

## Resonances between Life and Education

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**Abstract:** Brazilian students occupied their own schools as a huge protest in response to the state's plan that intended to close 94 public schools. Their response to the announcement was immediate and on Nov./15, a handful of students decided to occupy a school in the metropolitan area of São Paulo. Within a week, nearly 100 schools had been occupied, and, a week later, 200.

They were directed influenced by the movement of Chilean's students that happened during 2006, known as "La rebelión pinguina". They also followed the flow of the 2013's protesters demanding reductions in public transportation fares as of the protests against evictions intended to clear the way for stadium construction of the 2014 World Cup.

The school's occupation enjoyed broad support from parents, neighbors, teachers and the wider community, although it had faced tough resistance from the state government by the violent action of military police — the same treatment all the other social movements received.

The idea of this paper is to use clinical listening as a mode to access forces and lines, functioning as critics and as lines of flight on the realm of public education. The clinical listening is operated as non-moral and non-hierarchical domain, setting a state of listening able to capture vibrations that can resonates as interfere on the production of different modes of education and life.

Besides, the analysis of the student's occupations seem to have points of connection with some listening groups of students of public schools in Brazil. These groups took place in other context, but they seem to resonate common issues with the occupation movement and trace relations of closeness with the proposal of singular educational processes.

**Key words:** state of listening, resonance and singular educational processes.

### 1. Introduction

This paper intends to place, in a relation of resonance, two events that occurred in different places, but seem to retain adjacencies and trace a common horizon of vindication. The common ground for these two different experiences is the understanding of the practice of clinical listening as a mode of access to intensities by means of resonance.

### 2. Resonance as a Mode of Perception

The idea of resonance refers to a way of affecting and being affected that affirms the intensive power of the

state of listening. The French philosopher Jean Luc-Nancy elaborates on this question in a beautiful essay called “Listening”, published in 2002. In it, the state of listening is approached as an intensive operation of hearing, just as the act of seeing intensifies the gaze, groping, the touch, smelling, the scent and, tasting, the savor.

It seems important to consider the state of listening as it engenders a perceptive field that understands the “self” as an effect of what resonates from within it. Thus, appearing to be a strategic operator when intending to function in a field where the concept of the subject seems to be dislocated or inappropriate, in favor of the establishment of relations of proximity/distance and the accompaniment of fluxes and forces.

So, the idea of resonance works as a way of embodying matters that are not only (or simply) connected by comprehension or understanding, therefore functioning as an interpretation of reality. In other words, to be in the state of listening is to be subject to events — a relation of exposure that may unfold into vital positioning that differs from hegemonic postures, tracing a differential and counter-hegemonic subjectivation process that is, therefore, simultaneously, clinical and political.

To place one’s self in the state of listening then means to perceive taking part in a play of forces and to give consistency to that which resonates and communicates through vibration, and not necessarily by sense. In this way, it is by resonance that something from the discourse of another activates an experience in the body of who hears.

This way of operating evokes the potential of the unconscious as a mode of production, because it does not occur in relations of cause-effect, but unfolds through connections without a necessary bond, that is, not connected *a priori* to anything or following a pre-established logic, invoking a field of vibrations and affects.

### 3. Methodology and Developments

After this quick introduction to activate the domain of listening in its intensive mode, it is possible to place in a relation of resonance, in a kind of *zigzag*, two events that occurred in different contexts: the mobilization of the secondary school students of São Paulo, in two different moments, and the proposal of listening groups of resident students in one of its neighboring states, Minas Gerais. The idea of *zigzag* is used, by Deleuze, as a mode to connect singularities as non-linear, unpredictable and undisciplined produced. In other words, connections made by resonance.

In the end of 2015, the Department of Education of the State of São Paulo, the richest state in the country, presented an austerity measure for public schools in a way very similar to what happened in Italy and England in the past few years. Named “scholastic reorganization”, the state government’s proposal was to transform schools into units that would attend to only one of the school cycles — initial grades or final grades, which would restrict the contact/relation between students to children and adolescents of a same age group. This measure would also separate groups of siblings, causing great inconvenience for parents/guardians that work all day. Beyond that, the scholastic reorganization foresaw the shutting down of some classrooms and schools. A conflicting realization given the already exceeding amount of students per classroom, which has proven to be a hampering factor to learning, in addition to being exhausting to both teachers and students. It is noteworthy that nobody from the school’s communities (students, teachers, principals, parents/guardians, specialists) was consulted during the process.

According to the Department of Education, the reorganization is justified by the birth rate drop in the State, joined by a natural decrease in new enrollments in schools. However, different specialists claim that this decrease in enrollments is due to low investments in public education, reinforced by the increase of enrollment fees in

private schools. Beyond this argument, it may not be simple coincidence that one of the oldest schools of the State, located at an immense lot in a middle-class neighborhood, should be among the schools to be closed. This fact suggests that the interest of the government is not limited to educational issues.

After the largest teacher strike ever to occur in the State of São Paulo, which lasted for three months, and failing to achieve any of its demands for wage increase, better working conditions and discussion regarding the scholastic reorganization, it was time for the students to stand up against the State's authoritarian measure. In an unprecedented gesture in the Brazilian context, they occupied state schools and faced the Military Police, which was mobilized immediately by the state in an attempt to silence them.

It is important to say that the gesture made by the students resonates a broader movement of the retaking of the streets that gains mass since 2013 in Brazil. During the same year, the revocation of the increase in bus fare demanded by the Movimento Passe Livre (Free Pass Movement) worked as a recovery device for bodily potential of mobilization and interference in the social process, and a certain street-desire began to spread though the country. Reclaiming the streets opened a field of vindication and triggered a series of movements, with more or less success on what concerns the answering of their demands, the support from other layers of society and the movement of repression from the State. It is also undeniable that the retaking of the streets has not occurred solely via affirmative forces that demand multiple agendas of expansion of vital issues. Responsive movements have made themselves notable and gave legitimacy to the seizure of power, in a national level, by the more reactionary, privileged and sad groups (as Spinoza would say) in the country.

In spite of all this, the student movement is not fueled by sad passions. With explicit references to the secondary student movement in Chile, which registered a detailed manifesto of "how to occupy a school", the number of occupations increased daily. In one month, more than 200 schools were occupied in São Paulo.

The school occupations gained social backing and support through donations of food and basic necessity articles, support from several people in occasions where there were confrontations with the police, by notification through means of communication other than mass media, by donations of class lessons and a variety of activities, which resulted in a broad counter-pedagogical program. Throughout the three-month occupation, the students assumed janitorial and kitchen chores, performed repairs and organized their schools. In addition, promoted discussions regarding topics such as feminism, self-management, politics and racism — issues commonly avoided in classroom discussion, despite their presence in school life.

During the occupations, attention was drawn to the care provided by children and teenagers to the school, and to everything concerning the occupation. This care and supervision was not simply restricted to physical organization and was extended to the decision making process, always collective, discussed in assemblies and in contact with other occupied schools. The students invented and tried out a self-managing device capable of resisting police brutality and manipulation caused by the media and more organized groups, such as political parties. They had no leaders and their public announcements were always shouted out in unison — one of the students would read the text that was elaborated collectively and, once heard, the words were repeated, in chorus, by the other student-occupiers.

Another fact that affected educators, parents and citizens, who are sensible to the causes of the students, was the manner in which they occupied the school kitchens. Totally autonomous, the students organized the stock of provisions found in the schools (when they were faced with several food items that had never been distributed to them) and also raised more supplies to guarantee their permanence in the occupation. They cooked for all present at the school and invited some teachers to eat with them. It was a remarkable scene: a varied meal, prepared in

enormous pots that, most probably, were never handled by them before.

The successful occupation of the kitchen was central to the triumph of the student occupations. After all, without food, the students would not be able to stay in school for too long. But the use of the kitchen also demonstrated, in a concrete and visible way, that the students know how to organize and nourish themselves mutually, against the idea of those who insist on proposing tutelary educational situations.

Now I invite you to hear about the proposal of listening groups of students from Itabira, a small city almost 700 km from São Paulo. Itabira has 120 thousand inhabitants and 35 municipal schools (while São Paulo has 11 million people and 5 thousand schools). In the tiny city of Itabira there were no school occupations. The listening groups happened in the beginning of 2015 and involved 40 students between 12 and 15 years old. During 2015, the city's administration elaborated a plan for the extension of student permanence hours to more than the 4 hours of the regular period, with activities in the fields of art, technology and leisure. Its proposition aligns itself to an expectation for the expansion of assistance to students in regards to time, space and contents of learning.

The elaboration of the Plan was participatory and involved teachers, managers and technicians from the Department of Education. The objective of this meeting with the students was to collect experiences of their school life and register suggestions for the elaboration of the Plan to expand the educational offer to the city.

By listening to them, it was clear they had a perception of the pedagogical choices they are subjected to, as they mentioned class division based on behavior and school performance, an illegal practice still present in some schools. It also became evident that they know how to distinguish racist behavior from teachers that dispense differential treatment "because I am white and my friend is black". That is, they are fully capable of positioning themselves in relation to their process of learning.

The students of the small town expressed special interest with regard to the lunch offered in the schools. They want lunches that include "a wider variety of fruits and juices". There was also a suggestion that lunch be prepared by the student's grandmothers, given that "*granny snacks* are always delicious".

It is interesting to note that some issues brought up by the students of Itabira, without any direct contact, became mobilizing demands of the students of São Paulo. The lunch served in schools is a theme that triggers this process. When questioned about what they would like to improve in their schools, the students of Itabira mention lunch as something they would like to participate in, clarifying a potential field of learning and experimentation that is not commonly considered by schools. Lunch is accessed as an interval between didactical activities; a moment to nourish one's self and, then, continuing the learning process. The field of nourishment as one of the lines of cultural production, interfaces with food safety issues, possibilities of contact with other understandings, flavors, and other elements regarding food that are not conceived as a part of the learning process. It is therefore an instrumental use of food.

The lunch issue unfolded differently in the state schools of São Paulo. In a general sense, food is also underused or reduced to its biological dimension in São Paulo schools. However, the political manipulation around the school lunch issue takes another form during the occupations when a corruption scam involving politicians and food suppliers gains visibility, in the beginning of 2016. The denouncement revealed the lobby promoted by some providers to guarantee the supply of food to schools upon high payments (approximately 25% of the total contract value) to government representatives through profiteering of products. Beyond the values, one must highlight the difference between the list of products intended for the schools and what was actually served to the students. The most radical expression was the presence of noble meats in the contract while simultaneously providing salt crackers for lunch. Appalled, the students created, among other mobilization actions, a Facebook

page where they posted daily pictures of the lunch served at the schools.

The diversion of funds for student food to enlarge shady private gains leads to obvious symbolism: what would serve as nourishment to the students is corrupted, favoring the enrichment of those in power, or yet, the interdiction of food and growth of some for the enrichment of a few.

The assessment of this process was proven to be intolerable to the students and sparked a new wave of occupations of schools and public spaces demanding the investigation of the scam. Once again, the Government, which was criminally involved in lunch corruption, violently repressed the student movement. Because of its obvious demand and the strength in the confrontation with old and segregating policies, the student movement gained backing and support and was able to install an investigative committee that remains obstructed till now. Not to mention countless other effects of subjectivation that may be listed when considering that the students produced a new territory that integrated forces from the areas of education and the political organization of the resistance.

This causes one to think that when the access to the most elementary use of food is not guaranteed, many other possibilities of learning are sequestered. It is also possible to affirm that corrupting student nutrition has multiple symbolic and concrete effects that span from biological and intellectual malnutrition to its affirmative dimension, updated by the secondary school movement in the plight for the right to educate and feed itself.

#### 4. Questions as a Way to Conclusion

It seems inevitable to question the potential of the affirmative treatment of the food issue in schools. What could unfold from an educational work that considers both, food beyond its biological dimension, as well as the expressed interest of the students to be involved in different stages of lunch serving in schools?

Listening to students indicates a few guidelines present in contemporary political actions that may be thought of by the retaking of the streets, production of bodily presence, direct action, the right to care and the right to intervene in the cultural process. Such guidelines indicate, still, specific issues to the field of education concerning the participation of students in their pedagogical process. Not only does this sound important so that the participation has a place in the school curriculum, but also that the educational propositions may undergo interferences and be affected by the point of view of the students.

Therefore, the plight of secondary students and their suggestions for a school yet to come resonate a common horizon that is not limited to the question of food. What is at stake is the production of singular educational processes, open to the thoughts of the students and their capacity to question the present and imagine futures.

To follow and support the student movement means to consider them capable of interfering in the educational process and to produce learning situations that are consonant with contemporary desire investments. There seems to be several stimulating conversations ahead, thus, activating the capacity Charles J. of listening to that which resonates minor educational possibilities is urgent — an imperative in the struggle against the current situation of democratic regression in Brazil.

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