to call for the unity of prefigurative and institutional strategy.

In the contemporary literature on prefigurative politics, these origins of the concept have largely been lost. In *Community and Organization in the*

35 → Boggs, 182.

36 → Boggs, 183.

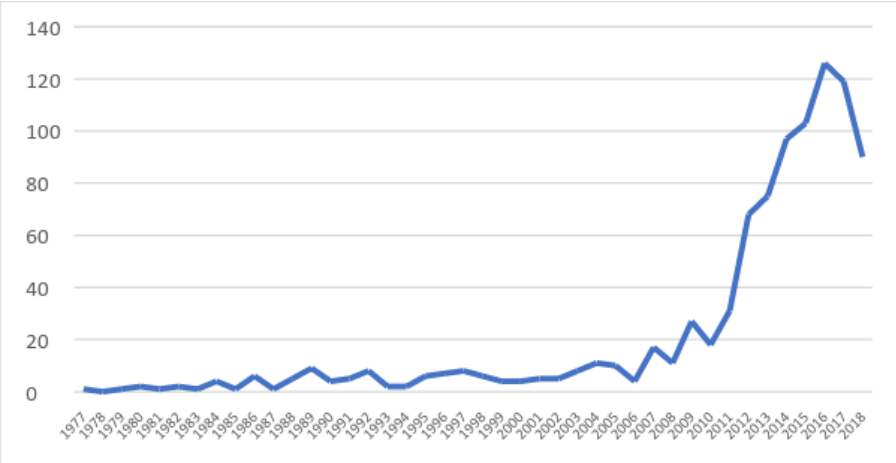
37 → Boggs, 184.

New Left, Breines draws on Boggs' concept of prefigurative politics to defend the New Left from critiques of being nihilist or irresponsible. She writes

> While those commentators see pathology, however, I see the healthy and vital heart of the new left, its prefigurative politics. The term *prefigurative politics* is used to designate an essentially antiorganizational politics characteristic of the movement, as well as parts of new left leadership, and may be recognized in counter institutions, demonstrations and the attempt to embody personal and anti-hierarchical values in politics.[38]

Thus, Breines draws on the concept of prefigurative politics to highlight the new forms of anti-hierarchical organizing among the New Left, and to defend those organizing efforts. She also embraces the counterinstitutions of the left, which she argues were institutions created outside of the established order with radical egalitarian principles.

Figure 1: Numbers of Google Scholar Citations of "Prefigurative Politics"[39]



38 → Breines, Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968, 6.

39 → This table was created by a graduate student assistant at Penn State, Hye-Su Kuk.

These first discussions of prefigurative politics took place in the 1970s and 1980s, after the rise of the New Left in the United States. However, it was not until the mid-2000s that citations of prefigurative politics took off in the English-language academic literature, reaching its peak in 2016 (see Figure 1). This trend is related to the rise of the anti/alter globalization movements of the early 2000s, the U.S. Occupy movement, Spanish *Indignados*, the Arab Spring, and the other so-called horizontal movements of the 21st century. The bulk of this literature is a defense of prefigurative politics, understood as anarchist, autonomist, and/or anti-statist politics, over other forms of institutional or statist struggles. David Graeber epitomizes this position, arguing for more "direct action, with its rejection of a politics which appeals to governments to modify their behavior, in favor of physical intervention against state power in a form that itself prefigures an alternative."[40]

Conversely, this literature also includes scholars and activists who reject prefigurative politics, claiming that it is the antithesis of strategic politics. In this latter line of argument, Jonathan Smucker writes that "I am neither against manifesting our vision and values in our internal organizing processes, nor against staging actions that put these visions and values on public display; my critique rather, is of the notion that such practices can somehow substitute for strategic engagement at the level of political power."[41] As both Graeber and Smucker exemplify, there is a tendency to talk about prefigurative politics and strategic state engagement as separate or opposed forms of activism and contestation. This dichotomous thinking is unfortunate, because it does not allow for the dialectical unity between prefigurative and state struggles that Boggs initially promoted.

More recently, Ana Cecilia Dinerstein has applied the concept of prefigurative politics to Latin American social movements in her book *The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America: The Art of Organizing Hope*. Dinerstein explores autonomous practices among a diversity of social movements in Latin America, declaring that these struggles for "self-

40 → David Graeber, "The New Anarchists," New Left Review 13, no. 6 (2002): 62.

41 → Jonathan Matthew Smucker, Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017), 122.

determination, self-organization, self-representation, self-management, and indigenous autonomy – are not new."[42] She also argues that autonomous organizing is essentially "a tool for prefiguring alternatives with political imagination,"[43] defining prefiguration as the process of learning hope. With the rise of the "pink tide" in Latin America in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the debate about autonomy intensified. Dinerstein argues that the Latin America pink tide left deep "divisions between those who support the governments and those who feel betrayed."[44] The support for autonomous organizing, outside of and against the state, reemerged with a new force.

Dinerstein, however, rejects this prefigurative retreat. She writes, "I contend that the characterization of prefiguration as 'the enactment of an ideal society' is too narrow and does not inform the complexity of the politics of autonomy in Latin America. It reduces prefiguration to a self-contained organizational process, and does not tackle the issue of form, embeddedness and struggles that underpin prefiguration."[45] In other words, Dinerstein critiques the detachment of prefiguration from other forms of political struggle. Instead, she argues that prefigurative politics include four simultaneous processes, the negation of the current system, the creation of alternative social, political and economic relations, and the "struggle with, against, and beyond the state, the law and capital, the production of excess."[46] This latter process refers to the creation of modes existence that cannot be captured within the boundaries of capitalism (e.g., land rights can be offered within a capitalist framework, while food sovereignty is inherently an anti-capitalist demand, or excess). Dinerstein theorizes the state as a mediation in the process of prefiguration. In other words, "Autonomy is not 'against' the state or 'outside' the state but internal to the social relation of capital."[47] Thus, prefiguration never exists in a separate life-world from the state, capital, and the law; rather, the capitalist state manages autonomous

42 → Dinerstein, The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America: The Art of Organizing Hope, 1.

43 → Dinerstein, 2.

44 → Dinerstein, 8.

45 → Dinerstein, 17.

46 → Dinerstein, 188.

47 → Dinerstein, 19.

organizing through these mediations, for example, allowing the Piqueteros in Argentina to administer government employment programs, or legalizing public settlements and land-use rights for landless squatters.

Thus, drawing on the particularities of Latin America, Dinerstein reframes the debate around prefigurative politics away from the question of "state/no-state" to the empirical examination of how capitalist states transform in response to autonomous organizing. This is a huge advance from previous debates, as it rejects the debilitating question of whether social movement engagement with the state simply leads to demobilization and decline. Rather, Dinerstein illustrates that there is no form of prefigurative politics that is not mediated by the state, capital, and law. This moves us beyond Boggs' original formulation, illustrating *not* that prefigurative and state struggles are both important, but rather, that the former is analogous with the latter.

I agree that the dichotomy between prefigurative and institutional politics does not map on to most social movement organizing in Latin America, where there is a tradition of integrating autonomist practices with institutional transformation. In the rest of this article, I draw on the case of the MST's educational struggle to explore the relationship between prefigurative politics and occupying state power in the particular realm of public education. I contend that not only are prefigurative and institutional politics compatible in one overall strategy, as Boggs suggests, but moreover, some of the most effective means to prefigure radical egalitarian ideals. In many ways, this argument aligns with Dinerstein's focus on the interconnections between prefigurative politics and state mediation. Indeed, Dinerstein draws on the MST's agrarian reform struggle to illustrate her points about the politics of autonomy.

However, while drawing on Dinerstein, I also want to suggest a corrective to her presumed relationship between autonomous organizing efforts and state transformation. She writes, "Autonomy, I propose, is not the organizational tool to transform the state but rather the transformation of the latter is a consequence of the movements' autonomous search for what is not yet."[48] I am critical of this position, as it still suggests that movements

48 → Dinerstein, 25.

should not be focused on transforming state institutions, but rather, developing autonomous practices that will lead to state transformation. Based on my research with the MST, I argue that activism within the many state institutions that are a daily part of people's lives is *critical* for sustaining social change efforts. At its heart, this is an argument about the importance of both the means and the ends: although state transformation might be the overall goal, the MST's political struggle illustrates that achieving that end is more likely if the means involves strategically occupying public schools. In other words, not only can social movements build counterinstitutions and prefigure democratic practices within their own ranks, they can also begin to prefigure socialist ideals in the very capitalist, bourgeois institutions that they are simultaneously fighting against. The following vignettes will hopefully illustrate this point.

THE MST'S PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL STRUGGLE AS PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS

"The Itinerant Schools would go along with the march"

On November 19, 1995, the center-right governor of Rio Grande do Sul began funding the construction and administration of public schools located in MST occupied encampments. In these "Itinerant Schools" a process of *contentious co-governance*[49] developed in which the government continued to provide the financial resources, bureaucratic apparatus, and basic curriculum for the schools, while MST leaders built the schools, chose the teachers, organized teacher trainings, changed the schools' organizational structure, and even had influence over much of the curriculum. The movement also gained permission to have these schools "move" with the movements of the camp; or in other words, relocate after evictions or when new land occupations occurred. During one MST mobilization, encamped families occupied several government offices in Porto Alegre for seven months. The Itinerant Schools functioned during this

49 → Tarlau, Occupying Schools, Occupying Land.

entire period on the lawn outside of these offices—while still being funded by the state government. One MST leader recalled, "This was an exciting period for the Itinerant Schools. If there was a march the Itinerant Schools would go along with the march; they would measure the kilometers the children were walking; they would analyze the different types of vegetation they saw."[50] Access to Itinerant Schools within MST occupied camps quickly became one of the movement's primary strategies for keeping families living in the camps, and mobilizing them into action.

…

In this account of the Itinerant Schools, the MST pressures the state government to construct public schools in MST encampments. However, once built, the MST *led* a process of contentious co-governance of these schools, becoming part of the state through appointed positions and informally taking on government tasks. The goal of these public schools was to prefigure the MST's agrarian vision—developing communities with the capacity for self-governance and economic sovereignty—on a small scale within the local school system. This institutional arrangement lasted for a decade. Then, in 2007, a new right-wing governor, Yeda Crusius, shut down the Itinerant Schools. Nonetheless, the prefigurative process embodied in the Itinerant Schools had an important long-term impact, with MST leaders in other states visiting these schools and then developing similar prefigurative educational experiments, which often surpassed the original schools in size and capacity.

This exchange itself was an important pedagogical moment, as activists learned about the history of the Itinerant Schools, how the movement negotiated their legal status with the state government, and the challenges that the teachers and students faced. This helped build the knowledge and confidence of these activists to build similar educational experiments in their own states. This is reminiscent of Boggs' description of the factory councils in Italy, which were able to "raise new issues and instill a new vision in the minds of thousands of workers . . . The legacy of the

50 → Interview, October 2010.

factory occupations and the councils became a feature of proletarian culture in Northern Italy, to emerge later in [other] forms."[51] In other words, prefigurative struggles, even if only momentary, can help expand people's imaginary of the politically possible, or as Dinerstein writes, the *not yet*. In the case of the MST, the radical prefiguration of an alternative social world took place within the state public school system.

"We are always in 're-start'"

When the first MST land occupation occurred in 1995 in Santa Maria da Boa Vista, the semi-arid (*sertão*) region of Pernambuco, young 18-year old Teresneide Varjão began visiting the camp and "fell in love with the community." Varjão began to teach the children on the camp to read, as her eighth-grade education made her one of the most educated camp residents. In 1998, observing her potential, the state MST leadership decided to invest in her capacity for teaching. They sent Varjão to the first MST-sponsored high school program in the Northeast, funded through the federal government in coordination with the University of Paraíba. Erivan Hilário was only fourteen years old when his family joined an MST land occupation in Santa Maria in 1996. In the camp, Hilário organized educational activities for the smaller children. The MST leadership saw his initiative, and asked him to attend the high school with Varjão.

For both of these local leaders, access to this MST-sponsored high school program was an important opportunity since there were no high schools in their rural region. Through this three-year program, Varjão and Hilário learned about the MST's educational approach. Hilário described the high school, "as a dream . . . it started my activism, I learned to love teaching, I learned that I wanted to be a teacher, but not just any type of teacher."[52] The high school was organized through the pedagogy of alternation (*pedagogia da alternância*), which allowed Varjão and Hilário to spend several months a year in Paraíba studying, and the rest of the time in Santa Maria completing community research projects. The community project that

51 → Boggs, "Gramsci's Theory of the Factory Councils: Nucleus of the Socialist State," 183.

52 → Interview, October 2011.

Hilário and Varjão were assigned to was the task of organizing an MST education sector in the region.

The principle challenge for Varjão and Hilário was convincing teachers to support the movement's educational proposal. Varjão and Hilário had to engage in a long-term process of persuading dozens of teachers in their schools—almost all of who were from the city—to become allies of the movement. The MST leaders traveled to the schools every day, talking to teachers and offering their assistance. Varjão recalled, "It was crazy, we would leave on Monday, come back late Sunday, wash our clothes, go off again." Over time, they began to win over these teachers—by being a constant presence in these schools. One teacher explained, "My vision was similar to everyone, I was scared and thought that this was an invasion . . . In 1997 I went to an MST teacher training in Caruaru; I began to understand the movement in another way, my vision expanded . . . I am connected to the MST and always participating."[53]

However, despite local MST leaders' initial success garnering the consent of these teachers for their educational project, they faced another big issue: the constant turnover of teachers due to local political disputes. As Varjão described, "Every time a mayor changes all of the teachers change, and everyone in the opposition party was sent to our schools." Varjão and Hilário learned to avoid party politics and support *all* of the teachers assigned to their settlement schools. Varjão recalled: "The difficult issue is that we were always re-initiating our work, we would joke every time the teachers changed, 'we are in re-re-re, we are always in re-start'."[54]

…

Over the past fifteen years the MST has been able to maintain an active presence in the public schools in Santa Maria over multiple mayoral administrations—through long-term, continual, effective leadership in local communities. As Varjão describes, this is not a task that is ever "complete." Rather, MST leaders have to constantly *earn* teacher, parent, student, and

53 → Interview, May 2011.

54 → Interview, April 2011.

community allegiance. As Wendy Wolford argues, social movements are "competing discourses negotiating for the rights and ability to define who will represent the poor and how."[55] Part of the MST's ability to win over the right to represent these communities has been their active involvement in the local schools, an institution that the community values. The MST's involvement might be as simple as helping the teachers set up their classrooms in the morning, or planning parent-teacher meetings in the afternoon. The movement also organizes teacher trainings that teach educators about the core philosophical components of the movement's educational vision, including the relationship between theory and practice, the methodological connection between learning and training, knowledge and learning based in people's realities and experiences, learning that is socially useful, education for work and through work, and the organic connection between educational and political and economic processes.[56] Teachers and parents become active members of the MST, not due to the agrarian reform struggle, but because they are inspired by this educational vision.

When I was Santa Maria in 2011, both Varjão and Hilário were involved in other statewide and national MST tasks. Now, different MST leaders were the "organic intellectuals" in these agrarian reform settlements, convincing these communities of the value of participating in the governance of an alternative school system. Several of these new organic intellectuals were the teachers themselves, who had moved from simply supporting the MST's proposal to becoming active leaders in the MST's education collective. In other words, through activists' educational struggle in the public school realm, the "movement" grew beyond the original activists to include the teachers and sometimes principals of these rural schools.

"Why shouldn't I support a meeting of MST youth?"

55 → Wendy Wolford, This Land Is Ours Now: Social Mobilization and the Meanings of Land in Brazil (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 10.

56 → MST, "Princípios Da Educação No MST" (Movimento Sem Terra, 1996).

It was July 9, 2011, and I was heading to interview Mayor Eduardo Cultinho of the municipality of Água Preta, in the sugar cane region of Pernambuco. Cultinho came from an elite family that had been in power in the region for decades with different political affiliations. After miles of driving on almost-impassable muddy roads, we pulled up to his plantation where a group of people was waiting. I was escorted to Cultinho's office and he asked me to have a seat while he "attended to the people outside." The first woman came in and told a story about someone sick in her family, asking if Cultinho could help. Cultinho gave her 50 *reais* [in 2011 $25 USD], saying to the woman, "It is only a little, but it is from the heart, so you can buy some groceries." The next two men also told stories of hardships, and Cultinho asked his assistant to give each of the men 30 *reais*. Cultinho turned to me, "I know that it should not happen this way, but I have to help people when I can."[57]

After the visitors left, Cultinho and I jumped into a two-hour interview about municipal politics, the regional economy, and the MST. Cultinho explained, "My relationship with the MST began a year after my election . . . I supported MST marches, meetings of *sem terrinha* [little landless children]." Cultinho seemed open to the MST's presence in his municipality. However, when I asked him why he funded a movement that critiques large land estates, he replied: "I am the mayor, I try to attend to everyone's demands . . . I have always had a good dialogue with the MST. Why shouldn't I support a meeting of MST youth? *I attend to the needs of the Evangelical church, the soccer team, a guy who wants to go to the beach. Why not fund a plenary of MST youth*? [emphasis added]" For Cultinho, the church, a soccer team, a beach vacation, and the MST were all citizens at his door that morning asking for money.

…

For the past three and a half decades, all over Brazil, municipal, state, and federal government officials have devolved educational responsibilities to local MST leaders to develop curriculum, train teachers, design new

57 → Fieldnotes, July 9, 2011.

educational practices, and facilitate community involvement in schools. In many locations like Água Preta, conservative mayors allow this to happen because the benefits of conceding educational co-governance to MST activists seem to outweigh the potential conflicts that might arise if this help is rejected. As another local mayor in Pernambuco explained, "After I took power, the MST became part of the administration—they helped to run the government. They began to make a lot of suggestions about education, and we invited them to participate . . . It was very practical. The MST education collective had already been working in the municipality for a long time."

For these mayors, the MST's participation in the public schools both avoids conflicts and, in many cases, helps the schools function more efficiently. The pedagogies that the MST implements, which prefigure collective work practices, participatory governance, and political struggle, do not seem to be immediately threatening to local politicians in terms of their hold on office. The mayors are playing the short-term game, hoping their concessions to the movement will subdue any immediate protest; the activists are playing the long-term game, planting the seeds in the public school system that they hope will grow their movement, and its power to confront the mayors' political power, sometime in the future.

"The purpose of this occupation was pedagogical"

On Wednesday, September 22, 2015, I joined twelve hundred teachers at the Second National Meeting of Educators in Areas of Agrarian Reform (II ENERA) marching through the streets of Brasília and making several stops. First, we stopped in front of the Ministry of Education and the teachers spray painted on the side of the building: "Education is not a commodity," "Closing a school is a crime," and "37,000 rural schools closed." Then, we marched to the Ministry of Justice, and the teachers denounced the killing of indigenous people in Mato Grosso do Sul. Afterwards, we marched towards the Ministries on the other side of the road. As half of the group passed by the Ministry of Agriculture, where Kátia Abreu the infamous supporter of agribusiness was Minister, the middle of the march suddenly started running towards the building, breaking through the glass doors and occupying the lobby. Police began throwing tear gas grenades and using

pepper spray to push back the crowd. In the building, twenty female teachers dressed in skeleton masks took off their shirts and breastfed skeleton dolls, a symbol of the effects of pesticides on infant health. After no more than ten minutes in the lobby, several MST leaders shouted for the teachers to leave and the crowd exited the building. No one was arrested.

Twenty minutes later, sitting on the grass with some of these teachers, I asked what they thought of the protest. Clara Ribeiro, from the northeastern city of Àgua Preta, said that this was her first MST activity. She said she had never experienced anything like that before and she thought it was inspiring. Another teacher from Água Preta, Isabela Costa, was more familiar with the MST because she lived in a settlement. Costa said, "honestly, I was so scared when everyone started running to the doors and the police came!" She did not like the feeling of fear, but she enjoyed the rest of the march; she also wanted to keep participating in the movement. I also chatted with the head of the MST education sector in Pernambuco, Rubneuza Leandro, asking her why the teachers had only occupied the building for ten minutes. Leandro said, "The point was not to occupy the building permanently, and have everyone get arrested. The purpose of this occupation was pedagogical, it taught the teachers that the conflict we talk about is not just theoretical, it is has a material reality when you go to the street."

…

During the II ENERA, the MST brought together teachers from around Brazil to experience, if only for a week, what it means to be part of a world with socialist values, theories, politics, culture, and confrontation. The goal of this meeting was partially to make demands on the state, but more importantly, the meeting was "pedagogical," teaching the teachers about the movement's alternative educational project—in theory and practice. The II ENERA is a single manifestation of the MST's national attempt to influence teachers, communities, students, and government officials across the country. Local MST leaders recruit teachers that they think might be sympathetic to their struggle, and they invite them to movement-led teacher trainings where they learn about the theoretical foundations of the MST's educational proposal and experience it first-hand, prefiguring the educational

values they hope to implement in their own public school system. However, the teachers are not only there to learn; they also become active promoters of this approach through contentious action. Every year dozens of statewide and regional teacher meetings take place, in addition to similar events with other foci, such as meetings about agroecology, housing, health, gender, youth, media, and law. In all of these meetings, these thematic issues are discussed in relationship to the MST's larger agrarian reform struggle.

PREFIGURATION AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

In the proceeding vignettes, MST activists work both within and against the complex and contradictory Brazilian state to prefigure their social values. In this case, the transformation of public education is not simply a consequence of autonomous organizing efforts, but rather, a means to achieve that primary goal. By promoting alternative practices in hundreds of state institutions, the MST is able to integrate more activists into the movement, increase political and technical knowledge, and allow a wider subsection of civil society (e.g., teachers and students from non-MST communities) to practice, or prefigure, an alternative social world. I argue that these prefigurative educational practices *within state institutions* are an example of what Dinerstein would call organizing hope, or the "collective pursuit towards the realization of what does not yet exist for each of the movements in question and the concrete anticipation of such unrealized reality in the present."[58] Although in many cases politicians concede educational governance to the MST as a "mediation" of their protest, the MST's co-governance of these schools still sow the "seeds" that may very well be, in Glowa's words, "the organizational tools for the process of building towards the *not yet*."

The fact that this struggle takes place in the public school system is significant. As Tithi Bhattacharya suggests,[59] educational struggles are

58 → Dinerstein, The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America: The Art of Organizing Hope, 25.

59 → Bhattacharya, "Bread and Roses in West Virginia"; Tithi Bhattacharya, "Women Are Leading the Wave of Strikes in America. Here's Why," The Guardian, April 10, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/10/women-teachers-strikes-america.

gendered in particular ways that shift their meaning for understanding the process of social change and social reproduction.[60] First of all, the majority of the activists as well as the teachers and parents involved in the MST's educational struggle are women. This is unsurprising, as Bhattacharya writes, "Teaching is seen as 'care work,' traditionally understood as 'women's work.'"[61] Indeed, the MST's focus on education initially began with a concern about care, or "what to do with all of the children" running around the occupied camps without supervision or childcare. As national MST leader Edgar Kolling explains, "When we occupied land and created large camps there was a lot of pressure to have schools. The moms and teachers pressured the MST to be concerned with formal education."[62] Kolling's specific reference to "moms" indicates how the concern with children was often considered a "woman's concern" within the occupied camps. Thus, even though the MST was fighting for the transformation of economic relations of production, the gendered nature of productive and reproductive work continued. Since the first land occupation in the early 1980s, the mothers in the camps, often with the support of other women who had teaching degrees, organized educational activities for the camp's children.[63] Eventually, these women also pressured the MST's national leadership to make education an official concern of the movement, not simply an informal function, leading to the founding of a formal MST education sector in 1987.

Importantly, although not intentionally, the gendered nature of the MST's educational struggle led to the radical transformation of the movement itself. For the past three and a half decades, the MST education sector has been a point of entry (*porta da entrada*, as it is frequently called within the movement) for women to begin their activism, and then take on other, more prestigious leadership roles within the movement. In other words, many of the MST female leaders gained confidence in their organizing capacity by establishing childcare in their camps, helping out in

60 → I once again want to thank Michelle Glowa for the suggestion to read Bhattacharya and apply her theories of Social Reproduction to the MST's educational struggles.

61 → Bhattacharya, "Bread and Roses in West Virginia."

62 → Interview, January 2011.

63 → Tarlau, "How Do New Critical Pedagogies Develop? Educational Innovation, Social Change, and Landless Workers in Brazil."

the diverse tasks needed in the schools, pursuing teaching degrees, and negotiating with and protesting against local educational officials. After these initial experiences, these women took on national leadership roles in other movement spheres such as agricultural production, finance, political formation, grassroots organizing, and international relations. Eventually, the women who became national leaders pushed the movement to implement a quota system in the mid-2000s to guarantee equal gender representation in all of the movement's decision-making bodies.[64]

These dynamics illustrate how formalizing struggles around care work can help to transform the internal composition of grassroots movements. Similarly, sexuality is intertwined in complex ways with the gendered nature of productive and reproductive work. In the MST, the majority of LGBT activists also began their activism through regional education collectives. The LGBT activists I spoke with expressed their preference for the more welcoming atmosphere in the education sector, versus the agricultural production sectors and other spheres of the movement dominated by male activists that were often homophobic. In 2015, LGBT activists began organizing around specific issues that LGBT landless people face in camps and settlements. Almost all of the national leaders of these LGBT organizing efforts were long-time participants in the education sector. In 2017, this LGBT collective was given a seat on the MST's national coordination body. Thus, the movement's educational organizing not only transformed the composition of the movement, but also helped articulate struggles along different lines of oppression in the Brazilian countryside.

A second reason that the MST's educational activism is distinct from other forms of organizing is its location within a sphere of social reproduction. As Bhattacharya writes, "If workers' labor produces all the wealth in society, who then produces the worker?" Bhattacharya reminds us of the pitfalls of binding class struggle to the point of production alone, "without considering the myriad social relations expanding between workplaces, homes, schools,

64 → Joao Alexandre Peschanski, "A Evolução Organizacional do MST" (Masters Thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 2007).

hospitals—a wider social whole, sustained and coproduced by human labor in contradictory yet constitutive ways."[65]

The MST activists had to address the issue of social reproduction from the very beginning of their movement, as local state officials set up schools in their communities that taught their children that rural areas were backwards and that success required moving to the city for a good job and better life. The MST realized that in order to promote their economic vision over multiple generations, they had to intervene in this sphere of social reproduction and "produce a worker" for a different type of agrarian society. Although the movement does not articulate its educational struggle as a "social reproduction" struggle, it is here that social reproduction theory is extremely useful.[66] As Bhattacharya articulates, social reproduction theory "reveals the essence-category of capitalism, its animating force, to be human labor and not commodities."[67] Thus, by occupying the school system the movement was planting the seeds for a different type of society, producing human laborers trained in practices of self-governance, collective work tasks, agroecological farming, and an ideological critique of capitalism.

The MST's formal educational programs have helped to build the internal capacity of the movement in three important ways. First, as I already mentioned, by occupying the public-school system the MST has integrated more women, LGBT activists, and youth into their movement. Second, the public education system is a means to obtain the many technical skills that movements need for self-governance and autonomy. The MST has promoted high school and university degree programs in cooperative management, public health, social work, law, veterinary studies, agronomy, and many other areas. Instead of relying on outside experts, the movement

65 → Tithi Bhattacharya, "Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction Theory," in Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression, ed. Tithi Bhattacharya (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 3.

66 → The MST draws on critical theorists such as Mariano F. Enguita and Gaudêncio Frigotto to theorize schools as instruments of social reproduction, however, the movement does not traditionally use feminist theories of social reproduction. Mariano F. Enguita, A Face Oculta Da Escola: Educação e Trabalho No Capitalismo (Porto Alegre, RS: Artes Médicas, 1989); Gaudêncio Frigotto, "Teoria e Práxis e o Antagonismo Entre a Formação Politécnica e as Relações Sociais Capitalistas," Trabalho, Educação e Saúde 7 (2009): 67–72.

67 → Bhattacharya, "Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction Theory," 19.

has produced its own organic intellectuals who have the technical skills to integrate into concrete professional tasks. As national MST activist Maria de Jesus exclaimed, "Now we have pedagogues, agronomists, lawyers, journalists, all of these professions in the countryside that are important for the working class."[68] Although it is also possible to gain these technical skills outside of the formal school realm, by earning degrees recognized by the state movement activists have been able to go on to occupy other institutional spheres.

Finally, while I contend that it is possible to prefigure alternative social visions in all state spheres, the public education system is a particularly powerful institution to make this intervention. Youth, teachers, local state officials, and parents spend hours and hours a week studying and working within the public-school system. As Bhattacharya writes in reference to the 2018 teacher strikes in the United States,

> The West Virginia strikers might see their political identity in a de-gendered way, i.e. as workers alone, but they were, in their lived experience, mothers, church members, community leaders, and breadwinners. Domestic labour and wage labour were always layered and conjoined. This was expressed in how quickly wider layers of the community were immediately pulled into the strike and reflected the disproportionate ways in which women, rather than men, create social and community networks.[69]

MST activists, by providing daily support for educational provision, are not just landless farmers promoting a particular economic vision. They become mothers, community leaders, teachers, caretakers, mentors, and friends to an entire community. By providing immediately useful support in the sphere of social reproduction—radicalizing childcare now for a future "not yet"—the movement has developed a wide network of allies that go far beyond the boundaries of their own movement. This consent the movement has garnered in the civil society realm will be increasingly important,

68 → Interview, September 2011.

69 → Bhattacharya, "Bread and Roses in West Virginia," 6.

especially given the conservative resurgence in Brazil and the rest of Latin America taking place since 2013, which I will address briefly in the conclusion.

CONCLUSIONS

Our ideas and philosophical understandings of the world are directly shaped by the people around us. This article and my thinking about prefigurative politics and the gendered nature of the MST's educational struggle have been shaped by the Latin American Philosophy of Education Society, and I hope these ideas will continue to evolve through further dialogue with this group of scholars and activists. In this conclusion, I summarize the major points I have tried to make in this article and I end with a brief reflection on the current Brazilian context.

The major goal of this article has been to reject the dichotomy that is often constructed between "prefigurative politics" and "state struggles." In the United States, the bifurcation between these forms of struggle emerged in wake of the New Left in the 1960's, and intensified with the rise of the alter/anti-globalization movement and the Occupy Wall Street Movement from the 1990's through the 2010's. In Brazil, the "state/no state" debate is most recently a product of the disappointment social movement leaders and political activists have felt with the rise and fall of the "pink tide" over the course of the twenty-first century, and the failure of leftist and left-of-center presidents to fulfill their radical promise.

In order to move beyond this polarized debate, I first traced the history of the concept of prefigurative politics, suggesting that in its original formulation the goal was to merge the prefigurative and the political. In other words, socialist prefigurative politics was necessary, but so was the political struggle that could help ensure the continued existence of these small-scale experiments.[70]

Second, I suggested that the polarization between prefiguration and institutionalization does not map on to the experiences of Latin American

70 → Boggs, "Gramsci's Theory of the Factory Councils: Nucleus of the Socialist State"; Boggs, "Revolutionary Process, Political Strategy, and the Dilemma of Power"; Boggs, "Marxism, Prefigurative Communism, and the Problem of Workers' Control."

social movements. I analyzed the contributions of Dinerstein's *The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America*, and her point that prefiguration will always be mediated through the state, capital, and law. Therefore, autonomous practices are never fully outside of state power. I suggested that Dinerstein's idea of excess, or how movements can promote an alternative social world that cannot be captured within a capitalist logic, is a useful framework for analyzing prefigurative politics.

Third, and notwithstanding Dinerstein's important contributions, I have also argued that there is a difference between the transformation of the state as a means or end of organizing. In both Dinerstein's argument about the politics of autonomy and my own argument about the long march through the institutions, the prefiguration of alternative social relations directly leads to state transformation. However, Dinerstein's emphasis is still on prefiguration outside of bourgeois state institutions, although she acknowledges that there is nothing outside of state mediation. I argue, drawing on the MST, that the prefiguration of alternative social visions within bourgeois state institutions is also important, because these are the institutions that interface with the majority of people in their everyday lives. I also suggest that the *ends* of transforming the state is much more likely if social movements employ multiple *means*, both building counterinstitutions and occupying bourgeois state institutions, as Boggs originally suggested in 1974.

Finally, drawing on Bhattacharya, I have reflected on how the MST's prefigurative politics in the public educational realm is gendered, having always been a sphere of women's work within the movement. This both reproduced the gendered division of work that is dominant in the broader capitalist society, while also radically transforming the movement itself. By formalizing the movement's concern with public education and childcare, the MST integrated women into the movement. Consequently, these female educational activists became leaders in the MST's many decision-making bodies. The MST's occupation of the public-school realm also allowed for women to advance their formal education and obtain technical degrees that have allowed them to occupy other institutional spheres. Finally, by becoming leaders in their communities fighting for quality educational access in the Brazilian countryside, MST activists have won over entire communities

that now support their broader struggle, even if they do *not yet* identify as socialists.

Given the current Brazilian political context, the fruits of this thirty-five-year long march through the institutions is more important than ever. In October 2018, the fascist, virulently homophobic, misogynist, racist politician, Jair Bolsonaro, won the presidential elections. Part of his campaign promise was to rid Brazil of the "red outlaws," referring primarily to the MST and the homeless movement. Bolsonaro promised to arm landlords with guns and respond to land occupations with military intervention. In the policy realm, the majority of the movement's gains at the federal level had already been reversed by the previous administration, with important public policies like the National Program for Education in Areas of Agrarian Reform (PRONERA) completely gutted.

Yet, there are reasons for cautious optimism. First, since Bolsonaro has taken office in January 2019, he has not yet employed this strategy of using the military or federal police to violently repress the movement. Of course, Bolsonaro's hateful rhetoric has emboldened others to take violent action, most recently in July 2019 a man drove a truck into an MST occupation, killing a 72-year-old landless farmer, but this is not the same as state-sanctioned violence. Second, the definitive end of political diplomacy in Brazil has distinct advantages, with the potential of generating a surge in MST-led occupations and protests. With the Workers' Party out of power, the MST no longer has to engage in a delicate political dance with the federal government; it can mobilize against the new administration and openly contest its legitimacy. Agrarian reform youth is a third reason for optimism. Today's MST is a movement of young people who grew up in settlements and camps, obtained education through the movement's formal educational programs, and participated in MST activities and events. Bolsonaro does not have the power to reverse those experiences, and even a couple thousand second-generation leaders who stay in the countryside could prove critical to the long-term relevance of the movement. In other words, the seeds have already been planted and harvested, and will not be disappearing in the near future.

Fourth and finally, the MST is now engaging in this contentious political struggle with more material, ideological, and socio-political resources than

ever before. The federal government will have difficulties dismantling the already viable cooperatives, schools, and university programs which are now part and parcel of the fabric of local economies and institutions. Furthermore, although Bolsonaro won the general election in 2018, he lost to his political opponent Fernando Haddad in eleven states, all concentrated in the poor Brazilian North and Northeast. In this region many left-leaning governors won the election. Ironically, after Bolsonaro came to power these local governments were *more* willing than ever before to work with the MST, as a form of resistance against Bolsonaro.

In conclusion, the MST's prefigurative struggle has always moved forward under contradictory and conflictive relations with the Brazilian state. Over the next years we are going to see the true strength and limits of the MST's long march through the institutions, or what I have referred to as activists' attempt to prefigure, within our many state institutions, the *not yet*.[71]

71 → For a longer explanation of these arguments about the MST's struggle under conservative resurgence, see the epilogue of my book (Tarlau 2019).