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Experiences and Social Processes of High School Students' School Occupations in São Paulo

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ABSTRACT – Experiences and Social Processes of High School Students' School Occupations in São Paulo. In this paper we review the school occupation movements of São Paulo from the study of the discursive and action repertoires of the relevant players who were against the educational reform policy announced by the São Paulo State government in 2015. It aims to understand the struggle experience of the young players and part of their social processes. The article is divided into two parts: 1) a brief analysis of the educational policy and students' disapproval and the support of public opinion, using the paradigm of communicative action; 2) reflection on intersecting themes such as feminism and gender equity issues, for example, that emerged within the social movement. The conclusion indicates that the experience of the occupations resulted in a greater complexity of the movement and its agendas.
Keywords: **High School Movement. Occupancies. Experience. Social Process.**

RESUMO – Experiências e Processos Sociais das Ocupações Secundaristas de São Paulo. Este artigo busca analisar o movimento secundarista de São Paulo a partir do estudo dos repertórios discursivos e de ações desses atores em resposta contrária à política de reforma educacional da rede estadual paulista anunciada em 2015. O objetivo é compreender a experiência de luta das/dos jovens atrizes/atores e parte de seus processos sociais. O texto está dividido em duas partes: 1) breve análise da política educacional e da reprovação das/dos estudantes e o apoio da opinião pública, recorrendo ao paradigma do agir comunicativo; 2) reflexão sobre temas de intersecção, como feminismo e questões de gênero, que emergiram no interior do movimento. Conclui-se que a experiência das ocupações resultou na maior complexidade do movimento e de suas pautas.
Palavras-chave: **Movimento Secundarista. Ocupações. Experiência. Processo Social.**

Introduction

Why should we talk about the high school students' movement in São Paulo, also known as the movement to occupy public schools in São Paulo? More than five years have elapsed since the students' uprising against the intended educational reform policy in the State of São Paulo, and this is an issue that, in addition to awakening different interests focused on public education, is not disconnected from the discussions on youth and policies aimed at this section of civil society.

In the first place, the high school movement in São Paulo stood out as the most relevant action against an encompassing policy in public education. It is about the experience of a defense struggle of public schools. Secondly, the movement served as an inspiration for the national student mobilization against a series of education political projects, among which the Provisional Act No. 746/2016, of the High School Reform, supported by segregation actions (Cunha, 2017); the *Proposta de Emenda à Constituição* (PEC, Proposed Amendment to the Constitution) No. 241/2016, of the ceiling on public spending, which causes the suspension of the public funding for education for twenty years (Pinto, 2000); and Bills (PL) No. 867/2015 and No. 193/2016, known as "*Escola sem Partido*", whose ideological cleansing argument served as a justification for proposing the banning of political debates in schools (Guilherme; Picoli, 2018).

Among the issues that involved the students organized in the movement to occupy schools in São Paulo in 2015, some that are more recurrent in the literature should be mentioned: general aspects of the political, economic and educational context (Goulart; Pinto; Camargo, 2017; Campos; Medeiros; Ribeiro, 2016; Catini; Mello, 2016; Rodrigues, 2016); authoritarianism of educational policy and pedagogical planning and projects (Arelaro; Jacomini; Carneiro, 2016; Ribeiro, 2018; Medeiros; Januário, 2017); precariousness of educational conditions, closing of classrooms and reduction of pedagogical resources (Goulart; Pinto; Camargo, 2017; Campos; Medeiros; Ribeiro, 2016; Girotto, 2018); the conception of education in the conduction of educational policies and the student opposition (Ximenes, 2019; Corti; Corrochano; Silva, 2016; Espinosa, 2019; Piolli; Pereira; Mesko, 2016; Catini; Mello, 2016; Santos; Segurado, 2016).

Cross sectional subjects with the students' movement were also approached, such as: the role of social media and new communication technologies (Dios, 2017; Ketzer, 2018; Rico, 2016; Altheman; Marques; Martino, 2017; Paes; Pipano, 2017; Romancini; Castilho, 2017); the mainstream media's approach to the school occupation movement (Canesin, 2018; Souza, 2018; Marin, 2017); feminism and gender issues (Moresco, 2019; Leite, 2017; Araldi; Arendt, 2017; Santos; Cordeiro, 2016); legal interpretations of the conflict (Almeida, 2016; Tavolari; Barbosa, 2019; Tavolari et al., 2018); winning of public opinion (Medeiros; Januário; Melo, 2019; Stabelini, 2019).

Despite the diversity of studies performed, the movement to occupy schools has been little assessed from a perspective interested in the action of subjects, that is, from a sociology of action focused on forms of collective action and their social resistance processes. This approach deals with the action of the subject engaged to intervene, as he can, in the current social organization. It is a form of analysis that is born when people become aware of themselves, that they can make their own history (Touraine, 1965) – an aspect that appears among the young players in question. The French sociologist Alain Touraine (1978) argues that the analysis of conflicts and social movements allows us to know the production of society itself, through social struggles and cultural innovations. And it is based on this assumption that I understand the study of the high school students' struggle as necessary.

I have tried to bring a few contributions to the understanding of the high school movement marked by occupations, focusing the discursive repertoires and the actions of students organized without collective initiatives. In this study I have used documentary records (press news, decrees and laws, documentaries, pamphlets, posts on social networks and other productions by the young players), interviews with former high school students who participated in the occupation movement and an extensive literature on the social movement and the educational policy in São Paulo in the last two decades. The interviews were carried out between 2017 and 2019 with 13 youngsters from different districts of the city of São Paulo (north, south and east). The talks addressed memories and reflections about the past that were much debated among these young people. Therefore, I chose, in some of the passages, to use testimonies given in the heat of the moment, records of images transformed into documentaries that have been approved by the social players in question.

From the Announcement of School Reorganization to the Mobilization and Student Uprise and Public Opinion support

On September 23, 2015, the São Paulo government announced the reform policy of the State education network, called "school reorganization"[1]. The news was printed on the cover of the Daily Section of *Folha de S. Paulo* and announced the transfer of more than one million students, pointing out that the government expected to adopt such a change as of 2016 and that children would study a maximum of 1.5 km away from their homes (Monteiro, 2015)[2]. The "reorganization" policy foresaw dividing state schools by teaching cycles, that is, each school unit would only offer one school cycle (Elementary School I, Elementary School II or High School Education).

The separation between young people and children in the public school network is part of a policy initiated in the 1990s, whose objective is to reduce the public education network, transferring part of the re-

sponsibilities with public education to the municipality. The transfer of the first years of basic education to the municipalities entails the separation of the different stages of school life. The effects on the daily life of the affected community are summarized in the separation of siblings, relatives and social groups, as well as new difficulties in school access, especially in the capital of São Paulo, where displacement and transport conditions are deficient, and in rural areas, where students walk many miles to get to school.

The 2015 proposal is certainly a step in a larger pre-existing and long-term project, which is the transfer of basic education to the municipalities, carried out without any study and technical-scientific predictability regarding the consequences for the municipalities and for those mostly affected: students and their families, teachers and other public school employees.

It should be remembered that in the state of São Paulo the policy of education municipalization began during the Mario Covas administration (1995 - 1998), based on the education reform in the State (São Paulo, 1995), which had as one of its objectives decentralize the administration and resources of the São Paulo educational system, in order to switch the offer of elementary education, transferring part of it to the municipalities. This is a political stance similar to what the World Bank and other transnational financing bodies suggest to developing countries, namely: that the State plays the role of "manager" of services, such as education and health, for example, and that it ceases to be primarily responsible for financing public and social policies to develop its economy (Adrião, 2018). The municipalization policy is part of a process of opening up public services to partnerships with companies, civil society and other government bodies, decentralizing the exclusive responsibility of the State: a precedent for different forms of privatization of public education in São Paulo (Martins, 2006; Peroni, 2003; Adrião, 2001; 2008).

For the reorganization announced in 2015, about 311,000 students from the public school network would have to switch schools and 74,000 teachers would be affected by the change (Pinho, 2015), according to information announced by the then State Secretary of Education, Herman Voorward, in an interview with the mainstream media and information outlets. The program announced by the government was received by the school community as an action with no guarantees that it would result in improvements in public education. The threat of changing routines generated immediate dissatisfaction in the school community, and the subject of "reorganization" gained prominence and considerable proportions in the public sphere of São Paulo.

The non-acceptance of the announced measure was a reaction to the way in which the government presented the initiative, without giving details about its steps, without a road map or plan that would clearly illustrate how the project would be put into practice and without any discussion possibility, uncertainties and the raising of many questions.

Education experts have assessed the school community's concerns about the links between educational policies and future impacts on the state education system, from the administration and structure of school units to the monitoring of school performance (Arelaro; Jacomini; Carneiro, 2016; Adrião, 2006; Adrião; Camargo, 2001). Among researchers in the field, there is a consensus that reform policies with a great impact on the education system, that is, that affect millions of people, including students' families and education professionals, are important tools for reducing social injustices, capable of overcoming in the long term situations of social exclusion and inequalities (Sen, 2000; Drèze; Sen, 2015). Given this potential impact, these policies should be the result of well-grounded research and extensive discussions in consultations and public hearings with those affected. The case of the São Paulo 2015 "school reorganization" did not present any grounds for legitimacy, because, in addition to using an ill-grounded study - based only on one variable, i.e., the number of teaching cycles per school, the relationship between the simplification of school management and school performance -, prevented the main stakeholders from the right to participate. As a result, it did not provide solutions to pre-existing problems, such as the difficulty of accessing education for young people and adults who work without complete basic education.

The "reorganization" would certainly change the functioning and organization of people's lives. In situations in which the students would be transferred far away from their home, families with less economic power could have their expenses affected, hampering their budget; siblings would be separated, and parents would have their routine changed. It is noteworthy that the routine change and, consequently, the interference in private life was an important factor for the high school movement to win the opinion of a part of society that is averse to more progressive agendas. It is worth remembering that in November 2015, shortly before the high school movement uprising, a survey by *Datafolha* (Souza; Machado, 2015, s.p.) revealed that 59% of the São Paulo population were against "school reorganization".

> (Interviewee 4)
> The news of the school reorganization caught everyone off guard. It was completely top-down, there was no discussion with students and teachers. It was out of the blue sky. At the first moment when I read the news, I got scared, […], but I did not realize the fact that the reorganization would cause classrooms to be shut down, that teachers would be terminated, schools would be separated according to grades, elementary school I, elementary school II and high school, and how this would make it difficult for students who, for example, take their younger siblings to school. Many students would study very far from their homes, although they now live close to the school. So it was on the internet that I saw a discussion taking place, between students, teachers, in different groups and in leftist newspapers with several criticisms. And then I got it (Ramos, 2020, p. 47).

Among the motivations for the emergence of the high school struggle, the structural and logistical transformation of people's daily lives seems at the core of the issue because it would certainly affect social relations; in other words, we can say that the policy announced by the State government would interfere in the private sphere. Second, the high school mobilization against the project takes place through an attempt to preserve the social interaction in the school environment, which would be related to the representation of the place of meeting and coexistence and the dispute over the meaning of the school, as observed in the statements below:

> (Interviewee 1)
> I was one of the first to know that the school would be made available. […]. I thought it was absurd [...]. The reason is that there were no students. The idea was to transform the school into an ETEC. It wasn't quite like that; we noticed it was fake news. The governor said: ah, there are no students in the classroom. But if you took the roll call, the teacher attendance lists, there were more pupils than usual. There should be 35 and there were 50. It was absurd. How are you going to use the justification that you don't have students? (Ramos, 2020, p. 50).

> (Interviewee 5)
> My mother always put something in my head, which is: education is not taken away, education is given. I think this was a move that motivated me a lot, especially knowing that a school is going to be shut down, as that this decision would get in the way of people who were from the school. And it wasn't one school, there were 94 schools. It's too much (Ramos, 2020)[3].

> (High school students talk – Documentary *Lute como uma Menina (*Fight Like a Girl)
> My enrollment is performed in another school, in a period that is not the one I chose.
> At Ana Rosa school, the data have improved a lot for four years. We put a lot of effort and we managed to enter the ranking of the 10 best schools in the state in the ENEM test, but the person who takes ENEM is a high school student. Why are they taking Ana Rosa's high school education? (Beatriz Alonso; Flávio Colombini, 2016).

At the time, the first statements of the high school students were mostly recorded on social networks and other spaces of internet communication, which demonstrated a collective uprising driven by the inconsistency of the government's arguments disconnected from the schools reality. The policy of closing hundreds of classrooms and making school buildings available for other public purposes would cause the worsening of classroom overcrowding as an inevitable consequence and far from any project that aims to improve education quality. This was a very clear issue for the school community, and it allows me to say that the main motivation for the high school students struggle was due to objective questioning, based on expected standards, contents and

shared experiences in the school environment and in the development of social bonds.

In order to better understand the social process that was formed from the announcement of the "reorganization" policy, it is necessary to consider the formation of a "collective conscience", that is, a conscience shared among the students and between them and a significant portion of the school community, although some actions against the high school mobilization originated from groups of parents, neighborhood and supporters of the State government. Despite the diversity that characterizes the public school communities, including opinions and perspectives, there is a sharing of experiences and values for reflecting about the public school, defend its space and give value thereto. The "reorganization" appears, then, as a threat to the shared and specific rationality of the school environment, that is, to what the school represents, its symbolic value and the intersubjective social relations stemming from it.

Among the socially constructed and shared values in connection with school, it is known that the school institution has as one of its functions the development of the individual and the citizen. This formation process occurs through communication, through interactions and the provision of objective and subjective meanings. It is about dialogic relationships and the sharing of a rationality built through social bonds (Habermas, 2011), whose shared language between subjects – rules, values and knowledge – concerns the socialization of the school environment, also reflecting the relationships of society as a whole.

In view of the socially constructed rationality involving the school, the announcement of the "school reorganization" was received by the school community as an interference in intersubjective relationships, a threat to common language and an interruption in the domain of socially constructed reason, whose daily experience the school tends to enhance. Thus, the policy of "school reorganization" represented an actual potential for intervention in the *life world* (Habermas, 2011), that is, for State intervention in everyday interactions, in the intersubjective relationships that were built in the school setting and in the collective rationality, that serve as initiatives guidelines and that generate a feeling of security and stability.

The "reorganization" was received by the students as an aggression to the meaning of the school hurting the language known and incorporated in the school relationships community, in the interactions symbolically mediated and guided by recognized norms and values. An example is the consensus on the benefits of coexistence between different ages in the school environment, considered important for the socialization of the youngsters and identity formation. The rationality involving the school supported by the State government, an educational process that forces an artificially constructed homogeneity - a consequence of the division of schools by teaching cycles -, distorts real life, that is, it does not allow the school to fulfill one of its essential functions, which is to teach how to live in society respecting the differences.

The school belongs to the *life world*, that is, it is part of everyday social life and includes cultural, social and personality structures, from which interaction mechanisms are established. Thus, if the state educational policy does not correspond to the school's expectations, people tend to disapprove of it. The non-acceptance of the announced public policy reveals a consensus built collectively by processes of dialogic interaction, regarding the school significance, and about the reality to be faced. It is also worth noting that this socially constructed consensus is largely due to the interactions marked by lived and perceived experiences.

The notion of experience concerns subjects and their social, political and cultural relationships. It is a mediation between experiences, social relationships, formation of consciences and struggles (Wood, 2011). This conception, developed by Edward P. Thompson (1987 [1963]), encompasses the notion of *lived experience* – lifelong experiences – and *perceived experience* – social consciousness. In this connection, the lived experience is also thought and felt by the subjects (Martins, 2006). Thus, the perspective of experience allows us to access the social meanings of a collective action or a social movement and other forms of political organization of the subaltern classes. The movement of schools occupation would be, therefore, a phenomenon of the young high school students' social experience i.e. of the forms of school life experienced by these students.

Another approach that dialogues with the notion of experience as mediation has been presented by François Dubet (1994) in his *Sociology of Experience*[4]. For that author, experience becomes a central element for understanding the action of the collective subject and its interactions. This perspective is of interest because it allows the identification of different aspects of social experience in relation to the development of the collective subject and its combat practices - forms of action and repertoire, one of which is the non-existence of a social movement that brings together individuals dedicated to a single project.

On the other hand, the forms of action, also understood as a repertoire of actions and their main tactics, matter in terms of the political intention of the player in focus, and also as a basis for the action of the opposing player i.e. the State government. It also serves to influence public opinion about the educational reform and the conflict in question. The students' movement, contrary to the "reorganization", choose the direct action, whose main tactics were, in addition to the school occupations, the predominance of autonomous and grass root organization, street demonstrations, simultaneous blockages of the main cities' streets, leafleting, boycott of the *Sistema de Avaliação de Rendimento Escolar do Estado de São Paulo* (SARESP, São Paulo State School Performance Assessment System), development of manuals for internal guidelines and promotion of cultural and educational activities, in order to prefigure the desired school model.

The development of forms of action is the response to the measures and actions of the State government and to the groups advocating

the "school reorganization", marking the different stages of the conflict, according to the political conditions of the movement and the *structures of opportunity* (Tarrow, 1998).

The formation of public opinion about the "reorganization" is constituted, in part, as a result of the evaluation of the mobilized youth, of the movement's actions repertoire and of previous experience lived by the students, which is marked by deprivations and precariousness, due to social disrespect that yields inequality. The feeling of *social disrespect* (Honneth, 2011) would have driven the struggle of those young players for recognition as students in their entirety, as can be seen in the statements taken from two documentaries that address the matter.

> We are discovering the school. Everything there was inside a small room that was locked with a bar. We only used it to get physical education materials, [...]. So many things like chemistry stuff. We could set up a laboratory! [...]. All they said to us is that they were not available. They lied to us (Escolas..., 2017).

> We entered a room containing brand new seats. I have to look for a seat to be able to study. You have to go and look for room by room, because there are more than 40 students in my room, there are 44 students in my room (Lute..., 2016).

> These materials here (opened the laboratory cabinet) we never used in the laboratory. In chemistry class, we always stay in the classroom, just a notebook and a blackboard. We never use baking soda, acids. Nothing actually. And there's a lot of material, a lot (Lute..., 2016).

In view of these experiences, common among working-class youngsters, the critical opinion about the effects of the "school reorganization" policy was not restricted to the school community (Medeiros; Januário; Melo, 2019): it was also exhibited by people sensitized about the high school cause, including people with no connection with São Paulo public education. The all-time disapproval of the Alckmin administration was associated, to a large extent, with the disapproval of the education reform and the support of public opinion to the high school struggle. During the period of school occupations and street demonstrations, a survey by *Datafolha* (Mendonça, 2015) reported the drop in Alckmin's popularity to 28% and the respondents claimed the "school reorganization", along with the water crisis, as the main factors of such slump.

The disapproval of the announced policy and of the government, mainly due to the authoritarian way in which Alckmin's administration acted in the conflict with the mobilized students[5], took place via a communication paradigm, that is, through daily dialogical relationships, intersubjective interactions, exchanges of information and past experiences from person to person in different spaces of the *life world* - on the street, in commerce, in public transport, in places of services, social

networks, etc. The communication route reveals how people with no connections to the school network took side of the conflict and demonstrated their support of the school occupation movement, in some cases donating essential products for the maintenance of the occupations – hygiene products, food, blankets, etc. –, legal support, free classes in the occupied schools, participation in vigils at the time of greater tension with the police, etc.

Between 2015 and 2016, the education reform policy was the protagonist of public debates in São Paulo in a social process that is, in itself, a democratic process in a network of communication flows, which generated a certain collective understanding about the school and public education, enhancing the legitimacy of the high school movement that became widely supported by civil society.

In the words of Habermas, an important reference in the theory of contemporary democracy, "[...] public opinion, formed in communicative power according to democratic processes, cannot "dominate" by itself the use of administrative power; but it can, in a way, guide it" (Habermas, 2011, p.23).

In this connection, the Alckmin government's unpopularity grew for the first time, caused especially by the disapproval of the "school reorganization" and the repressive way in which his government reacted to the high school movement. The organized action of the young players against the shutdown of classrooms, schools and shifts was essential for the issue of public school defense to gain space and win public opinion, causing the government to step back on its political project. Although the movement does not have legal decision-making power, the adhesion of public opinion through legitimate processes tends to generate power to pressure decision-making agents within the State apparatus.

The School Occupations and the Emergence of Debates on Cross-cutting Issues

The daily coexistence between students in the occupied schools revealed diverse social conflicts within the schools, exposing differences and needs that were beyond the single agenda against the closing of schools and other immediate effects of the "school reorganization". Based on the experience of occupation, new demands began to compose the high school agenda, going from specific demands of each school unit mobilized, such as infrastructure and management problems, to identity issues that are not disconnected from social class conditions and the debate on education.

The expansion of the high school agenda enhanced the aspect that the common struggle against the educational reform policy translated, in general terms, into the search for social justice in a society plagued by inequalities. The collective action of students developed in the sense of sharing the social disrespect suffered by adolescents. Motivated by the exclusion conditions from their legal relations of equality and by the

deprivation of their rights, not only illustrated by the way the government presented the new policy, but also in the daily interactions in the school setting, including within the grassroots movement. Situations of sexist behavior among students, in the day-to-day of the occupations, intensified the demand for discussions and classes on the subject. Girls, who made up the majority in the occupied schools, did not accept subordination within the movement that they were building together with the other students and that was intended to be horizontal.

By refusing reproductions of society structural injustices in the school environment, the adolescents developed the discourse of the need for the movement to debate education reform in a dialogue with the social problems faced by students. From this perspective, it would not be possible to carry out any education reform policy without considering the social conditions of the stakeholders affected. So, just like episodes of sexist behavior, other problems, such as racial and gender prejudice (Patta, 2017), also served to encourage the young players to include in the movement agenda and in the occupations programs (classes, readings, cinema sessions, conversation circles, intellectual gatherings and workshops), topics of interest to the group and that establish connections with the education discussions.

The high school initiative, which fought against damage to the integrity of the individual, takes on new dimensions from the experience of occupations, initiating other internal social processes in search of development and guidance against social injustices. Schools in the central region of São Paulo city, such as the *Escola Estadual Fernão Dias Paes*, whose occupation program took on great proportions: with cultural activities – shows, workshops and public classes, which had the participation of popular artists, intellectuals and public personalities; even including schools with minor visibility, security and external support. In general, such schools are located in peripheral areas of the interior of the state and in the city of São Paulo. The activities organized by the students brought up issues related to class status and the recognition of identities: topics such as urban mobility, right to the city, indigenous rights, LGBTQIA+ rights and racial discrimination.

> (Interviewee 7)
> There was so much to do here and now! We had to occupy another school somewhere else, hold a meeting I don't know where; it's obvious that the issue of urban mobility, the right to the city will be on the agenda. If I didn't have a student pass at the time, how would I do these things? (Ramos, 2020).

> (Interviewee 5)
> Fight for the right to the city and understand that suburbs are also part of it. And fight for the right to the periphery, fight for things that leave downtown and come here [periphery]. Fighting for art in the boondocks, for rights in the boondocks, for you to be able to walk on the street [...]. This idea of the right to the city arises much more from

> an issue of the suburbs. Be able to bring all these things that you have in the city and you don't have in the periphery. Bringing a lot of art here, be able to go out at night on the street and stay calm, because as long as we can't do that, we have no real right to the city. [In the occupation] I was the only one who lived out in the boonies, […], so we always exchanged ideas about it, about police abuse that happened here [in the periphery] but did not happen there [downtown]. It also happens, but it's not the same (Ramos, 2020).

> The closest thing to a different class we had was philosophy, sociology. And here in the occupation, we managed to foster classes on our own. Theater classes, class on gender deconstruction, on feminism, on putting the agenda on racism and subjects that are taboo, you know? Things that we were never able to discuss properly at school, we managed to discuss those subjects in a few weeks of occupation. […], I think this is lacking in school, things that we face in our reality (Lute…, 2016).

Issues linked to political minorities were at the core in the occupation movement which, although organized, for the most part in an autonomous and grassroot manner, many schools had their occupations and mobilizations carried out by girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex and transgender students, seeking to build a movement whose relationships could be of equality and respect for differences.

Feminism was the most discussed topic among the different schools occupied, from autonomously organized schools to those led by student organizations or by political party youth groups, such as *Juntos do PSOL*. In these schools, which were a minority in the movement, cases of male leadership in a setting with a majority of girls, the feminist topic was also at the core of the discussions. The girls took advantage of the occupations to set up a feminist agenda within the movement in order to deconstruct gender inequalities experienced in the school, family, church, work and other settings[6].

Change initiatives began with the sharing of tasks to maintain occupations. The cleaning and feeding tasks were distributed among everyone, boys and girls. Many boys began to perform activities never done at home, such as cooking and washing dishes. Many prominent roles – occupation spokesperson, premises security, representative of the occupation at regional meetings, frontline in street demonstrations and mediation between high school students and school management – were taken on by the girls, whose dedication to combat the "reorganization" and critical capacity drew a lot of attention. This can be seen in the social networks, documentaries produced at the time, newspapers, television news and other media: whose images revealed the girls leading the movement, in conversation circles, performing jesters, facing police in demonstrations and improvising protest songs.

Female protagonism brought with it the development of ideas and critical reflections on State policy and its connections. Internal debates

were held to address the government's motivations and objectives for "school reorganization". The development of the occupation movement was marked by processes of critical reflection on the crisis in the education system; about the hidden intentions of the government to shut down some schools and transform others into schools for technical courses; on reducing education costs; about the conception of school as a company, as a business that can generate profit or loss; and, also, about the fact that the public school is the development site for the workers' children.

> (Interviewee 3)
> The criticism we made a lot at the time of the occupations is that technical education is cheapening the workforce, because a lot of knowledge that we saw [in the technical course] in the environment course I saw again later in college. […]. What I mean is that a lot of the technician's knowledge is the same thing that undergraduate students learn, but they learn it as a technician. So it's different from holding an undergraduate degree. Which one will be most valued? You will have practically the same knowledge, but who will earn more? Who will earn less? It's all about considering exploration. So we kept saying: this is not good! (Ramos, 2020).

In different schools, the students had the support of professors/ teachers, university students, activists and groups able to offer classes and lectures – usually to promote discussions about militancy, public education, and to address issues that were already being discussed by the teenagers, such as machismo and homophobia, for example. It is noted that the cross-cut themes that made up the expansion of the high school movement agenda, enhanced the struggle for quality public education and for the normative sense of the school as a public space that does not marginalize.

In general, the discussion topics dealt with the exclusion of adolescents inside and outside the school environment – discrimination, oppression and inequalities intertwined and not dissociated from the education system and educational policies, such as "school reorganization". Forms of social injustice were debated without hierarchies or overlaps, understanding that all the issues approached within the movement during the occupations are forms of exclusion and, therefore, equally important as a cause of suffering, revolt and resistance.

The external and internal conflicts of the grassroot movement revealed intersections among problems of public education in São Paulo, education policies, precariousness and social disrespect, including the non-recognition of the identities of young students. In this connection, the concept of intersectionality (commonly used in feminist studies)[7] serves as a theoretical-methodological tool to consider different forms of social injustice that the same individual or generation may suffer, and, as a consequence, for the development of a social movement, whose trajectory involves the expansion of their claims, denouncing different forms of precarious life.

When observing the trajectories of the young players focused here, it is observed that, from the experience of occupation, the same person manifests himself in favor of causes that may affect him directly or indirectly, becoming part of different collectives, activist groups and social movements. This became a common reality among the mobilized high school students, revealing the profile of political identities that were formed at that time, from the links established between the different social injustices experienced. Thus, students begin to split between the high school students struggle and other militancy agenda outside the school.

> (Interviewee 5)
> My political militancy began at school, at the time of the occupation, and then it grew. But I had never participated in anything before, I always saw demonstrations, but I had never participated in anything. [...] The movement helped me a lot, because after the high school movement I was part of other movements and these movements taught me many things. I was part of the *ZN em Luta* [...], I met a group of people who posted in schools to create a free students' association [...] I also attended *Sarau Sete Jovens*, *Samba do Bowl*, *Frente Negra* as well. [...] The high school movement represents a very big transformation for me (Ramos, 2020).

The process of expanding the political debate of the high school students mobilized in São Paulo, that is, the complexity within the 2015 high school movement is found in the different locations and social experiences in which the students dwell and draw their experience, including sexuality, gender identity, racial stigma or, even, work and class conditions that converge to what is in common, that is, bring differences closer together. In this connection, the predominance of the autonomous and horizontal organization turned occupations true political arenas on Education and intersection subjects, whose links are established by the adolescents' experience, thus showing that an educational reform cannot be carried out without considering the relations of prejudice and differences that affect school life, that is, an education policy should never be established in isolation, without taking into account the realities of school communities.

They were young people from different realities who came together to fight for a public, free and quality education, but during the process, especially as of the occupations, the daily coexistence and the emergence of structural problems of society within the movement – such as the division of labor by gender, for example –, served as a gateway to broadening the agenda, both on issues arising from the poor distribution of resources, and on different forms of discrimination and oppression. This process of political development led many students, who before the mobilization against the "reorganization" had no militancy experience, to take part in activist groups, social movements and other forms of political organization, as mentioned above.

> (Interviewee 3)
> My [militancy] started at school. My family is middle class; before I entered high school I studied in a private school, it was a bubble, very isolated thing. […] I live in a peripheral neighborhood, but I did not know, it was such a violent thing. But my militancy actually began in the second year of high school. It was influenced by the teachers I had, wonderful teachers, the things they brought I had never thought of before […]. I see that my critical thinking was born in high school (Ramos, 2020).

Cases found in our investigation showed students who became part of feminist groups, black movements and movements from peripheral neighborhoods to build cultural and educational projects. In view of the political gain among adolescents, it is right to consider that the experience built at school and especially within the high school movement started the awareness and participation of these young players in relation to civil society organizations, as well as alternative forms of collective action. Thus, what I observe from the experience of the struggle against "school reorganization" is a process of political formation and, in many cases, development based on the language of activism. In these cases, it is about a radical position and alternative action of political participation and criticism of the current deliberative model (Young, 2014[2001]; 2000), in the search for winning rights.

Observing the described complexity, which characterizes the formation of new political identities, I verify the critical perception of adolescents regarding connections between different forms of social injustice. Understanding that may cause to refer to the contributions of Nancy Fraser (2006) on the present time categories of conflict – redistribution and recognition – being connected injustices that generate demands for social justice that are also connected. People subjected to injustices of an economic nature, that is, victims of the unequal distribution of wealth produced by society, tend to be subjected to injustices of a cultural nature, prejudice and other forms of discrimination. Fraser addresses this diagnosis considering hybrid profiles, that is, people who belong to economically exploited classes and culturally discriminated groups.

People who suffer from both forms of injustice, economic and cultural, need policies that ensure effectiveness as two remedies, remediating inequalities linked to the recognition of identities and material inequalities, in order to ensure equity between different forms of life.

The intersections between the different forms of social injustice were very well understood and expressed by the adolescents in the occupation movement. The process of expanding the movement's agenda occurred as a result of this perception and the sharing of experiences inside and outside the school environment, through dialogues and daily interactions organized around the common search for the defeat of a policy that meant the intensification of the injustices already suffered by the public schools students.

The nexus between the demand for public, free and quality education, and the guidelines that were added to the development of the struggle revealed the high school criticism of people's economic and cultural injustices that are co-originating. In this connection, what Fraser (2006) said about policies aimed at compensating for distribution injustices also contributes to offsetting the acknowledged injustices.

Therefore, an educational policy that ensures quality training for the working class' children can also contribute to weakening the distribution injustices and recognition of identities. Thus, the young players reveal, based on social experience, which includes experiencing the occupations, that the policy of reform of the public education system will have to be formulated in dialogues with the community, in order to consider, together with the structural problems of the schools, cross-sectional subjects inseparable from the debate on Education.

Final Considerations

In this article, arguments were presented to show the relevance of talking even today about the school occupation movement that took place in 2015. Both from the symbolic point of view and from the point of view of the analysis of the collective action organized by individuals still in their adolescence phase.

The text was constructed seeking to highlight two important moments in the experience of high school mobilization, which were: 1) the formation and winning public opinion, taking as necessary the consideration of the movement's forms of action, and the complexity of the struggle, with the expansion of its agenda based on the tactics of occupying schools; and 2) sharing experiences of different forms of social injustice.

Interviews used resorted to the memories of the young players and their reflections on the experiences in the movement and its relevance, enhancing the importance of their stories of struggle for critical thinking about public education in São Paulo today. The testimonies taken from documentaries that recorded the students' thoughts in the heat of the moment served to identify the motivations for the mobilization, as well as the choices of actions that made up the high school repertoire. The two forms of registration used reveal that the development of the occupation movement resulted in its own complexity and its guidelines, loaded with experiences inside and outside the school environment.

If, on the one hand, politics aim at the education system as another government action to be carried out with and for their peers, students, on the other hand, we see it as a real possibility of changing the conditions of social life, demanding a reform of education not only in the sense of formal education, but of an integral, democratic education, capable of developing humanized citizens.

Notes

1 The use of quotation marks to express the policy in question carries irony in relation to the effects of the political project, disapproved by students and the school community as a whole..

2 The report highlights the size of the reform of the state public education system and presents evidence that the government did not use scientific studies to support the project..

3 From this quote, the speeches of/of the students, identified as interviewed and interviewed and highlighted throughout the text, are unprecedented and are part of the doctoral research entitled High School Autonomous Movement of São Paulo: conflicts, social processes and political formation (Ramos, 2020).

4 Dubet (1994) arrives at the conception of experience as mediation through an empirical study carried out with young people from the urban periphery, in which the subjective character of the experience (representation of the lived world) and the cognitive character of the experience (reflexivity and critical awareness).

5 On authoritarianism in the conduct of the conflict, in addition to episodes of violence involving the military police, at the height of the occupations, a meeting led by Fernando Pádula (today secretary of education at the São Paulo city hall), at the time chief of staff of the then secretary of Education, Herman Voorwald, had his recording leaked and disseminated by the main media (Rossi, 2015), revealing an agreement with regional education leaders to spread false information about the conduct of students in the occupations. The objective was to put the population against the high school movement, but the leak of the audios, with the voice of Pádula talking about "war of information", resulted in the wide disapproval of the government in the conduct of the conflict.

6 On the gender dimension in the occupations of schools in São Paulo and other states: Moresco (2019); Castilho (2018); Leite (2017).

7 A concept widely used by feminist intellectuals and black activists, such as Patricia Hill Collins, Bell Hooks, Angela Davis and Kimberlé Crenshaw to problematize the limitations of white feminism. On the reception of the concept of intersectionality in Brazil, see: Rodrigues, Cristiano. The relevance of the concept of intersectionality for feminist research and practice in Brazil. International Seminar Making Gender. Center for Philosophy and Human Sciences, Communication Center at the *Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Florianopolis*, 2013.

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