

Business schools on fire: Engaging students in activism in Brazil

Fernanda Carreira, Amanda Gross, Gabriela Alem, Isabella Santiago, Ricardo Barretto and Beatriz Santos

Introduction

The year was 2019. A devastating fire swept through the Brazilian Amazon rainforest, capturing the attention of the world, with the impacts making headlines in international news outlets¹. Even São Paulo, one of the world's largest major cities, located thousands of kilometres away from the fires, saw its skies darken, and a deluge of black, Amazonian soot rained down upon us. The federal government accused socio-environmental NGOs and indigenous people of involvement in these fires, leading to the arrest of some NGO activists and workers. This marked a new chapter in a series of ongoing anti-democratic measures within the state, culminating in a diminished role for civil society in governance and policy-making.

In light of these circumstances, at the *São Paulo School of Business Administration* of the *Getulio Vargas Foundation* (FGV-EAESP), a team of

¹ Link to some news: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/21/jair-bolsonaro-accuses-ngos-setting-fire-amazon-rainforest>;
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-50580152>;
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/08/20/sudden-darkness-befalls-sao-paulo-western-hemispheres-largest-city-baffling-thousands/>

facilitators running a course known as FIS (an initialism for Integrated Education for Sustainability in Portuguese), decided to delve into the role of Brazilian NGOs in the context of sustainable development. Drawing from their prior experiences of working with NGOs, the facilitators understood the vital role of these organisations in challenging the hegemonic economic development model that contributes to deforestation, exacerbates inequalities, and neglects Indigenous peoples.

A year later, after being inspired by the focus on activism and organisation at the ephemera-conference on *Activist organizing and organizing activism: A post-pandemic world in the making* in May 2021, the course facilitators, along with two other researchers, aimed to explore whether their course experience could serve as a form of activism in the field of management education. The outcome of this reflection is conveyed through the following narrative together with the mini-documentary ('mini-doc'), we invite you to watch before reading the following pages (available at <https://youtu.be/yfZgFhUL46o>). This dual format was chosen to immerse readers (and viewers) in the reflections of the students and facilitators and to make this work accessible outside of academia. We consider this to be an act of activism, as we are raising our voices 'in the spaces where theory and practice overlap' (Authers et al., 2007: 315).

Nonetheless, it is important to mention to our scholarly audience that our main purpose with this work is not to present a theoretical contribution towards teaching activism (Contu, 2018). Instead, we want to invite you to understand the procedure followed and how those involved understood it a year later. In doing so, we depart from traditional academic writing by adopting a narrative approach, both visually and textually, as well as by providing illustrative content. Our intention is to contribute to the debate surrounding what it means to be an activist within a business school (b-school) context.

We view this paper as a politically committed contribution. All the authors, through their work and research on topics such as management education, environmental issues, and social crises, felt a collective sense of purpose in illustrating the concept of teaching activism through the FIS case study. We

believe it is time for studies that are actively, and politically committed to challenging traditional notions, specifically the idea that impartial observation is possible, and that academic research should be devoid of values (Ergene et al., 2021). Our work explores how faculty within b-schools can make a meaningful impact by engaging in these dialogues and practices.

Pre-production: academic activism research

While the debate around academic activism is not new, as universities have historically served as sites of ‘student activism and political ferment’ (Martin, 2009: 841), in recent decades educational institutions have become part of the knowledge industry, geared towards perpetuating the business of ‘economic progress’ and the neoliberal conservative agenda (Rhodes et al., 2017: 3). Following the neoliberal capitalist rationale, ‘[t]he corporatization of the university comprises managerial and institutional forces including policy decisions that generate increased stratification of universities and ‘precarization’ of faculty; higher fees and student debts; top down rather than collegial decision-making and control systems; intensification of work and outputs with unrealistic expectations on teaching, research, and administrative performance’ (Contu, 2020: 743). Callahan and Elliot (2020) highlight a pressing issue that develops within such an academic landscape. They suggest that scholars are not only failing to acknowledge and appreciate activism but are also falling short in leveraging it for greater impact. Specifically, they argue that we are facing an ‘activism crises’, as scholars do not ‘recognize, value, and know what to make of the activism in our midst so as to make more of it’ (Martin, 2009: 842).

In the context of b-schools, activism is uncommon. Faculty members typically do not engage in deep critiques, challenge the current economic system, or promote critical thinking and practices towards social, economic, and knowledge-based justice (Contu, 2018; 2020). Fleming (2019) nevertheless doubts that all b-school academics truly support the neoliberal business framework imposed on them. He highlights a specific type of alienation in these institutions: the estrangement of one's academic identity. This alienation stems from the discrepancy between the expected role of

academics in a neoliberal educational environment and their actual intellectual values. Yet, what if academics could embody their true values? Would they have the liberty to challenge 'the ideology of neoliberal capitalism, which dominates business schools today' (Fotaki and Prasad, 2015: 565)?

One could argue that Critical Management Studies (CMS), Critical Management Education (CME), and Responsible Management and Learning Education (RMLE), despite all their differences, have been forms of activism '[m]uch before the current fashion[s] of "environment and sustainability" or "diversity" took over the mainstream agenda' (Alcadipani, 2023: 418). However, Butler and Spoelstra (2014) demonstrated how, due to the neoliberal regime of excellence in b-schools, CMS scholars now tend to act cynically and treat their research agenda as exchange currency, which has the potential to undermine the very foundations of the critical studies conducted within the field.

Contu calls academics to confront the challenges of neoliberalism and revisit the concepts of equality, freedom, and solidarity. This involves adopting a forward-thinking, intersectional, and critical academic practice, dedicated to advancing social, economic, and epistemic justice. Yet, despite progress in ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility, and the widespread acceptance of the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) by b-schools, the call to action as strong as Contu's (2018; 2020) proposal has not been as evident in Brazil.

The debate surrounding PRME demands our attention, as it plays a role in the case we will narrate. Launched in 2007 by the United Nations together with a consortium of b-schools, its accrediting body, and Global Compact signatory companies², PRME was designed to raise the profile of sustainability in b-schools through various principles focused on serving society and safeguarding our planet³. However, this was a little controversial.

² A United Nation initiative.

³ More about the PRME at <https://www.unprme.org/about>.

Critics believe that rather than sparking the intended paradigm shift, the principles reinforce the alignment of b-schools with corporate interests, perpetuating dominant narratives of competitiveness and utilitarianism (Louw, 2015; Millar & Price, 2018). Additionally, PRME faces criticism for being more aspirational than practical (Parker, 2018), often used for marketing rather than meaningful action (Louw, 2015; Millar & Price, 2018; Parker, 2018). Conversely, some recognize the potential of the initiative to foster research, teaching, and engagement with socio-environmental issues in b-schools. However, the extent of sustainability integration varies greatly across institutions, depending on institutional support, resource availability, and faculty commitment (Kanashiro et al., 2020).

Finally, discussions around pedagogy are pivotal when addressing activism within b-schools. CME and RMLE scholars highlight various theories and approaches that aim to introduce practices such as experiential learning, decentralisation of power in the classroom⁴, transcending disciplinary boundaries (inter/transdisciplinarity), engaging in problematization for critical reflexivity, serving communities (see Dal Magro et al., 2020), and embracing the ethics of care (see Kurucz et al., 2014). Interestingly, many of these practices resonate either directly or indirectly with the approach proposed by Paulo Freire, a renowned Brazilian philosopher, educator, and activist celebrated for his Pedagogy of Freedom (Freire, 1998). The central facets of Freire's proposal encompass the view of education as a political act - never neutral but always enabling or obstructing certain interests. It also encompasses a different teacher-student relationship that seeks teachers and students' emancipation through 'questioning the hegemony of one worldview over all other possible worldviews' (Dal Magro et al, 2020: 593).

The initiative we discuss in this piece, FIS, incorporates several of these practices. The course proposal is a blend of different forms of activism that are evident in the course content, our pedagogical approach and the activist role of the teachers. Since 2010, this course has been a platform for addressing sustainability-related activist issues within our b-school.

⁴ Distinct from a student-centred classroom, see Dehler et al., 2001.

Based on a true story

Top Brazilian b-schools were heavily influenced by the United States in the late 1950s and 1960s. FGV-EAESP was born from a Brazil-US government partnership that tasked Michigan State University with founding a business school (Cooke & Alcadipani, 2015). Since then, FGV-EAESP has followed in the footsteps of major US and European schools, both in terms of curriculum design, the constant pursuit of international accreditation (being a triple-crowned institution), and the notion of establishing elite institutions that only select the best (and richer) students of the country.

In 2009, as a growing number of b-schools joined the PRME, FGV-EAESP also became a part of this movement. In this context, the idea for the FIS (Integrated Education for Sustainability) course was conceived. The undergraduate program coordinator approached the Center for Sustainability Studies (FGVces), requesting the creation of an innovative course aligned with PRME principles. To design the FIS, the FGVces team meticulously researched innovative practices, not only within management education but across the broader field of education. The aim was to develop a distinctive methodology that encompassed elements of Transdisciplinarity (Morin, 2001; Nicolescu, 2006), Theory U (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013) and Transformative Learning (Hoggan, 2016; Mezirow, 1997).

Since 2010, the FIS course has been offered as part of undergraduate courses in Business and Public Administration, Law, Economics, and International Relations. The course starts with introducing the students to a specific complex sustainability challenge, which is designed by the FIS teachers (FIS team hereafter) - the *Reference Project*. Examples of *Reference Projects* are: creating an art exhibition on the adaptation of agriculture to climate change; developing a teaching case on organising methods based on the rights of nature; or designing an affective cartography that illustrates how mangroves sustain life on the planet. Students work on this challenge collaboratively, aiming to provide a result that has a tangible social impact. Additionally, the course offers a so-called *Self Project*, which involves self-awareness practices curated by the FIS team. This includes body-mind exercises, such as dancing to what we are feeling after a mindfulness practice we created to explore the

Gaia hypothesis⁵; or artistic activities, such as drawing your tree of life to share in a conversation with a colleague; or even one-to-one mentoring to talk not just about a career, but about feelings, purpose and values⁶.

The teachers of the FIS team have a multidisciplinary background, which is quite distinct from the regular faculty of FGV-EAESP. It comprises people with degrees in business and public administration with an emphasis on sustainability, one of whom brings the dimension of the imaginary, a communicologist with a postgraduate degree in psychotherapy and a dancer, who brings the dimension of the embodied learning. The team is also supported by a psychologist who studies complexity, and an environmental manager with a postgraduate degree in cooperation pedagogy, not to mention the specialists we invite to our classes, ranging from lawyers to astrobiophysicist and oceanographers, to name a few. In the course that we describe below, the teachers had previous experience working in NGOs. This affiliation inspired the theme of the *Reference Project*, focusing on how socio-environmental NGOs drive sustainable development in Brazil.

Setting the scene: inspiration, casting, and production

We are apprehensive, beyond our own lives, about the fate of the entire earth, which is at risk of descending into chaos. The non-indigenous people do not fear, as we do, being crushed by the fall of the sky. But perhaps one day they will fear it as much as we do! (Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert, 2013)

2019. The Amazon Forest was on fire. NGOs were accused by the federal government of instigating these fires. The volume of ‘fake news’ about the role of NGOs in Brazil was thunderous. The FIS team, fuelled by a sense of injustice and the urge to restore the importance of the Brazilian socio-environmental movement, decided to develop a *Reference Project* on this same topic to work with its students. After all, this movement had fought for environmental preservation and the democratic rights of organised civil society in a myriad of national decision-making processes over decades. The

⁵ By Lovelock (2000)

⁶ For more, check FIS Instagram: [fis_fgv](https://www.instagram.com/fis_fgv) | Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fis.gvces>

only thing remaining was to choose the format in which students should deliver their project.

The decision to choose a web series as the format was taken for several reasons. Firstly, experts consulted by the FIS team emphasised that a web series would serve as a suitable medium for activists to counter the dissemination of fake news in an economical and swift manner while using the very tool that was also being used to spread the fake news in the first place. The FIS team considered that, while Brazil awaited the establishment of federal regulations concerning the proliferation of fake news on social media, countering these falsehoods using a similar strategy seemed to be the most viable approach at the time. This choice was driven by the circumstances resulting from the Bolsonaro's administration, which exerted significant pressure against legislative initiatives aimed at regulating and penalising the dissemination of fake news. This opposition was often framed as a defence of freedom of expression, creating a complex environment. The administration was noted for its negationism on various issues, including climate change and COVID-19 vaccination. Moreover, corporations such as Google and Meta actively participated in extensive lobbying efforts to dissuade the Brazilian government from enacting laws that would hold them accountable for the propagation of such content⁷.

Secondly, the web series format facilitated the use of accessible equipment like mobile phones for quick distribution via platforms such as YouTube. This served the NGOs that are pressured to achieve impactful outcomes with limited resources. Lastly, the students seemed to have had an innate affinity for this type of content production.

When the FIS course commenced, most students had only a limited understanding of the role of socio-environmental NGOs and their Brazilian history. Maria Eduarda, a Public Administration student, and Emmanuel and Micael from Business Administration articulated similar gaps in their

⁷ See <https://www.gov.br/cade/en/matters/news/cade-launches-enquiry-into-abuse-of-dominant-position-by-google-and-meta-in-case-involving-2018fake-news2019-bill>

knowledge. Scholarship students, mainly Black, showed some engagement in activism, particularly in diversity and gender issues. Only four students had prior NGO experience as interns or volunteers.

Through classroom dialogues with the students, another shared characteristic emerged: the majority lacked first-hand experience in street activism, such as participating in protests, marches, or interventions akin to those conducted by Greenpeace. The young members of Brazil's elite, who constitute a significant portion of the FGV-EAESP student body, demonstrated minimal involvement in this form of activism. Their preference skewed toward digital activism, at the most. Conversely, scholarship students exhibited greater involvement in protests related to social issues.

An exploration of the history and significance of socio-environmental NGOs in Brazil became imperative. The inception of these NGOs dates the era of military dictatorship and the struggle for civil rights in Brazil. By facilitating direct engagement between the students and people involved in NGOs, the FIS team ensured students developed their own understanding of the subject. This exposure proved invaluable not just for the *Reference Project*, but also for the *Self Project*, as it created an environment where students could experience the motivating factors that drive those working in these organisations to champion diverse causes. Throughout this process, the students cultivated an affective relationship for the work of NGOs, and a passion for sustainability (see Shrivastava, 2010).

The *Self Project* is based on a particular term, which was chosen because of its etymological implications. The selected word was 'coragem' (courage) which encompasses enhancing self-integration and cultivating a connection to others - to everything. This seemed particularly pertinent to the context of NGO work in Brazil, especially during the political climate of the Bolsonaro administration. Its etymology, denoting 'the action of the heart', resonated strongly with the facilitators' perception of activism. This spurred the development of a series of activities designed to evoke and explore this sense of courage within the students. As student Beatriz elucidates in the mini doc, this word prompted her to reflect not only on her personal endeavour to overcome overthinking and take action but also to critically assess the state

of Brazilian society. She realised that for individuals like her - Black and from a lower socioeconomic background - 'simply existing represented an act of courage'.

The production of the web series entailed two field trips: one to visit an NGO dedicated to conservation efforts in the state of São Paulo, and another to interview NGOs across various regions of Brazil, including the Amazon. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, during the second month of the course, imposed a shift to remote education. The FIS team had only two weeks to adapt the entire course dynamics. Naturally, students and the FIS team were frustrated, and their insecurities and pandemic-related concerns took a toll. Nonetheless, they all persisted and created a virtual journey that comprises body, artistic, and mindfulness activities - crucial components of the FIS approach. For instance, students were asked to bring a basin of water, and after the FIS team showed a video on Zoom of an Amazonian River, they signalled everyone to put their feet in the basin of water, as if they were entering the river together. The team also managed to connect with some NGOs they would have visited during the trip for an online conversation. During on one of the sessions of the virtual journey, they even had a bonfire with storytelling typical of the Amazon (for more examples and insights into the FIS team's learnings from transitioning this group to emergency remote teaching, see Carreira et al., 2023). The culmination of the students' and the facilitators' efforts during the semester yielded the web series *Echoes of the Future* (<https://www.bit.ly/ecosdofuturo>).

RESGATANDO AS ORIGENS
Ep. 01

Ecos do Futuro

FGVces - FGV EAESP
9 vídeos · 1.320 visualizações · Última atualização em 13...

Reproduzir t... Ordem aleat...

The year is 2050. Cora works in the last socio-environmental NGO in Brazil. Throughout the 6 episodes, Cora has the mission to tell the story of NGOs and make a rescue of the essences of activism. At the end of each episode, a word and a drawing define its essence.

This production happened in a very difficult time in Brazil's first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, a moment of political uncertainties and governmental attacks on social-environmental agendas. The name of the web series reflects on the courage seen in the speeches of all the people interviewed, who work at social-environmental NGOs and for decades have been fighting for environmental protection in Brazil and were being persecuted by the Bolsonaro Government.

- 1** **RESGATANDO AS ORIGENS**
Ep. 01
7:07
FGVces - FGV EAESP · 912 visualizações · há 2 anos
- 2** **ECOS DO PASSADO**
Ep. 02
7:26
FGVces - FGV EAESP · 430 visualizações · há 2 anos
- 3** **RAZÕES DO CORAÇÃO**
Ep. 03
6:21
FGVces - FGV EAESP · 299 visualizações · há 2 anos
- 4** **NOVOS PARADIGMAS**
Ep. 04
5:26
FGVces - FGV EAESP · 254 visualizações · há 2 anos
- 5** **O COMEÇO DO CAOS**
Ep. 05
6:08
FGVces - FGV EAESP · 261 visualizações · há 2 anos
- 6** **ALÉM DO QUE SE VÊ**
Ep. 06
6:26
FGVces - FGV EAESP · 266 visualizações · há 2 anos
- 7** **Google**
Ep. Teaser 1
1:31
FGVces - FGV EAESP · 106 visualizações · há 2 anos
- 8** **QUAL O PAPEL DAS ONGS SOCIOAMBIENTAIS PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL NO BRASIL?**
Ep. Teaser 2
0:59
FGVces - FGV EAESP · 101 visualizações · há 2 anos

Figure 1. Echoes of the Future synopsis and episodes

Source: <https://www.bit.ly/ecosdofuturo>

Episode 1. Rescuing the origins



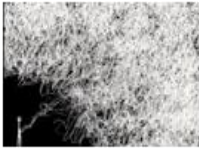
When and how social and environmental NGOs were born in Brazil.

Episode 4. New Paradigms



The concept of Sustainable Development and the new face of socio-environmental activism that arises with the SDGs and with world leaders mobilizing to think about mitigating socio-environmental impacts and the future of the planet.

Episode 2. Echoes of the past



Presented in radio program format, follow this conversation about Eco 92 and its importance for the advancement of environmental agendas in Brazil.

Episode 5. The beginning of chaos



The day the sky darkened in São Paulo. Special guests connected the phenomenon to the intensity of the fires in the Amazon and shared their impressions about something that no one imagined would be possible.

Episode 3. Reasons of the heart



The content approach changes from historical facts of activism in Brazil to emotional reasons. It's an episode about love for a cause and socio-environmental impact.

Episode 6. Beyond the sight



Through statements about the impacts of environmental disasters of Mariana (2015) and Brumadinho (2019), here is an invitation to action; to reflect on being part of nature and how to become an activist.

Link to 'Echoes of the Future', with English subtitles: www.bit.ly/ecosodofuturo

Figure 2. Episode's synopsis
Source: Elaborated by the authors

Behind the scenes mini doc: reflecting upon the educational experience one year later

Learning is what remains after forgetting has done its work. (Alves, 2009, our translation)

Nearly a year after the conclusion of the course and in conjunction with the *ephemera* conference on *Activist organizing and organizing activism: A post-pandemic world in the making*, the facilitators' team and other researchers embarked on a mission to reflect on the process of selecting NGOs and their

activism as a focal topic for the course. They aimed to explore how the experience continued to resonate with both students and facilitators.

To achieve this, all participants were invited to engage in a collective conversation, moderated by two of the authors of this paper, who were not part of the FIS team. Nine students took part online, as social isolation due to the pandemic persisted. Simultaneously, the facilitators engaged in a reflexive dialogue among themselves about their journey in preparing and guiding the course. Each conversation adhered to a semi-structured guide covering pertinent topics. Although held in separate rooms, the students and facilitators commenced together by participating in an exercise designed to rekindle their connection to the course experience.

The exercise entailed listening to the song that marked the conclusion of the course, a Brazilian composition titled 'What Touches the Heart', which resonated with the conceptual word 'courage'. With eyes closed, students embarked on a mindfulness exercise to revisit their shared, formative journey that semester. Following that, the group streamed the third episode of their web series *Echoes of the Future*, selected through a prior vote, before the conversation. Subsequently, students were prompted to articulate their emotions, memories, mental images, sentiments, and inspirations that the memory evoked on a digital board. The FIS team migrated to a separate online environment meanwhile the two authors facilitated the guided conversation with the students.

Both the mini-doc and the written text were produced by collectively observing the conversations of the students and the FIS team. While the text was collaboratively authored, the script and editing of the mini doc were primarily undertaken by two of the authors. The mini doc was entitled *Echoes of the Future: behind the scenes*. If you haven't watched it yet, we invite you to do so now. The video complements and illustrates what we are narrating textually, while also serving as the authors' activist work to extend traditional academic writing. You can find it here <https://youtu.be/yfZgFhUL46o>.



Image 1: Scene from the mini-doc

Throughout the conversation, students shared how the course experience had impacted them across educational, professional, and personal dimensions. Given their limited prior knowledge, the direct interaction with NGO activists and professionals prompted them to question their assumptions, values, and beliefs regarding the subject, as you can see in some testimonials presented in the mini-doc. This exposure even led some to pursue work within such organisations. They were profoundly influenced as individuals by encountering a subject that was often neglected in their other undergraduate courses.

We believe that participation in the course for both facilitators and students shifted from the alienation described by Fleming (2019) to active engagement with what it means to teach and study at a business school. The facilitators shared their expertise and concerns about NGOs with students, influencing their beliefs without imposing dogma. A notable takeaway is that the 'outsider' status - distinct from permanent faculty - may have empowered the facilitators to tackle subjects that could challenge the prevailing ideology of the b-school. This 'outsider' stance offered facilitators the prospect of reimagining and redefining the 'homo academicus' (Alakavuklar, 2020), unencumbered by the traditional dynamics of b-schools. This endeavour seeks to balance academic and activist selves, aiming to 'point out inequalities and unfair practices and suggest viable alternatives' (2020: 205). For instance, the FIS team acknowledges the wisdom of indigenous communities as equally

valuable as scientific knowledge and places themselves in the role of learners alongside their students, echoing Paulo Freire's assertion that 'there is no such thing as knowing more or knowing less; there is only different knowledge (see more in table 1).

Being an activist implies a responsibility in the face of crises like climate change, the surge of authoritarian regimes, growing intolerance and the exacerbation of social injustices and inequalities. Echoing Contu (2018), we argue that b-schools must no longer act as advocates for neoliberalism, nor sustain the systems that led to the current climate crisis (Rhodes et al., 2017).

Beyond the immediate experience and the reflection that have arisen from these narratives, the significance extends past the content taught, and its societal impact. In the words of Hill Collins, 'when it comes to intellectual activism, content and process matter' (2013: xxii). In the opinion of facilitator Ricardo, the stimuli offered to students, encompassing content and the presentation of novel perspectives, represent the essence of academic activism. With this sentiment in mind, we present, in Table 1, what emerged from these reflections and narratives as the essence of being an activist teacher within a b-school.

<p><i>Being a constant learner</i></p>	<p>The journey begins with acknowledging that facilitators/teachers don't have all the answers, as indeed, they don't know! It is not just about being a facilitator of the student's learning journey, it is also about fostering their own growth. This becomes more possible when they foster not just a horizontal relationship within the classroom, but a de-centred one as well (Dehler et al., 2001; Dal Magro et al., 2020).</p>
<p><i>Being a caring teacher, and to</i></p>	<p>Humans are inherently caring, and compassionate. In the world we inhabit, care and affection are crucial. Being an attentive and caring teacher, being fragile by demonstrating feelings and vulnerabilities. Embracing an ethic of care is central and</p>

<i>engage as a subject</i>	challenges the norms of neoliberal management education (Kurucz et al., 2014). It is imperative for facilitators/teachers to engage as subjects in the teaching process, as it is not possible to teach what has not touched us as human beings - our beliefs and values (e.g., Hill Collins, 2013; Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).
<i>Tear down the walls of knowledge</i>	Introducing students to novel forms of knowledge, showcasing a diverse range of specialists regardless of titles, and taking students outside the classroom on field trips to connect with nature and different cultures. Introducing them to the wisdom within their own bodies, highlighting the body as a territory of knowledge and self-awareness. Encouraging students to connect with their inner selves.
<i>Make diversity real</i>	Whenever possible, curate classes with a diversity of gender, race, and perspectives. Invite scholarship students. But that's not all: infuse diversity in every facet, whether when inviting experts, organising field visits, or selecting authors to be studied.
<i>Promote the collective</i>	Working collectively is a conduit for mutual exchange and care. For this class, it also embodied a means to experience the collaborative spirit prevalent in NGOs. Yet, more importantly, it contrasts with students' experiences in other fields that may often prioritise individuality and self-achievement. Given the challenges we face as humanity, embracing collective thought and collaboration is paramount.
<i>Experiment and experience it</i>	Dancing, meditation, incorporating moments of silence, and allowing for spaces to openly express emotions all shatter the misconception of incessant productivity. These practices

	liberate us from the undue pressure to always produce something.
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Table 1. Sharing our lessons on how to be an activist teacher in b-school
Source: Elaborated by the authors

Throughout the process of crafting this narrative, we have come to realise that FIS itself embodies a form of activism. It dares to question and challenge the conventional model of mass education and performative teaching by introducing ‘exotic’ topics and approaches. Furthermore, its methodology invites both students and facilitators to engage in what Maxey identifies as a fundamental aspect of activism: an ongoing process of reflection, confrontation, and empowerment (1999: 201). This indicates that cultivating an activist, educational experience implies not being afraid of the unknown, and of real-time experimentation.

For example, the shift to remote teaching due to COVID-19 led the facilitators to view students as co-contributors in the educational process. This cooperative model appeared quite radical in a b-school context, as cited by Dal Magro et al. (2020). Students showed a strong desire for high-quality education and a willingness to collaborate, aligning with the learning objectives of the course. Achieving these goals requires establishing a safe, trusting environment from the outset. Furthermore, with an activist approach to teaching we understand that we contribute to students becoming intimately involved with the contemporary challenges, rather than taking a more instrumental stance towards being a student, i.e. studying as a means of receiving a degree.

To be continued

There are, undoubtedly, a multitude of approaches to embodying the role of an activist teacher within the context of b-schools, if we consider the nature of education and the prevailing culture of competition. In this piece, we have merely shared one distinct experience, recognizing that it serves as a single thread within a broader tapestry of potential inquiries. Activism could prove

to be pivotal for the much-needed transformation in management education, as advocated by Parker (2023) in the new 'School for Organizing'. Thus, it is critical to uncover alternative modes of teaching and learning activism.

We acknowledge that half the students from the course discussed in this essay did not partake in the group discussion, making it unclear whether their views align with those presented here. Their perspectives, along with those of other participants within the b-school not engaged in activist practices, would be valuable to include.

We might also wonder what happened after that class, the impacts on the school, and the students' trajectories. Though this article wasn't initially intended for this purpose but to share our collective experience and prompt reflections on teacher activism, we'd like to offer insights. Despite the 14 years of FIS existence, 500 alumni and 27 *Reference Projects*, there is more to achieve. It is still an elective within a mainstream management curriculum, facilitators remain external to the official FGV-EAESP faculty, and students are still directed towards the corporate world.

One reviewer asked if including these courses like this into the curriculum is a form of neoliberal b-schools preemptively addressing and incorporating criticisms, referencing Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2018). We thought about it immensely, and it is undoubtedly a question to keep in mind. However, considering b-schools globally churn out the most graduates, we believe initiatives like FIS are vital for maintaining some degree of critique within these institutions. In a musical sense, they are 'breaks' not 'bricks' in the wall⁸.

So, has anything changed? Was it all in vain? Not at all. FIS has become a Brazilian benchmark for engaged teaching, advocating disruptions in mainstream management education⁹. There are cases of students who chose FGV-EAESP due to FIS. Numerous FIS alumni shift to sustainability-focused

⁸ In reference to Pink Floyd' song *Another brick in the wall* (1979).

⁹ In 2022, FIS was awarded gold in the Latin America regional category for the best Sustainability Education project in the QS-Wharton Reimagine Education Awards (<https://www.reimagine-education.com/#2022>).

careers, some entirely changing their lives based on *Self Project* discoveries. We also attract master and doctoral students keen to study FIS, as well as faculty colleagues who find inspiration in our pedagogical approaches. During the production of this note, FGV-EAESP announced curriculum changes for 2024, with an emphasis on sustainability. While we don't have the full picture of the entire impact of FIS, we understand that it was, indeed, part of these changes. However, disruptive change that challenges the status quo takes time.

Nevertheless, with this piece, we add critical reflexivity on the teaching methods and invite others to adopt the role of activist educators, thereby challenging conventional approaches to management education. It is an invitation to embark on an educational journey, one that instils the courage needed to confront the challenges of the world today. As scholars/teachers/facilitators/activists, we agree with Maxey's viewpoint, that 'activism means doing as much as I can from where I am at. Where I am at, of course, varies politically, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and so on' (1999: 201). Thus, we would appreciate collectively fostering knowledge surrounding teaching activism. If this narrative resonates with your practices, we encourage you to share them with us and our community.

Finally, let us circle back to the word 'courage'. In Latin, *coraticum* means heart and spirit, but in Portuguese, it also means action stemming from the heart. As Ailton Krenak, a prominent Brazilian environmentalist and indigenous leader of the Krenak ethnic group, boldly articulates:

Life is not supposed to be useful. That is nonsense. Life is so wonderful that our mind tries to make use of it. Life is enjoyment. Life is a dance. But it is a cosmic dance, and we want to reduce it to ridiculous, utilitarian choreography, a biography: someone was born, did this, did that, grew up, founded a city, invented Fordism, invented the revolution, built a rocket, went into space... All of this, folks, is such a ridiculous tale. Life is more than all of this. ...We must have the courage to be radically alive and not negotiate survival. ...Survival is already a negotiation of life. ...but we are all the time charged to do useful things. We are here to enjoy life, to experience life. And the more consciousness we awaken about life, the more we experience it. (Krenak, 2020)

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the authors

Fernanda Carreira is a Lecturer in Sustainability at the São Paulo School of Administration at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, where she also earned her PhD degree in Organization Studies, master's degree in Sustainability and her undergraduate degree in business administration. Her research focuses on teaching

and learning sustainability and bringing the imaginary as a pedagogical approach. She is also vice-coordinator of the Center for Sustainability Studies (FGVces).

E-mail: fernanda.carreira@fgv.br

Amanda Gross is a Lecturer in Sociology at the São Paulo School of Administration at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, where she earned her PhD and master's degree in Organization Studies. She completed her undergraduate degree in Social Science at São Paulo University. Her research focuses on the practice of science and the politics of knowledge production in Management and Organization Studies, drawing on the theories of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, as well as Actor-Network Theory. She also coordinates the Analytics Area for Graduate programs at São Paulo School of Administration at the Getulio Vargas Foundation.

E-mail: amanda.gross@fgv.br

Gabriela Alem is a master's student in Organizational Studies at the São Paulo School of Business Administration of Getulio Vargas Foundation, where she works as a learning process facilitator and education project manager at the Center for Sustainability Studies. She is a specialist in Cooperation Pedagogy and Collaborative Methodologies, as well as in Nature Philosophies, and holds a bachelor's degree in environmental management from the University of São Paulo.

E-mail: gabriela.alem@fgv.br

Isabella Santiago is the Director of Operations at Serenas, a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of gender-based violence. She holds a degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Sustainability from Getulio Vargas Foundation. Her professional journey is particularly focused on facilitating collaborative processes, conducting research, producing audiovisual content, and managing projects in the non-profit sector.

E-mail: isabellacruginelsantiago@gmail.com

Ricardo Barretto is a Lecturer in Sustainability at the São Paulo School of Administration at the Getulio Vargas Foundation. He holds specialization degrees in Communications and Politics from Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, Sustainability and Networks from São Paulo University, Transformative Education from Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul, and Analytical Psychology from Jungian Research Institute. His research focuses on how connections between mind, body and environment influence knowledge. He is also a psychotherapist and a Body-Mind Centeringsm educator.

E-mail: ricardo@conecsoma.com.br

Beatriz Santos is an education and racial equality activist and has worked in NGOs and startups in the educational sector. She considers herself a beginner in environmental activism. As an undergraduate student at São Paulo School of Business Administration of Getulio Vargas Foundation, she was interested in different teaching methodologies that a business school could offer, which is what struck her the most about the FIS proposal. She was a FIS 20 student and signed the script and direction of *Echoes of the Future*, bringing the perspective of those who experienced the formative path.

E-mail: beatriz.msraes@gmail.com