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Ashes as the disempowerment of life: curriculum, body and science education in flames

RESUMO

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KEYWORDS: Curriculum; Science education; Cartography; Environment; Burneds.

Cinzas como despotencialização da vida: Currículo, Corpo e Educação em Ciências em chamas

ABSTRACT

Este artigo constrói uma cartografia dos processos de despotencialização que atravessam o currículo, os corpos e a Educação em Ciências no Brasil, tomando as queimadas nos biomas como metáfora e materialidade de análise. A investigação se apoia nas filosofias da diferença e na cartografia como metodologia sensível e implicada, acompanhando três movimentos principais: a relação entre devastação ambiental e corpos periféricos, as visualidades das chamas registradas em fotografias autorais, e os efeitos da captura curricular por políticas autoritárias. Ao acompanhar essas trajetórias, o texto evidencia como o fogo não apenas destrói, mas também convoca à invenção de outras pedagogias possíveis. As cinzas, nesse contexto, simbolizam tanto a ruína quanto a potência de germinações futuras. O artigo propõe, assim, uma Educação em Ciências que se reinventa a partir do que sobrevive, que respira junto aos territórios e que se compromete com a criação de mundos sustentáveis, plurais e sensíveis.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Currículo; Educação em ciências; Cartografia; Meio ambiente; Queimadas.



INTRODUCTION

How can we think about Science Education in a scenario of fire? What do the flames invite us to potentiate in science education? Can the fires, which burn without asking permission – often provoked by greed within capitalism – teach us something? What are we burning beyond what we can see? Can fire teach Science Education? What kinds of depowering are produced in Science Education when we witness fire consuming human, non-human, and more-than-human lives?

Existing amid the annihilation brought by fire — especially intensified by environmental crimes, as nature cries out for help and greater care for Mother Earth — leads us to question the course of existence. Even in chaos, we learn, from the collective "Com-fabulações: ateliê de pesquisas inventivas em Educação", that poetics, politics, ethics, and aesthetics are essential for life to go on. Even in the fire, there is life! But how can we practice-think the materialization of fire in Science Education? What is possible for a Science Education in flames? What is possible for the fire that also burns through Science Education?

From these provocations, this article aims to discuss the border correlations of the visualities of fire, which destroy the environment. Often, such destruction is caused by human actions aimed at illicit enrichment, which depowers Science Education in Brazil—especially when we are dialoguing, in learning spaces, about the implications of wildfires in Brazilian biomes for the maintenance of life.

Keeping life alive amid the fire – which also has its right to exist, though not in criminal form, since it imposes alternative modes of survival on those who barely have the minimum to sustain life: Black people, Indigenous peoples, LGBTTQIAPNb+ individuals, riverine communities, quilombola... – is a challenge that forces us to reinvent the very ways in which ashes are produced. This is the result of burning lives: the production of ashes.

All Brazilian biomes are on fire: "[...] accumulated deforestation in the Amazon corresponds to 17% of its total area, 52% in the Cerrado, 69% in the Atlantic Forest, 30% in the Caatinga, 44% in the Pampa, and 16% in the Pantanal" (Campoli & Stivali, 2023, p. 9). What is being produced are ashes of lives taken by those who hold power and thirst for land — especially agribusiness. Fire acts as both devastation and memory; it leaves traces of ash that mark the land and the bodies of those who inhabit these territories. Yet life persists, it sprouts again. It insists on existing even where heat seems to have silenced everything. This persistence, for instance, does not come without scars, but it can reveal the potency of ecological and human resistance strategies.

Brazilian biomes are facing, and will continue to face, an ongoing assault – a fire that carbonizes not only the vegetation and the beings that dwell there but also the most basic rights of those who depend on these spaces – human and non-human alike. The ashes of the wildfires are not merely physical residues, but also symbols of a denial of our right to exist, to learn, and to connect with the planet. Inspired by the philosophies of difference (Deleuze & Guattari, 2011), we are called to problematize not only the immediate environmental impact but also the subjective and educational consequences of this devastating phenomenon.



The fires directly impact bodies: bodies of trees that become fuel, bodies of animals that writhe in agony, and human bodies that, by inhaling ashes, undergo a slow deterioration of their health. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2011), in their writings on the body without organs, help us understand the devastation caused by the wildfires as a process of depowering. The reduction of bodies to ashes, the loss of the vitality of beings, is a dismantling of the world's creative force — a way of preventing the multiple expressions of life from fully manifesting.

Haraway (2023) complements this reading by suggesting that we must think with other beings, make kin, and construct interdependent ways of life. She challenges the logic of destruction by proposing a form of living that considers the complexity of networks of existence. To resist in the Anthropocene. That is why we wager that in multispecies alliances, we might imagine a response to fire that is more than a containment policy, but a movement of resistance that recognizes vulnerability as a strength to be shared.

In both rural and urban regions of Brazil — especially in the Amazon, the Cerrado, and the Pantanal — forest fires have intensified, as indicated by data from INPE (2025), affecting entire communities with dense and persistent smoke. In such conditions, classes are often suspended. In 2020, for example, cities like Lábrea (AM) and Corumbá (MS) closed schools for days due to unhealthy air quality. With each interruption, children and youth are denied the right to learn about the environment around them and to position themselves critically in the face of the devastation they are living through.

As proposed by Malcom Ferdinand (2023), it is necessary to break with colonial ecology, which naturalizes destruction in the name of progress, and to build a decolonial ecology committed to justice and to knowledge rooted in the territories. To destroy is an orchestrated act of annihilating life, whether through wildfires or criminal arson. Destruction is the modus operandi of those who desire the end of the world, even when we are trying to postpone the end (Krenak, 2019).

In an age of climate collapse and environmental injustice, as Guattari (2001) suggests, it is urgent to rethink the very notion of science: no longer as a hegemonic knowledge detached from the world, but as an ecological practice, one that weaves together the environmental, the social, the ancestral, and the mental. The intensification of wildfires and burning only reveals and exacerbates this dissonance, making more visible the political and affective emptiness of Science Education when it distances itself from the materialities of bodies and of the Earth. This is not to say that everything was once guaranteed, but to recognize that, by remaining indifferent to the urgencies of the here and now, Science Education risks losing – or perhaps never having embodied – its potential for resistance.

We continue to argue that the fires call us to think about the forms of depowering that affect not only forests but also school curricula, bodies, and Science Education itself. We acknowledge that curriculum has historically been an artifact permeated by power relations — always implicated in hegemonic societal projects, as highlighted by the critical tradition of curriculum studies. However, in problematizing this curricular capture², we are not claiming it to be a recent phenomenon, but rather that it has been intensified under contemporary



neoliberal logic, in which standardized competencies and the governmentalization of bodies increasingly guide the curriculum.

The capitalist order produces the modes of human relations even in their unconscious representations: the ways in which one works, is taught, loves, has sex, speaks, etc. It manufactures the relation to production, to nature, to facts, to movement, to the body, to food, to the present, the past, and the future in short, it manufactures the relation of man with the world and with himself. (Guattari & Rolnik, 2011, p. 42).

Capitalism does not merely establish the relations of production; it also shapes the ways of teaching, learning, and existing, especially in its neoliberal expression (Albino, Rodrigues, & Dutra-Pereira, 2024). In this context, the curriculum has been repeatedly captured by corporations, multilateral organizations, and public policies operating under neoliberal logic, turning it into a device of standardization and control. As Oliveira (2016) proposes, curriculum is also daily creation – that is, it reinvents itself in subtle gestures, in classroom choices, in silent resistances, and in the displacements subjects enact in the face of what is prescribed. It is in this in-between that we situate the notion of currículo franco (Dutra-Pereira, 2023): a fissure for the unexpected, a way of not allowing oneself to be fully enclosed by official curricula, but of letting meaning leak through even under the weight of regulations.

From this perspective, thinking the curriculum and Science Education implies opening space for other forms of life, learning, and coexistence, where fire might ignite a spark for collective reinvention. To make kin, then, would be to create networks of interrelation between bodies, curricula, and nature, recovering the ethical and political potential of an education that breathes with the planet. This ethos of care can be present in educational practices, both within schools and beyond them. Children and youth, upon understanding that their existence is intrinsically linked to the existence of rivers, forests, and other species, may weave practices of resistance to the extractivist model and to the anthropocentrism that reduces the world to consumable value.

The science that has predominated in school curricula, especially in the natural sciences, has largely been a modern, Cartesian, dualistic science, marked by a supposed objectivity detached from life. A science that denies the body, affections, and territories; that produces universalizing knowledge, often in the name of neutrality; and that upholds the same colonial and capitalistic projects that devastate the worlds it claims to study. How, then, can we create educational practices that respond to the urgency of the here and now? How can we cultivate a mode of education that not only values the environment but is also willing to transform it, through multispecies alliances and a radical critique of the forms of life that generate destruction?

Thus, this article, in addition to introducing the debate on wildfires and the production of ashes from lives, seeks to emphasize how the curriculum, bodies, and Science Education are depowered as the fires intensify across Brazilian biomes. Inspired by the thoughts of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari (2011), and Suely Rolnik (2018), rejects totalizing models and proposes thinking life as flow, intensity, and creation. Rather than seeking universal truths, this philosophy wagers on the invention of modes of existence and the valorization of difference as a force of transformation. With this theoretical lens, we aim to unsettle the modes of being and teaching that naturalize suffering, control, and reproduction.



FLAMES OF RESEARCH

Inspired by the philosophies of difference, we composed this theoretical-methodological approach based on the metaphor of fire, invoking wildfires as a conceptual and affective operator within our research in the context of "COM-FABULAÇÕES: ateliê de pesquisas inventivas em educação". We understand fire not only as devastation, but as a movement that destabilizes, displaces, and also engenders other ways of existing and resisting. Fire also exists. To accompany these movements, we adopted cartography as a methodological force (Passos, Kastrup, & Escóssia, 2020), allowing us to follow flows, intensities, and becoming's instead of pursuing linear and predictable trajectories. Throughout the process, we articulated three flames that crossed our investigative path: 1. The discussion on environmental devastation and its effects on peripheral bodies; 2. The visualities of the flame and the production of life's ashes, through self-authored photographic records; and 3. The cartography of the depowering of the curriculum and the body within Science Education.

First Flame: Environmental Devastation and Peripheral Bodies

In the first flame, we take the relationship between environmental devastation and peripheral bodies as a starting point to think about the implications of wildfires on human, non-human, and more-than-human lives. We engage with the discussions of Bullard (1993), who exposed how environmental racism disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and riverine communities, placing these bodies on the front lines of the destruction provoked by fire. We also draw on Mbembe (2018), who problematized necropolitics, urging us to reflect on the bodies deemed disposable within the colonial-capitalist project. Along this path, we analyze the power relations embedded in the wildfires and in the apparatuses of control that determine which lives may live and which must be exposed to the flames.

Second Flame: Visualities of the Flames

The second flame was ignited by images. We approached photography as a sensitive methodological device, capable of capturing, provoking, and making visible that which so often remains silenced. The wildfires in the Brazilian Caatinga were documented through photographs taken by the author during travels across the states of Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte throughout 2024, allowing the field of visuality to emerge as a space of dispute and meaning-making. Inspired by Haraway (2023), I emphasize that images are not neutral: they imply ways of seeing and narrating the world. In this research, we worked with photographs as bodies-of-potency – images that looked back at us, that summoned thought, and that pierced through us. The process of analysis was guided by cartography, understood here as a research-formation method in which the researcher moves along with the affects that emerge, challenging the binaries between subject and object. Following Didi-Huberman's (2017) conception, we understand that images do not speak for themselves but can "take a stand" – in the ethical, political, and aesthetic sense – when embedded in



collective practices that open space for the interruption and reinvention of the gaze. Each photograph was activated in meetings with the research collective, where we contemplated the visible and invisible flames that the images revealed. This methodological gesture allowed fire to be read beyond the visible, as each image activated memories and affects that traversed our bodies.

Third Flame: Cartography of the Depowering of the Curriculum and the Body

The third flame marked the moment in which we approached the ashes left by the fire – not only as the spectacle of destruction, but as surviving matter, uncomfortable remnant, suspended memory. At this stage of the research, the wildfires shifted us from the immediately visible to the residues that remain subtle, dense, dispersed - and placed us before that which, even after devastation, still pulses and insists. It was from these ashes that we began to think about the depowering of the curriculum and of bodies within Science Education, understanding that such depowering is not caused solely by absence, but also by the automatic repetition of a colonized curriculum, insensitive to the burning ground beneath it. In dialogue with Guattari (2001), we understand curriculum as an ecosystem: a living articulation between environmental, social, and mental dimensions. And it is precisely because it is alive that the curriculum suffers when fire devastates - its ashes accumulate in emptied-out school practices, in the bodies that teach and learn under logics of silencing and standardization. As Didi-Huberman (2017) provokes us to see, ashes are not only an end, but a sign that something has resisted destruction, even if fragmented. To draw close to the ashes is, therefore, a gesture of listening and reconstruction: in them, we search for the traces of a Science Education that may still be recreated from what has survived, from what smolders slowly, awaiting another possibility.

Thus, we adopted cartography to follow the trajectories of this depowering. We did not map final states, but instead traced movements, intensities, and interruptions. Cartography allowed us to capture the effects of environmental devastation within the field of curriculum, revealing that, just like forests, Science Education has also been consumed and reduced to ashes by authoritarian curricular policies that, as Albino, Rodrigues, and Dutra-Pereira (2024) point out, drain educational potency and reinforce pedagogical practices rooted in technicist logics.

The metaphor of the flames led us through territories of destruction, but also of resistance and reinvention. We affirm that fire is not only devastation, but also the production of other materialities, forms, and possibilities of existence. Along this path, we took cartography as a mode of research that is itself traversed by the philosophies of difference. It is not about applying a methodology to a pregiven object, but about following the flows, intensities, and affects that emerge in the field – including those that destabilize us and compel us to think with the body. The three flames described here do not conclude the movement of research but instead open it to other possible becoming. Burning was, therefore, an act of making visible and making think, taking the ashes as still-living matter, glowing, ready for other beginnings.

In this research, we did not operate with methodology in a classical or normative sense. The cartography assumed here is not reduced to a technical



procedure, nor is it supported by a theory that arrives afterward to "analyze data." As Suely Rolnik (2011) teaches us, cartography is an embodied practice of thought, one that is made alongside the affects and displacements provoked in and by the field. Inspired by the philosophies of difference — especially the contributions of Deleuze, Guattari (2011), and Rolnik (2011; 2018) — we understand that to research is to allow oneself to be traversed by intensities that cannot be contained within fixed categories. In this sense, cartography is not "anchored" in the philosophies of difference as if they were some external foundation: they compose the very movement of research itself. It is not about organizing the world into stages, but about sustaining discomfort, the unfinished, what pulses in the in-between. We know this theoretical-methodological stance escapes the more stable models of academic evaluation, but it is precisely in this escape that we locate the ethics of our research practice: an ethics of invention.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEVASTATION AND THE BODIES THAT ALSO BURN

Environmental devastation across Brazilian biomes exposes the complex dynamics of exclusion and oppression operating upon racialized bodies and those who dissent in terms of gender and sexuality. Environmental racism is an essential concept for understanding how environmental destruction disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and peripheral populations. Bullard (1993), one of the pioneers in the study of environmental racism, argues that low-income communities, predominantly composed of racialized people, are those who suffer the most from the impacts of environmental assaults, whether in the form of floods, water contamination, or the very wildfires that ravage forests and spread into urban areas.

In the context of wildfires in Brazilian biomes, it is Indigenous and quilombola communities who are most affected, those whose lives, territories, and cultures are directly under attack. The absence of inclusive and effective environmental policies reveals that environmental protection is not a right equally guaranteed to all. The impact on these populations also constitutes an attack on their ability to exist and resist as culturally diverse communities. The violence that strikes the forests is the same that marginalizes racialized bodies, for what is at stake is a model that privileges certain lives over others—a colonial and capitalist logic (Rolnik, 2018) that continues to reproduce itself.

The absence of environmental policies specifically addressing LGBTTQIAPNb+ bodies, for example, is a dimension rarely discussed yet crucial for understanding the complexities of environmental issues in Brazil. Dissident bodies, those that deviate from cisheteronormative standards, often occupy positions of social and economic vulnerability, being directly impacted by environmental degradation (Dutra-Pereira & Tinôco, 2025). The lack of public policies that account for the specific vulnerabilities of the LGBTTQIAPNb+ population means that these communities have reduced access to resources and to safe environments during times of environmental crisis. When a home is destroyed by flooding or fire, LGBTTQIAPNb+ individuals often face additional barriers in accessing safe shelters, encountering discrimination and exclusion in emergencies, or even gender-based violence.

Sara Ahmed (2019) helps us understand how the absence of policies directed toward dissident bodies is linked to a denial of belonging. In a world where



normativities structure what is seen as legitimate or worthy of care, LGBTTQIAPNb+ bodies are systematically pushed to the margins – socially, economically, and environmentally. When environmental policies are conceived without considering the diversity of bodies and experiences, this exclusion is not mere oversight: it is the direct effect of a world project in which our bodies are kept outside the borders of what is allowed to live. This is the logic of necropolitics, as described by Mbembe (2018), in which the distribution of death - or of life that cannot flourish - is orchestrated by a State that not only neglects but acts intentionally in defense of elite interests. In the colonial-capitalist model in which we live, the State is an active part of the machinery that produces slow whether through environmental degradation, violent cisheteronormativity, or policies of abandonment.

In the face of these issues, we affirm the urgency of an environmental education that goes beyond the mere transmission of technical knowledge — an education committed to the critical questioning of the power systems that determine who is allowed to exist and resist in an increasingly precarious world. We do not attribute to education, on its own, the task of dismantling centuries-old structures of domination. We know its reach is limited by forces operating both inside and outside the school. However, we recognize in education — especially when traversed by dissident bodies and territorial struggles — the possibility of creating breaches, displacements, and ways of perceiving the world that escape the norm. It is, therefore, less about believing in redemption through education and more about affirming its potential as a space for micropolitical reinvention, where environmental and social justice can be voiced, even under crossfire.

Deleuze and Guattari (2011) use the metaphor of the rhizome to propose a mode of organization that is decentralized and allows for multiple entries, bifurcations, and connections — unlike the arborescent structure, which imposes hierarchy and linearity. However, we acknowledge that in the colonial-capitalist context in which we live, much of what is practiced as environmental education — including that which claims to be "outside the school", ends up reproducing normative, technical, and moralizing logics that fail to confront structural inequalities or the effects of necropolitics on dissident bodies and territories. For this reason, we are not referring to just any environmental education, but rather advocate for one that is critical, situated, and implicated in environmental and social justice.

The environmental education we embrace in this text is anchored in post-structuralist and micropolitical perspectives, rejecting the technicist and normative conception that still dominates many pedagogical practices. We are inspired by the propositions of Isabel Carvalho (2016), who understands the formation of the ecological subject as an ethical and aesthetic process of implication with the world, and by Carlos Frederico Loureiro (2013), who frames environmental education as a field of dispute within political ecology. We understand the environment as a territory of conflicts and multiple existences, interweaving human and non-human worlds.

We conceive and defend environmental education as a rhizome, in the light of Deleuze and Guattari (2011), which implies understanding knowledge not as something linear and hierarchical, but as a web of connections among subjects, practices, territories, and materialities. Thus, we advocate for an environmental



education that, more than informing, commits itself to the urgencies of the present, weaving ethical-political meanings in the production of sustainable and plural worlds.

In this rhizomatic understanding of environmental education, learning does not end when a class is over or when the bell rings; on the contrary, it extends and multiplies in different directions, encouraging students to interact with their communities, explore new contexts, and reimagine their relationships with the environment. For instance, school-based environmental actions — such as exploring local territories, cultivating gardens, inhabiting different spaces, or reoccupying agroforestry areas within schools and communities — are common practices in Paraíba and represent a significant starting point. These practices establish a connection between students and the land, showing in practice the cycles of nature and the importance of care. However, it is both possible and necessary to go beyond such initiatives to strengthen an environmental education that extends into the "post-school" sphere, especially in scenarios of depowering made visible through the fires. What remains after nature burns?

CARTOGRAPHY OF DEPOWERING AND THE VISUALITY OF FLAMES

The visualities of flames, in the context of this research, are not limited to the immediate perception of fire as it spreads and consumes the environment. The concept of visuality does not refer solely to what the eyes can see, but to the ways in which images produce meaning, affect bodies, and give rise to other possibilities of existence. Images are not mere neutral records; they are devices that articulate practices of seeing, narrating, and imagining.

Flames, when captured in photographs, cease to be simply natural phenomena and begin to operate as a visual language, addressing the observer and calling them to reflect on the forms of life that inhabit the devastated territories. Thus, the visuality of flames enabled us to see beyond the fire itself, broadening the field of perception to the traces of ashes, clouds of smoke, and bodies that resist amid devastation.

In the field of Science Education, this opacity invites us to reflect on the conditions of visibility of knowledge and of the bodies that inhabit the curriculum. Just as smoke obscures the sky and blocks vision, curricular control also obscures – or rather, strategically selects – what can and cannot appear. For an education committed to environmental and social justice, this opacity represents an obstacle to the creation and reinvention of teaching and learning processes. But for an education in the service of capital, of normativity, and of repetition, it is functional: it sustains a project in which only certain knowledges, bodies, and narratives are authorized to exist. The visualities of flames, in this sense, help us to question pedagogical practices that operate between clarity and opacity, between what is shown and what is systematically hidden. The images captured by the author create tension and present themselves as invitations to see what would otherwise remain invisible, silenced, or erased by the official curriculum.



Figure 1
Flames burning along the path of life





Figure source: Author's own research data (2024).

The images of wildfires in Brazilian biomes, especially in the Caatinga (Figure 1), recorded by the author, emerge as powerful devices for thinking about the modes of depowering the curriculum, bodies, and Science Education. The visualities of the flames illustrate environmental devastation and reveal how fire also reaches into the field of education: when schools are closed, when the air becomes unbreathable, when discussions about the climate crisis are silenced or approached in depoliticized ways. The traces left by fire infiltrate the everyday life of schools: they compromise the right to learning, produce fear, naturalize loss, and expose the fragility of a curriculum that often ignores the urgencies of the world around it. In this sense, the flames make visible a politics of abandonment, but they also function as a warning: they show that what burns also burns within the curriculum, in the teaching body, and in pedagogies that extinguish themselves in the face of catastrophe.

In this regard, the images operate as visual enunciations that summon gazes and affects, prompting reflections on the relations between nature, body, and curriculum. Following Haraway's (2023) propositions, we take visualities as practices of "making kin", an act of creating connections between the visible and the invisible, between memory and resistance.

The Fire (Figure 2), in devastating the landscape, also reconfigures pedagogical relations - not through a direct transposition between what is seen in nature and what is taught in school, but because it destabilizes the material and symbolic conditions of the educational process. In the images analyzed, we observe the entanglement of ashes with the soil, the charred trunks, the twisted branches, and the trails of smoke vanishing into the horizon. These visual elements, when cartographically activated, trigger readings that allowed us to reflect on the effects of an educational model that, even in the face of environmental collapse, insists on silencing debates, suppressing complexities, and reducing scientific knowledge to technique. Authoritarian and homogenizing educational policies, in this context, operate as an invisible fire that extinguishes epistemological diversity, dissident bodies, and the affective ecologies that could emerge within Science Education. The image, therefore, becomes a sensitive fold between what happens in the forest and what happens in the curriculum: both are scorched territories, under regimes of control that choose what must remain and what can be consumed.



Figure 2
Fire that spreads without asking permission



Figure source: Author's own research data (2024).

The curriculum, like scorched soil, carries ambivalences: it can be both a site of exhaustion and of reinvention. Guattari (2001) had already affirmed that environmental, social, and mental ecologies are interconnected – and the images of fire allowed us to perceive how the depletion of one of these dimensions reverberates through the others. In this text, we advocate for the notion of curriculum as daily creation (Oliveira, 2016), one that is not limited to an official document, but is forged in encounters, gestures, and negotiations that occur on the ground of the school. However, when that curriculum is rigidly regulated by authoritarian policies and homogenizing logics – such as those that guide documents like the BNCC –, it becomes infertile, like soil scorched by monoculture. This is not to suggest that there once existed perfect freedom or fertile ground, but rather to recognize that, within the contemporary colonial-capitalist model, the curriculum's capacity to affirm other forms of life has been systematically depowered. Still, even in the ashes, there are possible sprouts: fire also reveals fissures through which reinvention may germinate.

The images used in this research are not taken as illustrations of an external reality, nor as neutral documents. Inspired by Didi-Huberman (2017), we understand that images do not simply show, but make one see; they explain, unsettle the gaze, open fissures, and displace meaning. Likewise, Haraway (2023) reminds us that all visuality is situated: the one who sees, sees from a place, a history, a body. When activating these images within a cartography, we do not expect the reader to "see for themselves" what they mean, but rather to allow themselves to be traversed by the relations they mobilize. As Suely Rolnik (2011) proposes, the cartographic gesture involves listening to what pulses in the encounters — between image, body, landscape, and curriculum — so that something once invisible or silenced may emerge as a force of thought. In this sense, the photographs of the wildfires operate in the research as flames that ignite the gaze and call forth other socio-environmental pedagogies.

The images of wildfires, the presence of smoke (Figure 3), and the devastated landscape revealed layers of meaning that go beyond the materiality of fire. Although often considered secondary to the flames, smoke emerged here as a reading device: its dense, slow, and persistent presence obscured the sky, the contours of what can be seen, perceived, and said. Unlike fire, which destroys visibly and immediately, smoke acts insidiously – it infiltrates the air, sickens bodies, crosses borders, and lingers longer than the blaze itself. It was from this



effect of opacity that we shifted our gaze toward the ways curriculum is also built upon silencing: smoke led us to consider which bodies and knowledges are rendered invisible in Science Education, which urgencies are concealed by a pedagogy of neutrality, and how curricular policy, by obscuring certain themes, operates like a fog that veils the complexity of lived reality. Thus, smoke is not merely a residue of fire — it is, here, an active metaphor for the structural opacities that permeate teaching and learning.

As Suely Rolnik (2011) reminds us, thinking is listening to what crosses us as noise, as discomfort — and smoke, in this case, operates as that kind of opaque affect that unsettles certainties and summons new meanings. In the same way, Didi-Huberman (2017) proposes that what matters in images is not only what they show, but what insists on not appearing, what is hidden, what disturbs the visible. Smoke, then, becomes a methodological gesture for reading the curriculum: a pathway for perceiving the erasures that structure teaching and the modes of seeing that it authorizes or forbids.

Figure 3 *The Smoke We Breathe*



Figure source: Author's own research data (2024).

The visualities also activated a gaze toward the bodies that inhabit the areas affected by fire. The scene in Figure 4 revealed traces of carbonization, hollow trees, and signs of destruction, which led us to relate these non-human bodies to the human bodies that inhabit the school space – approximately 1 km away there is a rural school located along the highway between Mamanguape/PB and João Pessoa/PB, as well as several settlements of the Landless Workers' Movement (MTST). If, through the fires that strike the Caatinga, animal bodies are reduced to ash, then in the educational field, the bodies of teachers and students are likewise depowered.



Figure 4What Remains of Life When the Flames Die Out?



Figure source: Author's own research data (2024).

Guattari and Rolnik (2011) argued that capitalism not only organizes the world but also manufactures the relations of bodies with themselves and with the world. In this sense, the images provoked us to reflect on the condition of school bodies exposed to a technical, instrumental curriculum, alienated from environmental concerns.

In the photographs, the twisted branches, trunks reduced to charcoal, and blackened soil (Figure 5) led us to think of the production of ashes as a symbol of depowering. The post-fire landscape is not merely ruin - it is trace, residue, matter that insists. This scorched scenery called us to reflect on what remains of Science Education after the impact of curricular control. But losses for whom? And losses for what? In the context of neoliberal capitalism - as discussed throughout this text – what is erased from the curriculum is not a loss for all: it is, in many cases, an intentional erasure that favors the reproduction of an exclusionary and normative societal project. Just like the devastated biome, the curriculum also carries in its ashes the vestiges of what has been suppressed, but not entirely extinguished. The logic of ashes does not imply total death, but latent transformation. The teaching practices and learnings that survive authoritarian control may be understood as subterranean seeds — latencies that escape control and, as Deleuze and Guattari (2011) propose, sprout in the form of rhizomes, creating unforeseen connections, resisting monoculture.







Figure source: Author's own research data (2024).

As Achille Mbembe (2018) warns, in the context of necropolitics, biopower decides not only who must die, but also who is allowed to live a life deemed worthy of being lived – and, by extension, which knowledges and bodies deserve to be taught, remembered, and legitimized. Destruction, in this sense, is not accidental: it is a project. Judith Butler (2016), in her discussion of precarious lives, argues that loss is only recognized as such when what is lost was considered valuable within a given symbolic order. What curricular neoliberalism suppresses – Indigenous knowledges, dissident bodies, sensitive pedagogies, affective territories – is not regarded as loss by the system, because it was never fully legitimized by it. Yet, for those who resist from the margins, what was lost – or what was turned to ash – does indeed hurt as loss, but it also insists as remainder, as breath, as a presence that refuses erasure.

It is within this fold that Suely Rolnik's (2018) contribution emerges, when she affirms that life insists in forms that escape capture – no matter how intense the destruction. Even in the midst of ashes, there are bodies that vibrate, thoughts that germinate, forces that refuse paralysis. Thus, when we speak of ashes in the curriculum, we are not merely naming devastation, but wagering on the cracks, on that which, even reduced to fragments, still carries the potency to re-exist.

The power of visualities also lies in what they allow us to see beyond the visible. For Haraway (2023), images summon not only vision, but an ethic of care and responsibility toward the worlds we inhabit. As we observed the traces of destruction in the photographs, we were led to question how those traces are inscribed in Science Education. In the images, fire moves uncontrollably, just like educational subjectivities which, once reached by the logic of conformity, become bodies devoid of creative power. The fire that consumes forests is also the fire that burns the possibilities of an inventive education.

The burnt trees, blackened soils, and charred animals revealed the rawness of wildfire effects. Yet at the same time, that landscape showed us that not everything is lost (Figure 6). The trunks that remain standing, even if scorched, remind us of the resistances that insist on existing. In the field of Science Education, these resistances emerge in teaching practices that, even while



traversed by precarious conditions and normative controls, still find cracks through which to move.

Figure 6Even in the Depowering of Life into Ashes, There Is Still Resistance



Figure source: Author's own research data (2024).

However, it is essential to remember that there is not always space, time, or conditions for such reinvention. In a context marked by the intensification of neoliberal policies, work overload, and institutional control, not resisting is also an effect of the system — not a sign of individual complacency. To make kin with the catastrophic post-fire landscape, therefore, is also to recognize the lives that continue, even if withered, and to form alliances with what remains: the practices that have survived, the learnings that have persisted, and the bodies that, even traversed by exhaustion, still move.

As Suely Rolnik (2018) warns, we live under a regime of "pimping of life," in which the forces of desire, creation, and sensitivity are hijacked and redirected to sustain productivity and bodily docility. The capacity to resist — or to reinvent pedagogical practices — is not a matter of individual effort, but a dispute among forces that traverse us. Judith Butler (2016) also observes that the precarity of the material and symbolic conditions in which many subjects live not only limits action but compromises the very possibility of imagining another possible action. Thus, to recognize the teachers who resist is not to erase those who cannot: it is to denounce a system that suffocates, exhausts, and yet still encounters bodies that insist.

In analyzing the visualities, we understand that fire is not only devastation, but also a carrier of memory and resistance. Just as the charred trunks remain standing after the fire, teachers and students also rise, even after their bodies have been traversed by oppressive pedagogical practices. This movement of resistance led us back to Mbembe's (2018) discussions on necropolitics and lives exposed to slow death. In the images, we saw not only the fire, but also what remains after it. This "remaining" is both resistance and an invitation to fabulate other worlds.

In the context of Science Education, the visible traces in the images resemble the marks left by curricular capture. We know that the curriculum has never been neutral or free. It has always operated as a technology of governance, as a space crossed by disputes and interests. However, in the contemporary context, marked by the intensification of neoliberalism and by authoritarian educational policies aligned with the colonial-capitalist mode of life (Rolnik, 2018), such as those that guide the BNCC, this capture is radicalized: the curriculum becomes a



device of standardization, silencing, and the erasure of difference. It is captured by a logic that prioritizes outcomes, competencies, and rankings over creation, listening, and epistemic plurality. The effects of this capture do not entirely erase the curriculum, but leave it marked by residues of depowering.

Still, as with ashes that fertilize the soil for new germinations, these marks may operate as a force of reinvention. Educational practices, even within scenarios of control, can give rise to other ways of teaching and learning. The visualities of the flames, therefore, are not limited to destruction: they open cracks through which to fabulate other educational worlds. It is in this interweaving of image, body, and curriculum that we find the potentialities of visualities for a Science Education that breathes, vibrates, and insists.

Thus, the visualities of flames offered us a sensitive pedagogy (Planella Ribera, 2017), shaped through image and affect. The photographs illustrated the effects of fire and opened lines of flight that allowed us to interrogate the curriculum and the school body. Just as the devastated soil can, over time, recover its fertility, so too can depowered curricula and bodies find pathways to re-existence. The images allowed other voices to emerge within the educational field. This movement enabled us to imagine a Science Education less centered on content repetition and more attuned to the events that shape the present time (Figure 7).

Figure 7The Caatinga Resists Amid the Depowering of Life



Figure source: Author's own research data (2024).

The images of smoke and the landscape of ashes taught us that fire does not end with the flame, it continues to act through the traces it leaves behind. Likewise, curricular capture does not conclude with the standardization of content; it continues to operate through bodies and the daily practices of teaching. Yet, the ashes also revealed to us the persistence of life, for amidst the catastrophic landscape, we saw the first signs of regrowth. This allowed us to affirm that even in contexts of intense control and depowering, re-existence is possible. Just as the biome finds ways to regenerate, the curriculum can also reactivate its potentials. The teachers and students who insist on learning and teaching in inventive ways are the latent seeds that, sooner or later, will germinate.

However, it is necessary to acknowledge that, within the framework of the colonial-capitalist model, the possibilities for such practices are always under



tension from structural forces of power that seek to reproduce inequality, control, and homogenization. Pedagogical practices that affirm difference, resistance, and the possibility of beginning again do not emerge spontaneously or without resistance from the system. On the contrary, they require continuous effort and constant negotiation with the forces of capture, which seek to silence, delegitimize, and co-opt dissident knowledges and bodies.

DEPOWERING OF THE CURRICULUM AND THE BODY IN FLAMES

The third flame of our research took shape through the drawing of a cartography that followed the modes of depowering the Science Education curriculum and the bodies that inhabit it. In this movement, fire functioned both as metaphor and materiality, permeating educational practices, curricular policies, and environments. The ashes resulting from the destruction caused by wildfires became a symbol of the effects of control over Science Education, especially in its ways of teaching, learning, and existing. Just as fire consumes the forest and transforms bodies into remnants of existence, authoritarian curricular policies reconfigure the potency of teaching and learning bodies, leaving marks, voids, and silences.

Inspired by Guattari's (2001) propositions on the three ecologies, we followed the becomings that emerged from bodies in contact with a curriculum undergoing depowering. In the field of Science Education, the curriculum is not merely a collection of content, but a contested territory where forces of control and resistance confront one another. Through cartography, we observed that the curriculum often functions as a grid that imprisons the possibilities of creation and movement. This grid is not neutral, it produces effects on the bodies within it. When the curriculum, as seen in the BNCC, is reduced to a linear, disciplinary, and homogenizing logic, what remains are pedagogical ashes: bodies moving by inertia, repeating programmed gestures in the name of skills and competencies.

The bodies of teachers and students, like the bodies of burned trees—do not disappear, but remain as traces of a life that insists on existing. The cartographic process allowed us to visualize the resistance that emerges even amid depowering. In dialogue with the ideas of Kastrup (2007), we understand cartography as the act of accompanying processes of creation and making lines of flight emerge. In this sense, the curriculum was not taken as something fixed, but as a field of possibilities where control is never total and where there is always room for invention.

The concept of depowering, as formulated by Guattari and Rolnik (2011), was key to understanding what occurs in the encounters between curriculum and body. It is not merely a matter of content depletion or pedagogical impoverishment, but a process of weakening the capacity to act and create. This weakening is not accidental, it responds to the logic of curricular capture imposed by neoliberalism, which seeks to neutralize the forces of creation and innovation that may emerge in schools.

When the curriculum ignores environmental and social urgencies, it disregards students' realities and acts as a mechanism of control aimed at silencing difference, rendering knowledges and bodies invisible. The curriculum, as a field of dispute, is no longer an open space for invention but a territory being



colonized by a logic of standardization and subordination, fueled by the demand for measurable outcomes and market-oriented logic. The cartographic trajectories allowed us to see that the withdrawals and conformities of students and teachers are not accidental phenomena, but effects of an educational model that cannot sustain difference and does not offer the necessary conditions for the creation of new ways of teaching and learning.

However, depowering is not an end but a movement that can be reversed. Ashes, when mixed with soil, can make it fertile. With this image in mind, we call for practices of resistance that break with rigid instructional sequences and engage with themes tied to the local territory. These practices remind us of Haraway's (2023) proposition to create alliances that break from fixed hierarchies and foster new bonds of solidarity. Making kin within the curriculum was—and still is, in many cases, a way of creating relations that connect school knowledge with local knowledge, academic knowledge with the everyday practices of students.

The cartographic journey also revealed how authoritarian curricular policies function as agents of depowering. Standardized lesson plans, large-scale assessments, and the control of pedagogical practices were observed as forms of control that limit teacher autonomy and the creative freedom of students (Sales, Rigue, & Dutra-Pereira, 2024). However, for an entrepreneurial education grounded in corporate and neoliberal logic, this is not seen as a limitation but as a strategic objective: to ensure that education is tailored to market needs, subordinated to the logic of efficiency and productivity. In this sense, control devices enacted by educational policies function like the fire that consumes forests – not as an accident, but as design. They extinguish the diversity of pedagogical practices and impose a single way of teaching and learning, aligned with the neoliberal agenda and the project of maintaining structural inequalities.

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (2011), we understand this curricular control as a logic of arborescence, where a central structure organizes, hierarchizes, and standardizes all elements. When subjected to this logic, the curriculum becomes predictable and linear, limiting movements of creation and the unexpected connections that might emerge in pedagogical practices that resist such norms. This capture of the curriculum is not new: since the inception of the colonial-capitalist model, education has been used as an instrument of control and domination, but in recent years, neoliberalism has intensified these practices through policies such as the BNCC and the Reform of the New High School and its patchwork (Dutra-Pereira, 2025), written by a group of specialists aligned with corporate interests and the World Bank, with the explicit intention of shaping individuals oriented toward competitiveness and conformity, not toward buen vivir or social transformation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The wildfires, especially those in the Caatinga biome, have compelled us to reflect on modes of devastation that extend beyond flora and fauna, reaching human, non-human, and more-than-human bodies. Taking fire as both metaphor and materiality, we constructed this investigation through three flames: environmental devastation and its impacts on peripheral bodies; the visualities of the flames through photographic records; and the cartography of depowering



within the curriculum and bodies in Science Education. In each of these flames, reflections emerged that intensified the relations between nature, body, and education, revealing dynamics of control, resistance, and reexistence within this field.

Environmental devastation revealed itself not merely as a process of ecological loss but also as a form of necropolitics affecting racialized, Indigenous, Quilombola, and LGBTTQIAPNb+ bodies (Dutra-Pereira, 2023). These bodies, like the trees that burn, are reduced to ashes, yet still persist as vestiges of struggle and the insistence to exist. The images of the flames and the catastrophic scenes left in the aftermath reinforced this sense. The smoke, by clouding the sky, revealed the invisible control that obscures possibilities for creation within the curriculum. The soil and twisted branches reminded us that, even amid destruction, life resists in the form of latent seeds, awaiting the conditions for germination. These images illustrated the impact of the fires and opened possibilities to perceive the curriculum and Science Education in a more sensitive and engaged way, attuned to environmental and social issues.

The third flame allowed us to map the dynamics of depowering that traverse the curriculum and the bodies within the educational field. The curriculum, when captured by authoritarian logics and the growing imposition of large-scale assessments, especially following the implementation of the BNCC and neoliberal educational reforms in Brazil, transforms into a scorched territory.

This movement of capture is not recent, but it has been intensified in recent decades with the progressive insertion of policies that commodify education, aligned with the interests of institutions such as the World Bank and the broader neoliberal agenda. The curriculum, once a dynamic field open to invention, has been gradually subjected to rigid norms and performative assessments that prioritize efficiency and conformity over epistemological diversity and pedagogical freedom.

However, the cartography has shown us that, as in burned forests, there is always the possibility of regrowth. Teachers and students are not merely victims of control but are also agents who, even under adverse conditions, invent practices of resistance. These movements of reexistence allowed us to see that the ashes, once perceived as an end, can become fertile soil for new ways of learning and teaching. We affirm that the curriculum should not be seen as a fixed structure but as a rhizomatic field in which inventive practices connect in unexpected ways.

The three flames analyzed here invite us to rethink the role of Science Education in the face of climate crisis and environmental devastation. If fire consumes bodies, biomes, and knowledges, then Science Education must take on the role of reigniting what has been turned to ashes. This does not mean returning to what once was, but affirming new ways of existing and learning. For example, practices such as environmental education projects, in which students monitor degraded areas and develop solutions for the recovery of local ecosystems, or the incorporation of Indigenous and traditional knowledge into curricula, not only make visible other knowledges but also recognize and value the historical resistance of Indigenous peoples.

These practices, which deviate from the traditional teaching model, challenge the logic of domination and standardization imposed by neoliberal



policies, creating learning spaces where knowledge is constructed collectively, considering environmental and social contexts. To achieve this, it is necessary to build educational practices that are attentive to ongoing processes of destruction and that value the resistances emerging from the bodies that remain standing, for instance, the teachers who, despite external pressures, still manage to create space for discussions about climate change, or the students who, drawing from personal and local experiences, promote actions of environmental awareness and transformation.

We conclude, therefore, that Science Education must look to the ashes as living matter capable of germinating new practices. Fire is not only destruction—it is also transformation. Thus, burning the curriculum can be a way to ignite normative practices and open space for an education that breathes the air of the territories, listens to silenced voices, and fabulates other possible worlds. These possible worlds, as Deleuze and Guattari (2011) argue, are not subject to hegemonic norms but are built upon difference, multiplicity, and creative resistance. They are worlds in which the curriculum is not a fixed and predictable field but a rhizomatic process, open to the creation of new connections, new epistemologies, and new ways of existing and learning. Making kin with the ashes is the task that lies before teachers and students who wish to transform Science Education into a practice of freedom, resistance, and reexistence. May Science Education, like the forests that survive fire, begin again from what remains. May the ashes, then, be the soil of a curriculum that refuses repetition and reinvents itself with each new flame.



NOTES

- 1. Although the acronym was approved at the National Conference on the Rights of LGBTQIA+ People, following Dutra-Pereira and Tinôco (2025), we will use throughout this text the extended form LGBTTQIAPNb+, referring to the community of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transsexuals, Travestis, Queers, Intersex, Asexuals, Pansexuals, Non-Binary people, and others. More than "a soup of letters that imprisons bodies, [...] to exist amid the different processes of annihilation and even attempts at 'cure' (such as the notorious gay cure that has already decimated some bodies) is more than resistance. [...] It is a revolution that, in recent times, we have seen an increase in the letters of the acronym. [...] LGBTTQIAPNb+, always more... much more... because here we exist and will always claim our right to life, to our existence, [...]" (Dutra-Pereira & Tinôco, 2025, p. 6).
- 2. Curriculum capture refers to the action of educational neoliberalism, which seeks to control and normalize what is taught, how it is taught, and who has the right to teach and learn. This logic, based on assessment control and the homogenization of knowledge, affects both teachers and students, limiting pedagogical creativity and the construction of critical knowledge.

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