

‘One Must not Die to Don’t Kill’: the War Machine

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ABSTRACT – ‘One Must not Die to Don’t Kill’: the *War Machine*. This paper discusses health promotion and the production of ways to work in the present, especially under the scope of public education in times of neoliberal policies’ intensification. The capitalist machine produces illness throughout work processes, nevertheless we assert that something always gets away and overflows, as production norms, setting resistances that operate what we denominate the *war machine*. Throughout the research, carried out with municipal public teachers, we propose the understanding that this machine is built of these resistances, by means of which people create coping mechanisms for work controversies, inventing new life norms and expanding health power in/by the craft.

Keywords: Work. Education. Neoliberalism. Resistance. Health.

RESUMO – ‘É Preciso não Morrer para não Matar’: a *Máquina de Guerra*. Este artigo discute a produção de saúde e de modos de trabalhar no presente, especificamente no campo da educação pública em tempos de acirramento das políticas neoliberais. A máquina capitalista produz processos de adoecimento por entre os processos de trabalho, contudo afirmamos que algo sempre escapa e transborda, enquanto produção de normas, configurando resistências que operam aquilo que chamamos de *máquina de guerra*. Ao longo da pesquisa, realizada com professores da rede pública municipal, propomos entender que tal máquina se constitui dessas resistências, a partir das quais os sujeitos criam estratégias de enfrentamento para as controvérsias do trabalho, inventando novas normas de vida e ampliando a potência de saúde no e pelo ofício.

Palavras-chave: Trabalho. Educação. Neoliberalismo. Resistência. Saúde.

Introduction

For me, it has been very, very difficult, [...] this diminishment [...] because, like, [...] I won't deny it, I felt like the best when I took the exam and passed, because it was contested like the Medicine entrance exam. [...] I joined a network that had studies, [...] European students came to visit us. And then, suddenly, [...] how did this happen? [...] for me it was the last straw, [...] I had to seek therapy to support it. [...] that we have been called bums in the press, by our own manager! [...] That a mother, [...] from a community calls you a graduated whore, ok, okay? OK! It's the vocabulary they use. [...] But the manager! [...] And the harm this is doing to us, to our health, you know. And then [...], every day [...] my mantra is: 'I won't give them this treat, they won't take away the joy I feel from what I do'. You know?! I fight for this every day so that it doesn't get lost! (Teacher Denise)¹.

This paper is settled upon the experience, analysis and dialogue made possible throughout the process of research-intervention carried out with municipal Elementary school teachers. The research sets its theoretical-methodological foundation on the Clinics of Work, mainly the Clinic of Activity of Yves Clot, and the Institutional Analysis based on the precepts of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The articulation between these different pieces of knowledge comes in handy to raise the issue of subjectivity production and health promotion in public education's work context in times of neoliberal policies' intensification.

Based on this theoretical-methodological articulation, we developed a dialogic and cartographic research-intervention. The dialogue enables the crossover of pieces of knowledge and power relations that engenders the activity, as well as the discussion over again about the ways of being and doing in each collective. Regarding the cartography, it unfolds the research into an experimental field, in which researcher and research make one another while researching in the dimension of experience, constituting a mean of intervention as well. The research finds in systematic meetings with teachers its main device, based on which the processes of work and health promotion at the school underwent analysis. These meetings yielded dialogue and analytics about the subjects' experience and activity, concerning their obstacles, processes, and potency.

In the research carried out, we found that the neoliberal mindset's intensification in education has enabled the institution of practices that induce the individualizing logic, bringing along the flexibility, the productivism and the over implication². The consequences for the intertwinement of neoliberal policies in the ways of working in the public education are exceedingly hazardous to the worker's health, leading to misery and often triggering processes of mental and physical sickness.

The research's development took place during the municipal management period, from 2017 to 2020, which sought to align government proposals to neoliberal logic. We observed that this association brought the principles of neoliberal school to public schools, which “[...] assigns a certain model that deems education as an asset essentially private whose value is, above all, economic³” (Laval, 2004, p. XI). The economic agenda based on reducing costs, outsourcing

both teachers' hiring and the projects available to education reinforced policies to dismantle public education, withdrawing rights from public servants and stimulating individualization. Consequently, there was a worsening of the disarticulation among collectives, weakening of relationships, intensification of workload and destitution of collective strength, which destabilized the connection of teachers with their peers, students, and to their work.

We emphasize that many studies in the workers' health area have been developing analyses about how precarious working conditions can be related, as well as discussing the increase of sickness processes and exhaustion at work. That said, this research analyzes the means by which education workers have been adopting coping strategies against constraints to their power to act and to their inventive potential, raising an issue on how workers carry out day-to-day management of their work.

We assume that the reforms promoted in Public Education are part of a political and governmental project that seeks alignment between educational proposals and the neoliberal logic. This alignment does not foresee that the definition of programs and projects should be subject to discussion with teachers, staff, and the school community. Consequently, government policies remain distant from any possibility of dialogue with education workers, exacerbating the hierarchy and bureaucratization of education, thus demobilizing and discouraging the collective groups, that feel disregarded despite their historical journey of struggles, construction, and achievements. Government measures exacerbate individualization by dividing workers, punishing those who oppose the government, making teamwork as difficult as possible and disregarding the history of education in the municipality. Suffering overflowed by indignation, anger, and resentment brings along disarticulation and disintegration among work groups.

In the neoliberal context, we assume that work induce harmful effects on the workers' health, but paradoxically it can also produce an expansion of the power of life and health, as the subjects create ways of living for work. Based on Canguilhem (2009), we understand that health is not in the subjects' ability to adapt to the environment, but rather in their ability to create and institute new norms of life in the face of the infidelities of the environment.

We understand that contemporary work is made up of workers who are increasingly medicalized and, at the same time, overstimulated and over-implicated. In face of this neoliberal capitalist machine, however, another machine uprises: *a war machine* that is made up of resistance, by means of which subjects create coping strategies amidst work controversies, inventing new norms of life through work.

Health and Resistance: *war machine* and work as activity

Professor Denise lets the suffering that comes out of her throat speak like a roar, a shout, a protest. Her voice verbalizes the pain, and that pain becomes an act of resistance! Combat mode! Health movement! Suffering becomes the power of denouncement and creation of

a way of living and surviving among the affections that take place in encounters amid work. "It's necessary to also assert that there is life in suffering as well as there is no rupture with some prevailing kind of life in us without suffering"⁴ (Neves, 2009, p. 782).

The suffering expressed by the Professor sets a rupture with the *suffering/resenting/becoming ill* subjective mood promoted by the neoliberal capitalist machine, which makes "[...] of life a submissive employee and hostage to prescriptions, health programs, averages, and established standards"⁵ (Neves, 2009, p. 782), inducing effects over worker's organism and psyche. Education professionals feel the intensification of neoliberalism in their bodies and are saddened by the disregard and constant oppression upon the history, the journey, and the collective construction of the teaching craft.

The rupture enables to reverberate the radical potential of life, making room for a different mode of subjectivation that germinates from *suffering/creating/acting*. It is about affirming the suffering as "[...] a constitutive process of life in its clashes of reinvention"⁶ (Neves, 2009, p. 782). It is about affirming life in its potential to create, act and resist. Public educators resist. They fight to be acknowledged and recognized in their own history – a collective history of a suffering, mistreated work collective, that regardless acts, seeks and comes up with ways to not leave helpless the population it welcomes and serves, ever relying on few resources and partnerships. The shout echoes, calling for respect and dialogue, resisting the attacks and contempt from government officials and the media.

The education professionals live in a paradox between *suffering/resenting/becoming ill* and *suffering/creating/acting*, transitioning from a subjective mood to another. Sometimes resentful, just reliving what did them harm, they complain and recollect of an education that was once internationally recognized; eventually they also create ways of living and working, creating gaps and way-outs, breaking up with naturalized patterns and becoming agents of their own actions.

The resentment brings along the assignment of value to passivity, it puts another one ever in first place and oneself in second, squishing the instincts of life inside, since they cannot be expelled out, unloaded by means of action. According to Nietzsche (1998), resentment is born from a slaved moral, "[...] while every moral is born from a triumphant Yes to itself, since the beginning the slaved moral says No to an 'outsider', an 'another', a 'not-self' – and this No is its creating act. This inversion of views is that set values [...] it is something from resentment itself [...] its action is deeply reaction"⁷ (Nietzsche, 199, p. 28-29).

The action, the creation, the "Yes" to oneself come first, being institutive, moving, unheard of. The reaction, the resentment, the "No" to not-self are secondary, reactive powers that intend to be instituted, naturalized, and take over control. The subjectivation mode that takes the suffering in its resentment dimension sickens because it immobilizes the strengths of living, oppressing the creative potential and pre-

venting the willpower from acting. The vital normativity of the living being is limited, leading the subject to live across lower standards of life, with little power of expansion, leading them to become ill.

The neoliberal rationality, intertwined in public education, becomes imperious, disarticulating groups and weakening individuals. Based on the speech report of teachers throughout the research, we came to notice feelings such as fear, anger, indignation, sorrow that provoke lack of motivation and often trigger sickening processes. In a paradox, these feelings also set breaking points, poke a hole, dig a gap and transmute the daily misery into an act of resistance.

The rupture with the ruling subjective mode is urgent and emerges from the smallest acts, in small doses and micromovements that grow shaped as resistance, as creative act, as expansion of life and health. Not even the capitalist machine's whole device can take the pleasure of teaching away from educators, the satisfaction of checking up on their progress, the joy of being with their peers, the relief from solving tough situations on a daily basis: "*I won't give them this treat, they won't take away the joy I feel from what I do*". We emphasize, nonetheless, that this very joy and pleasure can, in a paradoxical way, aid to sustain the exploitation on the behalf of the maintenance of a sickening system⁸. The affections become experienced and provide an escape from the institutionalized means of control. It is like it goes in the Brazilian song by Chico Buarque (1978):

[...] Despite of you
Tomorrow is to be
Another day
Imma still gonn' see
The garden flourishing
As you want not [...] ⁹

In this song composed during the military dictatorship, Chico Buarque (1978) brings to the table the power of life that does not surrender, producing gaps and escapes to the ties established. Despite the sorrow and oppression, the suffering becomes resistance, either in the macro or micropolitical way. It is through the macropolitical way though, by the lines of escape and through the interstices of power that the resistance is powered up and able to become *war machine*.

The concept of war machine was wrought by Deleuze e Guattari (2012) no in *Nomadology*, in which the authors state that the war machine "[...] is irreducible to the State device, external to its sovereignty, prior to its rights: it comes from elsewhere [...] it would rather be like pure and measureless multiplicity, the maltha, irruption of the ephemeral and power for the metamorphosis¹⁰" (Deleuze; Guattari, 2012, p. 13).

According to the authors, it must be understood that the sedentary, institutionalized, hard forces of the State have won and continued to capture the active, nomadic, and deterritorialized forces, but this does not mean that the latter died or disappeared. On the contrary, the forces are always in a duel, the superior and inferior, the reac-

tive and active forces. The State fears the warrior and tries to subject him to its law, aiming to impose a certain control over him; however, the warrior does not obey anyone, he asserts himself in defense of his way of life, he takes the "[...] becoming as a true 'destiny' for his uncertain existence¹¹" (Schöpke, 2012, p. 170).

The war machine is primary, prior to the capitalist machine, produced in between the resistances, not surrendered to the power of the State and dwelling in the heterogeneity, the multiplicity, the ephemeral. It moves between lines of escape, events of becoming, creations ever unheard of. The neoliberal capitalist machine is produced by the power that seeks to capture events, inventions, and resistance. We emphasize that the machines dwell in us, crossing us over and moving us, they are not in binary opposition, not representing the war of good against evil, given that they are in mutual engendering, coexistence and continuous tension, producing unceasing modulations on our experiences and ways of subjectivation.

The *war machine* is no other than that opposed to the neoliberal capitalist machine, composing it, refusing it, slowing it down, confusing it, not dismantling but inducing momentary destabilization. In a paradoxical way, this machine is macro and micropolitical, resisting the capitalist machine in different dimensions. The resistance takes place by widening the teachers' action power by means of activity, experience and daily normativity that invents itself through small gestures and movements that swing between lines of escape and institutive moves, provoking microcracks in the school walls, in the neoliberal machinery and in the work processes involving activity.

In this paper we sustain that the education workers' health power increases as resistance finds ways to interrogate and raise issues upon work as an activity, enhancing normativity through work. Thus, we take the concept of activity from the readings of Schwartz (2011) and Clot (2010), authors in the Clinics of Work field, who support the idea of activity as a micromanagement of the daily variability of work, as (re)creation of means to live through and at work. The activity is to always do things differently, as it presupposes incessant re-normalization of work by the workers themselves (Schwartz, 2011). According to Clot (2010), the activity is what you do, what you don't do, what you stop from doing, what you refuse to do, what you abandon, what you want to but can't or won't do and even what you do so you don't have to do what you must.

With regards to the resistance, we understand it as a potential raising of issues for creation (Deleuze, 1987; Foucault, 1999; Clot, 2010), i.e., potential for inquiry over the human activity in work context and invention of new forms of life through work. The resistance is oriented by strategy and struggle (Foucault, 2010), but also oriented as by creation of life as a work of art (Deleuze, 1987). The health and the resistance dwell the powers of inventiveness and update on acts of creation for standards, worlds, problems, way-outs, gaps, paths, and means of coping the neoliberal capitalist machine. Being normative

implies the creation of new ways of existing, and the creative act is, at the same time, an act of resistance (Deleuze, 1987).

By understanding that resistance speaks of the power of collective issues-raising and creation, it becomes an ethical, aesthetic, and political act, constituting a mean of expanding workers' health power, at a time of individualization policies' intensification. Therefore, it is important to give visibility to the resistance endured by the activity of subjects and collectives in work situations. Resistance that is connected to the forces of an act of becoming, forces of creation and desire, active forces of strategy and struggle. Resistance that is given by the experience of life and by life.

To resist through activity

[...] I think that the traditional structure of the school, you know, it traps you [...] in these walls, which are symbolic, but they are very concrete, you know, in the sense that 'enough with this! Now you have to take care of this here!', right? And how oppressed we feel sometimes, because we are being charged by a structure that demands this and that from us. And how much we have to realize, how much we also do this in a way, you know, to our students, and then, sometimes you realize and say: 'what did I do? I killed the guy!' [...], 'ah, I killed the guy!' [...], 'how do I bring him back now? I killed the guy!', right?! And then you're thinking: 'guys, no!'. So I need to not die, to not kill, right?! (Teacher Ângela, 2019).

Teacher Ângela's speech brings to the table the analysis of inherent risk to the teaching craft, the risk of letting oneself get killed by the work process, of letting oneself die due to the oppression of the system or of making others die as a result of one's own subjective death. The risk of death, which lurks and stalks the school, is produced by the subjective flattening, the suffocation of inventiveness, the lack of openness to what deviates and produces resistance.

However, the same lines bring with it the incessant production of resistance movements to what limits, what oppresses, what flattens, what tries to make people die and kill. This resistance is not always visible, not always recognized as something that produces rupture or opens new paths, but it is productive of life and health in work contexts. What is considered non-formal for education carries within it the potential of what is not expected, what is unheard of, what surprises. The teaching craft conveys the agonistic of an activity that is subjectively heavy and difficult, and at the same time light and informal, which sustains the conflicting complexity of the activity.

Even by the conflict in which their activity puts them, the subject does not remain 'passive'. The psychic mobilization is not to be found interdicted. More properly, it is possible to sustain that their 'craft' is revealed in their capacity to stand against adversity, in the attempt to escape what puts them away. It checks out the reassurance of their competence and simultaneously of their dignity – when it self-assures – against what rounds it, feeding on the coercion of the environment, aiming to avoid subdue to them¹² (Clot, 2010, p. 104-105).

It is our understanding that the resistance is of the order of activity, insofar as the activity involves an incompleteness, a resistance typical to the work experience. The unfinished activity carries the potential of the act of becoming, the power of issue-raising and the power of creation through and at work. We therefore reaffirm the ethical-political dimension of resistance. According to Schwartz (2011), no work has ever been able to capture the entire mystery of the productive gesture, as the activity places the subject in an active position in the face of the infidelities of the environment, displacing him from the passive position in the face of the oppression suffered by the processes and the work organization.

The activity takes place by intangible gestures, in between heard of and unheard-of experiences, made-up normativity processes established by subjects in the making of their actions. The ethical dimension takes place in this process of creating ways to act through activity, a process that is ever designed by its unfinished status and implies over the subject displacement, normativity, creation of self through the work, a self that presupposes a relation to others, to the world, to the history of a work collective.

The political dimension of resistance is self-assured by the collective strength that composes activity – which cannot be produced individually or solo, but rather in between the debate of norms sustained in the history of teaching craft, in the sociocultural history it is on, in the history of workers that invent and reinvent their making on a daily basis. The activity presupposes a relation of “[...] construction, on average, of a world where the subject can live the experience of reality upon what they have as unknown and unexpected¹³” (Clot, 2013, p. 201). Based on its normativity, the activity is a collective-historic exercise of the craft, that surpasses the individual and implies the production of political action.

There is a tension between the forces at stake, forces of life and death, of insane productivity and health promotion, of inventiveness and capture. These forces are not ambivalent nor mutually exclusive, but rather immanent to activity and experience. Forces in combat, in composition, in agonistic. To understand the procedure of these forces, their paths and risks, prevents us from escaping, for we must fight what oppresses us, in order to give it a way to what broadens life and health, under a constant process. The power of health is expanded by the processes of resistance that emerge through activity, which makes people live and is invented through acting at work.

The neoliberal public school belongs to this game of power that produces subjective death by flattening and modulating subjectivities, at the same time that stimulates inventiveness and creativity aiming to frame and capture the productions born from the ways of being syntonetic to the neoliberal rationality. However, the invention and creation of other ways of being and living in this space take place along lines of flight, which may or may not be captured by the system. The neoliberal public school makes up the neoliberal capitalist machine,

which produces flattening, modulation, and capture of the production of subjectivity in the contemporary world, whilst it is transversalized and composed of *war machines* that provide resistance and escapes.

The agonistic between the government of conduct (ethics of capitalist machine) and the govern of oneself (ethics of the subject) is made daily in between the “*not die to not kill*”. In this context of attempts of capture by the neoliberal capitalist machine it becomes urgent to give the resistance and the daily creations some visibility, in order to not let die by the small gestures and great processes of everyday *madness*, as well as not suffocate micro and macroprocesses of creation and inventiveness. To not die and avoid the other’s death, one must resist what reduces our power, to what limits our health, what sucks our vital energy. It is urgent and mandatory to shed light over what to what derives, what deviates and what does not surrender, i.e., to the ways of resisting and creating amid what tries to submit and capture.

To Resist through Work Well Done

[...] it's a charge from outside, it's also a lack of support, so it's [...] very difficult. [...]. But it's complicated, you're constantly questioning yourself, we don't rest, the teacher's brain is always working, because you never know what scolding you're going to get tomorrow. Today you say ‘ah, I solved that here’, tomorrow there will always be a bigger scolding. [...] You know that what you do is not enough, [...] so the phrase that defines it is: “we die at sea, we swim and die on the beach”, that is my definition, ‘we always fall at the last hurdle’. I said, ‘Now I’ve solved it, everything went well, that’s great!’ The next day there’s a worse case, there’s always a worse case, there’s always a worse case, every day it’s like this! (Teacher Mônica, 2019).

I think we do a lot, [...] my phrase is that other one ‘we do everything!’, I always say that. Every day I say: ‘today we are going to do everything!’ And we do, we do a lot, but there are always things, [...] and is it tiring? IT IS! [...] That’s this, when we are honest, with ourselves, when we say like this, look, ‘I’m going to do my job!’ You do it well! If you’ve reached that point, that’s great, if you haven’t reached it [...] that’s great too. There are days when you will take just one step, there are days when you will walk a marathon, but that’s it, we managed to do it that day [...] doing our best, that’s it, you know? Because if we charge ourselves about what has to be done every day, and we can’t do it, we can’t do it, we get sick (Teacher Valentina, 2019).

The dialogue between teachers and researchers arises the controversies of *work well done*, which sets up to each teacher what is that they conceive as a work of quality. The *work well done* refers to the collective work developed through conflict management, the act of facing the reality of work and the collective work experience, according to which the quality is not centered in the achievement of goals but rather woven by the debate among those who work, concerning the controversies of action (Clot, 2009). The *work well done*, as it is understood, refers to the resistance reassured on the normativity experienced by workers on the management of their daily work activity.

It is while the work is done that the controversy must be institutionalized to operate decisions concerning its development. The denial of this controversy does not prevent the task to be executed, but can ruin

the quality of work (Clot, 2009). The route to promote health through and at work is not by conformism, but on the contrary, it is on the development and widening of the individual and collective power to act upon the activity at stake, enabling the creation of means and norms in and through work, creation of contexts for living (Clot, 2009).

To react to the real and subjective hazards of work, trying to go beyond limits that are not predictable from the outside, means transforming work dilemmas, enhancing the essential competence of workers. The quality of work is not part of what is prescribed, but it is part of the experience, belongs to what is experienced in and through the activity. Clot (2009) questions whether it is possible to work without taking risks. In addition, we question whether it is possible to work without facing risks, since these risks enhance the workers' health. Facing the risks that the activity entails is about opening oneself up to the experiences that arise in each new situation, going beyond the limits of what is established and what is known, taking risks, despite setbacks and infidelities of the environment.

The teachers assume risks daily by inventing and creating different ways to carry out their work. Sometimes, they are unsatisfied with the immediate result, but often are surprised with the actual results that can only be felt if looked at from another perspective or after certain time. The risk of not knowing is taken daily by educators: not knowing if the proposal is going to work out, whether the students will like it or not, will they play along, will they learn, whether they are going to refuse it, if the very teacher is going to be pleased about what-ever happened.

To resist through the *work well done* is about ethical potential of acting, which involves normativity in activity, the refusal to heteronormativity and default predetermination. It does not deal with what is established and naturalized as a work of quality but is rather about taking to oneself the action over their own work, inventing, and normalizing their activity in their own acting.

The controversies about the *work well done* compose the dialogues of Teachers Mônica and Valentina: “*we always fall at the last hurdle*”, “*we do everything*”. The paradox between real work and the reality of work, the tasks fulfilment and the activity that takes place in between the making of work, modulating the teaching experience between nothing and everything, balancing little and much.

This paradox evokes the power of resistance settled between nothing and everything. “Nothing”, reflected on Teacher Mônica’s speech, reports the limitations of a making that is constantly demanding more workload and overdoing, preventing the action through this making (it seems to do nothing, since there is so much to do). “Everything, expressed by Teacher Valentina, is not about a non-reflected making, but rather a criticism about a way of working that ever demands the most from the worker, making it hard to they recognize their limitations.

“Everything” and “nothing” dwell the paradox activated between over implied action and inherent resistance while acting through work. “Everything” and “nothing” convey in each the unfulfilled possibilities, that may be lived and understood in their potential to ever become, in their latent possibility, in their negativity, their needing, their lack for what is yet unaccomplished. One experience does not rule out another since they compose the same level of affectations.

What is assessed by teachers as not *well done* is primarily based on the difficulties for developing a task that they set to carry out with students, whether due to the disorganization of a student or the class as a whole, due to lack of interest of the class, due to difficulties in understanding the task, among other reasons. “Students don’t want to learn, they don’t bring materials, they get to class and don’t even open their notebooks”; “We feel helpless, frustrated, and anxious”; “We want everything to work out and it’s not happening!”; “We get irritated, tired, we get headaches, backaches, stomachaches... We go completely off the diet, because we get anxious, we eat too much, then we gain weight, we get even more anxious because we can’t lose weight [...]. When you get home, you fight with your husband, with your children, and raid the refrigerator”.

To look at the *work well done*, what happened, what was interesting and what was produced seems overshadowed by what was not accomplished. “We don’t value the 20 students we can assist, only those we can’t access”; “We put more emphasis on cases of failure, and we fail to see successes”; “We need everyone’s collaboration, we need everyone’s help to make the situation a little better, we won’t be able to handle everything”; “We need to lend a hand [...]. Help each other.” The reports, listened to at different moments of the research, bring up some arising controversies in the teaching craft in between what one needs to do and cannot achieve and what one does and yet does not recognize that does.

Based on the studies of Danielle Ruelland and Jean-Luc Roger with secondary teachers in France, Clot (2009) states that it was identified that the quality of teaching work is settled upon a paradoxical and complex relation that is set between goals to be achieved and the propelling motivation for the *métier*’s realization. The unsettlement is placed between students’ learning and the reiterative need to stablish control over discipline at the classroom. This finding leads to reflection upon the present tensioning in the everyday-life teaching craft, as Teacher Cátia (2019) presents:

Before entering the classroom, in some classes, I think ‘how many fights am I going to have to break up?’, [...] sometimes I’m not even thinking about the class I’m going to teach [...], I I’m thinking ‘if so-and-so comes, I’ll have to split’. [...] it starts to give me chills in my stomach, because the situation isn’t very good and what am I going to be able to do? I just wish I could teach, not shout, and not break up fights. So, sometimes I’m not even thinking about content, but whatever I get from content is profit.

Cátia explicitly addresses the ache of losing meaning from the work’s content, which devitalizes the action, making it difficult or pre-

venting it the set of valid goals (Clot, 2009). The occupation's dilemma begs the question about the quality of work, while the teaching craft is insistently put to the test. Teachers drain their energy trying to maintain, at any cost, their students' discipline and, as a consequence, the quality of their work. This exhaustion is felt in these professionals' body, who find it difficult to discuss the quality criteria of teaching beyond the control of the discipline and basic education indexes.

In Brazil, the quality of Elementary Education is measured by Basic Education Development Indexes, which judge results and establish identical goals for the entire national territory, without considering specificities and differences between schools and regions. The recognition is guided by numbers and not by reality, by indexes and not by local difficulties. Teachers find themselves in a conflict between what students really need and what must be done to increase the learning rate of their class.

Presently, resistance is kept for the acknowledgement of the craft itself, which is produced at and by the collective, by recognizing oneself in another. The dialogical meeting between teachers and researchers is made up in an analytical space about the quality of work through the controversies of what is to be understood as "*work well done*", shedding light on micromovements, informalities, to what is produced on the long run.

What is considered to be "little" by the teachers reflects the solitude induced by the difficulty of being self-recognized in history, in the gestures and words of a collective patrimony, which brings along success, failure, memories, but also "[...] 'little things' in which prevail the unfulfilled and that to be fulfilled in nourishment¹⁴" (Clot, 2010, p. 286). This collective history is something that may be erased and become a burden with regards to the development of prescriptive tasks. We perceived throughout the research how much the work organization settled upon neoliberal mindset is devoted to erase or silence this history so that it may become individualized, personalized, and out of context instead.

The resistance of teachers is at endorsing and ensuring the transmission of this collective history through teachers' daily analysis "[...] that it remains as a proper means to work and deserves to be maintained¹⁵" (Clot, 2010, p. 286). This assessment takes place daily through the exchange, the encounter, the dialogue between teachers, when they are able to put under analysis their work gestures. It matters to assert that this assessment can be carried out in formal environments of meeting, but also can take place inside school corridors, in the teachers' lounge, the library, the coffee break, at lunch outside school, at the happy hour among peers.

We understand that one of the means by which resistance is asserted in its political dimension of questioning the ways of working happens through complaints. We propose to understand the complaint as a gesture of teaching work, which is repeated and remade at each meeting. It is part of the teaching act, the memory of the craft

that is told regarding the difficulties and impossibilities of carrying out prescribed tasks. This discussion is part of the dialogue about how teaching is constituted beyond what is taught at training and universities, beyond what is expected from the results of this making and including the entire web of unforeseen events and obstacles that turn the teaching act arduous. It is precisely in what is done between these impediments and crossings, through what is roughly called “tact”, that the teaching act is constituted.

The mode of subjectivation suffer/resent/become ill is often updated and powered up by the complaint that takes over in teacher’s speech, about everything that hardens, hinders, or prevents the development of *work well done*. However, in a paradoxical way, due to its denouncement strength, the complaint may expose the continuous attacks to the collective of work, acting as movement of issue-raising and questioning in face of the work’s *maddening* organization and processes. The shared complaint may constitute a way to counter the attacks against the craft, opposing the individualizing processes of work, precisely by operating a collective discussion on the ways of working at public school.

To share what you do when everything supposedly “goes wrong”, to share experiences that occur amidst obstacles and difficulties, to talk about the frustrations and anguish of not being able to do what needs to be done, i.e., resuming the collective in individual activities, it all may expand the power of action. This is because, according to Clot (2009), the invention of ways of acting is produced with patience, repetition, improvisation, and flexibility, which constitute the craft’s gesture. This daily creation of ways of being a teacher repeats the gestures of a collectively wrought craft and, through this repetition, one is able to invent new gestures, which requires sharing to strengthen and feed the collective history.

To Resist, Disobey, and Create Way-outs

To disobey is to rescue the indignation, to assume the inconformity and fight for the constant restlessness. “To disobey is a statement of humanity¹⁶” (Gros, 2018, p. 17), by reconnecting ourselves with the average, the world, and the need for denaturalization and denormalization of things. To disobey is a political act by reassuring oneself as a stance before life and the world, which involves more than oneself, an ethical and political self, sustained in the creation and construction of a collective.

The political *self* is the ability of critical thinking, which enables us to refuse consensus, conformism, naturalizations, pre-established ideas, questioning politics and the way of things in the world. However, the political *self* is worthless, “[...] if it is not supported by a collective, if it is not articulated through joint action [...]” (Gros, 2018, p. 17). Alone in their individuality and framed by the rules of the disciplinary game, the socialized individual is unable to keep, sustain, or articulate forms of disobedience, as they end up being captured by the

chains of normalization, which label them as undisciplined, dangerous, delinquent, aggressive, "crazy", abnormal, or any other adjectives that label them as deviant from the system. Isn't being deviant what allows us to question the rules and to also be normative?

We state that disobedience keeps the craft living, to the extent that it maintains its power of inventing and posing problems in and by the collective. Being deviant, from the craft's viewpoint, implies taking risks of not following the formalized and established rules, to invent norms that increase the power of living through work. Based on collective history, it involves creating other ways of working, challenging what is established and already invented.

Since we are unruly by nature, even involuntarily we resist constantly to the different kinds of surrender. Revolt, rebellion, and different forms of resistance to submission do not always foresee rupture or armed uprising, but rather constitute ways of micropolitically resisting the macrostructure of the established social machines. Micropolitically, we produce different means of resisting and deviating through our craft, whenever we question, problematize, and do not comply strictly to established and imposed norms, we stylize our actions, inventing ways of doing or not doing, transforming, or slightly obeying, moving against what we are commanded.

From the craft's viewpoint, resistance movements are made up of micropolitical movements: "No one knows what happens from inside the classroom door". This recurring speech in education talks about normativity and daily disobedience that escape the managers' control. Teachers disobey what is imposed on them, doing it so through activity, as they stylize their daily actions and create unique ways of acting in and through work. Through activity, they invent gestures, create means, open paths, which circumvent, contradict, and undo some ways of acting expected by the institutional machinery.

To disobey or slightly obey, to question, to doubt, to denaturalize, to be surprised by what is given, to listen to other's indignation, to become uncomfortable, to look at what bothers you, to pay attention, to take breaks and create gaps are small movements of resistance that make up the activity but are generally subsumed into everyday life and work.

Resistance is done through micromovements, by recognizing small-large daily movements. The issue of the size and grandeur of the work is much more due to the affectation it causes on each person (teacher, student, father, mother, technician) than the immediate result. The teaching staff work up on their job. They transform, act, invent. But they don't always realize what they are doing and how much is being done.

Teaching is work whose results are not always quantifiable, which often makes the work seem ineffective and meaningless, both for students and teachers. Besides, as it is intellectual and subjective work, it becomes almost impossible to assess what will be meaningful to students or not, what will involve formal or informal learning, what will involve affection and experience. Realizing that their work does not end in the classroom, that it reverberates in the lives of students

and in their own, helps professionals to shift the focus from established problems to modulating their daily experiences.

The restoration of the collective is resistance when professionals are given the opportunity to talk to each other about their work, their actions, and interventions. Through dialogue, they share activity gestures, experiences built in and through the exercise of their activity, anxieties, difficulties, what didn't work, what did work, abandoned desires and the like. The collective history is restored to the extent that the other becomes a craft's interlocutor, whom pain, struggles, achievements, and losses can be shared with. By means of a generic posture of the craft, the recognition of oneself by the self and by others is possible as long as the possibility of dialogue endures.

Resistance emerges through the obstacles placed by the public education's administration. Despite all obstacles, education professionals look for different ways to put into action what they believe in and want. The teachers' commitment to doing something beyond their obligation points out to Schwartz's (2011) statement that the simplification of work is not what improves workers' health, but on the contrary it is the complexification of the activity carried out on the basilar debate of values between workers and their craft that allows the activity's transformation, expanding the power of health in and through work. The complexity of the activity implies normativity that is possible by facing adversity, challenges, gratification, achievements, and defeats, which encourage the workers to seek alternatives to what they do. It differs, therefore, from the incentive to productivity and creativity promoted and defended by the capitalist machine.

The necessity to step away from the obvious and the establishment makes teachers seek partnerships with their colleagues, sharing and inventing unforeseen activities for their functions and not mandatory for the students' curriculum. Activities outside the norm and therefore normative in essence. The creation of gaps also occurs in between everyday actions. What is not formalized becomes an opening, possible means amidst the imposed impossibilities. Amidst disobedience and insubordination, teachers create gaps and way-outs, reaffirming the craft as a *war machine* that operates amidst norms and resistance, which expand the power of life and health in and through work.

Final Remarks

During the research, the teachers had their hopes up on the perspective of the meetings and, by means of their speech and views, they realized their own misery in the suffering of others, saw their craft reflect on other's activity, shared ache, joy, failure, and accomplishments, collectively. The meetings had the daily activity fed, being percussion to the coping of what makes one suffer, gathering a network of small common fractures and counterpoint for solitude.

Spaces where the collective dialogue is possible (as a formal, informal, momentary, regular, broad, or constrained space) between workers are important collective tools for activity analysis. This is so

because the dialogue can take place as a collective tool that establishes disruptive processes on the individualization present in the ways of working on education. This rupture passes through the acknowledgment of the self on the other and vice-versa, passing by the view of the self through the other’s activity, it surpasses view that the collective transversalizes of every and each one of all, flowing through the perception that affections and affectations implied on the everyday acting are not private, but belong to all that share and create ways of acting on and at work.

That said, we affirm that, through unfinished dialogical encounters, the craft became a health operator, as it was taken by workers as a means of acting in and through work. The craft retaken, revisited, and relaunched into the forces of action and analysis of the subjects enhanced their capacity to create norms for living at work, that is, it expanded the health power of workers.

The resistance grew powerful as the professionals brought to the table the controversies about the activity and daily intentions to create ways of living through and at the work. Invisible, the resistances often allow themselves to be captured in somewhat subtle and abstract features. Made-up gestures, unspoken utterances, interrupted movements, affections only seemingly unconsidered, but lived vividly in between the acting of subjects. Resistance is the active force of strategy and opposition to the power relations, which is affirmed by the act of creation of ways of being, existing and acting that are not to be conformed, but rather reassured by the living: “the act of resistance is not a work of art, but it’s part of it. The work of art is not an act of resistance, but in a certain way it is¹⁸” (Deleuze, 1987, s/p).

To resist is to create, in the same way that creating is resisting. It can be a speech act, a shout, a voice, a gesture, that can be made by the acting through activity. The act of resistance is an ethical, aesthetic, and political one. The life is put on the line at work, as it is by facing their activity and others’, the craft’s history, the desire, the deterrent, the resistance, and the struggles that the subject lives the work experience.

We reaffirm that this resistance dwells the ethical-aesthetic-political dimension, updating in between the collective acts of creation and by raising issues to the human activity in work context, powering up the widening of worker’s health in middle of the execution of their craft. The resistance sustains the *war machine* operation amidst the daily work processes, producing openings, cracks, deviations, gaps, and normativity that affront and destabilize the neoliberal capital machine.

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Notes

¹ This paper is a byproduct from PhD research, carried out with the teaching team of an Elementary School located at Porto Alegre/RS. The research was approved by the

Research Ethics Committee and followed the authorization flow via Free and Informed Consent Form's signature, counting on CNPq sponsorship. The excerpt above is part of the interviews, recorded and transcribed by the researchers. In the transcriptions, the option was to record the interviewee's speech with their own marks of expression, with traces of orality, just adjusting the punctuation to try and bring the participant's speech flow. The names used in the article are fictitious, in order to preserve the participants' identity.

- ² The over implication is a concept wrought by Lourau (1995), defined by the difficult or unfeasibility to make the implication undergo analysis; it draws nearer the concept of devitalization by Clot (2006), which highlights the emptying of meaning in the activity due to the difficulty for the subject to recognize himself individually or collectively in his action.
- ³ Freely translated from the original: "[...] designa um certo modelo escolar que considera a educação como um bem essencialmente privado e cujo valor é, antes de tudo, econômico"
- ⁴ Freely translated from the original: "É preciso também afirmar que há vida no sofrimento, e que não há ruptura com um tipo de vida dominante em nós sem sofrimento"
- ⁵ Freely translated from the original: "[...] a vida uma funcionária-submissa e refém de prescrições, programas de saúde, médias e padrões instituídos".
- ⁶ Freely translated from the original: "[...] processo constitutivo da vida em seus embates de reinvenção".
- ⁷ Freely translated from the original: "[...] enquanto toda moral nobre nasce de um triunfante Sim a si mesma, já de início a moral escrava diz Não a um 'fora', um 'outro', um 'não-eu' – e este Não é seu ato criador. Esta inversão de olhares que estabelece valores [...] é algo próprio do ressentimento [...] sua ação é no fundo reação". Quotation marks by the author.
- ⁸ Queremos destacar aqui que as táticas de exploração do sofrimento no trabalho são muitas e antigas (Le Guillant, 1984; Dejours, 1987), por vezes, inclusive, sendo acompanhadas de sensação de prazer e satisfação. Cabe discutir a respeito do estatuto das estratégias empregadas pelas pessoas no trabalho, tendo em vista que seus esforços podem estar sustentando o ideário do pró-ativo e autoempreendedor, auxiliando com isso na manutenção de condições e de organização nocivas ao trabalho.
- ⁹ Freely translated from the original: "[...] Apesar de você/Amanhã há de ser/Outro dia/Inda pago pra ver/O jardim florescer/Qual você não queria [...]"
- ¹⁰ Freely translated from the original: "[...] é irredutível ao aparelho de Estado, exterior a sua soberania, anterior a seu direito: ela vem de outra parte. [...]. Seria antes como a multiplicidade pura e sem medida, a malta, irrupção do efêmero e potência da metamorfose".
- ¹¹ Freely translated from the original: "[...] devir como verdadeiro 'destino' para sua existência incerta". Quotation marks from the author.
- ¹² Freely translated from the original: "Até pelo conflito no qual sua atividade o coloca, o sujeito não permanece 'passivo'. A mobilização psíquica não se encontra interdita. Melhor, é possível sustentar que seu 'ofício' se revela na sua capacidade de lutar contra a adversidade, na tentativa de escapar ao que o deixa confinado. Verifica-se a afirmação de sua competência e, ao mesmo tempo, de sua dignidade – quando ela se afirma – contra o que o rodeia, servindo-se das coerções do meio, a fim de evitar de submeter-se a elas". Quotation marks by the author.

- ¹³ Freely translated from the original: “[...] construção, no comum, de um mundo em que o sujeito pode viver a experiência do real naquilo que ele tem de desconhecido e inesperado”
- ¹⁴ Freely translated from the original: “[...] ‘pequenezas’ em que insistem o não realizado e o realizável em gestação”. Quotation marks by the author.
- ¹⁵ Freely translated from the original: “[...] de que ela continua sendo um meio apropriado para trabalhar e merece ser mantida”
- ¹⁶ Freely translated from the original: “Desobedecer é uma declaração de humanidade”.
- ¹⁷ Freely translated from the original: “[...] se não for sustentado por um coletivo, se não se articular sobre uma ação de conjunto [...]”
- ¹⁸ Freely translated from the original: “O ato de resistência não é obra de arte, mas faz parte dela. A obra de arte não é ato de resistência, mas de uma certa maneira ela o é”.

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