Student Strike as *a* Critical Pedagogy Practice in Graphic Design Education

How to cite this article: Souza, E. A. B. M.; & Cunha Filho, P. C. (2022). Student Strike as a Critical Pedagogy Practice in Graphic Design Education. *Diseña*, (21), Article.5. https://doi.org/10.7764/disena.21.Article.5

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DISEÑA | 21
AUGUST 2022
ISSN 0718-8447 (print)
2452-4298 (electronic)

Original Research Article
Reception ☑
March 30 2022
Acceptance ☑
July 25 2022

Traducción al español aquí

ABSTRACT

This article reports on and analyzes the experience of undergraduate Industrial Arts Graphic Design students autonomously planning and holding an event (*préocupe*) using action research methods to address two issues: fragmentation of the student body and the feeling of inadequacy. By framing Vieira Pinto's concepts of 'work' and 'critical consciousness', this research confirmed that students' existential reality is akin to that of the working classes: they both work for others when performing their regular activities. The paper presents the statements of students gathered in a collective interview to demonstrate that *préocupe* instantiated the pedagogical essence of striking: developing the class's critical consciousness. This work pertains to other initiatives challenging the spread of neoliberal education worldwide, and is a meaningful contribution to critical pedagogy practices in design education, with accounts of students developing both operational graphic design skills and critical consciousness autonomously.

Keywords

Critical consciousness
Critical pedagogy
Design education
Graphic design
Pedagogic practice

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INTRODUCTION: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN CONTEMPORARY DESIGN EDUCATION

In 1999, the European Union implemented the Bologna Agreement to set standards in higher education as a means to achieve uniformity and comparability of institutions — which led them to take on a corporate identity in order to compete for students/consumers (Gielen & Bruyne, 2012; Laval, 2019). Such rearrangement occurs parallel to the growing precarity of labor epitomized by what has been called the 'gig economy' (Woodcock & Graham, 2020). In professional design discourse, this is expressed by Lorusso (2019) through the neologism 'entreprecariat': a word that mixes 'entrepreneurship' and 'precariat' to point out that labor relations are superseded by feebler transactions that entail casual, non-permanent work, and permanent uncertainty for workers. This scenario is widely recognized as a consequence of neoliberalism (Gielen & Bruyne, 2012; Laval, 2019; Lorusso, 2019; Woodcock & Graham, 2020).

As Abdulla (2019) and Wood (2020) point out, debates about neoliberalism have also spread to design schools. As a response, there have been discussions about what a 'critical pedagogy' could refer to in design education, some of which have been compiled in publications such as Lindgren (2018), Laranjo (2019), and Wood and Haylock (2020); while other initiatives sparked from research — such as the ones described by Elzenbaumer (2013) and Laranjo (2017) — have also highlighted the need for critical pedagogy in design. Yet others propose alternatives to neoliberal design education through co-created curricula and divergent pedagogic ideas, such as Parallel School, Southland Institute, and (Graphic) Design School School. However, engaging in critical pedagogy is a difficult task, because it seems it is not fostered through the reproduction of a specific set of procedures or deploying toolkits.

The field of critical pedagogy is characterized by "constructive resistance to what is currently taken for granted, whether this is seen as the ideological givens of texts or the assumed identities and dispositions of learners" (Wallace, 2008, p. 144). In large part, this field stems from the distinction drawn by Paulo Freire (1967/2020) between 'banking' education and education 'as a practice of freedom'. According to him, the former reinforces the status quo and deems education merely as a transfer of knowledge, which dehumanizes people by disempowering them to act upon the world. In his later writings, he denounced that neoliberalism managed to spread and advance this kind of education with "its cynical fatalism and its inflexible negation of the right to dream differently" (Freire, 2001). Experiencing the rise of neoliberal education, Spademan (1999) also noted how assessments smother innovative teaching practices and encourage students' passivity.

On the other hand, education as a practice of freedom engages in comprehending the empirical reality and apprehending its underlying causality, which allows to understand problems radically — all the way to their roots — and become conscious of their historicity. When describing how he developed what came to be misleadingly known as the 'Paulo Freire Method', Freire (1967/2020) highlights that it necessarily fosters critical consciousness. His report also explicitly states that it emerges from dialogues with learners, not through a purely mechanical approach. In developing Freire's idea, hooks (2020) describes this kind of consciousness as 'critical thinking': an approach to understand underlying truths via self-disciplined and self-corrective thinking that entails the ability to accurately and relevantly take action.

When outlining critical consciousness in his pedagogy, Freire (1967/2020) refers to Álvaro Vieira Pinto as a master, whose reading is indispensable. However, the unfolding of Freire's critical pedagogy may have overlooked Vieira Pinto's influence, as argued by Cipriani (2018). Following this remark, we will discuss Álvaro Vieira Pinto's concept of 'critical consciousness', and how it can be developed by working classes through striking. We will outline Vieira Pinto's (1962) assertion that striking is fundamentally a pedagogical practice for working classes to develop their critical consciousness, due to the dialectic between its form and its essence. He explains that striking is essentially when a class stops *working for others* and starts *working for itself*, thus acquiring knowledge to start changing their reality collectively (Vieira Pinto, 1962). He also asserts that students share the existential reality of working classes as workers-in-the-making — which empowers them to engage in striking (Vieira Pinto, 1962).

In the following paper, we will report a pedagogical experiment conducted in the undergraduate industrial arts graphic design curriculum at Instituto Federal de Pernambuco – Campus Recife; one of the authors who encouraged

this experiment is part of the teaching staff. Due to the current curriculum's structure, which does not incite extracurricular activities, students do not get the chance to know people from other semesters, which leads to the issue of fragmentation of the student body. In order to bring them closer to the consciousness of their communal life, students were led to hold a set of workshops — named *préocupe* — where they would exchange experiences and skills. We will report two iterations of *préocupe* and refer to statements from five students that planned and held the later iteration. These statements were recorded in a collective interview that revealed a second issue: the feeling of inadequacy. Finally, we will assess how this experience developed their critical consciousness — which, as both Freire (1967/2020) and hooks (2020) point out, is key for critical pedagogy — and argue that it instantiated the essence of striking for Vieira Pinto (1962): students started studying for themselves.

THE STRIKE AS A WORKING-CLASS PEDAGOGIC PRACTICE

In this section, we will (1) outline how consciousness is embedded in the material and historical conditions of individuals; (2) consider the distinction between naive and critical consciousness; (3) delve into the concept of work; (4) outline complementary aspects of going on strike: its form and its essence. Finally, (5) we will present how going on strike constitutes a pedagogic practice for working classes.

Vieira Pinto (1960) conceptualized consciousness to discuss Brazilian reality during the '50s, establishing an inseparable link between it and the social conditions imposed by underdevelopment. Because of this, consciousness is neither spiritual nor abstract nor subjective; consciousness, he argues, is a set of representations, ideas, and concepts that can be historically and socially organized in modalities (Vieira Pinto, 1960, p. 23). As Gonzatto (2018) points out, this means that every consciousness engages actively with its reality in its specific space and time, making an active representation of the world, not merely mirroring it; hence, reality must be considered an element of consciousness, not an external object. Ultimately, consciousness is the perception that the world exists as a field of action and the world, in its turn, is not immutable but a constantly-changing scenario (Vieira Pinto, 1960, p. 60).

However, there are different modalities to represent reality. Vieira Pinto (1960) outlines two poles: 'naive consciousness' and 'critical consciousness'. Critical consciousness constitutes an authentic appreciation of reality because it examines and understands the objective conditions under which it develops: its accuracy in representing reality also comprises the dynamism of the objective world and of the material aspects that determine it; due to its authenticity, it recognizes that reality is dynamic, ergo, it always contains the seed of its shortcomings (Vieira Pinto, 1960, p. 52). On the other hand, the naive modality seeks to sustain

its representation despite changes in reality (Vieira Pinto, 1960, p. 53). Simply put, the latter relates to the world as if it were stable and immutable, while the former recognizes its historicity. However, it is important to stress that these poles do not configure a dichotomy, but a gradation (Gonzatto, 2018, p. 78) (Figure 1).

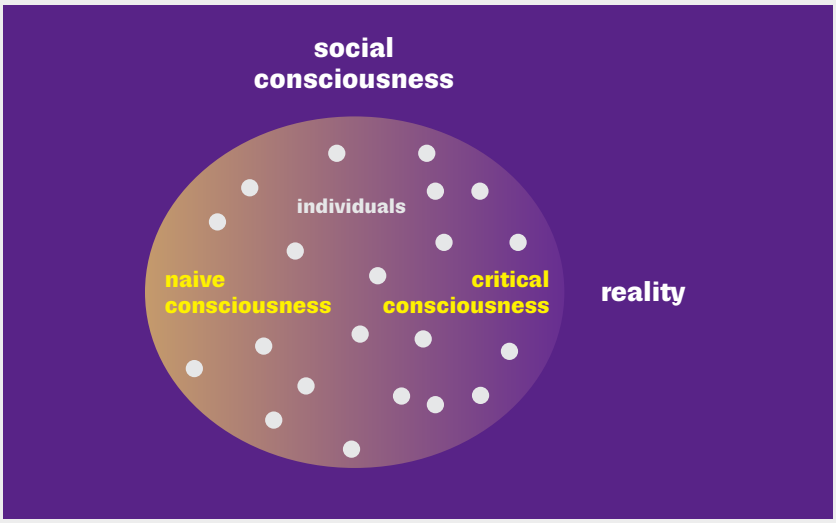

Figure 1: Diagram of the 'modes of consciousness', as outlined by Vieira Pinto (1960). These modes of consciousness are not dichotomic but rather constitute a gradation: the critical pole characterizes the consciousness that appreciates the objective conditions of reality that determine it. Source: Based on Gonzatto (2022), adapted and translated by the authors.

If consciousness is embedded in historicity, how does it move from the naive pole to the critical? The development of consciousness is centered on the concept of 'work', which is a particular kind of action that implies an ontological dimension through which humans define and operate their reality (Vieira Pinto, 1962, p. 92), and constitutes their existential dimension. In other words, by acting upon reality, each person establishes their representation of it and humanizes themselves. Gonzatto (2018) points out that this ontological dimension is shared by existentialism: the subject constitutes themselves along with their circumstances. It is in this very process of acting upon reality that consciousness perceives the world as a field of actions and possible projects (Vieira Pinto, 1960, p. 60), but when one faces resistance from reality, one must make one's actions apprehend the concrete demands of it and insert oneself into the causal links between phenomena. In other words, consciousness — representation of reality — and work — transformative action upon reality — establish a dialectic relationship embedded in their historicity (Figure 2). For Freire (1967/2020), this is precisely the role of education as the practice of freedom in general, and of his adult literacy program specifically: a means through which people's consciousness may become critically transitive. Thus, in order to be successful in their transformative actions, people's representation of reality must be as concrete as possible: this entails the emergence of critical consciousness.

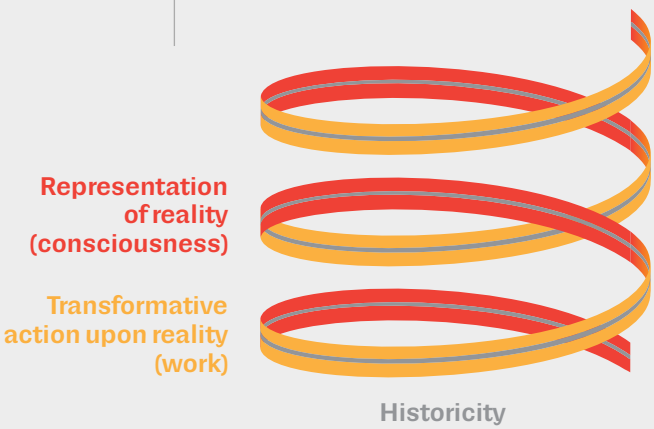

Figure 2: Diagram of the dialectic relationship between consciousness and work embedded in historicity. One humanizes oneself by transforming reality, which requires representing it. Furthermore, reality's representation emerges by working to transform it. Source: The authors.

However, there is still one substantial distinction to be made regarding the development of critical consciousness through work, which Vieira Pinto (1962) designates as 'working for others' and 'working for oneself'. This revolves around the separation of rich and poor in Brazil's class-structured society in the '50s and '60s under imperialism: a context of political turmoil that resulted in a US-aided military coup in 1964 that only ended in 1985 — and that caused the exile of Vieira Pinto himself. Vieira Pinto (1962) points out that to comprehend strikes as social phenomena, we must apprehend the mutual dependence between their external form and their internal essence — that is, conjuncture and structure. On the surface of events, this phenomenon appears as a stoppage from work, but its essence relies on the transformation of 'working for others' into 'working for oneself', which is profoundly pedagogic (Vieira Pinto, 1962, p. 71).

In such events, work is redirected: it is employed to develop the working classes' own consciousness, moving from the naive pole to the critical. This occurs because every time workers engage in a strike, they are developing their critical consciousness and perceiving themselves as active subjects in making history (Vieira Pinto, 1962, p. 52). Thus, the fundamental pedagogical role of striking arises when exercising social struggle, because workers sharpen their assessment of reality and are forced to make decisions to advance their demands (Vieira Pinto, 1962, p. 78). As we have discussed, resisting reality and inserting themselves in the causal links between phenomena to apprehend concrete demands, is precisely what Vieira Pinto (1960) states as the development of critical consciousness. That is why "for working classes, a strike *never* fails" (Vieira Pinto, 1962 p. 75): even if they don't achieve their immediate demands, they are always learning to act together as a collective.

As Figure 3 sums up, striking allows the development of critical consciousness in working classes because they engage collectively in altering their reality — they work for themselves. In this process, they face resistance from reality and are urged to exercise their capacities of apprehending the underlying causality of their world.

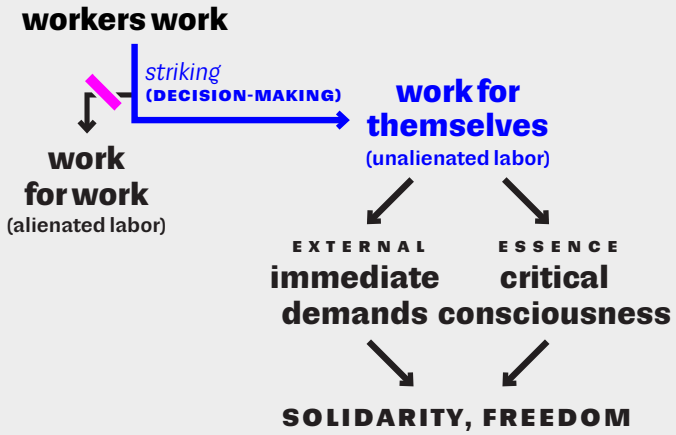

Figure 3: Diagram of Vieira Pinto's (1962) understanding of work and striking for working classes. Source: The authors.

REPORTING TWO ITERATIONS OF *PRÉOCUPE*

In this section, we will lay out the curriculum's background and then report on how these workshops unfolded in two different iterations of *préocupe*. The graphic design curriculum at Instituto Federal de Pernambuco – Campus Recife — a public education institution — in Recife, was launched in 2000 when the Brazilian government encouraged establishing undergraduate industrial arts courses in order to qualify the workforce faster than regular undergraduate curricula. In 2008, this strategy was consolidated by law in the form of *Instituto Federal*: these institutions seek to provide different types of curricula and education levels to respond to socioeconomic demands, generate employment, income, and technological innovations that can advance Brazil's economy (Lei N° 11.892, 2008). As Amorim Junior, Schlindwein, and Matos (2018) discuss, these goals submit both instructors and students to attending to neoliberal demands for education.

The current undergraduate industrial arts curriculum— effective since 2016 — adopts a problem-based learning structure: each semester approaches a specific graphic design field, and every curricular component converges to develop one main design project, as shown in Figure 4. For this reason, students do not get to choose any component and have their workload completely full — which is directed to address the problem at hand in that given semester. Furthermore, there are no union students could go to in order to reunite and dialogue. Therefore, they do not get the chance to know people from other semesters and do not exchange experiences or tips regarding the curriculum or otherwise. In this scenario, we identified the first issue to be addressed: the fragmentation of the student body. As an instructor in the curriculum, one of us knows this had been a long-standing remark, but it became overtly explicit in a conversation with a third-semester student: they revealed not knowing that they had a representative in collegiate meetings to voice their demands.

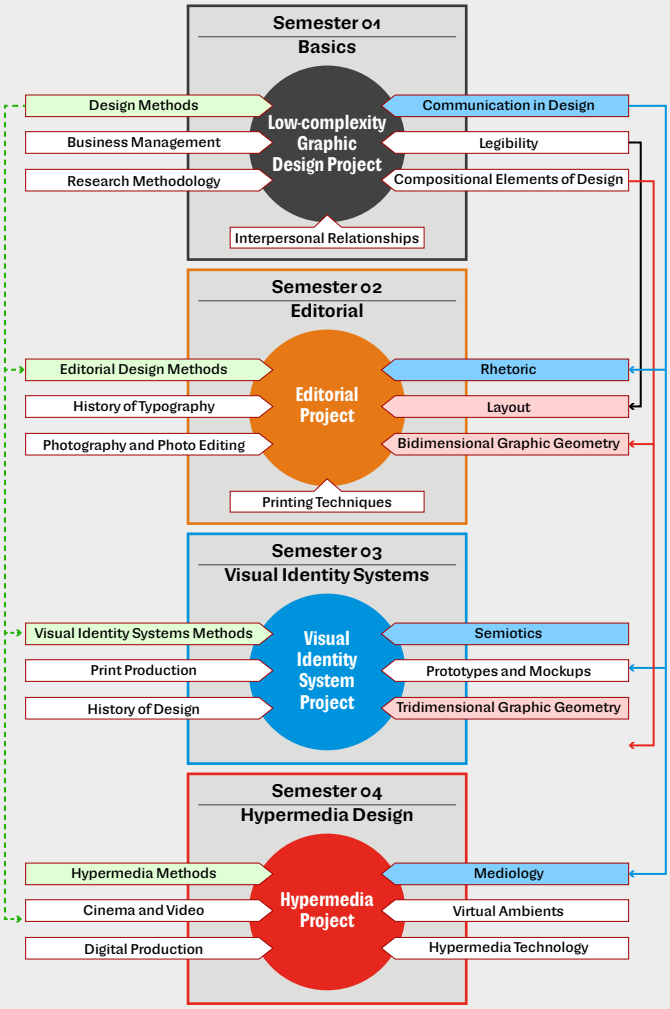

Figure 4: A diagram representing the current industrial arts graphic design curriculum at Instituto Federal de Pernambuco – Campus Recife. In each semester, every curricular component converges to develop the main design project. The blue, red, green, and black lines with arrows indicate curricular components that have the other as their prerequisites. This makes every semester self-contained, and students do not relate to people in other semesters. Source: Instituto Federal de Pernambuco Industrial Arts Graphic Design Curriculum's Pedagogic Project. Translated by the authors.

In December 2019, two instructors — one of which authors this paper — proposed holding a set of workshops where students would tutor each other, hoping that this could restore some sense of cohesion to the student body. We named this event *préocupe,* and made an open call to propose workshops. After students proposed the workshops they would tutor, we scheduled and announced them through the course's Instagram profile (@cdesg.ifpe), where attendees could find a link to Google Forms to enroll in activities. This first iteration transpired between December 11th and 13th, 2019. 11 workshops were planned, tutored, and attended by undergraduate-level graphic design students, instructors, and staff. This constituted the first iteration of *préocupe*. Upon finishing it, we instructors announced that we would not take part in planning another iteration; if it were to happen, it would have to be organized autonomously by students, to be made by

them and for them. The fact that *préocupe* was convened by instructors constitutes an apparent contradiction that will be addressed in the next section.

Planning for the second iteration began on January 10th, 2020, when students formed an organizing committee of five people (ages 19, 21, 23, 23, and 24), four of which were in their fourth semester and one in their fifth semester. The same two instructors attended the first meeting, and reported to them how the first iteration was prepared, suggesting that students adopted an action research method to plan, act, and observe, improving in each interaction (Kemmis et al., 2014). So, students started working on the difficulties they had experienced as tutors and/or participants in the previous iteration: online registration, workshop announcement, and enrollment confirmation. Also, they decided to prioritize workshops that freshmen would benefit the most from. Finally, they set up a schedule that included developing a visual identity and publicizing it both online and offline — typical graphic design activities —, and carried out a brainstorming session to conceptually define the event. During the following month, they collaborated on planning the second *préocupe*. They met again in person three times, and worked online almost every day to produce the event and design both the visual identity and social media campaign, which focused on workshop calls and attendees' enrollment. They also designed one offline piece: a printed poster. All meetings were summarized by the committee on an online document.

This second iteration transpired on February 13th and 14th, 2020, with eleven four-hour workshops plus a roundtable, which included the freshmen that had begun their studies in the graphic design curriculum a week before. There were 44 people who signed up for at least one activity, but some participants took part in some activities without signing up. Most attendees were other students from the curriculum, but the administrative staff and four instructors also took part in the workshops as students. The activities' attendance varied from five people (as in the workshop to draw mandalas) to about twenty (as in the roundtable discussing pricing in graphic design). To publicize these workshops, organizers created a social media schedule and a to-do list that were updated regularly on an online document. The whole process was autonomous: no instructor overlooked it or had access to the decision on which workshops were tutored, nor the way tutors organized their time and activities. The teaching staff — including the coordination — simply agreed to make time and space available for students to reunite and operate. One of the authors took part as a participant observer most of the time, taking photographs and talking to students who were tutoring.

In the end, organizers collected feedback from 20 of the students that attended the event, and it was overwhelmingly positive: on a 5-point-scale, 17 respondents rated the highest score to how much they enjoyed the experience, and 16 rated the highest to *préocupe's* relevance (Figure 5). About a month after

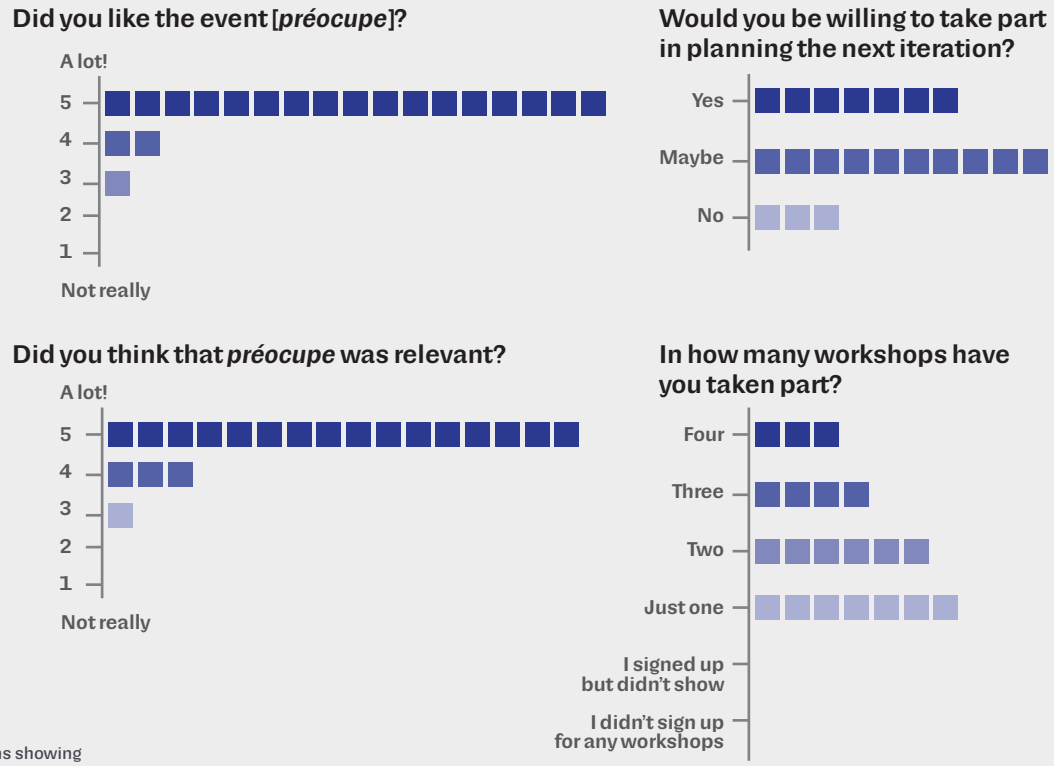

Figure 5: Graphs showing participants' feedback regarding *préocupe*. Twenty people answered it (each square represents an answer by one respondent). Source: The authors.

the reported experiences, Brazil underwent its first lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic on March 17th, 2020.

DISCUSSION: STUDENT STRIKE AS A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY PRACTICE

On July 7th, 2020, we collectively interviewed four of the five students from the organizing committee to identify the skills developed, and register their impressions on how this experience affected them both personally and professionally. In this section, all quotes are taken from their statements in this interview. Together with observations made by one of us as a participant during this second iteration, we will analyze their statements to argue that planning and holding *préocupe* instantiated the pedagogical essence of striking. As Vieira Pinto (1962) outlines, this essence consists of the development of critical consciousness when a class collectively (1) faces resistance to reality, (2) is urged to apprehend the concrete demands of reality and (3) acts upon it to foster change. In other words, we will demonstrate that *préocupe* is a kind of strike because students started studying for themselves (Figure 6). In this regard, to stop studying for others means to stop attending to the school system's criteria and start exchanging experiences

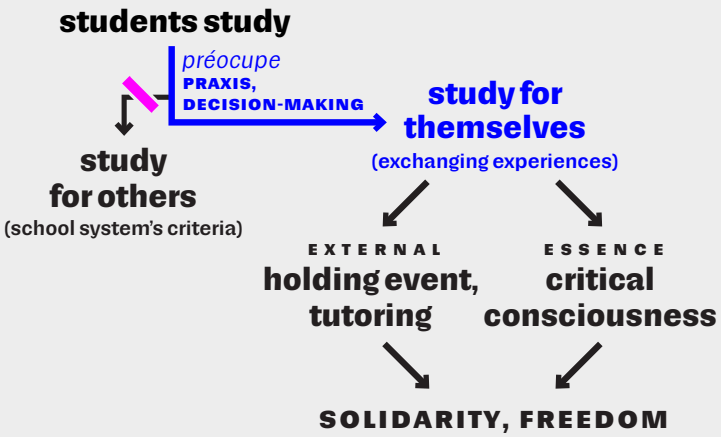

Figure 6: Adaptation of Vieira Pinto's (1962) understanding of work and striking for working classes to the conjuncture of Instituto Federal de Pernambuco's Industrial Arts Graphic Design Curriculum for holding *préocupe*. Source: The authors.

in order to make decisions — how the event was to be held, its visual identity and communication, which workshops would take place, and how they would be organized, among others.

The 'operational graphic design practices' learned during regular curricular activities seem to have been fully internalized because, during the planning process, they autonomously went through an analysis of their experience, synthesis of concepts, and elaboration of layouts. However, they seem to have profoundly altered the way they were employed. The data and resources they needed were not collected: they actually experienced them day to day because they were deeply entangled as subjects in the context they were designing for. However, they needed to 'become aware' of their conjuncture— this process seems to have directed the creative process because "everyone was at the same table, discussing the same thing, and everyone was having very similar ideas (...) we wanted it to be something informal, young, colorful, local."

The 'collaborative practices' actually bled into the very making of the graphic design pieces. We found that this design process was deeply collaborative. Not only did they go through the phase of ideation together through a brainstorming session, but the actual execution of the pieces was also collaborative: their meetings' summary and the collective interview indicate that their graphic design decisions were made diffusely as they discussed ideas and laid each piece out. It is also important to note that their autonomy and collaboration when employing said graphic design skills fostered the development of a language for the visual identity system that was highly characteristic (Figures 7 and 8). In contrast, Figure 9 shows other graphic design projects made by the same students that took part in the *préocupe's* organizing committee, but as assigned projects to be assessed as part of regular components in the curriculum. This means that the collaborative efforts engendered by planning *préocupe* were also expressed in the very practice of graphic design.

↑ **Figures 7 and 8**: Instagram posts developed by undergraduate graphic design students to publicize *préocupe's* workshops. Some of the keywords selected from the brainstorming session that guided their design decision-making include: colorful, local, belonging, student leadership, collage, resistance, and memes. All these words seem to refer to their experience as people and students, and/or to what they aimed to build as a community. Source: *Préocupe's* students.

↓ **Figure 9**: Graphic design projects by students that took part in the *préocupe's* organizing committee, elaborated on different curricular components, where one of the authors was the instructor. Despite frequently allowing students to choose themes and subjects to develop their projects in lessons, the difference in visual communication (compared to Figures 7 and 8) is striking. Source: *Préocupe's* organizing committee members.

Our examination of the 'curricular structure' was confirmed: they felt motivated to "enliven the curriculum because we feel that the course and its structure are too automatic, too stiff, and we don't have the chance to pause and think about what we want to learn." Especially for freshmen, the experience is reported to be shocking: "I was very startled" and "in the beginning, we feel overwhelmed (...) everything is new (...) so we don't have a lot of time to do much more than dive into the curriculum's demands. (...) When I started it was very exhausting." Even though the industrial arts curriculum provides faster professional qualifications than regular undergraduate curricula, students nevertheless develop personal relationships. Hence, the social experience that is characteristic of an undergraduate course is curtailed by this curricular structure, which in turn generates the issue we identified as the 'fragmentation of the student body'. They also confirmed this, reporting that students from different semesters in the organizing committee "did not see each other (...) never even stopped to talk [to each other]" before *préocupe*.

Planning *préocupe* also implicated their 'learning'. To answer to the event's demands (resistance from reality), one of the students learned how to use graphic software to integrate themselves into the workflow: "I learned to do gradients and filter effects (...) because of *préocupe*." Furthermore, some workshops were planned to work with graphic software for "those who were interested in trying it out not for being graded, but for learning." This remark allows us to state that they recognized regular activities as 'working for others' ("for being graded") rather than for themselves ("for learning"). This was later reinforced: "a lot of what we do is focused (...) on finishing an assignment to get a grade, and carry on the course until the end." So, as Figure 6 implies, once they started studying for themselves, the learning process changed.

When 'working for others', they would come to the 'pedagogic space' just to "enter the classroom, receive information or an assignment, and then head straight home." For them, "when we arrive somewhere, attend to a lesson and then return home, this space becomes just a place we go through, not a place we are a part of." This made the pedagogic space feel stressful to them: "We were not there to experiment; we were there to do it right because it [the thing they made] would be part of the assignment." To sum up, they concluded that "there is a space but nobody feels comfortable using it because it feels as if it were not for us (...) it is for instructors and coordinators." All of this "frustrates the experience of being in a public institution" and they "miss having a space that students can occupy," which led to feeling powerlessness to act upon their reality. Here we were able to identify the second issue addressed: the 'feeling of inadequacy'.

However, such shortcoming was overturned as a motivation:

despite being near the end of their course, they held *préocupe* because they "would have loved to have such time and space to experiment different things with others by my side — not alone — to count on this support and exchange [of experiences]." So, they wanted to provide freshmen "an experience that could be more pleasant" so they "don't have to struggle as much." Thus, planning *préocupe* strongly developed 'collective awareness'; it was what they needed to recognize themselves as a collective — as the student class: "I am also part of this place. This place is also me." This process gave them "a feeling of empowerment" to act upon their reality. Such examinations resonate with other pedagogical contexts in Brazil, as Angelon and van Amstel (2021) show.

The longed social experience happened and was profoundly meaningful to them. As they reported,

> Interaction will always be important because it is where ideas and the desire to do something together come from. (...) the point is to know where you want to get to, and to do that you have to keep everything in mind. Which problems will appear? How will you be able to solve them? What solutions will you find for these problems?

Answering these questions consists exactly in what Vieira Pinto (1960) understands as 'work': the particular kind of action through which humans define and operate upon their reality. In doing so, students prioritized workshops to help freshmen: "with *préocupe*, we were concerned about what people in the first semester need to know (...) Let's plan these workshops because it will make the course easier [for them]." Then, they transformed their reality through these changes, and humanized themselves by "doing something for the course too, for the people who just joined it." Dialectically, according to Vieira Pinto (1960), work entails a more 'concrete apprehension of reality'. That can be first identified in their motivation to take part in planning *préocupe*: "I wanted to know how it felt to be on the other side of the instructors' table." In other words, students were motivated to understand their reality from another perspective — that of the instructor. Once they did, the more complex apprehension they had of their reality transformed how they felt towards both the curriculum and the instructors: "I felt like I really belong here (...) I also understood the struggle instructors go through to engage people in the classroom."

In this regard, when carrying out tasks to make *préocupe* happen, they taught themselves and learned about their reality, recognizing that they were 'studying for themselves'. By being urged to make decisions about holding the event and tutoring workshops, they discovered they could change their reality through work, and the feeling of inadequacy seems to have disappeared: "I think it [tutoring others] gives a sense that this [the space] is ours and that by being in it, making

use of it, occupying it, we can explore possibilities." Also, on *préocupe,* they felt that they were there "not only to listen but [we were there] to talk." Nevertheless, they acknowledged only being able to do that because they did it collectively, addressing the issue of fragmentation. One of them confessed that:

> For me, the most important thing about this experience was interacting with people (...) Talking to people from other semesters (...) Probably, if it weren't for *préocupe*, we wouldn't have had the kind of relationship we had. I also think [it changed the relationship] with you, teachers.

Once they had the space and time available, their relationship with each other emerged alongside the development of their critical consciousness.

After the event took place, the faculty resumed its activities regularly and unaltered. The stoppage of 'studying for others' lasted two days, but, as Vieira Pinto (1962) argues, every strike is victorious because it always develops the class's critical consciousness; however short, people experience working together to act upon their reality. 'Studying for themselves' on *préocupe* profoundly altered the relationship of the people in the organizing committee with their reality:

> I think it [this experience] was important to me. As I said, before [*préocupe*] we were there just to attend lessons; this time we were in that space to do something. I think it also melted some of my fear and shyness to do things, to take action, to have the courage to do something.

In regard to students that attended it, the overwhelmingly positive feedback and their willingness to take part in planning and holding the next *préocupe* (Figure 8) also indicate encouragement to engage differently with the pedagogic space; however, no further specific data related to this iteration was collected.

There are two apparent contradictions in this report that we would like to outline. The first one, as mentioned before, is how *préocupe* came to be: its first iteration was convened by instructors. This could represent a contradiction because attending a call from their hierarchical superiors —instructors — would not mean any subversion at all. However, this is a perilous comprehension of social relationships in education. Specifically, a neoliberal one that increasingly seeks to confound the pedagogic space with the professional *ethos* (Laval, 2019). Upon deeper examination, the 'other' of the students' work are not instructors, but the whole neoliberal school system that can be seen as epitomized in the mechanism of assessments (Spademan, 1999). Therefore, in the best of cases, students and instructors should be seen as allied classes that struggle together. Secondly, is that this strike did not stop students from studying as much as strikes do not stop all work. If, as Vieira Pinto (1962) argues, striking appears differently in every conjuncture, then, as shown in Figure 6, the mobilization to hold *préocupe* instantiated

the pedagogical essence of striking: developing the class's critical consciousness. Addressing those apparent contradictions seems key to characterize striking as pedagogic practice: not as the ultimate expression of critical consciousness, but as its very development.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, we reported on and analyzed the planning and holding of an autonomously student-operated event called *préocupe,* that aimed to address two issues: fragmentation of the student body and the feeling of inadequacy. From a strictly operational perspective of graphic design, this initiative was highly successful for the process for visual identity, and the social media campaign was designed collaboratively from ideation to execution, in an adequate manner. Visually, the result is unique and fulfilled *préocupe's* communication needs. Furthermore, this experience restored social fragmentation and dispelled the feeling of inadequacy students felt. As they started working for themselves in this decision-making process, they took over the pedagogic space and sought to help others, which fostered collective awareness, as we have shown through the quotes of students from the organizing committee.

We framed this experience on the discussion of Vieira Pinto's concepts of 'critical consciousness' and 'work' (1960), and how it can be developed by working classes through striking (1962). Regular curricular activities in the pedagogic space are constituted by students' attending to school system's criteria – that can be seen as embodied in assessments (Spademan, 1999) – which meant that students were there "for being graded." This characterizes the student class working for others. However, according to Vieira Pinto (1962), students are workers-in-the-making and thus share the existential reality of working classes. As such, they are able to stop 'working for others' and start 'working for themselves' — going on strike. On *préocupe*, this took the form of holding workshops based on their experiences and interests, and taking over pedagogic spaces.

Therefore, once their work was no longer submitted to the school system's criteria, they understood that they are able to change their reality collectively. In other words, *préocupe* constituted a mobilization that instantiated the pedagogical essence of striking, and developed students' critical consciousness.

The advance of neoliberalism limits our imagination, imprisons us in cynical fatalism, and dehumanizes us (Freire, 1967/2020) by turning people into 'human capital' (Laval, 2019). As it unfolds in design education, the 'banking' approach it entails further paralyzes us and makes it seem that the precarious labor reality of the gig economy is the only possible one (Lorusso, 2019; Woodcock & Graham, 2020). By embedding the development of critical consciousness in the students' pedagogic practices, design education might contribute to their capac-

ities to apprehend the concrete demands of reality, and act upon it. As we have shown, one way to encourage this is when students stop attending to neoliberal school system criteria and start studying for themselves. Further critical pedagogy studies in design education could elaborate on the instructors' role on developing students' critical consciousness: when are faculties helping to develop critical consciousness, and when are they opposed to it and reinforcing the school system's criteria? How often do instructors in design education considers students' demands and update their practices and curricula? Initiatives like *préocupe* could play an important role in mediating such interests.

However fruitful this experience has proven to be, our scope is advisedly narrow. Further research should take into account broader aspects and different types of data — e.g., demographics such as age, income, place of residence, etc. — to portray students' expectations and curriculum practices. Also, future research in this direction could focus on different aspects of planning and holding such an event, and providing deeper insights into the roles of other people — instructors, attendees, curriculum coordinators, etc. An important unfolding would consider that organizers designed for an audience they are a part of, so they did not need to collect data and resources, but become conscious of them: this may provide key aspects to engaged graphic design. Also, it would be relevant to focus on the techniques students employed to tutor each other, and how they relate to the instructors' lessons. By considering different personal degrees of self-confidence and autonomy, long-term studies could focus on how this experience translates to their remaining student life and their professional careers. **D**

Acknowledgment

We would like to thank students in the industrial arts graphic design curriculum at IFPE – Campus Recife, and are especially grateful to Beatriz Vasconcelos, Laura Linck, Régi Silva, Rodrigo Victor, and Sabrina Guimarães for your *esperançar*.

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