How to reference this paper:

ABSTRACT: The present text, through educational memories, aimed to analyze oral narratives about the experience of creation and operation of the Jacinta Sousa Popular Library and the activities developed in that space in the then Araguaia Resistance Community (Comunidade Araguaia) in Jaguaruana - Ceará (CE), Brazil, which at the time claimed the expropriation of the Maharishi Vedic farm – Paraíso. The text lists the main political-educational activities promoted by the famous library and their impact on the community. Finally, the challenges and obstacles to the realization of that experience were also taken into account, contextualizing it to the moment of rupture that the community was experiencing, culminating in the transition process of the library from one community to another.

KEYWORDS: Popular Education. Memory. Popular Library.
Introduction

 [...] For this story to be increasingly recounted and not forgotten.

ODAIR, José. Farmer, activist of OPA.4

The Community of Resistance of Araguaia5, an occupation located in the municipality of Jaguaruana, Ceará, Brazil, has a history marked by inaccuracies and conflicting discourses regarding the crises experienced by the community. However, some points are vividly remembered, such as the presence of books organized on the table and the smiles of children. It is known that the occupation began on August 10, 2010, accommodating about 30 permanent families and just over 40 in transition. During this period, the community sought to protect itself from constant threats, such as firearm attacks, repossessions, and the fear perpetuated daily by those in power.

At the time, accompanied by OPA6 – Organização Popular, a comunidade desenvolveu diversas experiências de resistência em Educação Popular através da biblioteca, promovendo práticas autônomas e não institucionais de educação, como assembleias e espaços formativos, pois “a educação popular é uma entre outras práticas sociais cuja especificidade é lidar com o saber, com o conhecimento” (BRANDÃO, 1989, p. 12, our translation). This encompasses not only a formal and school sphere of social life but all practices developed in the community by individuals.

Between 2018 and 2019, a science fair project at the State School of Professional Education Francisca Rocha Silva involved high school vocational students in community activities, generating award-winning research in stages of Ceará Científico, an event organized by the Education Department of Ceará, aimed at encouraging the development of scientific research led by students. The Jacinta Sousa Library played a central role, being a space for political-educational practices where the community reflected on work, culture, study, and collectivity, trusting in the humanization of participants, and the right to education persists.

This text emerges from research conducted in the Academic Inter-campus Master's in Education and Teaching - MAIE/UECE, with the direct collaboration of co-authors who

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4 OPA – Popular Organization. The statement by Odair is excerpted from an interview conducted on August 20, 2021.
5 Araguaia – is a name that pays tribute to the resistance experience of the Araguaia guerrilla, which was part of the struggle against the civil-business-military dictatorship of 1964.
6 OPA – is a popular organization formed by members of various social movements, pastoral groups, churches, left-wing parties, collectives, and communities. It originated in the Baixo Jaguaribe region and now has a national reach.
composed the examining board. Methodologically, this research relies on the use of Oral History, which was the means used for constructing and producing sources understood as "individual, informal, dialogical narratives" (PORTELLI, 2016, p. 12, our translation) dealing with aspects of the social life of individuals. Thus, such narratives end up "coloring the past with a value that is dear to us: that which makes man a unique and singular individual in our history, a subject who effectively lived" (ALBERTI, 2004, p. 8, our translation).

This perspective recognizes the symbolic and cultural value of such narratives for the subjects addressed here. The use of their names was done in complete agreement with them. Incidentally, they rejected the possibility of using names other than their own. Narratives sometimes clash with the profession, formality, and care inherent to academia. History only exists in the narratives of concrete subjects, and it is valuable to safeguard that (OLIVEIRA NETO, 2022).

In conclusion, through this text, the aim is to situate the popular library Jacinta Sousa in its local political context, highlighting the nature of its practices in Popular Education, as well as how it approaches and deals with the knowledge and wisdom of individuals, seeking to educate them within a critical and transformative perspective. According to Freire,

>The way a popular library operates, the constitution of its collection, the activities that can be developed within it, and stemming from it, all of this, undeniably, is related to techniques, methods, processes, budget forecasts, and auxiliary personnel, but above all, all of this is related to a specific cultural policy (FREIRE, 1981, p. 41, our translation).

Through the embedded practices and commitments, the famous library constitutes itself as a collective formative device, committed to collective, supportive, and culturally emancipatory sociability, awakening critical awareness and captivating other transformative social practices. When situated in communities that are victims of rights denial and marked by the absence and obstacles of the State, the inherent contradictions must be analyzed in the concrete complexity of the experience.

The following lines aim to understand the experience of a popular library developed by OPA. The analysis seeks to examine the obstacles faced during its implementation and the conduct of activities, the educational gains, and challenges involved, as well as the direction of the experience after the collapse of the occupation. This highlights the vitality and dynamic strength of the library in overcoming adverse contexts.
Community of Resistance Araguaia and the Emergence of the Jacinta Sousa Popular Library

Here and there, some inaccuracies resonate. It is not known for sure how many days or nights there were. From this cold calculation, only the memory of books spread on the table and children smiling is securely retained. Thus, the itinerary begins with the aim of bringing into discussion some narratives related to moments in the library of the former occupation in the Araguaia Community of Resistance, located in the municipality of Jaguatuana, near the territorial limits of two other municipalities, namely Icapuí and Aracati, in the State of Ceará.

Dating back to the first occupation on August 10, 2010, the Araguaia resistance community had about 30 families permanently inhabiting the territory and an average of 40 in transition. During this period, the community lived almost daily, with threats of attacks and repossessing.

The Vedic Maharishi: Paraiso farm, occupied by the peasants of the Araguaia Community, has a total registered area of 3,908,576.3 hectares. In August 2011, it was characterized by INCRA as a large unproductive property; however, the expropriation process was archived because an active forest management plan was attested during that period.

Upon request from the landless rural workers, a new inspection was carried out between August and September of 2016. The report produced by INCRA once again confirmed the condition of a large, unproductive property. However, the expropriation process did not succeed, as the conclusive opinion of the technicians who authored the report argued that,

[...] obtaining the property Vedic Maharishi - Paraiso for the National Agrarian Reform Program is unfeasible because the successive years of rainfall scarcity have worsened the limitations related to the water availability of the property in question (INSTITUTO NACIONAL DE COLONIZAÇÃO E REFORMA AGRÁRIA, 2016, our translation).

Just over a year after the issuance of this decision, on November 22, 2017, the workers of the Araguaia community advanced with the occupation, taking it inside the fence occupying the land and the abandoned properties of the farm. Thus begins a period of intense clashes, where the legal entity of the farm requests a new possession order. However, on May 30, 2018, the Public Ministry of the State of Ceará once again emphasized the unproductive nature of the land, recommending the families to remain on the territory for the fulfillment of the social function of the property, according to Article 184 of the Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988).

At that time, the MST - Landless Workers Movement issued a statement, where they stated:
According to the families, they came to live there since many did not have a home or land. Workers are already organizing themselves to prepare the areas where crops will be grown. The workers had already claimed the property in 2010 when they set up a camp near the farm, demanding the expropriation of the area. During the camp's seven years, two inspections were carried out, and even without fulfilling its social function, the reports favored the owners (MOVIMENTO DOS TRABALHADORES E TRABALHADORAS RURAIS SEM TERRA, 2017, our translation).

Geographically located far from urban centers, with roads practically impassable during the rainy seasons, which hinders access even to neighboring communities, the Araguaia Community provided essential lessons in resistance. Among these lessons, autonomous, non-institutional, and informal educational practices, such as assemblies and constructing formative spaces with the workers, stand out. Despite their still embryonic nature, these practices have proven to be organic and politically potent, contributing to strengthening the community as a collective. Below is a record of one of the assemblies held in the community in November 2017.

**Figure 1 – Assembly in the Araguaia Community, Jaguaruana – CE**

Source: Landless Workers Movement (MST)⁷

From various collective initiatives, such as assemblies, important fruits sprouted, blossoming into practices and social consciousness. The community initiated the activities of its community library, Jacinta Sousa, in homage to a significant educator and famous activist who had passed away a few years earlier. She played an active role in the popular mobilization of the region, participating in various occupations as a mobilizer and popular educator. In the words of Odair José, an OPA militant and longtime friend of Jacinta,

Speaking about Jacinta Sousa is talking about an experience; a human being, a woman, black, is [...]. A strong woman [...]. A woman who rose early in life.

Odair José's narrative helps recall aspects of Jacinta's political involvement. Vibrant and energetic, Jacinta engaged in dialogue with movement comrades despite the challenges and oppressive impositions she faced due to her status as a woman, black, and from a peripheral background. She managed to drive and promote significant educational initiatives in various occupations, including the occupation that gave rise to the Rosa Luxemburgo settlement in Jaguaruana, Ceará.

It is from this legacy of struggle and resistance, embodied in Jacinta's figure that the library bears her name. It is said to "bear" because even though the occupation has ended, the library sprouted wings and moved to the São Miguel Settlement in Itaiçaba – CE, continuing its journey and carrying the baggage of transformation.

The seed of the library sprouted and eventually gave rise to a cultural center in the São Miguel community called the "Marielle Franco Center," which now includes, in addition to the Jacinta Sousa Library, a children's circle, a plenary for meetings, a meeting and study room, and a community kitchen. In memory of two black women, one from the rural area and the other from the city, the Center constitutes a hub for diverse educational practices with an emancipatory perspective.

**Educational Practices at the Jacinta Sousa Library: Planting and Harvesting Educational Actions and Collective Knowledge**

Returning to the time when the library was still located in the Araguaia camp, the community, through collective discussions, built a workshop agenda addressing relevant topics to the community, such as organization and articulation, agroecology, education, and work. Additionally, the community incorporated the construction of a social cartography into the agenda. In this context, social cartography was not limited to an intellectual effort focused solely on recognizing the territory but was also considered a crucial tool in the judicial negotiation processes at the state level.

The community understood that in the pedagogy of transforming society, knowledge and power are associated, recognizing that in the face of manipulation by the powerful, the practice
of popular education is intertwined with liberating knowledge (MENDES, 1993). In this process, the reading of books and the world intersect.

The library then assumes an important role, being a "space of right" where the community thinks "from work, culture, study, collectivity, self-organization, among other dimensions" (GEHRKE, 2018, p. 73, our translation), and fulfills an important social function: to humanize us. By "literalizing" the world, it "develops in us the share of humanity to the extent that it makes us more understanding and open to nature" (CÂNDIDO, 2018, p. 23, our translation).

It is the recognition that the struggle for a society without exploitation is directly interconnected with the enjoyment of intangible goods, incapable of being quantified, as "the struggle for human rights encompasses the struggle for a state of affairs in which everyone can have access to different levels of culture" (CÂNDIDO, 2018, p. 29, our translation). When reading with an eye on the world and life, in fully realizing existence and human values, letters become weapons of justice, equality, and love.

OPA militants, including popular educator Elisângela Silva, a prominent community leader and feminist, led most activities. Responsible for coordinating a significant portion of political formations, including activities at the Jacinta Sousa Library and the agroecological women's garden, this educator embodies the trajectories of boys and girls from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds who faced the challenges of the working world early on. She also represents the transformative potential that emerges from practices of overcoming, resisting, and confronting injustices against the active people in the Northeast semi-arid region, where the educational principle of courage needs to remain constantly present.

The initiatives in the library bring much of a popular pedagogy, aware that emancipation, something distant, is only possible through persistent training and self-training of those who are targets of exclusion, oppression, threats, and exploitation of the capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal structure (MENDES; MEDEIROS, 2021). Below is a table briefly listing some of the essential activities developed in the community.
Table 1 - Overview of educational activities carried out in the Araguaia Community, Jaguaruana – CE, between the years 2017 and 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readers of the World</td>
<td>Children read short stories and book excerpts to illiterate adults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation Circles</td>
<td>Community members gathered in the library to discuss common interest topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemblies</td>
<td>Meetings with all community members are held to discuss urgent issues. Typically, topics related to community organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance Workshops:</td>
<td>Workshops that involved external partners, focusing primarily on training in topics such as organization, work, agroecology, and society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping</td>
<td>Through formative processes, the community conducted territory demarcation and recognition using social cartography methodology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Garden</td>
<td>Through cultivating a communal plot, residents aimed to work on principles such as solidarity and empathy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Group</td>
<td>The &quot;germinating resistance&quot; women's group strengthened actions for the camp's women, building interventions highlighting peasant women's role.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher data, 2023

A significant portion of these activities developed as a result of the construction of the library, which began to house a collection from donations. It occupied an old warehouse from the former farm next to a workshop and tractor garage. Collectively, the space was cleaned, and through the solidarity of other communities supported by OPA, some shelves, and supports were obtained to display and store the books.

Several surveys were conducted attesting to the importance of the popular library's existence in the community. Constructed using completion forms, the small community census helped map the occupation's profile and better direct actions in the territory, examining markers such as gender, race, education, trades and professions, family composition, and income.

The data produced considered specific criteria, such as permanent residence in the community, meaning residing in it, as a portion commuted between the occupation and their original community. Thus, the surveys were constructed based on people who permanently lived in the community. The first chart, shown below, involved 66 individuals, both men and women outside school age, responding to whether they were literate. From this quantity, it was observed that 37 (56%) were illiterate, and 29 (44%) were literate, as shown below.
Based on the data presented in Chart 1, a gender breakdown was conducted in the illiterate population, as evidenced in Chart 2. The primary purpose of this breakdown was to map specificities to develop more effective strategies to engage this audience in activities promoted by the library. Next, the gender of illiterate individuals was emphasized.

Chart 2 – Illiterate Individuals by Gender in the Araguaia Community, Jaguaruana – CE

Source: Researcher Data, 2023
Overall, it was found that self-identified men had lower educational levels than self-identified women. Many men dropped out of school in the first year or did not effectively attend a school year. This reality again highlights the depth of societal inequalities marked by the social division of classes. In the Brazilian rural context, this dynamic is incredibly complex and exclusionary. In this sense, there is a need to conceive a school focused on the working class, as emphasized by Mendes and Medeiros (2021) and Medeiros, Fortunato, and Araújo (2022). An educational institution that fosters the human and integral development of each individual.

It must be noted that women who also responded to the questionnaire had very limited schooling. Many of them, like the men, took on responsibilities for other family members at an early age. Thus, active involvement in school became unviable, considering that in the Brazilian countryside, schools themselves, their access, school transportation, teachers, and the curriculum allowed for more exclusion than inclusion of peasant communities.

In Chart 3, the availability of time for people to participate in collective activities in the community was delineated.

**Chart 3 - Availability of Time for Participation in Collective Activities in the Community**

![Chart](image)

Source: Researcher Data, 2023

In a capitalist society where individuals are educated for the rationalization of life, according to the logic of discipline and individualism, the availability of time represents a political decision, mainly when directed towards establishing collective practices of formation and self-formation.

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10 Yellow color: Women; Orange color: Men.
In this context, activities were developed in line with the data obtained from the community census, taking into account the specific limitations of the community. Examining the activities listed in Table 1, it was observed that a significant part of what was experienced involved various audiences, both literate and illiterate, all participating in the events organized by the library. This includes activities such as mapping and "readings" of the territory, aiming to understand the potential and diversity existing in the community. Knowing the territory deepens the sense of belonging and mobilizes communal and collective practices.

However, even in the face of many meaningful positive experiences in the pursuit of collective strengthening, the political practice of the powerful, through ideology, a culture of fear, and the imposition of scarcity, achieved the feat of disintegration, and the occupation did not succeed in its endeavor. Faced with numerous threats and internal conflicts, most camped individuals (as well as movement leaders) left the area.

The removal of the OPA flag, raised on an old mast of the dilapidated building, was the symbolic last act of the occupation. Despite the memories, a few occupants remained who, under the supposed consent of the landowners, began engaging in extractive activities such as logging and charcoal production, as well as some small farms by a lagoon, with intensive pesticide use.

When the educational praxis of life does not flourish, a culture of death establishes itself. Fortunately, time is historical, and the memory of individuals who struggle and carry within themselves the historical perspective can emerge in new syntheses, expressed in more refined and accurate practices.

While from a concrete perspective, the Araguaia Community in Jaguaruana no longer exists in the previously described form, the educational memory of significant events persists among those who experienced the times of struggle. Learnings persist and, at some point, emerge in new forms and contents. History subsists in practices and memories, and time takes care of its emergence in social relations and individuals committed to human emancipation. Here, Elisângela's memories were invoked, recalling moments of fear and tension experienced during specific periods of struggle for expropriation, especially in the early years.

Between 2010 and 2017, the Araguaia occupation existed outside the boundaries of the farm's fence, setting up a cluster of tents near the main entrance gate. Elisângela recounted a series of threats and bullet attacks that occurred during this period. According to our narrator,

There, we went through many moments of tribulation and struggle. [...] recalling a bit of that time, right [...] when the landowners sent, you know,
henchmen inside the farm. And then we were outside, right, at the gate, and they spent the night shooting, and we couldn't sleep either (Elisângela, Ceará, 2023, our translation).

Countless times, the described episode repeated itself. Retaliations were practically daily, "they passed in front of the camp showing their guns," recounted Elisângela, who added emotionally: "but we resisted all of it together" (Elisângela, Ceará, 2023, our translation). Faced with such challenges, the community knew how to resist, endure pressures and threats, achieve critical legal victories, and strengthen trust and the community spirit. Judging thus, it seems incomprehensible that the occupation eventually collapsed. However, Elisângela explained the reasons for this. Let's see:

We proposed to produce in an agroecological way for us to eat, and the excess is [...], what was left, to sell. But unfortunately, some families, we had these advances, is [...], like the construction of the library, like this progress, right, from the public prosecutor's opinion. But unfortunately, some families, it is [...], did not continue on this path, right? Some families there threatened us because we fought for agrarian reform, and they just wanted to sell wood, right [...], and there was already talk of land speculation in there [...] (Elisângela, Ceará, 2023, our translation).

The working classes learn from organization lessons, even when links break in the necessary union of equals. The history of the subaltern is made up of mistakes and successes, defeats and victories.

Despite the defeat, Elisângela recognized the importance of the library experience: "I know that what we did there was beautiful and is still alive today," she said. Aware of her role in building such experiences, she showed us tenacity: "This is part of it, right? It's the learning from struggles, not always pleasant. But we know it's necessary." From our narrator's perspective, such memories, although painful, are dear to her formation because "without memories, the individual is annihilated" (CANDAU, 2019, p. 17, our translation).

However, it is the transformation of memory into experience, that is, the refusal to close the event that seems to mobilize our narrator's sentiment, similar to a wound that should not heal, similar to what Benjamin proposes in his Theses on the Concept of History, where "experience thus allows the writing of an anti-history because, instead of enclosing the past in a definitive interpretation, it reaffirms the openness of its meaning, its unfinished nature" (GAGNEBIN, 2018, p. 69, our translation). History continues because educational practices are inherent to individuals, especially when they recognize themselves as historical.
Final considerations

In conclusion, it is essential to emphasize the importance of addressing experiences of this nature from the perspective of the individuals involved. In this way, it becomes possible to access educational memories that offer valuable insights and reflections, constituting significant tools in constructing an educational practice committed to social transformation, solidarity, and people's liberation.

Therefore, the end of the occupation did not signify the conclusion of its experience, as, in concrete terms, the library continued to exist in another space, as previously explained. Thus, even when considering only the symbolic realm, it can be observed that the "Jacinta Sousa Library," in its breadth of meaning as a historical experience of certain social subjects, does not conclude in the past; on the contrary, it revitalizes and rediscovers itself through its memories, maintaining its lively and dynamic character. Like Jacinta, the library is present in memory, in practice, and in the historical perspective of those who experienced it as a community educational practice.

It is precisely this continuity, revealed through oral narratives, that ensures the vitality and strength of this experience. This narrative holds inspiring and pedagogical potential, providing mechanisms for concrete action aimed at the practice of Popular Education in territories of resistance and land struggle.

REFERENCES


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