

**CRIMINALIZING THE COUNTRYSIDE, PLATFORMIZING THE SCHOOL:
DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY AS COUNTER-HEGEMONY**

**CRIMINALIZAR O CAMPO, PLATAFORMIZAR A ESCOLA: A SOBERANIA DIGITAL
COMO RESPOSTA CONTRA-HEGEMÔNICA**

**CRIMINALIZAR EL CAMPO, PLATAFORMIZAR LA ESCUELA: SOBERANÍA
DIGITAL COMO RESPUESTA CONTRAHEGEMÓNICA**

Igor Tairone Ramos dos Santos¹ 0000-0003-1796-2401

Judson Pereira de Almeida² 0000-0001-9934-2163

Arlete Ramos dos Santos³ 0000-0003-0217-3805

¹ Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia da Bahia – Vitória da Conquista, Bahia, Brasil; igortaironeufba@gmail.com

² Universidade Estadual do Sudoeste da Bahia – Vitória da Conquista, Bahia, Brasil; judson_almeida@hotmail.com

³ Universidade Estadual do Sudoeste da Bahia – Vitória da Conquista, Bahia, Brasil; arlete.ramos@uesb.edu.br

ABSTRACT:

This qualitative, exploratory study analyses how the platformization of public education by large technology corporations reconfigures the superstructural mechanisms of domination bearing upon Field Education, the Brazilian countryside education movement. We argue that it faces a twofold siege: the symbolic delegitimization carried out by hegemonic media, which labels social movements and field subjects, is renewed through algorithmic circulation, while a material dependence of schools upon transnational private platforms takes hold. The empirical basis comprises 2,729 responses from municipal public-school teachers in Bahia, Brazil, collected within the Formacampo Programme. Findings indicate strong dependence on commercial platforms, poor critical data literacy, the absence of basic public infrastructure, and majority adherence among teachers to the premise that private services outperform public ones. Digital sovereignty is therefore defended as a counter-hegemonic idea capable of addressing both fronts of the siege, in dialogue with Freirean and decolonial perspectives.

Keywords: Field Education; platformization; surveillance capitalism; digital sovereignty; social movements.

RESUMO:

Este trabalho, de natureza qualitativa e caráter exploratório, analisa como a plataformação da educação pública pelas grandes corporações de tecnologia reconfigura os mecanismos superestruturais de dominação que incidem sobre a Educação do Campo. Sustentamos que ela sofre um cerco duplo: a deslegitimação simbólica operada pela mídia hegemônica, que rotula os movimentos sociais e os sujeitos do campo, atualiza-se na circulação algorítmica, ao mesmo tempo em que se instala uma dependência material das escolas em relação às plataformas privadas transnacionais. A base empírica são 2.729 respostas de docentes da rede pública municipal baiana, coletadas no âmbito do Programa Formacampo. Os resultados indicam forte

dependência de plataformas comerciais, letramento crítico precário sobre o tratamento de dados, ausência de infraestrutura pública básica e adesão majoritária dos docentes à premissa da superioridade dos serviços privados. Diante disso, defendemos que a soberania digital como uma ideia contra-hegemônica capaz de responder às duas frentes do cerco, em diálogo com as perspectivas freireana e decolonial.

Palavras-chave: Educação do Campo; plataformação; capitalismo de vigilância; soberania digital; movimentos sociais.

RESUMEN:

Este trabajo, de naturaleza cualitativa y carácter exploratorio, analiza cómo la plataformación de la educación pública por las grandes corporaciones tecnológicas reconfigura los mecanismos superestructurales de dominación que inciden sobre la Educação do Campo, movimiento brasileño de educación campesina. Sostenemos que esta sufre un cerco doble: la deslegitimación simbólica operada por los medios hegemónicos, que etiquetan a los movimientos sociales y a los sujetos del campo, se actualiza en la circulación algorítmica, al mismo tiempo que se instala una dependencia material de las escuelas respecto de plataformas privadas transnacionales. La base empírica son 2.729 respuestas de docentes de la red pública municipal de Bahía, recogidas en el marco del Programa Formacampo. Los resultados indican fuerte dependencia de plataformas comerciales, precaria alfabetización crítica sobre el tratamiento de datos, ausencia de infraestructura pública básica y adhesión mayoritaria de los docentes a la premisa de la superioridad de los servicios privados. Defendemos, por tanto, la soberanía digital como categoría contrahegemónica capaz de responder a los dos frentes del cerco, en diálogo con las perspectivas freireana y decolonial.

Palabras clave: Educação do Campo; plataformación; capitalismo de vigilancia; soberanía digital; movimientos sociales.

Introduction

Field Education¹, forged in the struggle of countryside workers, agrarian reform settlements and traditional communities, was constituted as a counter-hegemonic proposal, defined by Caldart (2009) through an inseparable triad: countryside, public policy and education. It was not born in State offices nor in market prescriptions, but on the ground of the occupations and communities that demand a school bound to their reality, their work and their identity. Precisely because it carries this contesting character, it faces an ideological and media campaign which, over decades, has associated social movements and, by extension, the subjects of the countryside, with disorder, illegality and backwardness.

Recent technological transformations have shifted a significant part of this symbolic dispute to the territory of digital platforms. The same corporations that organize the circulation

¹ Translator's note: readers may have met this concept under the label *rural education*. Following Caldart (2009), however, Educação do Campo — here rendered as Field Education — is a distinct category: an education conceived by and with the peoples of the countryside, as a public policy bound to their struggles, territories and identities, and not merely an education located in, or delivered to, rural areas. This distinction is developed throughout the text.

of information and shape public debate, such as *Google*, *Meta* and *Microsoft*, came to provide the infrastructure upon which public schools, including those of the countryside, carry out their pedagogical activities. For van Dijck, Poell and De Waal (2018), such platforms have become global infrastructures that establish the conditions under which other actors may operate. The convergence is not accidental: the ideological apparatus of information and the school apparatus, previously relatively distinct, tend to overlap in the hands of the same set of transnational companies (Santos, 2025).

We start from the assumption that Field Education suffers, in the digital context, a twofold siege. On the symbolic plane, the historical delegitimization of its subjects persists and is reconfigured, now amplified by the algorithmic circulation of discourses. On the material plane, a growing dependence of the pedagogical infrastructure on private platforms takes hold, which compromises the autonomy that lies at the core of the project. The two fronts are inseparable, for whoever does not control the infrastructure through which discourse circulates does not control the image produced of it either.

As the idea of “digital sovereignty” runs through the entire text, it is worth defining it from the outset. Sovereignty, in its classical sense, is understood as the power of a political community to decide, in the last instance, on the matters that concern it. Transposed to digital technologies, the notion designates the capacity of communities, institutions and nations to control the technical conditions, the data and the infrastructures that mediate their activities, instead of delegating them entirely to transnational private corporations. Pohle and Thiel (2021) warn that it is not reducible to the State’s capacity to enforce laws, involving technical, pedagogical and social dimensions, and Belli (2024) calls *Commons Digital Sovereignty* the right of communities to define, democratically, the design and management of network infrastructures as a common good. It is in this broadened sense that we employ the concept.

To support the reflection empirically, we draw on data produced within the Countryside Teacher Education Programme (Formacampo), detailed in the methodological section. Besides this introduction, the text is organized into five sections: the first discusses the shift from the media superstructure to the algorithmic one, illustrated by an emblematic case of criminalization that directly reached the countryside school; the second characterizes platformization as an expression of surveillance capitalism; the third presents the methodological path and the Formacampo Programme; the fourth analyses the data from the Bahian territory, with emphasis on the teachers’ voices; the fifth gathers experiences of resistance and develops digital sovereignty as a counter-hegemonic horizon, followed by the conclusion.

From the media superstructure to the algorithmic one

In the materialist tradition, society articulates an economic infrastructure, formed by the means and relations of production, and a juridical, political and cultural superstructure erected upon that base. Contradicting the idealist tradition, Marx asserts that it is the material conditions of existence that condition the consciousness of human beings, as the author synthesizes:

It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being; it is, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which arises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness (Marx, 1983, p. 25).

It is in the superstructure, therefore, that the dominant class seeks to secure its material position, both through the force of the State and through the production of a symbolic conformity that naturalizes domination, since the ideas of the ruling class, presented as universally valid, become the ruling ideas of each epoch (Marx; Engels, 2007). Applied to our object, this formulation explains why the defence of unproductive property manages to present itself as the defence of everyone's order, and why the entry of a transnational corporation into the public school manages to present itself as modernization in the collective interest.

Althusser (1985) systematized the notion of ideological State apparatuses, among them the school apparatus and the information apparatus, historically composed of the press, radio, television and, more recently, the internet and social networks, which symbolically justify the material relations of domination and produce what Gramsci (2001) understood as hegemony, that is, the active consent of the dominated. In the educational field, Saviani (2024) recalls that the symbolic violence of the imposition of the dominant culture is not manifested only in school, being equally reflected in the formation of public opinion by the mass media, which reveal themselves as ideological apparatuses par excellence, among other ways, through the treatment given to social movements and their agendas.

This treatment operates through labelling. Becker (2019) defined the label as a designation attributed to an individual or group when it violates socially established norms, as the author himself formulates:

[...] deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender. The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label (Becker, 2019, p. 24).

Those who conduct this process are the so-called moral entrepreneurs, that is, institutions, authorities and dominant groups that hold the power to define what counts as deviance. Historically, occupations of unproductive land and mobilizations for expropriation are portrayed as criminal actions, and their protagonists receive labels such as troublemakers or criminal organization. The very lexical choice already labels, for occupation designates the organized entry into a property that fails to fulfil the social function imposed on ownership by the Constitution (Brasil, 1988, arts. 5, XXIII, 184 and 186), a historical form of pressure for the realization of a legally established right, whereas invasion transports the same act into the register of criminal wrongdoing and suppresses the illegality that the action denounces, that of the unproductive latifundium.

Agenda-setting theorists argue that the media build the agenda of topics about which society should think and, by selecting aspects of reality and making them salient, identify problems, diagnose causes and issue moral judgements (Reis; Gadini, 2016). Not by chance, the vocabulary of the legislative proposals that increase penalties for occupations and create registries of invaders is exactly that of hostile journalistic coverage, since the media label provides the argument for the State's denial of the countryside's agendas, and the political confrontation constitutive of social movements is reconverted into crime. The most perverse effect is to fracture class solidarity, for the urban worker is led to see in the countryside movements an enemy, when they share with them the same position of subordination to capital.

This conversion of the label into a legal device is no theoretical abstraction and reached, in the most emblematic case, the school itself. In December 2007, the Superior Council of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Rio Grande do Sul approved a report designating prosecutors to file a public civil action aimed at dissolving the MST and determined intervention in its itinerant schools. Based on a Conduct Adjustment Agreement signed between the agency and the state government, the press reported, in February 2009: "From March, when the school year begins in Rio Grande do Sul, the itinerant schools of the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) will be closed" (Torres, 2009, online, our translation). Hundreds of encamped children were relocated to schools far removed from their reality, and the Human Rights and Minorities Commission of the Chamber of Deputies reacted in an official note: "More than a political/ideological decision aimed at weakening the MST through criminalization, this is a flagrant violation of human rights" (Brasil, 2009, online, our translation).

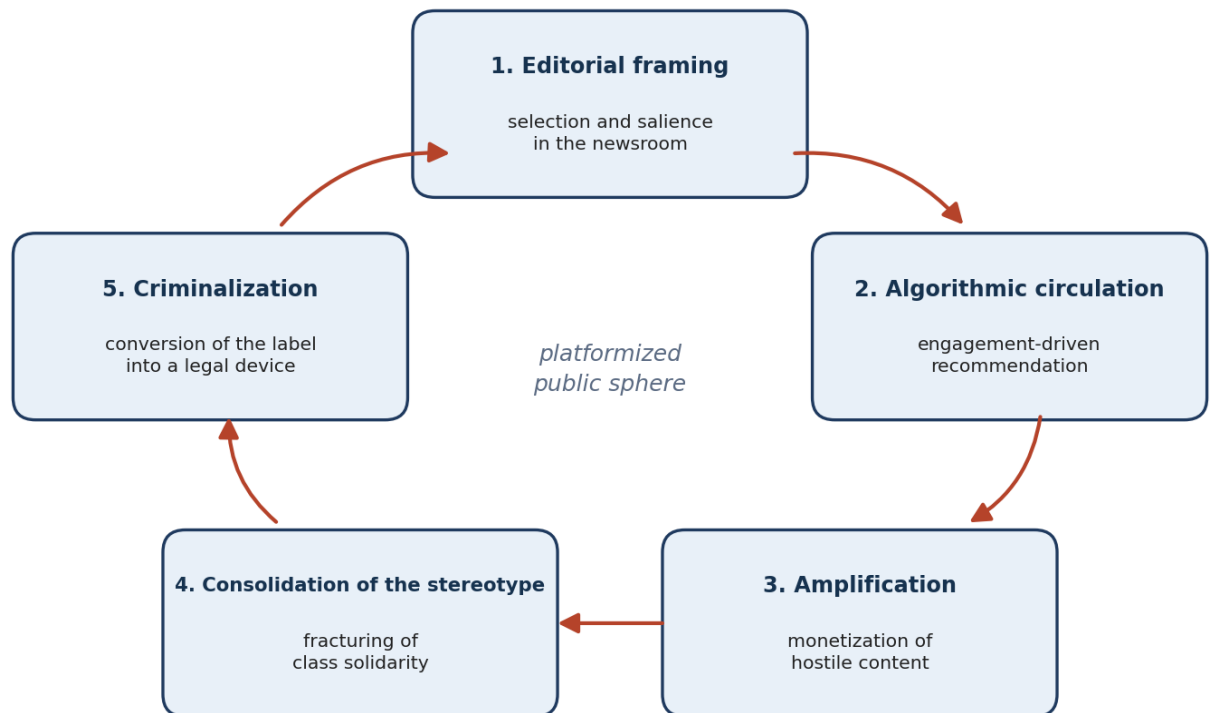
The episode illuminates the theoretical status of this dispute, for the State that closes the encampment school is far from being a neutral arbiter:

the state is thus a structured battleground in a particular way, where different social and political forces compete as they try to advance their own interests, identities and values and to compromise or weaken others (Jessop, 2016, p. 54).

It is on this terrain of dispute that criminalizing discourses, gestated in the media sphere, reach the layer of education directly, materializing in reports, adjustment agreements and acts of closure. And the target is not peripheral to our object, it is its centre, since it was within the struggle of the MST and the national articulation For a Field Education that the very concept of Field Education was gestated and developed, with the movement investing, from the first occupations onwards, in the construction of schools and of a pedagogy bound to the struggle for land (Arroyo; Caldart; Molina, 2004; Caldart, 2009). Attacking the movement's schools therefore means attacking the historical matrix from which Field Education emerged as a project, and labelling the movement and closing its schools reveal themselves as moments of one and the same process, in which symbolic delegitimization is realized as educational policy.

This picture did not disappear with the digital; it was intensified by it, with a shift that classical theory could not have fully anticipated. The corporations that today organize the global circulation of information configure themselves as transnational and private ideological apparatuses, which largely escape the control of national States (Santos, 2025). In the platformized public sphere, framing ceases to be exclusively editorial and becomes also algorithmic: the salience of content no longer depends only on the headline, but on the logic of engagement that amplifies what provokes indignation and hostility, because it maximizes user retention and, with it, data collection and ad display. Srnicek (2017) describes platforms as intermediaries that live off the continuous extraction of data, and Zuboff (2021) shows where this extraction becomes business: the modulation of behaviour, sold in markets of future behaviours. Becker's (2019) moral entrepreneur gains, so to speak, a new partner, which is the recommendation algorithm. There is, moreover, an important qualitative difference, since, in the journalistic model, it was possible to identify the party responsible for the framing and to contest it; in algorithmic circulation, framing dissolves into shares and clippings, becoming diffuse and infrastructural, embedded in the very logic of the platform. Figure 1 synthesizes the cycle.

Figure 1 – The labelling cycle in the platformized public sphere



Source: Prepared by the authors (2026).

As the figure shows, each stage of the cycle rests materially on the next: it is not enough to dispute the discourse, it is necessary to dispute the infrastructure upon which it circulates. It is here that the critique of the criminalization of social movements necessarily meets the critique of the platformization of education.

Platformization and surveillance capitalism

If the symbolic superstructure shifts to the platforms, the same happens with the concrete infrastructure of education. It is worth distinguishing privatization from platformization. Since the 1990s, the critical literature has recorded the penetration of business logic into public education, with the State displaced from the position of provider to that of regulator and contractor of private solutions. Platformization names something more specific: the penetration of the technical and economic infrastructures of platforms into the various sectors of social life, which come to reorganize themselves around their data architecture (van Dijck; Poell; De Waal, 2018). In education, a service is not outsourced; what is transferred is the very infrastructure upon which the educational activity takes place, silently and capillarily.

Zuboff (2021) gives a name to this form of accumulation, surveillance capitalism, which takes human experience as free raw material and converts it into data traded in markets of future behaviours. In school, students and teachers are, at the same time, users and sources of data, for every submitted assignment, every click and every duration of stay generate capturable information, much of it concerning children and adolescents. Cruz and Venturini (2020, p. 1082) are explicit about what this offer means for the companies:

[...] by offering educational applications and data centre space to thousands of students from Brazilian public schools and universities, the companies involved in this market expand their possibilities of extracting the raw material for their products, increasing their surveillance assets (our translation).

These agreements, the same authors observe, are generally bilateral and opaque, with terms that rarely become public. Schools come to depend on a handful of root platforms, so named by Pessanha (2020) because they serve as the base upon which the other systems operate, in an arrangement the author characterizes as digital neo-imperialism. The covid-19 pandemic accelerated the process, for what presented itself as an emergency measure consolidated itself as a permanent arrangement, and countryside schools, at the most fragile end of the system, reached the critical moment already lacking infrastructure, connectivity and teacher training (Santos, 2025).

The implications for Field Education are dense, since the project rests on the protagonism of peasant subjects, the valorization of their knowledges and the collective construction of a pedagogy bound to the territory (Santos, 2020; Santos and Peixoto, 2026). It is precisely this political charge that is lost when the expression is translated as mere *rural education*² (which can be verified in any online translator whose server is native to a country where English is the native language), erasing the difference, historically constructed by the social movements, between an education of the countryside and an education for the countryside. There is an evident contradiction between this principle of autonomy and territorial rootedness and the school's submission to standardized infrastructures operating under commercial logics alien to the specificities of the countryside. Mészáros (2005) reminds us that education only becomes an instrument of liberation if it breaks with the logic of capital, and platformization operates in the opposite direction, subordinating the educational process to

² The demonstration can be made in any online translator: entering "Educação do Campo" into Google Translate (<https://translate.google.com/?sl=pt&tl=en&text=educa%C3%A7%C3%A3o+do+campo>), one obtains *rural education*, a version that erases the political charge built by the social movements.

accumulation interests external to it. In doctoral research devoted precisely to this process, one of the authors of this article synthesized the scope of the change in the following terms:

This transformation goes beyond the simple digitalization of existing practices, constituting a fundamental restructuring of power relations in the educational field. As a result, both the pedagogical autonomy and the technological sovereignty of public institutions are gradually eroded, giving way to the systematic control exercised by the large technology corporations. [...] even when they are not directly present, root platforms play a crucial mediating role in educational processes, holding the power to reconfigure the entire field of education according to their logics and interests (Santos, 2025, p. 136, our translation).

Platformization thus represents a contemporary form of hegemonic recomposition through technology, against which the revolutionary pedagogy of which Saviani (2024) speaks is directed, and recognizing it as such is the first step towards confronting it.

Methodology

The investigation is characterized as qualitative research of an exploratory nature. The qualitative approach is justified by the interest in understanding how platformization is lived and signified by the teachers of countryside schools, beyond what numbers can measure, as Minayo defines:

Qualitative research answers very particular questions. In the Social Sciences, it concerns itself with a level of reality that cannot or should not be quantified. That is, it works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes (Minayo, 2001, p. 21-22, our translation).

The exploratory character, in turn, derives from the object itself, for the platformization of countryside schools constitutes a recent process still scarcely described in the literature, so that an initial approximation was sought, capable of mapping its manifestations in the Bahian territory and of raising categories for future investigations.

It is worth defining here the programme that originated the data. Formacampo (Countryside Teacher Education Programme) is an extension action of the State University of Southwest Bahia (UESB), developed in articulation with Gepemdecc, which has offered, since 2021, continuing education to teachers, managers and pedagogical coordinators of countryside schools in dozens of Bahian municipalities, constituting one of the largest networks of countryside educator training in the state (Cajaiba; Santos; Brito, 2022). The empirical basis comes from a questionnaire applied, in 2024, to teachers from 264 municipal public networks served by the programme, totalling 2,729 valid responses, systematized between 2025 and

2026. Although the instrument contains objective questions, whose percentages are mobilized here only descriptively, to gauge the phenomenon, the treatment is eminently qualitative, with priority given to the open questions, in which teachers described, in their own words, the challenges they face, submitted to thematic analysis guided by the categories of the theoretical framework (infrastructural dependence, data literacy, material conditions). To this *corpus* are added excerpts from semi-structured interviews with information technology staff responsible for educational systems of Bahian municipalities, produced in the doctoral research of one of the authors (Santos, 2025) and taken up here as a qualitative counterpoint, with anonymity preserved through code names (*Patch*, *Debugger*).

Data, voices and resistance from the (Forma)Campo

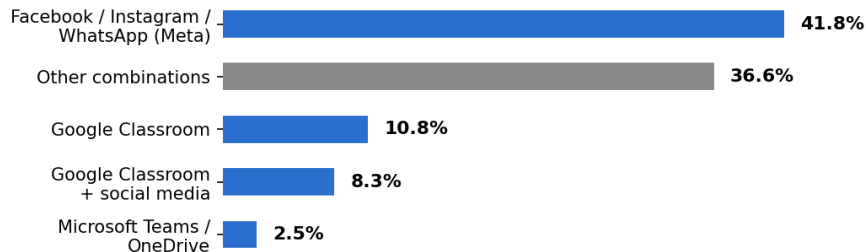
The first set of data concerns the platforms actually used in pedagogical work and confirms a strong dependence on private commercial services, as Figure 2 synthesizes. Taken together, the subjects' responses show that *Meta* and *Google* platforms account for 60.9% of the responses, with a predominance of the former, explainable by the prior familiarity of students and families with *WhatsApp*. The choice seems pragmatic and even democratic, but it reveals the depth of the capture: the communicational infrastructure of everyday life, maintained by corporations that live off data extraction, also becomes the pedagogical infrastructure of the countryside public school, a condition that empirically confirms the notion of root platforms (van Dijck; Poell; De Waal, 2018; Santos, 2025). There is, in this arrangement, no public, sovereign or community platform whatsoever. Nor is it a transitory arrangement, for 73.9% maintain some use of these tools after the return to in-person teaching: the health emergency was the gateway to a transformation that remained. It is also worth noting that 51.8% state that they do not pay for the platforms and 27.8% do not even know whether payment is involved, an indication that the counterpart for the supposed gratuity, the surrender of data, remains invisible to those who offer it.

Figure 2 – Dependence on commercial platforms in Bahia’s countryside schools (n = 2,729)

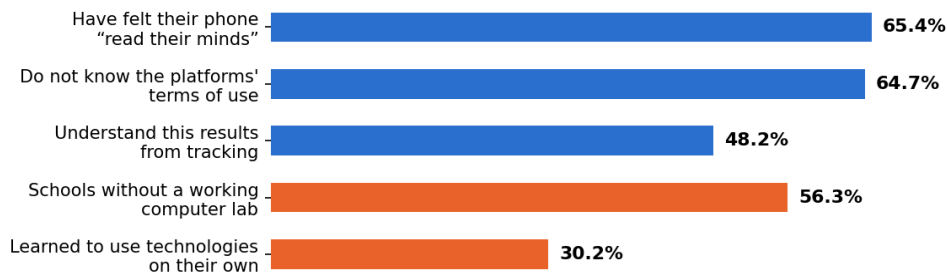
Municipal public-school teachers • Formacampo survey, 2024 (n = 2,729)

60.9% of responses indicate platforms controlled by Meta and Google **73.9%** keep some use of these platforms after the pandemic

A. Platforms used in pedagogical work



B. Data literacy, infrastructure and training



■ Data literacy ■ Infrastructure and training

Source: prepared by the authors from Formacampo survey data (2024).

Source: Prepared by the authors (2026).

The second set reveals the ideological dimension of the problem, for, of the total, 64.7% of the teachers do not know the terms of use of the platforms they operate daily, in a context in which the data of children and adolescents, subjects of special protection, are at stake. The gap is confirmed in the contrast between the 65.4% who have already felt their mobile phone “read their thoughts” and the 48.2% who understand this to be tracking and profiling. Extraction takes place silently and consensually, even though this consent is a fiction, for no one reads or understands the terms they accept, and the open responses show that the problem is not individual negligence, but a structural asymmetry of power and information. The interviews shift the question to the plane of the deliberate design of the systems. Asked about the platforms’ rapid advance, the technician *Patch* replied:

[...] there are teams with psychology professionals focused on user experience, like work that starts from the very beginning of the project, when we think strategically about how to make the interface attractive and intuitive for the user, you know? (*Patch*, 2024 apud Santos, 2025, p. 146, our translation).

Ease of use presents itself as a systematic investment in the capture of attention, and the unreflective acceptance of the terms is the predicted effect of interfaces conceived to dispense with reflection. A relationship analogous to the one described by Becker (2019) in the field of labelling is established, except that now the one who defines the rules is not the media moral entrepreneur, but the corporation that unilaterally drafts the digital contract: the countryside teacher, like the app worker, is captured by an algorithmic logic they do not understand and about which they do not decide. In the open responses reappears the recognition that the adoption of the platforms is decided in distant instances, without listening to those at the front line, people who, as one participant synthesized, are not heard, and yet carry the weight of other people's decisions. Another interviewed technician, responsible for a municipal public platform, ironizes this imbalance:

And the worst is that when a problem occurs in any external system, everybody says 'Ah, if we had hired a big company this wouldn't happen'. Now... when it's us who fix the problems, nobody remembers (*Debugger*, 2024 apud Santos, 2025, p. 192, our translation).

The third set, concerning material conditions, makes the picture even more contradictory: 56.3% of the schools have no working computer lab and 30.2% of the teachers learned to use the technologies on their own; added to those who never had any training, almost 60% received no institutional preparation. The open responses give a face to the percentages, reporting non-existent or slow internet, inadequate electrical wiring, equipment broken or never installed, the teacher taking their own device to school. Not infrequently, the only possible use is reduced to the projection of content, with students as passive spectators, the opposite of the active and dialogical pedagogy that Field Education pursues. The public is lacking and the private abounds.

This asymmetry reveals the central gear of privatization: when the State ceases to provide laboratories, connectivity and training and, at the same time, grants corporations access to schools, there is no omission, there is a specific form of State action, that of withdrawing as provider to reappear as facilitator of the market, driven by the instrumental belief that educational technology would, by itself, solve pedagogical problems (Lindh; Nolin, 2016).

Free platforms emerge as a saving solution for shortages that the public authorities themselves ceased to supply, and each round reinforces the perception that corporations are more efficient than the State, legitimizing new transfers.

This is no mere interpretative hypothesis: on average, 70% of the teachers answered that the services provided by private initiative would be better than public ones, considering

legitimate the participation of private groups in educational provision. The datum is remarkable because it comes from public servants of countryside schools, and reveals, in its most finished form, the active consent of which Gramsci (2001) speaks, for the very subjects captured by platformization adhere to the premise that legitimizes it. Soares (2000) helps to situate this adherence historically, by demonstrating that the Latin American neoliberal adjustment was not accomplished only through the material dismantling of public services, but through the simultaneous construction of a discourse that presents the private as a synonym of efficiency and the public as a synonym of precariousness. This discursive legitimation is articulated, as we have seen, with the criminalization of social movements, since delegitimizing those who defend the public and exalting those who privatize it are operations of the same process. The teachers' perception is not, therefore, an individual error of assessment, but the effect of an ideological pedagogy of decades: when the State delivers schools without laboratories and without internet, and the corporation delivers free and functional platforms, the everyday comparison confirms what the discourse had already taught.

Kwet (2019) names the process digital colonialism: companies from the centres of capitalism control *software*, *hardware* and connectivity, re-enacting the relations of dependence between centre and periphery, with data subjected to foreign jurisdictions. What distinguishes the case of the Brazilian countryside is the superimposition of this capture on a prior inequality, for where public infrastructure already exists platformization installs itself upon it, whereas in countryside schools it installs itself upon the void. The data and the voices of the Bahian territory thus confirm the hypothesis of the twofold siege, since the countryside school is delegitimized on the symbolic plane and captured on the material plane by a private infrastructure installed in the vacuum of public policies. It is in view of this picture that digital sovereignty imposes itself as a necessity, and it would sound abstract, or even defeatist, if it were not possible to point to concrete experiences of another path. They exist, on three scales.

On the community scale, families linked to a public school in Barcelona organized themselves, from 2018 onwards, with the activist network *Xnet* and free *software* collectives to conceive the *Democratic Digitalisation* (DD) platform, open source, with virtual learning environments, videoconferencing and collaborative tools under democratic governance, and not under proprietary algorithms (Santos, 2025). Adopted by pilot schools, DD demonstrates that dependence on root platforms is not destiny, but political choice, realizing what Belli (2024) calls *Commons Digital Sovereignty*. Its subsequent trajectory is equally instructive: once public funding ceased, maintenance came to depend on volunteering and donations. Herein lies a decisive structural contrast, since corporations offer robust systems with permanent support,

sustained by the lucrative extraction of data, whereas community projects weaken without stable funding, and these mobilizations need to be continuous, for the borders between the public and the private shift permanently.

On the State scale, the year 2026 recorded expressive movements in Europe. France set the goal of replacing *Microsoft Teams*, *Zoom* and *Webex* with the public system Visio by 2027; Germany migrated around 25 thousand workstations in *Schleswig-Holstein* to *LibreOffice*, *Nextcloud*, *Open-Xchange* and *Thunderbird*; and Denmark adopted *LibreOffice* in its Ministry of Digitalization (Soberania..., 2026). The measures, justified by the protection of sensitive data and by the reduction of exposure to foreign legislation such as the US *CLOUD Act*, constitute practical recognition that digital sovereignty is not reducible to a juridical question (Pohle; Thiel, 2021).

It is not necessary, however, to seek alternatives only abroad, since in the Bahian territory itself, Santos (2025) documents a municipality that chose to develop its own public platform, integrating education, health and social assistance, and what makes the case decisive is that the adaptation to the particularities of the countryside, impossible in standardized corporate solutions, appears there as a design requirement. According to the technician responsible for the development:

[...] here in the region we have many cases of students who miss school during harvest time [...] Bravo had no proper way even to register that... whereas the [platform], we're already building it with these particularities in mind. [...] we have a lot of trouble with internet in rural schools. So we're building the system with that in mind, with *offline* synchronization and everything. Do you think *Google* or Bravo, whatever it may be, would care about that? (*Debugger*, 2024 apud Santos, 2025, p. 189, our translation).

The question answers itself, for no transnational corporation has an economic incentive to develop functionalities aimed at a public that represents a marginal fraction of its market. And the claimed adaptation is not a pedagogical concession, it is a legal requirement, given that the LDB determines the adaptation of the school calendar to the phases of the agricultural cycle (Brasil, 1996, art. 28, II). Formacampo itself constitutes an emerging experience of digital sovereignty, for it operates its own virtual environment, maintained by the research group, which concentrates enrolments, training materials, certification follow-up and a Field Education Observatory, while at the same time tactically appropriating commercial platforms, as in open broadcasts, to convey counter-hegemonic knowledge produced by the subjects of the countryside themselves.

From these experiences we extract an operative definition: digital sovereignty does not mean refusal of technique, but rather control over the infrastructure that sustains the formative process and over the knowledge that circulates through it. Against it operate two habitual and insufficient responses. The first bets on the merely technical training of teachers, as if the problem were a deficit of operational skill, when the core lies in understanding and disputing who controls the platform. The second proposes the wholesale refusal of technologies, unfeasible and undesirable, for it deprives the subjects of the countryside of instruments which, under other conditions, would expand their possibilities of communication, organization and learning. Digital sovereignty cannot be delegated: it needs to be built collectively, through political decisions that confront the unequal power relations in the digital ecosystem. Applied to education, it implies public, open and community platforms, collective control of school data and the education of educators capable of questioning the logic of the technologies they use. It is, in Gramsci's (2001) terms, counter-hegemonic work, for it disputes consent on the very terrain where it is produced today. The proposal dialogues with liberating pedagogy, for according to Freire (2011) education only emancipates when it breaks with the banking model and converts itself into a dialogical practice of conscientization. On the digital terrain, the demand translates into critical data literacy, which is not teaching how to operate tools, but forming subjects capable of understanding who controls them and whose interests they serve, an urgency made evident by the 64.7% of teachers who do not know the terms of use. It is also articulated with the decolonial perspective, for transferring pedagogical mediation to platforms headquartered in the centres of global capitalism configures digital colonization (Kwet, 2019), in which the South supplies data and market while consuming technical standards conceived in the North (Pessanha, 2020).

It is worth, finally, retying the two ends of the argument. As long as the circulation of discourses about the countryside depends on infrastructures whose logic is engagement, peasant subjects will continue to appear in public debate under the framing that others produce about them. Disputing the infrastructure is, for this reason, also disputing who narrates the countryside, since whoever holds the means of circulation participates in the definition of what counts as legitimate and what counts as deviance (Becker, 2019). A countryside school that documents its practices, publishes what it produces and dialogues with its community through means it controls accumulates material proof against the stereotype of disorder and backwardness; a school that only exists on third-party servers depends, in order to be seen, on the same attention economy that caricatures it. From this follow three articulated measures: free *software* and open platforms maintained by public institutions or municipal consortia; public

infrastructures of connectivity and storage, so that school data do not travel only through foreign servers; and critical data literacy in initial and continuing teacher education. In isolation, none solves the problem; together, they sketch a path, which can only be a collective project and public policy, a condition for placing education back outside the logic of capital (Mészáros, 2005) and a contemporary form of the revolutionary pedagogy of which Saviani (2024) spoke.

Conclusion

We have sought to demonstrate that Field Education faces, in the context of digitalization, a siege on two articulated fronts: the symbolic delegitimization of its subjects, heir to media labelling and amplified by algorithmic circulation, and the material dependence of its pedagogical infrastructure on private platforms, under the extractivist logic of surveillance capitalism. This is the path the title announces, from the media superstructure to the algorithmic one, and the two dimensions express the same subordination of popular education to the interests of capital. Field Education is not, here, one particular case among others, it is the school form of a class project, in which the social movement figures as a subject that educates. For this reason, to label the movement is, in the same gesture, to delegitimize its pedagogy. When the news converts occupation into invasion, and when the State apparatus closes the schools of an encampment, the school that this struggle produced and the knowledge elaborated within it are also disqualified. Criminalization and infrastructural capture are not two problems that happen to fall upon the same territory; they are two operations upon the same object.

The data from the Bahian territory show us that dependence on commercial platforms continued after the pandemic, teachers know little about what is done with the data they produce, and schools lack the most basic public infrastructure, although the corporations' infrastructure is there, available and relatively free. The research results show us how this is lived. They accept terms they do not read, work with equipment that does not function and say, in various ways, that decisions about the school are taken by those who have never been in it. It is here that digital sovereignty ceases to be a question of infrastructure and reveals itself as a question of the circulation of discourse. A public or community platform offers the subjects of the countryside a place of enunciation not submitted to the metric of engagement; without their own means of producing, archiving and circulating their word, the movements remain in the position of object of other people's discourse, whereas, with these means, they accumulate record, memory and counter-narrative. Funding public, open and community educational

platforms is, for this reason, simultaneously technology policy, educational policy and a policy of guaranteeing the voice that can offer some kind of confrontation to the discourses that criminalize movements or proposals, even running counter to legal guarantees.

The struggle for Field Education is, today, also a struggle for the digital infrastructure upon which this education takes place. Defending the countryside school means disputing who controls the cables, the servers and the algorithms that traverse it, for the autonomy that social movements conquered on the ground of the land now needs to be conquered also on digital terrain.

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About the authors

Igor Tairone Ramos dos Santos. PhD in Education from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). Master's degree from the State University of Southwest Bahia (UESB). Professor of English at the Federal Institute of Bahia (IFBA), Vitória da Conquista Campus. Territorial Governance Agent of the Novo Pronacampo (BAHIA). GEPEMDECC (Study and Research Group on Education, Social Movements, and Countryside and City Education). Authorship contribution (CRediT): Conceptualization; Investigation; Methodology; Writing – original draft.

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Judson Pereira de Almeida. [Highest degree and granting institution; occupation and institution; research group – to be completed, max. 3 lines].

Authorship contribution (CRediT): Conceptualization; Investigation; Methodology; Writing – original draft.

Lattes CV: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/0000000000000000>

Arlete Ramos dos Santos. Postdoctorate in Education and Social Movements (UNESP), PhD and Master's in Education (FAE/UFMG), Professor of the Department of Philosophy and Human Sciences (DFCH), Professor of the Graduate Programme in Education of the State University of Southwest Bahia (UESB) and of the Professional Master's Graduate Programme in Basic Education (PPGE) of the State University of Santa Cruz (UESC). Coordinator of the Study and Research Group on Social Movements, Diversity and Countryside and City Education (GEPEMDECC/CNPq), Coordinator of the Latin American Network of Field Education and Social Movements (REDE PECC-MS) and Coordinator of the Formacampo Programme.

Author contributions (CRediT): Conceptualization; Investigation; Methodology; Writing. Currículo Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3007333595055044>

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