

ARTIGO

## EDUCATION AND AGENCY IN URBAN PERIPHERIES: THE PRODUCTION OF LABOR ALTERNATIVES BY YOUNG ADULTS<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper aims to approach the working conditions of youngsters to promote a discussion regarding position taking vis-à-vis the production of working alternatives related to current juvenile conditions, especially in relation to the fruition of cultural practices in urban peripheries. The data gathered for this study comes from the incursion into different socially vulnerable places in Porto Alegre, Brazil, between 2013 and 2016, when narrative interviews were conducted, in which the focus is the scrutiny of practices produced by the dwellers of the visited neighborhoods. Martuccelli's contributions are the main references for the analyses conducted regarding the "social trials" of labor and related supports. Production of cultural capital among peers is observed, which has also supported the accomplishment of the occupation of social spaces related to the "school format." Therefore, programs of education integralization, initially experienced as support, are turned into an action field via agency employed by the youngsters.

**Keywords:** Young adults, Education, Labor, Cultural Practices, Urban Peripheries.

### EDUCAÇÃO E AGENCIAMENTOS EM PERIFERIAS URBANAS: A PRODUÇÃO DE ALTERNATIVAS LABORAIS ENTRE JOVENS

**RESUMO:** O artigo parte das condições de trabalho de jovens na atualidade para discutir tomadas de posições na produção de alternativas laborais associadas à condição juvenil contemporânea, destacadamente à fruição de práticas culturais em contextos de periferia urbana. As informações consideradas resultaram da incursão a diferentes localidades socialmente vulnerabilizadas da cidade de Porto Alegre, entre 2013 e 2016, quando realizamos entrevistas narrativas e nos detivemos à observação de práticas produzidas por moradores dos bairros visitados. As contribuições de Danilo Martuccelli são os principais referentes para as análises empreendidas sobre a 'prova social' do trabalho e suportes relacionados. Observamos a produção de capital cultural entre pares, o que tem suportado a conquista de ocupações em espaços sociais articulados à "forma escolar". Assim, programas de integralização da educação, inicialmente experienciados como suportes, são convertidos em campo de ação mediante agenciamentos operados pelos jovens.

**Palavras-chave:** Juventudes, Educação, Trabalho, Práticas culturais, Periferias urbanas.

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## **EDUCACIÓN Y AGENCIA EN PERIFERIAS URBANAS: LA PRODUCCIÓN DE ALTERNATIVAS LABORALES ENTRE JÓVENES**

**RESÚMEN:** El trabajo se acerca de las condiciones laborales de los jóvenes de hoy, a discutir la toma de posiciones en la producción de alternativas laborales asociadas a la condición juvenil contemporánea, especialmente la fruición de prácticas culturales en contextos de periferia urbana. Los datos considerados han resultado de incursiones en diferentes barrios socialmente vulnerables en la ciudad de Porto Alegre, entre 2013 y 2016, cuando se ha hecho entrevistas narrativas y se ha observado las prácticas producidas por los residentes de los sitios visitados. Las contribuciones de Danilo Martuccelli son los principales referentes para los análisis realizados sobre la 'prueba social' del trabajo y los soportes relacionados. Observamos la producción de capital cultural entre pares, lo que ha apoyado la conquista de ocupaciones en espacios sociales vinculados a la "forma escolar". Así, los programas para la integración de la educación, inicialmente vividos como soportes, se vuelven un campo de acción a través de agencias operadas por jóvenes.

**Palabras clave:** Juventudes, Educación, Trabajo, Prácticas culturales, Periferias urbanas.

## INTRODUCTION

In general, working conditions for young people in Brazil tend to present more unfavorable indicators than for the population as a whole. In the last decades, the unemployment rates have become significantly higher, and the levels of informality also indicate precarious work situations. If we correlate such a situation with the fact that a considerable part of the Brazilian youth does not enjoy a moratorium on work and has to start to work already during adolescence in order to help support family subsistence and/or guarantee their own survival (DAYRELL, 2012), we end up having a framework of vulnerability that needs to be addressed.

If contemporary youth condition has been shaped by the valorization of sociability and the enjoyment of cultural practices (DAYRELL and CARRANO, 2014), their experiences, however, have been modulated by the conformation of institutional apparatuses that constitute compatible statutes and temporalities and, moreover, material conditions for the appropriation of cultural goods (REGUILLO, 2012). Upon considering these very aspects, we developed our problematization aiming to set up a scenario for analysis of articulations between young people's working conditions and cultural belongings, as fostered by field immersions.

Upon assessing the reports about incursions to socially vulnerable locations in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, conducted between 2013 and 2016, this article seeks to analyze position-taking of young people who, in order to survive, have developed work alternatives and cultural practices in an associated way, which culminates in activities as educators in school spaces. In this sense, upon having the contributions of Danilo Martuccelli (2007, 2008, 2010, 2011) as our main references, we analyze the means and agency deployed by the subjects facing the social challenge of work, in order to discuss the resulting individuation process.

For this purpose, this study is organized so that it presents the context of our research and the appropriate references for our reflections. Next, a discussion on the working conditions and practices of the young people whom we interviewed is proposed, and then considerations about how they integrate and produce educational practices are outlined.

## CONTEXT AND REFERENCES

Our research has as its main focus socially vulnerable neighborhoods in Porto Alegre, from different regions throughout the city. The constitution of these neighborhoods became more relevant as government policies and industrial growth influenced rural-urban migration flows, especially since the 1940s—with the rural exodus between the 1960s and 1970s being the most significant factor in the development of these localities. In this sense, they integrate what can be regarded as the process of formation of precarious peripheral areas in different Brazilian capitals, developed from the conjoint actions of the real estate market, the public power and the impoverished populations that inhabited these places, and *vis-à-vis* the rationale of appropriation of space and of distribution of richness in capitalist societies (MOURA, 1996).

Let us consider the specific territories relevant for the purpose of this study: Bom Jesus, Cruzeiro and Restinga. Located in different regions of the city, they all have a history of significant population growth in the years 1960-70 due to migratory flows from the interior of the state or to migration between areas within the city proper. Upon considering statistical series published by the Observatório da Cidade de Porto Alegre (Observatory of the City of Porto Alegre), a comparative analysis shows that these locations were among the most economically and culturally vulnerable ones. The educational indices, specifically, show precarious access to schooling, especially regarding high school withdrawal—which can reach twice as much the municipal averages levels (OBSERVAPOA, 2017).

These contexts were/are, however, the stage for different forms of activism. The 1970s and early 1980s were periods of strong mobilization of denizens for improved infrastructure conditions, in many cases with the support and advice of left-wing militants (ARMANI, 1991). According to our interlocutors, the formation of several representative and/or recreational associations contributed to the pursuit for infrastructural improvements, to the offer of cultural alternatives, and to community narrativization. It should also be borne in mind that the notion of “periphery” (as well as its correlates, “shantytown,” “slum,” “favela” etc.) was appropriated by residents in the metropolises as a space-time

for the social production of reflexive and aesthetic “boundary” alternatives. Artistic expressions from the 1980s onwards, especially in the 1990s, with emphasis on Funk and Hip Hop fronts, have contributed to the formation of signs of identification in this sense, especially among young people in “converting stigma into emblem,” as Reguillo (2012) states.

Previously, research on youths promoted similar analyses by highlighting collective actions in the occupation of public space, organized mainly from cultural practices (CARRANO, 2002, DAYRELL, 2002 and SPOSITO, 2000). Today, despite the increasing violence due to conflicts related to drug traffic in the localities surveyed, we observed that young residents of the neighborhoods where we conducted our interlocutions, continue to seek alternatives to perform collective actions in the sports and/or artistic fields—many times by associating them with the expectations of labor insertion and the maintenance of their subsistence. This is an aspect that we wish to problematize in this paper, after a brief presentation of our theoretical-methodological references.

## References

Interactions in peripheral contexts have urged us to consider Danilo Martuccelli’s contributions as our main interpretative references. The author, sensitive to the historical process of social differentiation we experience in capitalist societies, and, especially, to the possibilities of diversification of individual itineraries in the last decades, proposes that we should study the forms of individuation. However, even if we decide to begin with trials applicable to the individual, they are considered with the purpose of characterizing the structural challenges related to the social relations that can be built. The heuristic notion of “social trials” is directed at such an effort:

The trials have four great features. Firstly, they are inseparable from a narrative that gives individual or collective actors a greater role in understanding social phenomena. Secondly, the trials refer to an actor’s ability to deal with the difficult requirements and to the processes to which he is subjected. Thirdly, every trial works as an examination, in fact, as a selection mechanism through which, depending on their successes or failures, the actors forge their existences. Finally, the trials are inseparable from a set of major structural challenges to which individuals are obliged to respond and which differ in accordance with societies and historical periods. (MARTUCCELLI, 2007, p. 125)

Upon establishing a methodological vector, the author is not neglecting conventional social markers (class, gender, etc.); rather, he seeks to delineate a purpose of approximation to the experience that individuals make out of social relations, so that we can broaden our understanding of the movements that individuals make and that can extrapolate the usual macro-analytical categories. In this perspective, the interpretation is oriented to what causes the “work of the individuals” in their existences, as a configurator of the processes of individuation. For example, Martuccelli (2011) observed the existence of a “positional inconsistency” experienced by individuals from different social classes in Chile, something that made the subjects act, have busy days, and find a certain similarity in the insecurity regarding the society that they integrate.

Also, Martuccelli (2010) proposes the hypothesis of the existence of a “hyper-actor” in Latin American societies. Accordingly, Latin American individualism would not be erected in the fiction of a social contract between preconceived individuals and produced by institutional organizations and programs, as in Europe; it would consist of practices and skills of people who, in order to integrate into society, must first of all act and guarantee existence and recognition. This is a condition that would be partially explained by the way in which power is established in our countries: something that is not established as in the “North;” something that is indicated but not fully effective; such as the law that is not always observed, which varies in accordance with circumstances, and with the use of violence if necessary. This is such that the individual who needs to act—facing uncertain and non-functional institutions, or arbitrary power—needs the other to survive, since modern impersonal apparatuses do not represent this sort of guarantee. Therefore, the maintenance of social bonds becomes fundamental to the organization of experience, and historically, not only institutional programs, but also well-defined networks would support the trajectories of subjects in their daily lives.

As it can be deduced from the aforementioned, another important task has a role vis-à-vis the analysis of the bases that sustain the daily life of individuals, namely, what the author calls “supports.” Martuccelli (2007; 2008) seeks to designate the set of resources and supports that constitute the actors’ experiences not as an inventory of the conditions and networks disposed to them in accordance to their social position, but as an existential ecology of the appropriate elements in the process of individuation, which are inscribed in the web of effective interdependencies of individual histories, helping individuals to regard themselves as such—the acknowledgement of the agencies operated in the field.

It should be pointed out, also, that in order to work with these categories, we end up composing the referents by appropriating complementary notions. Interlocutions in the field led us to resort to the provocations of Michel De Certeau, notably to his well-known contributions to the wiles “of those who do not have their own.” We take, then, the notion of “tactics” to point out the movements of those who, in different social spaces, experience strongly asymmetric relations and must position themselves in “capture in flight,” when living conditions do not allow their landing and the safety of a “lookout.” Ponderation does exist, but it is restricted by the need to take someone else’s goods, as “the weak must take advantage of forces that are foreign to him” (CERTEAU, 2011, p. 46) and, in the microcosm of daily life, establish tricky ways of using and doing. Thus, cunning is a way of designating the dispositions of our interlocutors in the field, in relation to the resources that they could employ and potentialize in their itineraries.

The same can be said about the appropriation of Requena Santos’ (2001) concept of social network: “the effective network of a person is the set of individuals that he is able to mobilize when he needs something concrete” (p. 45). We sought to systematize—without exhaustive pretensions—the relational arrangements mostly quoted in the narratives in relation to the focus of analysis here, seeking to analyze which supports were constructed by our interlocutors as they integrated groups and social bonds, even if their economic conditions, housing and work were initially similar to other denizens of the peripheral areas.

Therefore, where the presence of state institutions is insufficient and/or episodic, when it is not established basically by repression, where the socially produced supports are based on the confluence of different forms of social inequality, we come up with the heuristic hypothesis that we need to work with theoretical and methodological references that focus on the agency developed by the individuals and which can thus indicate specific networks and forms of action in relation to the public (educational) practices and policies that are made available to them.

## The interlocutions

We have been involved in observing the practices of and, above all, conducting narrative interviews (in accordance with Jovchelovitch, 2002) with individuals with different labor, artistic or sports activities (social education, school teaching, cleaning and domestic care, recyclables sorting, sewing, nursing, *breaking*, funk, capoeira, basketball, soccer, among others). This research work, which started in 2010, is related to the production of identity and to the processes of individuation in peripheral contexts, and now has reached approximately 160 testimonials.

The collection is composed of interviews with people between 15 and 80 years of age, working in socially vulnerable locations in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil. About 65% of these, besides acting, resided in such *loci*. Regarding schooling, approximately 45% of the subjects had elementary education (incomplete or complete) at the time of the interviews, while 18% reported having high school level (incomplete or complete), and 37% undergraduation (complete or incomplete)<sup>3</sup>. If we consider large segmentations for age, 36% are comprised by young individuals (15 to 29 years of age), 48% by adults (30 to 59 years) and 16% by the elderly. Regarding gender, there is a slightly higher number of consultations with women (60%), mainly due to the interaction with people working in the area of education and social assistance.

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that if we take data only from people living in socially vulnerable locations, the percentage of people with higher education drops dramatically, usually restricted to elementary education. As ours is an approach based on interviews carried out in qualitative research, we do not aim for a representative sample of the populations of peripheral contexts of the city. We consider, then, the segmentations marked by contrast between groups of biographical itineraries.

The narratives present a free exposition of the biographical itineraries, in which the challenges faced during the experience and the relation with the social practice to which the interviewees had adhered at the time of the interlocution, are discussed. After that, we proposed additional questions regarding social networking—including family dynamics, work spaces, educational institutions, religious or community ties and leisure practices. We also asked about the most recurrent activities in their routines and their preferences regarding cultural consumption.

Although each interview presents a very extensive survey, for the purpose of this study, we will restrict the scope to a general characterization of the work activities mentioned by the interviewees who, besides acting, lived in vulnerable neighborhoods. Upon considering that many of the social trials in impoverished places are about subsistence and work, we chose to take these as a starting point for the presentation of the conditions for individuation experienced by the subjects. In this case, we will also use an age contrast between young adults and the elderly with the sole purpose of highlighting differences in relation to joining work.

Ten narratives produced between 2013 and 2016 were selected for this exposition. They were produced by interlocutors who, among their work activities, managed to occupy the role of educators. These are young adults who live in the districts mentioned above, who also have a history of insertion in cultural practices—basketball, elements of Hip Hop and capoeira<sup>4</sup>—, and whose socio-demographic profiles are close to those Sposito (2018) highlights for individuals between 25 and 29 years, notably those in the first quintile of income. Based on data from Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra por Domicílio (PNAD – National Household Sample Survey), the author observes that in this segment, in 2014, most of the individuals would no longer occupy the position of children in their homes, would be working and no longer studying—regardless of basic education being completed. Many would already regard themselves as adults.

Our interlocutors had entered high school, and four of them had finished it; they already had a long course of work insertions, culminating in non-formal education, and were the breadwinners in their families. These young people's itineraries will be analyzed with the purpose of discussing their narrated belonging and agency. We want to problematize how they are positioned in relation to the educational practice — considered here as part of a scenario of public policies to protect children and adolescents, which first is established as a potential constituent of support for these subjects and, then, as a space for action and production of work alternatives.

## **LABOR ALTERNATIVES: PANORAMA AND ITINERARIES**

Surveys conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) show that there are historical challenges related to gender and race/ethnicity inequalities, to labor market turnover and to the high level of labor informality in Latin America and Brazil. In this scenario, we have significant participation of young people in the economically active population (EAP). Based on PNAD data from a review made by the Institute for Applied Economics Research (IAER) for the years 2003 to 2013, the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2015) notes that approximately two thirds of the young people were already working (63% in 2013), evincing among other aspects: 1) unemployment rates above the EAP average, reaching twice as much or even more; 2) high employment turnover; 3) higher informality rates<sup>5</sup>, especially for self-declared blacks and browns; 4) comparatively lower remunerations; and 5) a significant number of hours longer than 44 hours per week, which may be the reason why for the difficulties in reconciling studies and work.

This situation also shows oscillations in accordance with educational levels. For the period aforementioned, more educated individuals tended to suffer less from the informality of labor ties, so much that those with secondary education not only had lower rates of informal employment, but also

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<sup>4</sup> Amongst our interlocutors, two practiced capoeira, two basketball, three breaking and three graffiti—the latter being related to Hip Hop. Although they moved from one cultural practice to another, we considered those practices to which they had greatest dedication and which ended up rendering activities as educators.

<sup>5</sup> Informal work here is related to occupations in one of these situations: i) employment without a formal contract; ii) work on their own without contributing to Social Security; and iii) unpaid employment. Among young people, the first one is more common (CORSEUIL, 2016).

enjoyed a considerably relative reduction during the decade of economic growth reported between 2003 and 2013—18.9% vs 11.6% for those with incomplete elementary education. Another nuance concerning schooling is observed when the data are segmented within the juvenile quota: after the initial insertion period into the labor market, between 18 and 19 years of age, the informality rate becomes lower than the general market average, which could be attributed to the progressive increase of access to school.

Employability conditions with a reduction in the informality rate among young people and an increase in the average salary—or even a decrease in the participation rate in the EAP between 2009 and 2013—due to a greater dedication to school, pointed to the qualification of the labor insertion of young people in the country (PARTICIPATÓRIO/SNJ-IAER, 2014)<sup>6</sup>. However, in spite of the improvements observed, the following period—of economic crisis and of upcoming changes in the management of public policies—showed signs of retrenchment, so that the situation of informality and unemployment has worsened, or rather: there was a reduction in the average rate of unemployment due to an increasing number of informal work links (IBGE, 2017).

From the above, it becomes clear that the impacts of such a scenario tend to be more perverse for socially vulnerable populations, especially those with lower levels of schooling and that, even in times of economic warming, had already suffered from unemployment and informality or from jobs of less pecuniary and symbolic recognition<sup>7</sup>. This context, thus, reaffirms labor as an imperative to “earn a living,” and promotes the perception of work as a necessity, as Corrochano (2016) pointed out in relation to young adults of low-income.

If we analyze the collection of interviews produced with residents of peripheral areas of Porto Alegre, the main work occupations are related to the areas of civil construction, sales/services and general services, domestic care and surveillance/janitorial services. As schooling increased, the interlocutors had more jobs related to technical work, and the incidence of general service activities was lower.

Labor alternatives were mostly related to several intermittent experiences, ranging sometimes from practices in informality to temporary formal ties, setting up several cases of precarious inclusion (MARTINS, 2002). For the most vulnerable groups, with low schooling (incomplete primary education) and fragile housing conditions, such as recyclables pickers, we could see sequences of precarious work comprising their family history, passing from one generation to another, so that the “work card duly signed” was set as a horizon not always discernible, but still sought-after as a reference for stability and resources, as already pointed out by Lisboa (2009).

Another aspect that deserves to be highlighted is the agency operated by the subjects in the pursuit of their work alternatives. When consulted about how they got their occupations, their testimonies evinced processes related to a combination of selective processes with the indication of family and friends. The youngsters usually mentioned the support of their families to get the first either formal or informal job opportunities.

In addition, it was often not a question of accessing an occupation, but rather of producing it through agency. From everyday individual tactics to collective organizing efforts, some of the examples narrated are: the production of recipe books as a portfolio to get a job as a domestic servant; the learning of craftsmanship to be able to work with sales; the development of tactics for recyclable picking in order to create bonds with residents in certain neighborhoods; artistic presentations aiming to mobilize investors and to expand work options; the political struggle for the formation of associations or service cooperatives in which they would eventually end up working; the voluntary practice in sports that—it was hoped— would result in a long-lasting educational project and in a job due to the acquired experience.

It was not uncommon for the subjects to have cunningly provided knowledge produced in the domestic space, by colleagues in informal and/or precarious occupations, or in cultural practices done in the public space. And they ended up deploying their relational arrangements, especially family

<sup>6</sup> Taking data from the 1990s, it can be observed that the decreasing employment rate among young people was accompanied by a rise in the unemployment rate, whereas between 2009 and 2013 it was a coefficient of a reduction in the rate of participation in the labor market (PARTICIPATÓRIO/SNJ-IPEA, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Specific and complementary analysis can be found in Silva (2013), who analyzes PNAD data on the income and poverty strata between women and men, blacks and whites.

members, friends and former co-workers, to compose or qualify work alternatives vis-à-vis their experiences.

I've always been a sports man since I was little [...] So I have this social project here in Restinga; I'm struggling to create an athletic track. So: "How to do a drainage?" To make all that space there, you have to know, because I was tested this way. I went to the city hall and they: "I want the blueprints." What is it? I had never heard of it. Then I started to ask what that was. How do I do it? [...] Then I went there to hire a plane to do aerial photography. Then I said, "How am I going to take this picture?" So what happened? To take the photo, talking to one, to another ... (Ventura, 61 years - Jan/2015)

Look, with my dad, I started to help him, I think I was twelve [...] I work only not to depend on my parents' money, which I never liked to depend on, I've always liked to have my own things. So I do a little bit of everything, I work in a kennel where I help take care of the dogs; I work with an elderly couple every Friday, whom I help in the housework; I work a little with my father who is a gardener [...] And even because dancing takes a lot of money, right? For you, travel ticket, for you to go to some event that you want to go to a lot, sometimes to pay some classes. (Anderson, 25 years old - Feb / 2013)

As we have seen, the need for work—the urge to produce it out of either necessity or the desire for consumption—was also articulated with the moral call for (relative) independence and for facing the adversities presented to the subjects. Besides converting necessity into virtue (Bourdieu, 1998), upon commenting on efforts and “overcomes,” the narratives evince a code for positioning regarding the social trials of work. This aspect, as can be considered for our purposes here, addressed other challenges: the migration and the conquest of housing; the urgency of circumventing violence in the territory; the coping with the inadequacies of health care; the attempts to reconcile school and work; etc.

The narratives emphasized the need for individuals to regard themselves as capable of generating subsistence for themselves and their folk. Independence, however, did not seem to represent a simple individual achievement, and could be associated with quests constituted from and for reciprocal ties with neighbors, colleagues, and, above all, relatives and friends.

When I had my daughter, it was tough! I could survive a little bit on my own, and my mother and my grandmother helped me with other things, you know? My brother gave me some milk from time to time, he gave me some stuff and so on. So I've always been very supportive to all the people, you know? I've never asked anything from the people, so when we were going to travel, I would withdraw some cash to complete the needed amount, I always have ... You have to make the group grow. (Júlio, 29 years old - Mar/2014)

Upon referring specifically to the young people interviewed, it is possible to pinpoint that they often had informal working activities and, when with employment, these activities were intermittent services with activities with intense interpellation for high production rates and with repetitive tasks, in which they could only remain for months or just over a year. Others, despite being activities with which they identified, offered insufficient remunerations, which led the youngsters to search for multiple jobs and, consequently, the need for circulation all over the city, going from one neighborhood to another far away.

That's what happens, I worked, I've always worked - not always - when I was old enough to work, I worked, after 15. I worked ... I helped my mom and dad in the bakery they had. Because my mom and dad always gave me a chore, you know? Then, I can still remember: I had to pull a cart and she gave me two bucks then, to me [...] But then I started to work as an attendant at 1-800 ... 1-800, telemarketing and then after two years almost, and then I passed to credit analyst [...] Then I left this one to work in another, as a Nestlé representative. I went to the bars to sell chocolate, Trakinas and stuff, by moto, 120km a day I travelled. (Guilherme, 24 years old - April/2013)

In general, we find similar data regarding those aforementioned and presented by IAER. Moreover, we observed situations in which, even if a formal contract of employment was signed, the



precariousness of effective conditions was present for these youngsters, “due to the intense and extensive work journeys, and to the diverse forms of remuneration” (CORROCHANO, 2016, p. 162). Often, our interlocutors complained about the overload of tasks, the low salaries and the intensity of the pace of work. On the other hand, they reported their tactics to compensate scarce resources and to increase the effectiveness of their labor alternatives.

Then they made the invitation: “Here is a project like this, so ... we need someone” [...] So I went and when I got there, the guys just gave me a stereo: “You take this stereo, go to the streets, be lucky there in the middle of the community”[...] I did not even think about this as a job, I thought about giving dance class, I wanted to ... have more dancers, you know? What was my idea: I was going to those places, making more people to bring to our group, you know? That was my idea ... I would rather have several points where to work, several places than having a fixed place like that, because I would have to go all over the city, right? (Júlio, 29 years old - Mar/2014)

However, an age contrast between the interviewees indicates that entry into the labor market has been postponed in the biographical itineraries during the last decades, confirming Camarano’s (2006) and Vieira’s (2008) hypotheses. When we consulted the elderly residents of the districts of our study about their work experiences, they stated that work activities began in childhood, in farming practices and in domestic care— some slave labor included—, which made it much more difficult to get into and stay in school, usually restricted to elementary school.

I was 9 years old and worked in a farm in Quaraí/RS. I didn’t get any money; it was only for food and clothing. When my mother went to visit me, I wanted to leave, right. But I hadn’t said anything to my mistress that I was leaving, but I had my bag packed. They said “Luci, your mother’s here, I came from my room with my little bag. She [the boss] used to beat me because I did not know how to run a house. I did not even go there to do that. But then she started to give me chores, chores I didn’t know how to do, I learned by leaps and bounds, right. She said there was a school nearby. There was nothing. That year was lost, I just worked. (Eva, 64 years old - April/2016)

For the young people whom we interviewed, it was commoner the entry into the labor market—non-domestic activities—in adolescence. Likewise, higher levels of education—high school—were observed. Here, the repercussions of public policies introduced after the Constitution of 1988 and the creation of the Statute for Children and Adolescents (SCA) seem to promote the protection environment for the subjects, as the data of average schooling of the population suggest.

In the meantime, the involvement in sports and/or artistic activities—both in school in the streets—became practices of intensive dedication in the biographical paths of our interlocutors, regarded as arenas of protagonism and recognition. Thus, the entrance and stay in such groups—basketball, capoeira or Hip Hop—favored the partaking in relational arrangements and into a body of knowledge that ended up composing the probability of professional performance in educational institutions: according to them, they came into activities as educators initially by indication of peers. The first experiences occurred in non-governmental organizations that developed educational-assistance projects in vulnerable locations. Over time, they began to engage projects before/after school time.

Because, in my case, the reason I left school was work. I had to choose: either I study or I work to survive. Earning enough, because my mother was not able to survive[...] as of 16, I started working at *McDonald’s*. Attendant, I mean, not just an attendant, you know? I did everything in there!

I started to give a workshop in Bom Jesus neighborhood. It was a project that was part of the CAW, which is the Cultural Association of Workshoppers of Porto Alegre, which was showed to me by Jukinha. It was him who taught me how to make projects too. (Marcos, 27 years - Oct/2013)

If the relationship with the labor alternatives that were normally delegated to the youths of poor community groups were the scenario for tensions, the educative activities, on the other hand, had been activities assessed positively. It does not exempt them from combined precariousness, such as small

pecuniary gains, informal and/or temporary contracts and, consequently, the need for simultaneous links with several contractors. Nevertheless, the educational occupation became a space for the exercise of services adhering to the knowledge produced during their itineraries: they used knowledge that was developed in informal practices, enjoyed in the public space, and that allowed the subjects to enjoy agency.

However, it is necessary to detail the articulation of our interlocutors vis-à-vis the potential supports of a protection network for children and adolescents, also furthering the analysis of position and agency constructed by the subjects, which also comprize their opportunities in relation to their education.

## **EDUCATION, WORK, AND AGENCY**

Now we should turn to the context of the establishment of state and parastatal apparatuses concerning social rights in the field of education and social assistance, stressing their articulation with the youthful situation of the subjects of our research. Then we will deal with the agency and positioning of young workers in activities in the field of education.

As is well known, the “Citizen” Constitution, enacted in 1988, the SCA enacted in 1990, and then the Organic Law on Social Assistance (OLSA), constituted disputes over intensified social rights in 1980s and, by creating legal protection, contributed to the establishment of collegiate deliberations between the State and civil society in different federal spheres. The formation of councils at the federal, state and municipal levels encouraged and began to regulate municipal networks for the protection and promotion of children and adolescents—among other publics—, acting to effectively achieve the legal status of “subjects of rights.”

Regarding legal provisions, however, it is necessary to highlight the precariousness of the services rendered, given not only the insufficiency of the allotted resources, but also the incidental and compensatory nature in many cases. In this sense, as far as young people are concerned, there was no clear specificity of focus of the programs for this segment until the beginning of 2000. What is more, the programs established in the 1990s had their constitution permeated by the social representations in dispute, vis-à-vis the relationship between youth and society. As a general—but not exhaustive—polarization, it is possible to identify debates that could either sometimes accentuate propositions associated with “protected citizenship,” or sometimes advocate participatory experiences. That is, they would designate youth as a form of “problem,” emphasizing measures of social integration which could eventually represent forms of social control of the youngsters’ time and corporeality; or rather, the conception that young people would politically express “change” that should be recognized (SPOSITO and CARRANO, 2003).

Taking data from the first half of the 2000s, Sposito (2008) pointed out that, in the face of the historical expansion of schooling, and with the more expressive arrival of impoverished segments in secondary education, the poor young recipients of social programs are positioned among parallel instances of education. Such structures would rarely create regular educational interlocution procedures, although there was encouragement of school attendance by social assistance initiatives. The author also mentioned that the non-formal or non-scholar education replicated the school model in a precarious way. Even though there was neither a formally defined curriculum nor a systematic evaluation, there was the perspective of learning through the establishment of a routine, a relationship between specialists and apprentices, and the appropriation of didactic practices and materials, which relates to the provocations of Vincent et al (2001) on the “pedagogization of the social.”

From then on, policies aiming at integral education make such parallelism even more evident. Programs implemented since the mid-2000s—such as ‘More Education’ at the federal level, for example—presented to schools knowledge that was different from that usually provided for in formal curricula. In activities that are to be complementary to the practices of the teachers, social educators begin to integrate more intensely the routine of the institution.

In Porto Alegre, before the federal proposals, in 2006, the ‘City School’ program sought to gather experiences of inclusion of practices from different social agents. The program had a history in the municipal education network and, in this sense, sought/seeks to formalize partnerships, either by

bringing social educators to school programming, or by enabling students to develop activities in affiliate non-governmental organizations<sup>8</sup>. Thus, different practices under the orientation given by school management, are articulated for educational purposes within these initiatives.

Silva (2017) points out that, in these historical disputes in the field, the “full-time student” model has predominated, which provides for the students the involvement in different practices, along with the association of different agents in the city—and not the production of “full-time schools.” We understand that the assumed configuration intensifies clashes such as those presented by Vincent et al (2001): the centrality of school as an institution and of the teaching practice, even if embedded in a network of partnerships, can be disrupted by an opening to extracurricular educational initiatives—but the very openness is built on the consolidation of the “school format” of socialization, namely:

the constitution of a separate universe for childhood [and, to add, for the young age]; the importance of rules in learning; the rational organization of time; the multiplication and the repetition of exercises, whose only function is to learn and learn in accordance with the rules, being this in itself its own end. (VINCENT et al., 2001, pp. 37-38)

The composition of a network for the protection and promotion of children and adolescents, and government programs that were created between the years 1990 and 2000, providing more attention to youths, despite the insufficiency and precariousness of care for vulnerable populations (CAMPOS, 2018), have contributed to the social production of time for childhood and for youth. We explore the hypothesis of the dissemination of the ‘school format’ in school and out-of-school apparatuses in the localities analyzed here, which has contributed towards a delayed entry into the world of work, affecting thus the transition to adult life. However, it is necessary to consider that the transitional sequence among youngsters from vulnerable contexts is not less susceptible to the imperative of work and/or to the accountability for domestic tasks and care, or to tensions regarding housing and educational and care spaces (CAMARANO, 2006; CORROCHANO, 2016).

### **About supports: constituted belonging networks**

It is not our intention to carry out an exhaustive survey of the supports present in the biographical itineraries of our interlocutors. This sort of attempt would deserve specific systematization and is beyond our scope here. Instead, as a heuristic alternative, the social networks most frequently associated with the production of educational practice as a space of action among the young people whom we interviewed, are scrutinized. Following Martuccelli’s (2007) proposal, we were careful not to carry out a crude inventory only, but to consider instead those arrangements in relation to which we perceived the subjects’ effective participation, sustaining them in the context and, in this sense, providing effective support for a specific and preferential labor insertion.

Recurring citations focus on family dynamics. We found that, mostly, these were large families whose configurations were variable regarding members who would reside together (in the house or in the yard) and/or would take care of the children—differing from what is usually regarded as family nucleus (father, mother - or tutors - and children)—, as already indicated (FONSECA, 2004): cousins, aunts, friends, among others, could constitute relationships of reciprocity, with practices of mutual support being of either regular or eventual occurrence.

At the same time that such dynamics was the context of responsibility for domestic activities and tasks in childhood or in youth, these were also the safeguarding vis-à-vis economic resources, shelter for migration, housing, protection against local violence, studying, and the first leisure activities.

Our young interlocutors experienced family arrangements that preserved childhood and schooling (even if partially), although they were responsible for domestic chores. These are members of an age group who started to enjoy the support of the protection network mentioned in the previous topic, with school attendance being a legal obligation supervised and made possible by apparatuses that, although insufficient and precarious, gradually guaranteed the occupation of children and adolescents in

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<sup>8</sup> For more information about it: [portal.aprendiz.uol.com.br/2017/01/09/idade-escola-projeto-aproxima-educacao-e-territorio-na-rede-municipal-de-porto-alegre/](http://portal.aprendiz.uol.com.br/2017/01/09/idade-escola-projeto-aproxima-educacao-e-territorio-na-rede-municipal-de-porto-alegre/).

educational and care settings. At one time, there were places for a symbolic dispute about childhood for the users, *loci* of permanence of the offspring for those who needed to work, and moral repositories of the promise of better existing conditions for the children<sup>9</sup>.

I've never studied again, because I am a mother to six children, but I've given all of them schooling, and they are all studying, you know [...] Because sometimes people, my children of saint<sup>10</sup>, I have, I—I have my children of saint who are nurses ... uh ... civil servant, my children are all well employed, thank God, you know. (Rosa, 60 years old - May/2016)

When I was a kid, my mother gave me to someone else. She was too bad for me. She would put me to work on the cart, collecting [recyclables]; I was four when I started. Not today. My kids are going to school; I get government scholarship and they're going to school. (Eunice, 37 years old - Mar / 2010)

Even if our young interlocutors reached high school, they were individuals with truncated or incomplete schooling. And the increase in the length of time spent in school was combined with the appropriation of the school for different reasons: among other possibilities, it could represent safety in violent territories, a place for diplomas and certifications relevant to the world of work, the arena for sociability among colleagues. The school environment could be reported as a space of tension with school contents (due to their supposed “little usefulness”), but it was remembered, above all, as a place for sociability, recognition among peers and the interposition of rhythms contrasting with school routine—when there was the occupation of the schoolyard and the corridors for musical enjoyment, and the interaction moments by the conversation and the “teasing” among colleagues (PEREIRA, 2016).

Thus, when schools offered educational alternatives before or after school time, in the schedule of programs for full-time education, they created, at one time, stimuli for students to fulfill school tasks, and a space for experiences that were more related to the cultural practices that these young people appreciated.

There at school, a teacher saw that I was very agitated and decided to put me on a project. It was a project similar to ‘More Education.’ And in that same project another student entered and he was already dancing break [...] every time the teacher left the room, he left his place and started to dance there in front of the mirror [...] I asked, ‘Hey dude, what are you doing?’ ‘Oh, I’m dancing.’ ‘You could teach me some steps.’ So, I learned it and practiced at home, at home but I practiced it all awkwardly. Then he invited me to rehearse at one of his friend’s. When I got this dance fever, it was where I changed; I started doing things in the classroom, because I did not want the teachers to stop me from having a break, because break time was the awesome! (Marcos, 25 years old - Nov/2014)

Although we can perceive the presence of family cultural inheritances—in artistic or sports enjoyment—and mass media and culture references, attending school and sociability among peers in this field were mostly narrated as supports for an extended experience of cultural practices, from consumption to production of practices and artifacts. The permanence in the school space was enabled not only by the action of teachers or workshoppers before/after school, but also by the sociability that was fostered, by the affiliation to networks and by practices that extended to outside school in the streets and that could comprise long-lasting groups of interaction.

Thus, with youths, in addition to the recognized articulation with the expectations of effective improvements in working and mobility conditions (ZAGO, 2012), the possibilities represented by the school space can be considered towards a diversification of the experience of support. In a certain way, we believe that we are closer to the analysis made by Dayrell (2007), when he states that the relationship between young people and school is a tense one, proposing a question as to whether “school makes the youth.” For those who go to high school, the institution is concerned with meaningful activities

<sup>9</sup> We could observe that, for the cases under analysis, part of the tensions in the youngsters' relationship with education is due to the responsibility for schooling, which tended to be delegated to them as they approached adolescence, as Zago (2012) points out concerning the older children in families of impoverished families.

<sup>10</sup> Expressions like ‘father or mother of saint’ and ‘son or daughter of saint’ are related to the way priests and their acolytes/initiates, respectively, in Afro-Brazilian religions such as Umbanda and Candomblé are referred to.

for its students, but they are often intensively experienced outside its walls. And by including them residually, they would create punctual alternatives that do not solve the dilemmas between the positions as a student and youngster, and the questions about the meaning of school socialization.

With this we have reached the third type of relational arrangement that we would like to highlight for the purpose of this study, namely, the networks associated with cultural practices. The literature on youth in Brazil has already publicized results on the importance of consumption and cultural production and on the dynamics of sociability in relation to contemporary youth status (DAYRELL and CARRANO, 2014, SOUTO, 2016). At the same time, they have pointed out the importance of considering, in complementarity, the actual situations in which the youth experiences are established.

For the cases presented here, if integration into cultural practices was supported by inflections in the position-taking of family groups and by the constitution of a protection network, the integration of peer groups deserves an analysis regarding their specificity, evincing the young adults' effective participation as a characteristic in the production of this support. The first aspect to be emphasized is that the experience among peers created dynamics for the production of knowledge and learning without the necessity of the interposition of the teacher figure; the young people shared practices by putting them into operation, and sometimes exchanging tips or suggestions—a dynamics of trial and error was developed through interactions that could be regulated by the rules of the game (a basketball game, a dance training) or simply commented on in small talks. These practices also required observation and a certain type of research in the media they had access to.

Such dynamics, often carried out in the public spaces that they could access, was narrated as an arena for protagonism. Although restricted to the microcosm of group interaction, the young people exercised the singular production of steps, movements, played in articulation with the recognition of their peers there. Therefore, belonging to collectives constituted a tension between the valorization of individualities with particular trajectories and deeds, and the need to maintain common parameters of action, as indicated by the repeatedly quoted notions of 'humility,' 'attitude,' 'fellowship' and 'perseverance.'

In basketball, there we learn, we learn a lot, like this. The guys want to show off: "look what the guy did," you know. There are several ways to play, we [...] We learned to play basketball, right, by watching, watching ... when they showed on Band [open TV channel] the NBA games [...] We did not have physical training, any kind of training. We learned by leaps and bounds how to play, so much that today the body complains, right. (Deco, 29 years - April/2016)

When they decided to tease someone for nothing, oh my, wow, kinda... it was sad! Wow, you had to put your little hands in your pockets, lower your head and go home. Ah, teasing<sup>11</sup>, nicknames... If you missed the ball, the guys teased a lot. (Fábio, 27 years old - April / 2016)

In this sense, the participation in cultural practices in the long run, as is the case of the subjects addressed here, has been configured as an identity aspect: as experiences of recognition and belonging, but also as a space for action whose operated agency engendered expectations of professional success in what they enjoyed doing. Thus, these interactions formed projections and organized the relationship with time in the narratives that the young people produced. If we can recall Ricoeur (2010) about identity being also a relationship with time in the formation of ipseity, those subjects expressed, during their practices, their desires for success and the imperative of the work that their context had interposed.

When I started dancing, I wanted to develop the movements I saw on the cassette tapes, you know? The second reason why I wanted to dance: one, I started to get very well-known and got really lucky with the gals. Since I was very chubby, I did not have these things of having a girlfriend at school. And third, I wanted to make more money with what I liked to do. That

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<sup>11</sup> As we understand from our observation in the field, "teasing" was presented as one of the forms of delimitation as collective criteria—including quality parameters—, while also signaling to one's need for determination and perseverance in the face of the situations presented, which they denoted with the expression "attitude". Therefore, the nicknames could be a way to single out the subject in the group.

moment was what led me to develop choreography, seek knowledge, participate in championships. (Julio, 29 years old - May/2014)

## Education: a space for action

The scenario of the implementation of the ‘school format’ we outlined above can now be considered as a space of action, as a *locus* from which the subjects converted relational arrangements that supported their experiences in arena for acting and subsistence, bringing it closer to their position taking vis-à-vis work alternatives.

The establishment of child and adolescent protection networks, as well as the expansion of average schooling along with policies for ‘full-time study,’ made it possible for knowledge that was different from that found in formal curricula, to begin to compose activities of educational spaces in a more intensive way—for example, capoeira, Afro music, Hip Hop. This will also be the context for the action of education workers whose denominations vary: without enjoying the status of a teacher, they are called workshopppers, or even social educators.

The arrival of our interlocutors in the educational practices begins in assistance activities of state or parastatal apparatuses operating in peripheral localities; whose history of articulation with popular knowledge—craftsmanship, sewing, music, etc.—is prior to the creation of the networks mentioned above. Generally, their entry into activities in the school environment occurred after some experience<sup>12</sup> was accumulated, and in the context of the programs of full-time study in the years 2000.

We may consider, then, that the full-time study comprises a set of school activities that occurs by the conversion of some of the knowledge produced in the juvenile practices into cultural capital. We may also consider it in terms of the fronts of action historically engendered by popular social movements, which, upon constructing alternatives to promote their productions, resemble the socially legitimized educational practices<sup>13</sup>. But we must consider, on the other hand, the inflections produced in the school space: the effective conversion into cultural capital also occurs under the effect of the programs of full-time study and the political-educational demands for students’ permanence in the school and their progress in the schooling course.

A third aspect that we might consider is related to the itineraries of the young people whom we interviewed. They were attendees in socio-educational projects before/after school; they were, in many cases, considered “troublemaker” students, obliged to attend cultural activities that ended up being consolidated as their favorite practices. Thus, entrance into schools was relatively familiar: not only did they know the general lines of the school routine, they also understood part of the purposes that organized the activities they started to perform. Some moral ‘agreement’ about the relevance of education, about the educator’s role, and about knowledge itself, was present and, moreover, was engrained in cultural activities that perform/performed in other public spaces. Rehearsals, presentations, or moments of fun in the streets usually enjoyed the presence of children who furtively approached and asked to participate. Then, integration could take place as a result of the welcome of those who mimicked gestures and of the explicit disposition to teach how to do it by the workshopppers.

Often, we were there in the gym dancing and stuff, and then, the people playing ball. Then, the guys with the kids, you know, and they said, “Come on, go with the dancing guys.” Then, the children would come closer, they would watch and we would call them to stay together and a few steps would develop (Julio, 29, Mar/2014)

Here at the school where I work, I called and asked if they wanted a workshop. She [project coordinator] accepted. Said, “Oh, we want to do a project like this, like this, More Education.” He asked if I had ever worked with the project. And I: “No, yes, I have experience.” She asked

<sup>12</sup> As a rule, the young people we talked to had accumulated about ten years of experience in the practices they began to teach—including regular exercises and presentations, the organization of thematic events and the integration of knowledge networks related to what they practiced.

<sup>13</sup> We could present, for example, the strategies of Mestre Bimba in the mid-twentieth century, aiming to value capoeira as a sports and educational activity (ASSUNÇÃO, 2013, LUCENA, 2018). More recently, in Porto Alegre, we could refer the annual actions of Hip Hop activists for the valorization of “the culture,” which include access to the school space for workshops and, then, emphasize the importance of education (PINHEIRO, 2015).

if I had experience with child. And I: “I have, calm down!” I printed the curriculum and the project I gave her here at school.

Sometimes, when there are a lot of students like that, they put them in my classroom. Then they: “Oh, let’s dance, let’s paint, let’s do this...” In order for them not to change schools ... There is a student, kinda, he isn’t enrolled in the project, but he comes to the project and stays one, two days with me there, and then returns to his classroom calmer. (Marcos, 27 years, out / 2013)

We believe that the workshopers’ practice as a school educator contributes to the fact that the elements built in their personal trajectories become the basis for integration into the “school format.” If the learning dynamics associated with the practices produced by young people in the streets did not necessarily comprise strict collective rules and rational organization of time—since individualized expressions or mimesis in the exercises prevail, and body enjoyment focuses on the present—, it is the entrance into the school environment that constitutes the activities regarding the collective repetition of exercises, promoting more emphatically the redundancy regarding purpose.

First, I start by talking about the history [...] So, I usually do a historical introduction. After they are already used to it, they already know I show them a video, a dance video for them then I divide the video into several categories: a video that shows the history of Hip Hop, a video that shows what the current scene is like, a video of how rehearsal happen [...] for them to have food for thought. Only then I start to work the basic steps [...] After they’ve learned the basic steps, then I start to work choreography with them [...] and then after all that, if we think it’s okay, we present the collective work then.

So, as the school already has rules in which you cannot this, you cannot do that; like this, like that, have to do A, B and C. For me it would be complicated to work with the children free here. Keep the pattern! So, I have to adjust to these patterns as well. (Marcos, 27 years - Oct/2013)

We try to do, you know, everything, you know, to help, you know, to help those who like, as sports, in fact, is ... I think it’s one of the best means of health, you know. So, somehow, I’m teaching there, too, to help them in some good way. (Deco, 29, April / 2016)

There still are tensions, however. Although students address workshopers and teachers by treating them all as teachers, the salaries of those who carry out the workshops in programs after/before school are much lower. Such condition tends to cause them to look for several simultaneous positions in different schools or social projects, or for various jobs—tattooing, civil construction services, fast-food restaurant services, etc. Inside the school, also, workshopers noticed the differences in treatment which would indicate the hierarchy between their knowledge and the knowledge of those who had higher education.

Moreover, the activities of these young people were permeated by motivations different from those that formally comprised the position taking in the educational spaces. The pecuniary gain could stand out as motivation to work, being a resource for subsistence or for the realization of activities in the fields of their favorite actions: in artistic or sports arenas. Schools could also be the *loci* of visibility of their groups and performances. The activities in educative and social activities both results and is constituted of agency and tactical motives operated by the subjects, as we will try to explore in the sequence.

## Education and agency

An important aspect to highlight in the set of narratives of the young people interviewed, concerns the articulation between cultural practices and work. Although the artistic and sportive enjoyment was initially established as a leisure and sociability activity among peers, as they maintained their adherence to the modalities they practiced, expectations of personal success and, soon, of job placement began to compose their cultural immersions. The imperative of work was not only a tensioner as age advanced, it also became the constituent of the cultural alternatives they produced.

I was already listening, I was already a fan of the producer I am working with now [...] Then there was a, you know a charity party where they invite new MCs. Then they asked me to sing and I sang and they asked me to join their producer. I want to progress in the career, you know. (Hiago, 25 years – June/2016)

I always had a lot of jobs [...] Let's say 'More Education,' which is a project that all schools have nowadays. If it pays you, let's suppose, R\$330 a month, you may think it's too little. But if you think that you have to work only one day a week for these 330.00, and that you can get another school, and another... If you go after it, you can make an extra amount. (Lucas, 26 years old - Jul/2015)

For those who started educational practices, the social networks they were part of were important supporters. In particular, the familiar relational arrangements and the working groups they belonged to allowed the indication to the first activities in this sense. For the reported occupations, moreover, the youngsters' agency was a condition for success or even development, such was precariousness in many cases of these first jobs.

I always get some money from them, who are the former sponsors of KSULO. As we are always in touch with them. We do the work record here and show it to them, because we cannot stop [...] Me, PX and our DJ, Pêa. We always go to São Leopoldo to make barbecue, do business work on rap. We go there and count the rap guys along with our company. (JR, 25 years, May/2013)

The maintenance of the activities or their expansion were also born from tactical dispositions, and mobilized learning and network building in the interactions with peers or in the opportunities obtained from a dynamics of possibility maximization. They seemed to be willing to make the most out of what came towards them, either by increasing the chances of doing presentations to the public or by moving to new work alternatives, or by diversification of recognition relationships. Such a cunning way of operating permeated cultural practices and work: a contact resulting in public presentations could mean a new occupation; this would be a source of funds to carry on with voluntary collective activities—usually without the benefit of formal support from public or private apparatus—or to have another space to represent their groups.

Let's say, we'll have a presentation tomorrow. Oh, how much time do we have? "Oh you have 8 minutes." Two minutes I allotted to my students and the rest was for us. Got it? When it was not for the school, I would take them with my group. When it was for the school, I was taking the group together. So, it was an exchange, you know. In this thing of involving everyone, we made a lot of presentation and where we'd go, the people wanted to know why there were a lot of people participating in the workshops, you know? And then, the guys found out I had this thing of being calm, huh? That I was not in a hurry for people to learn [...] (Julius, 29 years old - April/2015)

In this case, as in relation to informal occupations, we can perceive that labor alternatives are largely produced by the subjects—above all, via the sensitization of agents in the educational field. The support of family dynamics together with a more extensive schooling and the lasting integration of peer groups into cultural practices, were differentiators in their itineraries, but it will be the agency operated by the subjects thereof, in contexts of vulnerabilities, that will consolidate the articulation with social and education activities, making them a space for action.

Education intentionality proper was not always the first drive for having a job in the field of education—often, it was the need for economic capital and the expectation of putting their favorite activities into practice by deploying resources and contacts established in institutional arenas. But it is not possible to reduce the action of these subjects to the pecuniary pursuit and the fulfilment of material needs. The space of action they constructed between informal practices and social and educational activities was strongly associated with the social and cultural capitals that they shared and produced, as we are trying to point out, and, in addition, with the symbolic capital generated from their action in peripheral localities.

If I go out with you, I'll come up here and there's a drug spot here. You see, everyone knows me: "Master Bolivar, Master Bolivar..." Most were my students, you see. I'm going to Alemão, the biggest drug den we have here, the Alemãos were my students. I go to Nego, they were all my students. Wherever I go, you get it. I walk in night there, in the streets out there, these guys



pick me up and put me inside a shack and ... they say: "Oh Master, come here, let me introduce you to my mother", you know. (Bolívar, 29 years old - May/2013)

The scenario we have exposed so far is related to the production of a discourse favorable to the education existing among dwellers of different age groups in the neighborhoods where we made our incursions. In addition to the desire for social mobility, more directly associated with school in vulnerable contexts with a strong intercurrent of violence and insufficient presence of state apparatuses—when they are not presented by repressive actions—, the educator’s practice carries a symbolic capital associated to the protection of children, adolescents, young people. Often, adults and the elderly express their concerns about the youngsters’ time occupation and schooling. In such calls for socialization and control, it must be acknowledged that they tend to combine a positive appreciation of educational spaces, as safe *loci* which may render something supposedly better. It is worth stressing: we are not addressing their desires for ascension, which were certainly also manifested, but a diffuse appreciation that values education positively, in contrast to what would be considered a diversion, illicit, “unproductive.” This condition enhances educational apparatus as supports and potentiates, in articulation, the educational practice as a space for action.

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In order to conclude our problematizations, we would like to return to the contributions of Martuccelli (2010). We believe it is possible to approach the author’s thesis on the configuration of a “hyper-actor” in individuation processes in Latin America, with emphasis on the importance and sustainability of the social bonds and on the daily interposition of an indicative power.

The narratives we approach here are delineated as of the events carried out and the adversities overcome by our interlocutors, in itineraries rather discontinuous vis-à-vis their relations to the institutions of education and work. One can infer a certain “doing for oneself and for their folks” in what is narrated, given the systematic placement in informal, precarious or insufficient labor insertions, which also reveals an attempt to produce alternatives and build networks. The narratives were not presented in such a way that a subject’s achievements are the result of collective successes: that is, if observed with attention, they narrated individualities that valued the bonds of reciprocity that supported their existence, especially in close relations.

Thus, we can see that the agency that we seek to articulate to the analysis of youth performance in the production of their educational practices as work alternatives leads us to the figures of the “asymmetric player” and the “vulnerable opportunist.” This is more so for their “need to have a relational aesthetics that makes viable interactions” (MARTUCCELLI, 2010, p. 227) and for the astute uses of possibilities to deal with vulnerability. Individuals, who faced some struggle regarding independence upon facing a world that “excluded” them, would rely on the production of sociability and on the maintenance of the social bond as a *modus vivendi*, since institutional supports were insufficient or episodic.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout our exposition, we sought to highlight the elements related to the analysis of position taking by young people from popular groups, specifically those between 25 and 29 years of age, in relation to the educational practice. In this attempt, we addressed the school and work experiences of interlocutors who have achieved occupations in non-formal education from the incursions and interviews in three suburban neighborhoods of the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil. We tried to do this by narrating relational arrangements that effectively comprised the supports for their experience, and then by highlighting how agency produced alongside formed an arena for action. Thus, we tried to stress the role of work of individuals in the production of their conditions of existence.

The situations of social vulnerability of the localities considered here, accentuated by the informality of the work links to which young people are subjected in Brazil, explain not only situations of access to precarious, intermittent occupations and/or intensive rhythms of work, but also the context

of the individuals who engage in producing their own subsistence alternatives through agency combined with their networks of belonging and their bonds of reciprocity.

The relationship with the educational practice is, then, established in this scenario. In a tense and truncated interaction with school when they were students, our interlocutors were exposed to projects of full-time study and related cultural activities. Then, from cultural groups and practices in these lines, but extrapolating the school walls, they integrated circuits of production of interactions and knowledge, which turned into cultural capitals related to the educational field. This is due to the constitution of the network for the protection and promotion of children and adolescents from the 1990s onwards in Brazil, followed by, in the years 2000, programs of full-time study, which these young educators now assume as a space for action.

Thus, the educational practice is a work alternative, sometimes anchored in relational arrangements that supported the itineraries of young people, sometimes produced by the subjects' agency, integrating a space of possibilities established from a certain relational aesthetics aimed at the viability of interactions, as well as at the maximization of the ability to cope with vulnerability and/or to ensure that their favorite cultural practices take place. Therefore, we believe that this empiric exposition evinces the formation of 'hyper-actors' in the processes of individuation, as proposed by Martuccelli (2010) in relation to Latin American reality.

In addition, despite the tensions in the relationship with the school institution, given the different interpellations to compose the relationship with education in the neighborhoods under study, the arrival of our interlocutors in the educational practice as workshoppers or social educators occurs under a certain 'agreement' with the school precepts. That is why we suggest that this occurs in the consolidation of agents—state and parastatal—that contribute to the dissemination of the “school format.” In such a case, if the school did not “make the youth” (DAYRELL, 2007) for the age segment in question, the elements of its “form” can make the transition to adulthood through dynamics of agentic appropriation.

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