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From heavy rains to radical pedagogies: contesting housing injustice and environmental risk in Mauá, Brazil

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Abstract In the peripheries of southern metropolises, vulnerable households living in precarious housing often suffer from climatic events such as heavy rains. This oppressive reality has been tackled by grassroots groups through radical pedagogies, as has been the case in Mauá, a municipality in São Paulo's metropolitan area. Drawing on eleven months of engaged research with the Movement for Fight in Neighbourhoods, Vilas, and Favelas (MLB - Movimento de Luta nos Bairros, Vilas e Favelas). I explore the unfolding of radical pedagogies amid contestations of housing injustice and environmental risk. MLB's actions in Maua have included a support system for residents affected by floods and landslides, an occupation for households unsheltered by rainstorms, and weekly assemblies in vulnerable neighbourhoods. Combining Paulo Freire's ideas on popular education with Latin American theorizations on territory, I describe how radical pedagogies manifest throughout MLB's multiple activities. Specifically, I explain how pedagogical practice evolves as the movement de/re-territorializes and forges new territorialities. I argue that radical pedagogies play a fundamental role in MLB's territorial contestations for three reasons. First, urgent needs and oppressive realities are politicized, serving as an entry point towards 'conscientisation'. Second, radical pedagogies occur continuously, allowing the movement to keep unity and momentum. Third, pedagogical practices combine action and reflection, shaping 'territories of r-existence'. The case of MLB in Mauá exemplifies

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that radical pedagogies offer fundamental pathways for emancipation in a context of housing injustice and environmental risk.

Introduction

The relationship between environmental risks and access to adequate housing has been in the spotlight of governments, international agencies and increasingly also of grassroots actors on the ground. In the peripheries of cities of the Global South, the effects of climatic events on precarious housing are alarming. With high housing costs, increased displacement, and insufficient state-led affordable housing, the urban poor are often pushed to live in areas of high environmental risk (Ajibade and McBean, 2014; UN-Habitat, 2018). Oftentimes, residents self-build precarious settlements on slopes or flood-prone areas, which tend to become highly vulnerable to climate events (Núñez Collado and Wang, 2020). Such harsh reality can be found in the peripheries of the metropolitan area of São Paulo (Brazil), South America's largest urban agglomeration. From its economic development and industrialization, the metropolis grew exponentially throughout the 20th century. However, it became extremely segregated (Marques, 2016), with most of the urban poor living in self-built homes in peripheral neighbourhoods (Caldeira, 2017). Particularly from the 1990s, various informal settlements, known in Brazil as 'favelas', were built in left-over and environmentally risky areas (Jacobi, 2000; Martins, 2011), which are constantly affected by São Paulo's heavy summer rains (Haddad and Teixeira, 2015).

Located in the Southwest of São Paulo's metropolitan area, the municipality of Mauá is a paradigmatic case where housing precarity meets environmental risk. The city developed as a place of residence for working-class populations who could not afford to live in other parts of the metropolis (Conceição, 2013). Urban growth took place on steep terrains with fragile geological formations and insufficient drainage systems. As a result, various climate disasters have been registered in Mauá, including floods and especially landslides, making it one of the top five cities in the state of São Paulo registering severe geological accidents. Such environmental risks are aggravated by high levels of social and economic vulnerability, especially in the poorest neighbourhoods and informally occupied areas (Damasceno *et al.*, 2021; Fernandes and Valverde, 2017). Despite some state-led efforts to manage risk, Mauá does not have an overarching policy that provides safe and affordable housing for everyone in need. As a response, urban movements have been implementing grassroots solutions to housing precarity in Mauá. These movements politicize housing injustices and environmental risk while forging radical pedagogies.

One of the most prominent movements operating in Mauá is the *Movimento de Luta nos Bairros, Vilas e Favelas* (MLB – Movement for Fight in Neighbourhoods, Vilas and Favelas). Since 2020, MLB has been involved in various housing struggles in the city, including the implementation of a support system and an occupation to tackle households affected by heavy rains, as will be later detailed. MLB originated in 1999 in the state of Pernambuco and nowadays operates across various Brazilian cities. On a broad horizon, the movement claims for a socialist future. In more concrete terms, it fights for urban reform in Brazil, with appropriate living conditions for the working class, democratically owned property and no spatial inequalities. Housing struggles become the main engine towards this urban reform. As such, MLB organizes and implements occupations in empty sites or vacant buildings in both central and peripheral areas of Brazilian cities. Occupations not only provide housing for those in need, but also confront private property, raise awareness of urban injustices and show that other ways of living are possible (MLB, 2019). Oftentimes, occupations also trigger negotiations with formal institutions for the construction of housing developments, as has been the case in Mauá. The movement's mobilisations on the ground are sustained by weekly meetings taking place in specific working-class neighbourhoods or existing occupations. In these meetings, called *núcleos de base* (base clusters), activists and residents engage in pedagogical activities and discuss local achievements and strategies. These local assemblies are connected to other activities at a regional and national level, forging a multi-scalar network of articulated action. This paper looks at how radical pedagogies emerged and unfolded throughout MLB's activism in Mauá between 2021 and 2024, whereby housing injustices and environmental risk were discursively politicized and concretely tackled.

Scholars have explored the fundamental pedagogical role played by housing movements in different contexts, while they produce and share knowledge. Housing activists organize training, advising and capacity building activities to make complex realities more legible and empower citizens to claim for their rights. This has been the case for anti-eviction movements (García-Lamarca, 2017; Lira and March, 2023; Vilenica, 2017), anti-financialization organising (Fields, 2015; Silver *et al.*, 2021) and tenants unions (Wilde, 2019) around the globe. Through research and advocacy, housing movements forge counter-narratives that challenge mainstream policymaking (Fields, 2015; Vilenica, 2017). Co-produced mapping and enumeration have been fundamental in forging counterarguments, raising awareness and opening spaces of negotiation (Maharawal and McElroy, 2018; Fieuw and Mitlin, 2018). The pedagogical potential of housing activism also manifests through multiscalar knowledge exchange facilitated by networks of movements (Lira and March, 2023; Polanska *et al.*, 2021). In

the case of Brazilian occupations, pedagogies are also forged when planners and lawyers collaborate with movements to demystify legislations and help drafting coherent strategies (Diniz Bastos *et al.*, 2017; Morado Nascimento, 2016). Despite these various scholarly insights, not enough attention has been paid to how radical pedagogies change and unfold as housing activism de/re-territorializes and forges new territorialities. Moreover, scant attention has been paid to the specific pedagogical potentials emerging when movements simultaneously politicize housing injustices and environmental risk. This paper addresses these gaps, looking at the case of MLB in Mauá through Paulo Freire's ideas on radical pedagogies and Brazilian theorizations of 'territory'.

To shed light on MLB's radical pedagogies, we look at their practice in Mauá through the lens of Paulo Freire's ([1970]2005) ideas. The Brazilian popular educator theorized how radical pedagogy (mostly referred in his writings as critical pedagogy) unfolds in spaces and moments of oppression and resistance. For Freire, the reality of oppression is not a static and unchangeable condition. Such reality can be changed when action and reflection are intrinsically and dialectically combined, shaping what the author calls 'praxis'. The more individuals are critically aware of the reality that surrounds them, the more they are capable of transforming it. Marginalized groups, or 'the oppressed', are in a favourable position to learn and criticize injustice and oppression, since they feel the effects of such mechanisms in their everyday life. Thus, as they participate in radical pedagogies, oppressed individuals engage in a process of 'conscientization', an incremental acquisition of critical consciousness about the structural drivers of oppression and inequality, and about the possibility of intervening in such structures through acts of resistance. For Freire, radical pedagogies are never an individual process, but rather a product of 'actors in intercommunication', which in the case of activism implies overcoming inter-movement separations. In addition, the organisation aspect of social movements has a great pedagogical potential. For Freire, radical pedagogies can only fully overcome alienation when they articulate local realities with broader regional, national and international contexts (Freire, [1970]2005). These ideas have inspired the practice of social movements across Brazil, including MLB. Meanwhile, Freire's ideas provide an insightful framework to analyse the movements' radical pedagogies.

To analyse how radical pedagogies evolve as housing activism de/re-territorializes and forges new territorialities, the paper feeds from Latin American geographers' theorizations on territory. Scholars use the notion of territory to explore how power manifests in space. While Western academics have focused mostly on state control, approaching territory as a technology of power from above (Elden, 2013), Latin American geographers have

taken inspiration from social movements and tried to decolonize ideas on territory. In such a perspective, territory is not just a source of top-down control. Instead, it is where domination and contestation come together in complex ways (Halvorsen, 2019). Moreover, territories are not static things, but rather understood as ‘events’ (Santos, 1999). Different actors create and change territories by exerting power over space, a process understood as ‘territorialization’. This process is continuous, shaping ongoing dynamics of de-territorialization and re-territorialization (Haesbaert, 2011). Additionally, the making of territories is not limited to the local scale. Instead, actors such as social movements engage simultaneously with national, regional and local scales in their territorialisation, oftentimes consolidating ‘territory-networks’ (Haesbaert, 2011).

Another important concept is that of ‘territoriality’, which refers to the symbolic meanings attributed to territories, either territories that already exist or the ones that are being fought for and may materialize in the future (Haesbaert, 2011). Importantly, social movements can forge ‘emancipatory territorialities’, through which they privilege values around collectivity to overcome modernity and private property. Moreover, movements shape territories of ‘r-existence’: they not only resist and react to sudden shocks, but mostly engender new ways of being in the world (Porto-Gonçalves, 2012). Along these lines, territorial struggles are important not only for political and material achievements, but mostly for shaping alternative perspectives and knowledge (Escobar, 2020). Drawing on these understandings of territory, this paper will show how MLB’s radical pedagogies permeate processes of de/re-territorialization and the shaping of emancipatory territorialities in Mauá.

Therefore, building upon Paulo Freire’s ideas and Latin American theorisations of territory, this paper looks at MLB’s contestation of housing injustice and environmental risk in Mauá. The paper contributes to the housing activism and radical pedagogy literature by answering the following questions: How does MLB leverage radical pedagogies to address housing injustice and environmental risk in Mauá? How does this pedagogical approach evolve while activism de/re-territorializes and forges new territorialities? What role do radical pedagogies play for MLB’s everyday functioning and emancipatory potential? After explaining the research methodology, I present the main results, with a focus on the emergence and development of radical pedagogies amid de/re-territorializations and new territorialities. Then, I discuss the findings, highlighting three main principles of radical pedagogies: politicising housing injustice and environmental risk, maintaining the movement’s momentum and unity, and connecting action and reflection. The paper then finishes with brief conclusions.

Methodology

This research is a result of qualitative fieldwork conducted in Mauá between November 2023 and September 2024, where I combined participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The initial contact with MLB Mauá built upon my previous collaboration with the same movement as an activist in another Brazilian city. I started going to protests and activities organized by MLB Mauá, presenting myself as a collaborator and as someone who intended to conduct research with the movement. I attended and supported several strategic meetings, weekly base cluster assemblies in neighbourhoods and protests and demonstrations in Mauá and São Paulo. By conducting participant observation while being an activist, I managed to gain trust with other movement members and capture the nuances of how radical pedagogies manifest. In different stages, I repeatedly expressed my research intentions and asked other members if they agreed with it, to guarantee participant's consent throughout my involvement with the movement.

I also conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with key MLB Mauá informants. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, after my initial contact with them. Complementing the participant observation, interviews were crucial for gathering activists' and residents' perspectives on why and how radical pedagogies manifest. Moreover, the interviews were fundamental for understanding what happened prior to my involvement with MLB Mauá. Accordingly, interview questions revolved around explanations of the movement's strategies prior to 2024, as well as the importance and development of pedagogical activities throughout MLB's practice in Mauá. After a preliminary evaluation of research data, I identified key themes related to radical pedagogies, considering Freire's ideas on radical pedagogies and Latin American theories on territory. Then, field notes and interview transcriptions were coded and scrutinized through thematic analysis.

Results: MLB's radical pedagogies amid de/re-territorializations and new territorialities

This section of the paper describes how radical pedagogies emerged and unfolded throughout MLB's actions in Mauá between 2021 and 2024. Attention is paid to how the function and organisation of pedagogical activities evolved as housing activism de/re-territorialized and forged new territorialities. Following the movement's general strategies, MLB Mauá focuses its efforts on planning and implementing occupations, hosting weekly assemblies (base clusters) on working-class neighbourhoods or existing occupations, and organising protests and demonstrations. The notion of *luta*,

which in English translates as ‘struggle’ or ‘fight’, is not only part of the movement’s name (*Movimento de Luta nos Bairros, Vilas e Favelas*), but also constantly permeates activist vocabularies. For MLB, *luta* is an action to change a social and material reality, while foreseeing a better future and bringing people together. Or, as defined by an activist: ‘*Luta* is to organize the people and take for ourselves what the powerful don’t want to give to us. To speak to those who don’t want to listen to us. To be in a space that is not meant for us.’ (interview #6). This vocabulary and the intentions behind it is fundamental for MLB’s territorial contestations and radical pedagogies.

MLB’s operation in Mauá started in 2020, when activists occupied an abandoned school building in the city centre, where around 40 families lived for several months. In 2021, the building was sold to a private developer, who immediately issued an eviction notice. Following a series of protests, activists agreed to leave the occupation peacefully, after Mauá’s centre-left mayor promised to donate an empty plot of land to the movement. MLB activists then established base cluster assemblies in various working-class neighbourhoods, to strengthen and expand the movement in Mauá. Sceptical of the municipality’s promised land donation, activists decided to organize a new occupation to maintain the pressure on the state. In early 2022, a few weeks prior to the planned implementation of the occupation, heavy rains hit Mauá, leaving various vulnerable residents unsheltered. The incident sparked more members to join the movement, including those helped by MLB’s *disque chuvas* (dial rains), a self-led support system for families affected by floods and landslides. The city-wide disaster also led the forthcoming occupation to be named *Antonio Conselheiro: Ocupação dos Desabrigados Pela Chuva* (Occupation of the Unsheltered by Rainstorms). In March 2022, MLB implemented the occupation and managed to negotiate permanence while resisting imminent eviction threats. Life at the occupied site was precarious but collective, with residents living in makeshift tents, sharing meals and hosting weekly pedagogical assemblies.

The occupation lasted for over one year, until in 2023 Mauá’s mayor signed an agreement promising the donation of another site to MLB. The movement then disassembled and vacated the Occupation of the Unsheltered by Rainstorms. Residents of the occupation started receiving rent support instalments from the municipality and dispersed across various neighbourhoods, where MLB once again established base cluster assemblies. Meanwhile, MLB’s national-level activists submitted applications to *Minha Casa Minha Vida Entidades*, a federal programme providing funds to non-profit organizations for the construction of social housing developments. With the guarantee of a site for future construction, MLB Mauá was one of the organisations approved in the programme. Throughout 2024, MLB continued its *luta* (struggles), focussed especially on protests requesting

the formal donation of the site, which Mauá's municipality refused to do for some time. As this summary has shown, from 2021 to 2024 MLB Mauá engaged in shifting dynamics of territorialisation, de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation. The movement also kept forging and sustaining new territorialities. Throughout this ongoing process, radical pedagogies evolved and continuously played a fundamental role, as will be explained next. Particular attention will be paid to how the function and organisation of radical pedagogies developed before, during and after the Occupation of the Unsheltered by Rainstorms.

Prior to the implementation of the Occupation of the Unsheltered by Rainstorms, MLB forged radical pedagogies by politicising emergencies and urgent needs. Such a pedagogical process served to recruit new members and raise awareness of the occupation's importance. In 2021, activists organized base clusters in vulnerable neighbourhoods, where they debated urban and social issues in Mauá and other Brazilian cities, framing them as results of an oppressive system that exploits the working class. These meetings also served to inform of the plan to do a new occupation, through which low-income tenants or those living in precarious conditions could access better housing. Occupations were also framed as a pathway towards moving beyond private property and overcoming the very system that creates housing oppression. In parallel to the weekly assemblies, MLB activists also organized a self-help support system for households affected by floods or landslides, named *Disque Chuvas* (Dial Rains). Through this system, residents feeling at risk or having their homes destroyed after heavy rains reached activists via WhatsApp. MLB then provided emotional and material support to affected residents. The latter were invited to join the movement, where existing realities of risk and vulnerability were politicized as part of broader structures of injustice. As an activist explains:

“When a house is collapsing, the public authorities don't always show up, and sometimes people just need someone to help and provide emotional support. Since we don't have the structure of a city hall or a large company, we do what we can. So, we talk to the residents and remind them that it's not the rain's fault; the rain has been around since the world began.” (interview #3)

As residents affected by heavy rains joined the movement, their experienced reality of risk and vulnerability became the starting point for broader reflections. In the assemblies, participants discussed that the urban poor live in risky areas because they have no other options, given the lack of employment and affordable housing. They also discussed how the state keeps investing in rich areas of the city while neglecting environmentally risky urban peripheries. As such, a process of 'conscientisation' began,

whereby residents and activists together politicized housing injustices and environmental risk.

When the Occupation of the Unsheltered by Rainstorms was implemented in 2022, the previously empty site gained a new meaning or, in other words, a new territoriality. MLB's expertise and pedagogical activities were fundamental for the consolidation of this new territoriality, which pointed towards permanence and served to resist imminent eviction. In preparation for the occupation, future residents were trained on how to enter the site and how to perform once the police arrived. This rehearsed choreography constituted a form of pedagogy through organisation. As a result, the rapid and structured implementation of the occupation contributed to creating legitimacy, especially in the initial phase. Moreover, MLB's accumulated knowledge and expertise was crucial for the achievement of a legal agreement, which banned the city council from evicting the occupation. The new territoriality attributed to the previously empty site had different dimensions, which contributed to the arguments for permanence. First, the occupation represented a way of re-sheltering residents affected by heavy rains and denouncing the state's neglect towards environmental risk and housing precarity. Second, the occupied site had been previously designated as prone to the construction of social housing in Mauá's masterplan but was kept empty for many years. As such, the occupation was fulfilling the 'social function of property', which is a fundamental pillar of the Brazilian constitution. Therefore, the combination of new territorialities, accumulated expertise and pedagogical activities was fundamental for the occupation's legitimization and consolidation.

Once MLB members territorialized themselves in the occupation, they engaged in a process of collectively improving and living in the territory. This new way of being shaped radical pedagogies. As the occupation evolved, participants collectively improved its material qualities by removing existing debris from the site, assembling tents, building sanitation facilities and organising a collective kitchen. Nevertheless, full material consolidation was hampered by the police, which blocked activists from bringing bricks and concrete into the site. Additionally, during the first days of the occupation, heavy rains hit Mauá once again and the terrain was covered with mud. Despite these ongoing precarities, members of the movement maintained their upgrading efforts. As people cleaned and improved the site after heavy rains, they chanted: *a chuva destrói, a luta constrói!* (The rain destroys, the struggle builds back!). Residents also engaged in a radical everyday collectivity and shared most domestic activities, including cleaning, cooking, and eating. As a resident describes:

"It was nice because there wasn't that "this is mine, this is not" mentality. Everything was ours, it belonged to everyone. Food was for everyone, tools belonged to everyone. And I learned a lot. Some people say this does not work, but for me it works. If everyone is together, working towards the same goal, it's easier. Individually, you can't achieve that." (interview #1)

Therefore, the consolidation of the occupation engendered a territory of not just resistance, but mostly of *r-existence*, embedded with radical pedagogies. By dwelling on and improving the occupation, residents learned from one another while forging collective modes of living not experienced before. Through that, they changed their perception of what is possible and how life can be lived in less individualized ways. In this context, collaboration also became a powerful tool to improve the occupation's environment. Participants experienced in practice that the damage caused by heavy rains, both before and during the occupation, could be overcome through *luta*.

When the Occupation of the Unsheltered by Rainstorms was disassembled in 2023, MLB Mauá de-territorialized as members started living scattered across different parts of the city. The re-establishment of base cluster assemblies in different neighborhoods sustained radical pedagogies, allowing the movement to keep momentum and unity. While the occupation functioned as a territory of dense encounters and everyday conviviality, when residents started receiving rent support from the state and living separately there was a risk of complete dispersion. However, as activists often mention, *a luta continua* (the struggle continues). Therefore, around five base cluster assemblies were established in different parts of Mauá, which sustained the movement as a territory-network. The weekly meetings are structured in two parts. In the first part, participants read collectively an essay from MLB's nationally produced newspaper. The reading sparks a discussion, in which participants connect stories from other national or even international contexts to their own everyday realities. The debates address topics such as housing injustice, urban inequalities, poverty, hunger and environmental degradation. As an activist explains:

"We read the newspaper because people need to develop political awareness. We read the newspaper, we talk about the current situation, we talk about why we're fighting for housing, why the streets aren't paved, why there's no electricity, why they want to privatize things – we talk about all of this. It's a way to raise awareness and to call people to action, because they start to see the injustice and realize, 'Wow, I need to do something.'" (interview #3)

Therefore, newspaper reading and discussion functions as an important platform towards 'conscientisation', connecting reflections to future actions. In the second part of the meeting, activists bring information on the

movement's local achievements and call residents for other activities, such as protests and demonstrations taking part in different parts of the São Paulo metropolis. In 2024, much of MLB Mauá's efforts revolved around the official implementation of the housing development on the site to be donated by the municipality. This future housing development therefore operated as a new territoriality, referring to a territory expected to materialize in the future. Combined with the movement's radical pedagogies, this new territoriality contributed to keeping unit and momentum. Additionally, the weekly discussions served to continuously politicize the movements' achievements, reinforcing to participants that the construction of the housing development in the future was not the end goal, but part of a larger and ongoing *luta*.

In 2024, MLB organized a series of protests to pressure Mauá's municipality to formally donate the promised site to the movement. These initiatives complemented the pedagogy of weekly assemblies, leading participants to directly act upon unjust realities, while reflecting on them. At the same time, protests brought together once again residents from all over Mauá, contributing to the movement's re-territorialisation. During protests, the movement combined the collective presence of members in institutional spaces with speeches and chanting denouncing the ineffectiveness of these institutions. As such, the fight for bureaucratic agreements also functioned as a way to politicize unjust realities. Meanwhile, radical pedagogies were enhanced when protests led to achievements, since participants experienced in practice the effectiveness of collective action. Therefore, after the Occupation of the Unsheltered by Rainstorms was disassembled, MLB continued its radical pedagogies, combining base cluster discussions with direct action.

Discussions: the emancipatory potential of MLB's radical pedagogies

Between 2021 and 2024, the practices and strategies of MLB Mauá evolved as the movement de/re-territorialized and forged new territorialities. From the preparation for the Occupation of the Unsheltered by Rainstorms, to its implementation and later disassembling and dispersion of residents, radical pedagogies evolved but kept playing a key role. Importantly, three principles of radical pedagogies can be highlighted. First, MLB's pedagogical practice politicizes environmental risk and housing precarity, leading residents to understand the mechanisms behind their experienced realities of oppression. As such, activism moves beyond immediate responses to urgencies and consolidates as a struggle for a more just society. Second, the continuous and frequent nature of radical pedagogies allows for activism to keep unity and momentum. Combined with the establishment of forward-looking territorialities, this ongoing pedagogical practice guarantees the movement's

cohesion despite its de-territorializations and re-territorializations. Third, MLB does radical pedagogies by forging territories of r-existence. Such a process enables its members to experience the potential of collectivity and connect action and reflection in a critical way. These three principles will now be explored in detail.

Throughout its radical pedagogies, MLB Mauá politicizes housing precarity and environmental risk, triggering a process of 'conscientisation' amongst its members. Hence, the case of MLB confirms Freire's ([1970]2005) argument that individuals experiencing oppression are in a favourable position to reflect upon and question oppressive systems. MLB's radical pedagogies also reiterate that reflections emerging from experienced reality lead individuals to achieve critical consciousness and to act critically against oppression (Freire, [1970]2005). Along these lines, MLB's territorial contestation goes beyond material and political transformations as it shapes alternative perspectives and knowledge (Escobar, 2020). Such a process of politicisation and 'conscientisation' can be seen for instance through the *disque chuvas* (dial rains), whereby the very urgent and material reality of post-rain housing destruction became an entry point for a processual radical pedagogy revealing the root causes of environmental risk. The use of the newspaper in base cluster discussions was also fundamental in this process, as it encouraged residents to collectively analyse their everyday oppression in relation to other stories taking place around Brazil and other parts of the world. Thus, radical pedagogies emerge from 'actors in intercommunication' articulating the local with national and global struggles (Freire, [1970]2005). In doing so, the movement leads its members to understand that the fight for housing is not an end in itself, but rather part of a broader struggle for urban reform and a more just society.

By maintaining its radical pedagogy as an ongoing and uninterrupted process, MLB guarantees the movement's unity and momentum, despite changing dynamics of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation. The ways in which MLB approaches territory aligns with Latin American theorisations. From the implementation of the Occupation of the Affected by Rainstorms, to its later disassembling and new dispersion, the movement's territories can be understood as 'events' (Santos, 1999), part of an ongoing process of de/re-territorialisation (Haesbaert, 2011). Combined with the principle of *luta* (ongoing struggle) and the creation of new territorialities, radical pedagogies thus function as an engine that keeps activism going and sustains its territorial reconfigurations. For example, the preparatory educational activities that preceded the Occupation of the Affected by Rainstorms, combined with the new territorialities attributed to the site, guaranteed successful territorialisation and consolidation. After the occupation was disassembled, the potential dissipation of activism was

mitigated through the pedagogical activities occurring in the weekly meetings. Together with occasional city-wide protests and encounters, these activities connected the different neighbourhoods where MLB operated, forming a territory-network of activism. Therefore, radical pedagogies play a fundamental role in holding activism together and keeping it going, since pedagogical activities endure throughout changing territorial configurations.

MLB's radical pedagogies are effective because the movement manages to connect critical reflection with direct action and collective living experiences. Hence, the case of MLB Mauá aligns with Freire's argument that a truly emancipatory pedagogy occurs through 'praxis', whereby action and reflection are intrinsically and dialectically combined. The simultaneity of action and reflection allows movement participants to move beyond overly abstract understandings of oppression on the one hand, and overly uncritical forms of resistance on the other hand (Freire, [1970]2005). The case of MLB in Mauá also shows that when territorial contestation forges 'praxis', it engenders what Latin American geographers define as 'territories of r-existence' (Porto-Gonçalves, 2012). This can be seen especially in the joint material improvements and new ways of collective living that took place during the Occupation of the Unsheltered by Rainstorms. For example, when participants upgraded the occupied site together after it had been damaged by heavy rains, they simultaneously acted and reflected upon a condition of precarity, experiencing in practice that this condition can be changed through collective action. Complementary, by engaging in shared modes of living, movement members embodied the understanding that collaboration is extremely powerful. As such, the occupation became more than an immediate territorial resistance, engendering instead a territory of r-existence through praxis. After the occupation was disassembled, the praxis of radical pedagogies was maintained through the combination of weekly assemblies and protests, whereby action and reflection occurred in tandem. As such, the case of MLB Mauá reiterates previous community development scholarship on housing activism in Barcelona, where assemblies and direct action are argued to be co-constitutive for the formation of political subjects (García-Lamarca, 2017). Therefore, radical pedagogies are neither fully about action nor fully about reflection but rather formed through a 'praxis' where movements experiment with new modes of transforming and being in the world while shaping 'territories of r-existence'.

Where community development practice is concerned, much can be learned and transferred from MLB's radical pedagogies in Mauá. The movement's approach can be particularly valuable for community organisations and activist groups operating in the peripheries of Southern cities to tackle housing injustice and environmental risk. Nevertheless, the

three radical pedagogy principles highlighted in this paper can also serve as inspiration for a wide range of community development practitioners and activists. First, radical pedagogies should be used to politicize and problematize precarious conditions, such as housing injustice and environmental risk. In doing so, community development moves beyond straightforward provision of material or social improvements, which can be disempowering and lead to dependency. Instead, radical pedagogies should lead to a process of 'conscientisation', in which participants are able to fully engage in fights for social and environmental justice. Second, radical pedagogy should be approached as an ongoing practice, ideally supported by weekly encounters. In this way, activists and practitioners can sustain community development and avoid participants' disengagement, especially when there is territorial dispersion or members are just waiting for major accomplishments. Third, practitioners should leverage radical pedagogies by combining moments of intellectual discussion with direct action and collective experiments in territories. Through this, one can avoid community development from becoming just about abstract learning or just about uncritical social and material change. Thus, by bringing together action and reflection dialectically, ideally while shaping 'territories of r-existence', radical pedagogies can help movements and community organisations to forge truly emancipatory transformations.

Despite its various emancipatory potentials, MLB's radical pedagogies also present some limitations. First, in some of its activities the movement tends to maintain a clear division of roles between experienced activists and vulnerable residents. This is particularly prominent during negotiations with city authorities or the police, when a higher level of expertise is needed. As such, the movement ends up reproducing knowledge hierarchies, which are obstacles for fully emancipatory pedagogical processes (Freire, [1970]2005). In addition, the process of 'conscientisation' catalysed by MLB's radical pedagogies is time-consuming. As a result, not all participants of the movement fully engage in this process and many stay as members because of urgent housing needs. Activists also must deal with the challenge of rotation, with people constantly leaving and joining the movement, which compromises the endurance of radical pedagogies. Potential limitations could also be noted regarding the transferability of MLB's radical pedagogies to other contexts. MLB's expertise and pedagogical activities become effective particularly because of the movement's multi-scalar organisation at national and regional levels, which allows for the production of the movement's newspaper and the transferability of strategies across cities. Smaller-scale community organisations may not be able to articulate their struggles in such a multi-scalar way, although they could potentially activate trans-local pedagogies by joining networks and coalitions of movements.

Conclusions

This paper looked at how radical pedagogies emerged and unfolded throughout MLB's activism in Mauá between 2021 and 2024, building upon Paulo Freire's ideas and Latin American theorisations of territory. The paper advances scholarship on radical pedagogies, territorial contestation and housing activism. It does so by paying attention to the specific pedagogical potentials emerging when movements simultaneously politicize housing injustices and environmental risk. The paper also contributes to the literature by showing how radical pedagogies evolve while activism de/territorializes and forges new territorialities. As has been presented, the function and organisation of MLB's radical pedagogies transformed before, during and after the Occupation of the Unsheltered by Rainstorms. Prior to the implementation of the occupation, MLB Mauá forged radical pedagogies by politicising emergencies and urgent needs, especially through the support system *disque-chuvas* (dial rains). During implementation of the occupation, MLB's expertise and educational activities helped shape a new territoriality. When the occupation consolidated, pedagogies occurred as participants collectively inhabited and upgraded the site. Upon the dismantling of the occupation, weekly assemblies and direct-action sustained activism through radical pedagogies.

Based on MLB's experience in Mauá, the paper highlights three principles of radical pedagogies. First, urgent needs and oppressive realities should be politicized, serving as an entry point towards 'conscientisation'. Second, radical pedagogies should happen continuously, allowing movements to keep unity and momentum. Third, radical pedagogies should combine action and reflection, while shaping 'territories of r-existence'. In the specific case of MLB in Mauá, the notion of *luta*, an ongoing struggle for social transformation, shapes and permeates radical pedagogies. Through that, realities such as destruction by heavy rains and lack of adequate housing are approached not as static and unchangeable conditions, but rather as starting points for struggles towards more just societies. Future scholarship could explore how similar radical pedagogies manifest in other territorial contestations in urban and suburban contexts, potentially also bringing together different case studies comparatively. Attention could also be paid to the influence of state actors and the private sector on movement-led radical pedagogies. As housing injustices and environmental risk continue to shape southern cities and their peripheries, it is fundamental to give voice to grassroots efforts contesting these oppressive realities, including movement's radical pedagogies.

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