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Young workers and trade union movement: resistance in a neoliberal's context

Abstract

In view of the economic and political crisis in Brazil, the present article proposes to analyze the relationship between trade unions (as traditional workers' organization) and young workers, that are increasingly precarious but also engaged in the Brazilian social struggles.

Data from PNAD and SNJ (2014) show that more than half of the young Brazilians, aged between 15 and 29 years, are in The labor market. Despite the growth of the economically active population in this segment, the rate of unemployment and informality in labor relations is three times higher than in other age groups, evidencing the special vulnerability of this population in the labor market. These would form the *precariat*, who would be workers looking for the first job, who are in the informal sector, underpaid and inserted in precarious conditions of work (Braga 2012 and 2015).

An important characteristic of this generation is also its engagement. Brazilian youth played a key role in the main recent social struggles in Brazil, such as the 2013 demonstrations, the struggles against the coup of 2015-2016 and actions against current governments measures that leads with labor rights loss. They are in the middle of the resistance to what some analysts would call of a second neoliberal period in Latin America.

Moreover, although young workers occupy more and more space in the composition of the labor force and this subject is present in the political agenda of most of the unions in Brazil, youth is still the segment of lesser engagement in the trade union movement. According to Soares (2007), even though in some of the more formal categories a considerable proportion of young workers are unionized, they are not engaged in the trade union movement in general.

It is possible to perceive, however, the approximations and distances between the engaged young workers and the traditional trade unions (Santana and Braga, 2015). The present article intends to analyze this relation in a current context of threats to labor rights, of crisis in the Brazilian institutions, of a growth of the populist right in Brazil and in the world. An environment where resistance is necessary, it is also important to verify its social actors and how they relate to each other.

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