



Master Thesis

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feeding the **REBELLION**

The Landless Rural Workers' Movement discourses and practices of food sovereignty in the Armazém do Campo initiative

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Word count: 22284

2022

ABECEDÁRIO DA AUTONOMIA

prum projeto político-pedagógico progressista
primeiro pego palavras próximas
(POESIA))

quando queremos quota questionam quá-quá-quá
realizamos rebelião resistindo retrocesso reacionário
saberes secundaristas sonhados
sempre seguidos, seja sentido Samambaia,
seja Sapopemba

tentativas transitivas travam trabalho
temos testemunhado
tratamento tolerante transformam todes
unir uns utópicos urgentemente
ultrapassando unção ufanista utilizando unidade universal
veredando via verborragia vendo violência vitimando vozes
vivas vastas valentes
xenofóbicos xingam: xilogravuras, xamãs, xangôs
zumbi zarpando zepelim zelando ZOOM

alfabetizar amorosamente alcança amadurecimento
aprendiz acolhido atingindo assunção assumindo autonomia
beabá bancário, basta! burocratização baronesa
botando baderna, bradando: bando bolivariano
competências curriculares consultando comunidades
coparticipando construindo conhecimentos críticos com
curiosidade
docentes dispostos dialogando democraticamente
dignificando discentes descrentes dos direitos disponíveis

emocionante
escolas educando epistemologicamente
esperançosos exigindo ética, ética é estética
formadoras formadores freireanos falas fundamentais
formulações fatalistas, fenece, fórmula farisaica

gestão genocida gera grupos gentrificados
GREVES
GUARDAS
GÁS
GOLPES
GOOOOOOL

humanos históricos hoje habitando holisticamente
havendo humildade habilidades híbridas humanizarão
indago: in impeachment inexistente ideologia?
justiça jeitinho jogral
jovens juntos lendo
letreiros, lugares, leva levantes latinos!!!

linguagem lírica liberta lapida

memorização: método mecanicista maligno
melhoraram magistério mas ministérios malvados
mercantilizaram
neoliberais negaram nivelamento nacional
não noticiam neutramente
negligenciam nossas narrativas

obstruiremos obstáculos obscuros
ofuscando o ódio
opressores!!
omissos!!
ordenamos ouçam os oprimidos

do P ao Ó
desconstruindo o abecedário
através da metodologia de Paulo Freire
construiremos um mundo melhor

*Poem selected from the book Gênesis,
written by Emerson Alcalde, poet,
militant, generous and one of my
interviewees*

ACKNOWLEDGES

This research was written with two hands but with multiple hearts.

À meu pai, minha mãe, irmãos e sobrinhas, tios e tias, primos e primas, minha eterna gratidão pelo amor, apoio e confiança de sempre.

À meus amigos de Ribeirão Preto, São José do Rio Preto, Curitiba, Buenos Aires e São Paulo, agradeço pelos dias/noites virados me escutando falar da tese.

Aos meus queridos amigos do CEDLA, obrigada por segurar a minha mão e partilhar ideias, músicas, debates, cervejas, paninis e dias na biblioteca,

Ao meu orientador, Fabio de Castro, por me guiar em todo o processo e ser tão acolhedor em ouvir meus dilemas e ansiedades.

Aos meus entrevistados, que com muita gentileza me cederam seu tempo, conhecimentos e sonhos.

À todes os professores, funcionários e alunes envolvidos que fazem com que o CEDLA seja um pulsar latino de esperança em meio do caos.

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INTRODUCTION – FEEDING THE REBELLION

“Armazém do Campo is a space to feed the rebellion because it feeds the soul, feeds the popular resistance and feeds of power the family farming. It is a network bringing new engineering of popular cultures and perceptions around the food system”

Brazil, São Paulo, City Centre. I walk up Alameda Eduardo Prado, along the scruffy concrete pavement and worn paint. The first apparition is visible from the middle of the block when a shade of cabbage-colored-green (dark, strong, and looking like the plants got drunk on chlorophyll) appears, opening space amid the lead-grey of the concrete. As in about 98% of the shops in the centre of the city that never sleeps, the gate is made of iron, roll-up style. However, at Armazém do Campo, the ron is green. Cabbage-colored-green.

The second colour that can be seen scattered across its flags, banners, and paintings on the walls is blood-red. At first glance, you cannot tell if it is a café, a grocery store, a shop, or a cultural centre. At a second glance, one discovers that it is all that and more. I enter and stop at the counter to the left of the wide entrance. An employee comes out of the back of the store, wipes his hands on his apron, and smiles at me. Do you want coffee? Yes, strained, please. His way of talking reminds me of the song by Jorge Ben Jor¹, which I hum in my head:

Um cartel que mandava

Queimava, jogava fora

Mas não dava

Do you know Guaií coffee? No. While I am waiting for the coffee to cool, I contemplate how the history of coffee is intertwined with the history of Brazil. Originally from Ethiopia, coffee arrived in Brazil in 1727. However, the coffee cycle began to consolidate in the 19th century when the grain became the country's main export and source of wealth. Its labour relations involved an extensive network of the slave trade. Following the abolition of slavery in 1888, immigrants worked for decades on plantations, especially in the west of So Paulo, during the turn of the 20th century. The cultivation of coffee in extensive areas was responsible for the formation of several urban

¹Jorge Ben Jor (1942) is known for his satirical lyrics, with samba rock, jazz, maracatu, funk, ska and hip hop sounds. The song “café” closes the album released in 1995, named Homo Sapiens, in which the artist sings the story of “black coffee that turned gold”, referencing his black ancestors. The drink was brought to Brazil from Ethiopia, where the singer's mother was also born. The selected part of the song can be translated as follows:

“A cartel that sent

They could burn it, throw it away

But never give it”

centres in the country. Until today, Brazil is still one of the main coffee producers in the world, and the food culture of drinking coffee permeates numerous national rituals.

Likewise, the history of the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) connects with that of Café Guaií. Guay/Guaií means good seed, in Guarani². Agroecological and 100% arabica, it is one of the coffees sold at Armazém do Campo, and one of the main flagship products of the social movement. If the state of Minas Gerais were a country, it would be the largest coffee producer in the world. It is in the southern region of the state that arabica beans, of undeniable quality when compared to robusta (or Conilon), develop with expression. All gourmet coffees must be arabica, which is also more expensive and more delicate to produce. Coffee prices vary according to the grain type, quality, and complexity, and are subject to variations in harvest and international fluctuations.

It is also in the south of the state that the quilombo³ of Campo do Meio is located. This is one of the most successful areas in the cultivation of arabica, which makes it a territory of political and economic disputes. It was there that the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) began its activities in the south of Minas Gerais. The MST is a social movement that has been fighting for Popular Agrarian Reform (PAR) since the 1980s, with action fronts in all regions of Brazil joining forces for the expropriation of unproductive and vacant land. The struggle for agrarian reform is not a linear process. Rather, they are founded on the connections between how communities are organized around a particular set of identities and power structures. In addition, they are focused on how land governance has crystallized into formal tenure norms. In the south of Minas, the movement's activities led to the creation of rural settlements, where more than 500 farming families now live.

Before residing in the settlements, families developed rural activities as salaried employees on farms in the region, working as day labourers for production, and some cultivated crops as sharecroppers (they worked and received half of the production). The struggle for agrarian reform today binds all families together. The sale of its coffee production and other products is organised by the Cooperativa dos Camponeses Sul Mineiros, which includes rural workers and peasant organisations.

² From the Tupi-Guarani family, the Guarani language refers to a group of nine indigenous Latin American languages spoken by people of the Tupi-Guarani ethnic group, particularly in the areas located today in the South of South America.

³ Quilombo is the name given to communities formed mostly by remnants of fugitives from slavery in Brazil and dating back to the Colonial Period. It was one of the forms of resistance to the slave system, in which communities were organised after individual and collective escapes from slave quarters and plantations. Even after slavery was abolished in 1888, these communities continued to exist and were, for a long time, totally ignored and forgotten by the authorities.

Ariadinópolis is the scene of one of the biggest agrarian conflicts in the country and the site of a major political, economic, and cultural dispute. Minas Gerais' state government has been launching more incisive attacks since August 2020. Families were displaced, and schools were destroyed. The quilombo Campo do Meio occupants suffered numerous intimidations by the police, who arrived dressed for war, with 250 men, including the riot squad with armoured trucks (brucutu type), fire brigade trucks, and even a helicopter, which flew low over the occupants (Brasil de Fato 2020). The escalation of the conflict remains unresolved.

The employee tells me all this while I take a sip and another of the Guaií coffee, sitting there at the counter. The grains are aromatic, sweet, acidic, and dense at the same time. So is Armazém do Campo (AdC), a space to talk about what you eat, what you drink, where it comes from, and why it matters. It is more than a marketplace, it is a communication space. And it is precisely communication that is the key ingredient of this research. How has the MST been using the network as a space to communicate and connect consumers, producers, politicians, activists, supporters, and media? In a very aromatic, sweet, acidic, and dense way: just like a good arabica.



Figure 1: Café Guaií is one of the healthy foods produced by the 450 Landless families in the Quilombo Campo Grande camp, in Minas Gerais (Photo: Julia Gimenez/MST gallery)



Figure 2: Landless worker from Quilombo Campo Grande (Photo: Joyce Fonseca/MST gallery)

The AdC is a Popular Agrarian Reform (PAR) communication network that was created by the MST in 2016. It is part of an initiative from the social movement to bring to the forefront what they do and, especially, why: to produce *comida de verdade* (real food), which is healthy and agroecological. In April 2022, it had 34 points spread across 13 Brazilian states, with services via the physical store, delivery, and online ordering. The expectation is that in the next two to three years, another 30 points will open in several cities in the country.

In the middle of the AdC São Paulo, the stars of the space: organic and agroecological vegetables and fruits, stacked on top of boxes. A variety of vegetables, fruits, and vegetables. The colours are green, yellow, and red. Rice, beans, flour, pasta, oils, vinegar bottles, honey, sugar, teas, coffees, beers, wines, *cachaças*, and juices can all be found in the back of the store. There are also dairy products such as milk, cream, yoghurt, and curd available.

Products are sourced from associations, cooperatives of peasant family farms, quilombolas and indigenous communities. Alongside the fruits and vegetables, the AdC also sells material and symbolic accessories from the MST struggles like t-shirts, caps, flags, bags, stickers, cups, books, kitchen aprons, hats and others stacks of small visual elements, stacked in organised confusion. All with the strong-fight-red. The space is also where the solidarity network expands, through the formation of bonds between consumers, producers, activists, and progressive politicians. It is all self-service: take it, taste it, put it back. Practically everything carries the flag of the movement. In

the prints, in addition to the AdC logo and the MST flag, there are drawings and photos of personalities from the Latin American political left.

All the elements that compose the AdC are an attempt to bridge the gap between the rural and urban worlds. Urban children don't know where their food comes from any more, affecting the entire food chain. The government has dismantled several policies since 2016, including agroecology incentives and food distribution programmes. Nonetheless, it increased the significance of social movements.

In them, however, the rural-urban fusion occurs. A multi-scalar, multi-level organization, the AdC connects politicians, militants, settlers, practitioners, academics, consumers, and producers. It is more than just a place to sell food; it also serves to compress years of effort for MST and is a communication network for engaging with urban consumers and supporters. People may feel more solidarity with farmers' struggles as a result of an enhanced awareness of their causes, and they may make different food choices accordingly.

In this dissertation, we focus on how the AdC initiative plays a role in the MST's struggles. I present how the space represents a fifth stage in the historical development of the movement, as a communication network. Communication consists of discourses and material and symbolic practices. As a result, the MST is feeding the rebellion and the rebels (urban supporters linked to the left-wing progressive political action) with discourses and practices that promote hope and solidarity and call for a more just food system.



Figure 3: Armazém do Campo São Paulo (Photo: Facebook Armazém do Campo SP)

Agribusiness narratives of “development” are the basis of the Brazilian food system. Since at least the middle of the nineteenth century, the conversion of goods into commodities has been a dominant force reshaping all societies. This process has resulted in the current dominant industrial system, which controls the international food system and increasingly practises monopolies over agricultural inputs (like seeds, water, land, agrochemicals, and machinery) while failing to feed the world’s population sustainably.

In the current narrative, food is seen as a commodity, a socio-politico-cultural construction that is uncontested and treats food as a commodity. This hegemon view no longer sees the value of food that transcends economic considerations and downplays its non-economic qualities in favour of its tradeable qualities. Due to this, food's social, nutritional, and cultural qualities are neglected. Under capitalism, the value in usage (feeding people) and the value in exchange (price in the market) are greatly separated, giving the latter priority over the former. The consequences are environmental neglect, social inequalities, and economic disparities (Vivero-Pol 2017; De Schutter 2014; Altieri and Toledo 2011; McMahon 2014).

The hegemonic narratives around the food system also marginalised agrarian struggles in multiple ways. Many agrarian social movements oppose the commodification of food as a common, shared resource. They have long been fighting for land redistribution and for a food chain where production, distribution, and consumption take into consideration principles like solidarity and health (for both nature, and the communities involved). Over the twentieth century, family farmers, peasants, and rural workers have become more organised in a variety of formats. This is done by deliberating on food system struggles, influencing political contexts, and influencing public policies. They act in different instances (urban, rural), tend to align with different motivations (sovereignty, environmental justice, racial/gender inequalities, sustainability transitions) and operate at different scales (local, global, transnational). All of them, however, share two critical features: (Carter 2015; Wittman 2011).

The Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST) is one of those social movements that are creating bottom-up alternatives for the food system. They have been organizing the struggle for food sovereignty through a project called Popular Agrarian Reform (PAR). Their perception of food transcends beyond it being a tradable good. They see it as an essential resource, a human right, a public good, a natural resource, and a cultural determinant that provides belonging and connection. In recent years, they have balanced land and food agendas, amplifying their urban support base by focusing on the latter. Their multiple community-based initiatives promote alternatives to the food system narratives through everyday practices.

I apply here the social movement development theory (Carter 2015) to argue that the AdC initiative represents a fifth stage, where the goal is *communication*. More than a commercialization space, the space communicates and bridges the gap between rural and urban supporters. The AdC combine discourses and practices of resistance, using dialogues of agroecology in food production, solidarity in food distribution, and healthy food consumption. The initiative promotes dialogue with urban supporters that, in recent decades, has been disconnected from rural areas, by showing who are the people behind the food. This is an ethnographic work, a result of fieldwork conducted between February and April 2022 at the Armazém do Campo in São Paulo, Brazil, where I did participant observations, interviews, and informal conversations with people directly or indirectly involved with the initiative, such as producers, consumers, workers, movement activists, researchers, journalists, and MST national and state leaders. My findings have shown how communication networks like the AdC are necessary to cook news narratives about food: feeding the rebellion and eating hope.

Organisation of the chapters

Chapter 1 introduces the theoretical framework and political-cultural position. Food sovereignty and food as commons are combined with social movement theory. Through my approach, I present the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives of the food system, as well as how those narratives leads to land concentration and the struggles for agrarian social movements. I show how movements can help create and strengthen commons/sovereignty practices and discourses, as well as rescale them horizontally and vertically. Several rural communities movements in the Global South demonstrate this, including the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil. The chapter concludes with a brief description of my ethnographic work, the data collection process, and ethical considerations. In Chapter 2, I present the MST development history, arguing that the AdC represents a fifth stage in their development, characterized by being a communication network that bridges rural and urban supporters, combining land and food agendas. Chapters 3 and 4 are empirical chapters where I analysed discourses and practices that illustrate the AdC as a communication network. The major role of the AdC, discussed in the final considerations.

CHAPTER 1 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the theoretical framework, the argumentation and the methods used for this dissertation. My analysis combines three main theoretical frameworks: food sovereignty, food as commons, and social movement theory.

Food sovereignty was created and promoted in the Global South, by the transnational social movement La Via Campesina (LVC) and has a lot of similarities with the ideas of the Global North debates around food as commons. They are both transdisciplinary approaches that combine analytical frameworks with political-economic proposals. They move away from the perspective of food security, which is considered a too individualist, consumer-focused, and administrative perspective that does not address any deep change in the food system. If food is safe, affordable, and sufficient for low-income individuals and families, the loss of farmers may not matter, from the point of view of food security. Farmers' losses, however, do matter from the standpoint of food sovereignty, because farmers themselves, along with their social and ecological links, are more important than the food they produce (Desmarais 2007; Holt-Giménez and Patel 2009; Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe 2010; Galindo 2021).

Both aim for a change in the agrarian paradigm. The social movement theory, which looks at how those forms of social organisation are important not only because of their organizational structures, but also for the narratives they create. These bodies of scholarship have evolved in parallel despite their parallel interest in collective action and bottom-up policymaking. Political ecology scholars have been the ones who mostly concerned on linking social movements and the commons/sovereignty theories, aiming to understand how the access and management of natural resources took shape by local and marginalized communities within the broader political-economic dynamics of the hegemonic corporations system (Goldman 2001; Baud 2007; Bakker 2010).

Combining these approaches bridges and transcends the gap between theories. By applying the concepts into the daily lives of communities, social movements can consolidate commons and sovereignty institutions. In addition, commons and sovereignty can become a frame for social mobilization. New polycentric theories are needed to cross boundaries from the theories in a cross-scalar process.

Food sovereignty/food as commons: an analytical framework and a political-economic proposal

Food sovereignty is a theoretical-analytical framework and a political-economic proposal. It is the lens through which I see my object, the Armazém do Campo food market network, and my political positionality. In Brazil, the MST is one of 182 organizations of La Via Campesina (LVC), a transnational network of peasant activists. During its second global summit in Mexico, in 1996, they created the concept of food sovereignty. In order to achieve a more sustainable food system, they advocated agrarian reforms and popular power over land, water, and biodiversity, and advocates for agricultural trade policies rooted in principles of solidarity and international governmental agreements aimed at curbing the power of corporate agribusiness” (Carter 2015: 138).

In addition to promoting sustainable agriculture, they run campaigns to protect farmers' rights to seeds, combat violence against women, and advance agrarian reform. In their view, production decisions should remain in the hands of small-scale farmers to protect livelihoods, jobs, food security, and health. Food sovereignty emphasizes autonomy, proximity-based production-distribution-consumption cycles, and farmer-to-farmer networks to promote agroecological knowledge. It stresses that communities should manage their own systems, including markets, natural resources, cultures, and production methods. In 2007, at the Declaration presented at the Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty, 500 representatives from social movements from eighty countries defined food sovereignty and organized political actions to apply their theoretical approach. Food sovereignty offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, because it implies new social relations that are more just and free of oppression and inequalities (Altieri 2009; Altieri and Toledo 2011; De Schutter 2010; McMahon 2014; Rosset et al 2006; Perfecto and Wright 2009; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010; Desmarais 2007).

What are we fighting for?

A world where...

... all peoples, nations and states are able to determine their own food producing systems and policies that provide every one of us with good quality, adequate, affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food;

... recognition and respect of women's roles and rights in food production, and representation of women in all decision making bodies;

... all peoples in each of our countries are able to live with dignity, earn a living wage for their labour and have the opportunity to remain in their homes;
... where food sovereignty is considered a basic human right, recognised and implemented by communities, peoples, states and international bodies;

... we are able to conserve and rehabilitate rural environments, fish stocks, landscapes and food traditions based on ecologically sustainable management of land, soils, water, seas, seeds, livestock and other biodiversity;

... we value, recognize and respect our diversity of traditional knowledge, food, language and culture, and the way we organise and express ourselves;

... there is genuine and integral agrarian reform that guarantees peasants full rights to land, defends and recovers the territories of indigenous peoples, ensures fishing communities' access and control over their fishing areas and eco-systems, honours access and control over pastoral lands and migratory routes, assures decent jobs with fair remuneration and labour rights for all, and a future for young people in the countryside;...

Figure 4: Declaration of Nyéléni, Nyéléni Village, Sélingué, Mali, February 2007 - 1 (Photo: Printscreen/personal archive)

where agrarian reform revitalises inter-dependence between producers and consumers, ensures community survival, social and economic justice and ecological sustainability, and respect for local autonomy and governance with equal rights for women and men... where it guarantees the right to territory and self-determination for our peoples;

... where we share our lands and territories peacefully and fairly among our peoples, be we peasants, indigenous peoples, artisanal fishers, pastoralists, or others;

... in the case of natural and human-created disasters and conflict-recovery situations, food sovereignty acts as a kind of "insurance" that strengthens local recovery efforts and mitigates negative impacts... where we remember that affected communities are not helpless, and where strong local organization for self-help is the key to recovery

... where peoples' power to make decisions about their material, natural and spiritual heritage are defended;

... where all peoples have the right to defend their territories from the actions of transnational corporations;

Figure 5: Declaration of Nyéléni, Nyéléni Village, Sélingué, Mali, February 2007 - 2 (Photo: Printscreen/personal archive)

At a similar theoretical approach, but specially from the Global North, the commons has traditionally aimed to explain the ability of natural resource users to govern their shared goods via community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) regimes. As Elinor Ostrom (1990) showed us, the resources controlling institutions, cultural trajectories, dominant narratives, and moral principles that support the commons are all complex and dynamic. Commons are understood here as tangible and non-material goods that are generated and managed collaboratively by a community and shared in accordance with community-defined standards (Kostakis and Bauwens 2014).

Looking at how local resource-dependent communities self-organize to manage their shared goods, the commons is also concerned with how multiple actors participate in and lead to social movements, to reclaim and defend those resources, in response to threats by extractivist or conservationist policies. Indigenous and peasant communities⁴ are probably the oldest example of commons movements. They mobilize not only in defence of their territorial sovereignty and the

⁴ The distinction between indigenous and peasants movements is not that precise in some situations. They can converge and/or split in different occasions, fighting together from common enemies but also diverging when land distribution issues appear.

local environment that sustains their livelihoods, but also to protect their identities and cultures (Villamayor-Tomas and Garcia-Lopez 2018; Vivero-Pol 2020).

Food as commons theory sees (at least) six dimensions for food: as an essential resource, a cultural determinant, a human right, a public good, a natural resource, and a tradable good. It encompasses the right of communities to govern their food systems, looking at markets, natural resources, food cultures, and production methodologies in a broad sense. It is based on the idea that food is generated and managed collaboratively by a community, and shared according to community standards. It holds that commons are a collective method of community functioning that is based on participation, self-regulation, and self-negotiated norms and aims. It connects the use of the good, the purpose for that use, the community that agrees on that purpose, and the governing mechanisms to achieve that purpose. In this perspective, commoning encompasses all the practices that reflect social membership and solidarity in the food processes and dynamics, including farming, processing, exchanging, selling, cooking, and dining together (Vivero-Pol 2020; De Schutter et al 2020).

Food sovereignty and food as commons analytical paradigm offers a conceptual and politically enabling framework for responding to local troubles in food and agriculture, being about confronting globally interconnected relations of power in the present, opening space for new (and old) agroecological practices and new, just forms of agri-food governance" (McMahon, 2014: 133). They are both looking at practices, principles, discourses and policies that promote autonomy, diversity, knowledge-intensive, and small-scale production, in opposition to homogenization, technology-focused, and large-scale food production (Altieri and Toledo 2011).

The two concepts are also connected with the idea of agricultural citizenship, in which political participation, local food production, and environmental stewardship redefine the evolving relationship between land, state, and rural and urban societies. It highlights both the social and ecological basis of citizenship, refusing the conceptual segmentation of nature and society (duplicated in the segregation of rural and urban, woman and man, old and young) that is so basic to the idea of "modernity". It integrates agriculture, society, and the environment through mutual co-production, interdependence, and accountability systems that priorities resilience above maximum efficiency (Wittman 2011; Mariano 2013).

The food system hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives

The food system is a complex network of operations and interwoven systems and activities that includes production, processing, transportation, distribution, consumption and disposal of food. It encompasses political, financial, environmental, cultural and social impacts and inequalities. The food system includes sub-systems (e.g. farming system, input supply system, etc.) and engages with other vital systems (e.g. energy system, trade system, health system, etc.) so, a change in one system may trigger a shift in another (Nguyen 2018; Kennedy et al. 2021; Shreck 2008).

Here, the focus is on the "hegemonic narratives" that the food system is embeded. The concept of hegemonic food narratives is understood as the most significant and majoritarian perceptions, discourses and practices that characterize the system, based on Gramsci's (1992) premise of cultural hegemony. He argues that people are not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas. Therefore, to maintain dominance and keep the food system working as it is, a ruling class has to consolidate its cultural perceptions. Hegemonic narratives are constructed by social processes and political praxis (Goffman 1983) and entail the constant reproduction of structures and institutions (rules, norms, etc.) through pictures, discourses, stories, and data. It is through the universalization of dominant interpretations, combined with the neutralisation of opponent meanings and interpretations that consent is organised, and power is reproduced (Pazaitis and Bauwens 2020; Johnston 2008).

Hegemonic narratives in the food system are centred around neoliberal discourses and practices, based on land concentrations, powerful transnational corporations (agro-industry, traders, retail chains, and banks), and monocultures oriented toward exports (Pompeia et al 2021), which press on degraded ecosystems and further undermine nature's ability to provide food, fiber, and energy. In these perceptions, food is framed only as a commodity (Vivero-Pol 2017), a tradable good, whose worth is primarily determined by its price, irrespective of its environmental, cultural, politico or social impact. This process has also been called as "corporate food regimes" (McMichael 2000), "food empires" (van der Ploeg 2009), or "neoliberal diets" (Otero et al. 2015).

Although multiple challenges and inequalities are derived from it, two major elements are relevant for this research: the disappearance of the peasantry as a social class and the spatial separation between producers and consumers. The disappearance of the peasantry happens mostly because of the division of traditional community ties, creating the figure of the farmer. With the introduction of the families farmers into the market economy, the high costs of mechanization and the low prices for their products led to them becoming indebted to banks. They become small

agricultural capitalists if they win the competition in the market and prosper, but if they lose, they become impoverished and have to sell their land and separate himself from his means of production, becoming a salaried worker in the cities or urban areas surrounding the land. Secondly, there is a separation between consumers and producers, with the appearance of the market as the dominant element in the distribution of food. With an 80% purchase rate for general food baskets, supermarkets provide the majority of consumers with their food in Brazil. The same research indicated that the majority of purchases of fruits and vegetables take place at small grocery stores and street fairs (van der Ploeg 2009; Rovari Cordeiro 2019).

Challenges and possibilities for a food system change

Rethinking our food systems can address many threats of our time. Multiple counter-hegemonic initiatives exist, resist, and persist. People are calling for reclaiming food governance, reconnecting them with production, distribution, and consumption. Consuming habits are seen as a tool to challenge hegemonic structures (Beck et al. 2013). Consumption is a political act, and changing one's diet may alter the food market and the living arrangements of all parties (Barbera et al 2014). As people become more aware of sustainability and healthy nutrition, more time is spent planning shopping lists and cooking meals at home. As consumers turn back to basics when baking and cooking (Vittuari et al. 2021), organic sales have risen. Moreover, financial limitations, diminishing job offers, and lower income for the majority all contribute to bringing food back to the forefront of researchers, newspapers, and social movements (Fonte and Cucco 2020; Chang 2020).

As urban consumers demand more information about food, peasants' movements, NGOs, and academic institutions are spearheading new approaches to the food system, looking at the production side. As a result, consumer and producer groups are creating alternative food networks (AFNs) to protest the globalization of food. But sustaining counter-hegemonic paths is difficult. Customer engagement is one of the key differences between AFNs and traditional supply chains. Besides being extremely dynamic, they frequently organize themselves and make decisions democratically (van der Ploeg 2009; Venn et al. 2006).

In Brazilian peasant social movements, a central and systematic counter-hegemonic praxis is producing healthy food, without the use of agrochemicals, valuing native seeds (and rejecting transgenics) and searching for other productive forms and models, which are not aggressive with nature or with the subjects who work and transform it (Borsatto and Carmo 2013). Self-organised

communities and social movements can build governance that differs from those that preserve the international free market, in a process that is called “re-commoning food”:

“Re-commoning food may help us to re-create sustainable forms of food production (agroecology), new collective practices of governance (food democracies) and alternative policies (food sovereignty) to regain control over the food system by the most relevant actors (eaters and producers), from the current dominant actors (agri-food corporations and governments)” (Vivero-Pol 2020:36).

This process focuses on the non-economic characteristics of food, such as providing us with nutrition, belongingness, and cultural significance. Vivero-Pol (2020) argues that the value of food is framed by different epistemic toolboxes (i.e., values, knowledge, vocabulary, ideologies). It all depends on how someone perceives and assesses food, and each perception is tied to a different belief system and way of thinking. Food valuation as a commodity or a commons must be seen as a social construct that can be altered by collective power, like the ones promoted by alternative food movements and indigenous, quilombolas communities (Pettenati et al 2020).

Social movements struggle for food and land

Despite scholarly predictions that the peasantry would vanish (see Chayanov et al. 1974), the Latin American peasantry have increased their cultural, social, and political influence in the region (Altieri and Toledo 2011). This phenomenon has been dubbed "the return of the peasants" (Perez-Vitoria 2005) and has resulted in the recognition of the peasantry in their new role in the resistance to the advancement of industrial agriculture and neoliberal policies. Throughout the last two decades, there have been uprisings of movements that challenge industrial food systems by experimenting with alternatives to producing, harvesting, hunting, processing, transporting, consuming, and, ultimately, regulating food. The struggle for food sovereignty combines the struggles for land and food, and the peasant political projects are devices for multiple emancipation: that is, an alternative project for life based on a new relationship between living beings. Humanity and nature (coexistence, coproduction, etc.), as well as complementarity and without exploitation.

Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011), looking at how social movements acts in a food system transformation practices, classified into four categories: neoliberalism/market-led, reformist/aid-oriented, progressive/empowerment-seeking, radical/redistribution-enabled. These four elements have become a reference for acknowledging how emerging initiatives are setting themselves in regards to the food system while generating forward change. Here, we focus on progressive/empowerment-seeking initiatives, especially those that deal with challenging the core of food system inequities: land distribution.

In Brazil, land concentration is a colonial problem that remains unsolved: only 1% of agricultural holdings occupy the total land area, and only 2.8% of land owners own almost 60% of arable land. Small farms account for almost two-thirds of rural employment, but they only own 2.5 per cent of the total land. In spite of the establishment of the Institute of Colonization and Land Reform (INCRA) and several governments' promises to modify the situation, no significant steps have been taken. These agrarian inequalities generates constant cultural and social conflicts (Stédile and Fernandes 1999).

The collective political organization fighting against land concentration is one of the oldest social mobilizations in the country. One of the first peasant resistance organizations in Brazil was *Canudos*, whose main expression was the *Cangaço*, but the formal background started during the 1950s. Agrarian modernization and the Green Revolution influenced those articulations, when technology replaced manual labour and export-oriented crops were widely adopted. As a result, multiple social tensions peaked in the Brazilian countryside. As a result, peasant leagues were formed, which set the course for the struggle for land in Brazil, presenting a daring agrarian reform model, endorsed in 1963 by Jos Goulart. In the Military Dictatorship (1964-1984), land conflicts peaked. Since agriculture was technologically modernized and manual labor decreased, rural workers were forced to migrate to urban and recently-industrialised cities for work. A large number of them went to mid-sized cities to work on farms, cutting sugarcane and harvesting oranges, cotton, and coffee, if the figure of the *bóia-fria* (daily agricultural worker) emerges (Carter 2015).

The Communist Party and Roman Catholic Church also contributed to the transformation of the countryside. Their combined efforts, backed by trade unions and peasant associations, led to the formation of Christian Based Communities (CEBs) and Pastoral Commissions for Land (CPT), greatly influenced by liberation theology. Peasant rebel groups formed in several Brazilian states, especially in the south. In the 1970s and 1980s, multiple groups of peasants organized and challenged their displacement. Agrarian reform demands gained importance, forming new social identities. During the 1980s and 1990s, multiple landless peasants' organisations began to mobilize occupations and protest camps, challenging rural inequalities and fostering new legal understanding. This was done by questioning the legitimacy of large rural properties, based on the negligible productivity of the lands (van der Ploeg 2009; Stédile and Fernandes 1999).

Connections between commons, food sovereignty and social movements'

The first scholars to link food sovereignty, the commons, and social movements were in political ecology and environmental justice. Despite similar interests in group action and bottom-up governance, these bodies of knowledge developed independently for more than 50 years. Commons institutions can serve as the foundation of social mobilization and develop into a major frame for social movements. On the other hand, social movement theory has focused on various aspects of collective mobilizations and their influence on policy-making. Recently, more and more scholars have placed in the commons the hope for societal transformation through social movements, in order to achieve a more democratic, equitable and sustainable life (Villamayor-Tomas and Garcia-Lopez 2018).

Especially, Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) scholars had understudied the role of social movements in the governing processes of the natural resources (Stern et al 2002), showing how social movements have shape commons perspectives and institutions both horizontally and vertically, through the promotion of governing-from-below strategies. The theoretical and analytical connections are key to the emergence, renewal, and scaling up of natural resource management institutions, as a way to challenged multiscale power dynamics and mobilized collective action, thus contributing to effective decentralization of food power relations.

Because the aim of this research is to look at these combined approaches, social movements are understood as groups that creates processes of contentious collective action that portray frustrations around perceived injustices and that comprise a pursuit for alternative policies, values, discourses and/or practices. The combination of the theories is relevant to address how these organizations have been acting as "agents of change," fighting intersectional inequalities and building food as a web of life.

Research problem

Based on the theoretical framework presented above, this research aims to look at the Armazém do Campo (AdC) role in the MST struggles. The research question that guided this project is:

What is the role of the Armazém do Campo initiative in the MST historical struggles?

This questions leads also to the following sub questions:

- *How are the main discourses communicated in the AdC?*
- *How are the main material and symbolic practices communicated in the AdC?*

My ethnographic work and narrative analysis

My epistemological position is based on the idea that knowledge is relative and can only be grasped from the perspectives of those who participate in it directly. The main objective is to examine how social movements create narratives, values, and interpretations, and express them through a politico-cultural initiative. Therefore, ethnography is the most effective way to address that, because it involves understanding the social world, the shared behaviours, beliefs, and values of particular groups, and the narratives they promote (Ritchie 2003). It is the study of people, cultures, subcultures, systems, and individuals' patterns from the perspective of the subject. In my research, I combined digital and on-site ethnography to look at the AdC as an initiative that the MST created to promote dialogues around the struggle for food sovereignty.

The method is helpful in identifying the main discourses and practices presented. This is because they are strategic stories generated to articulate claims or complaints, promoting the interests of groups, and challenging opposition narratives. As Cortazzi (2001:384) states, "narrating is, after all, a major means of making sense of past experience and sharing it with others." Narrating itself contributes to the collective construction of identity and self-understanding. A narrative-based method takes the notion that knowledge might be stored, relayed, and retrieved in the form of stories, which are also products of social interaction. The power of narratives varies with the actors' identities, values, interests, knowledge, and experiences, as well as with the extent to which their narratives resonate with dominant paradigms. They do not have inherent power; they gain power when they resonate with people's cultural norms and also depends on the narrators' social power relations (Polletta and Chen 2017; Riessman 2008; de Moor and Wahlström 2019; Verloo 2018; Dietz 2019; Franzosi 1998).

Using these methods, I was able to see how leaders, settlers, and supporters use stories to mobilise participants and influence decision-makers, because narrating plays an influential role in the processes of formation and consolidation of a social movement. According to de Moor and Wahlström (2019): "people acquire and use knowledge about political opportunity structures through storytelling about the movement's past, present, and imagined future," demonstrating that narrative analysis is a useful tool for discussing the links between "structure and agency in social movements and other actors affected by (political) opportunity structures". Ethnography itself is a story that is being told. Ethnography is a narrative record of a journey, finding, and personal interpretation. Ethnographers tell stories as co-authors in the relaying and interpreting of informants' accounts, so they construct meanings through the narratives that they can (and/or want) to see. In

my case, it provided helpful insight into how social movements organize themselves and their struggles through the story telling they create, being in discourses or symbolic and material practices.

Data collection

Observations, interviews, and conversations were my primary sources. I spoke with 30 people in total, including six who are directly connected to the Movement (3 national coordinators and three state members from Mato Grosso do Sul, São Paulo, and Paraná); five who are indirectly connected (3 journalists from non-hegemonic media groups and two researchers); nine AdC workers (some were also settlers, farmers or militants of the MST); and ten AdC consumers (all urbans). The online interviews were all recorded using the Zoom application. The in-person interviews were recorded with the recorder application on my phone.

Among the topics discussed were their relationship with the MST, their perceptions of the food system, and how they feel about the creation, objectives, goals, and achievements of the AdC. I asked consumers how they heard about the initiative. I also asked if they knew about the MST before, why they chose to shop there and what they thought of the store's material and symbolism. Most of the interviewees I talked to, even National coordinators or AdC workers, present themselves as settlers, many of those being the second and third generation of settlers.

For the observations, I took photos with my phone and kept a fieldwork notebook. During my time living in the city between 2019 and 2021, I was a frequent consumer of the place. Additionally, I used to attend political and cultural events every month. I visited the store three times during my fieldwork period: February 16–20, March 6–13, and April 7–14. While observing interactions between workers and consumers, I took pictures, talked to people passing by, bought multiple products, and observed materials on the walls. I used Atlas software to transcribe, label, and analyse the interviews, conversations, and field notes.

Secondary data was collected by following the MST's Instagram page: @movimentosemterra. In addition to looking at the publications daily in an exploratory way, I choose to look more closely at the so-called “cap case”, which is presented in the material/symbolic empirical chapter. I looked at how people interacted in the publication and how the MST used their official Instagram page to present their positionality in the case. Choosing this particular case was because the item is usually sold at the AdC, and after the controversy, all my interviewees reported that demand for the caps increased, thus raising social media awareness of the AdC.

Ethical issues and positionality

I was born in Ribeirão Preto, named "São Paulo's countryside capital." Located in the northeast of the state, it was a gateway for agribusiness to advance through the Cerrado, with a powerful agribusiness culture, verbally expressed and hidden in values, interpretations, and identifications. Today, the Brazilian Agribusiness Association (ABAG), one of the most influential organizations in the industry, still resides in the city, despite it has been being surpassed by Mato Grosso and Matopiba in numbers. Ribeirão is an important pole of sugarcane production, and in the middle of the sugarcane monoculture is located the MST settlement Mário Lago, a resistance space located where was once the old farm of Barra. This is a sustainable food project, a national reference in agroforestry, and it protects the Guarani aquifer.

It was unknown to me before I began this study. As an urban white girl from a middle-class family (a set of features understood as "neutral" in today's world), my interest in food and agriculture never had a revolutionary perspective until I got to know the AdC when I moved to São Paulo in 2019.

In my family, my grandparents were among many rural workers who moved to the newly urbanised region to give their children a better life. By cooking and selling her food, my grandmother allowed my father, uncles, and aunts to study. Despite being born in the city, talking, sharing, cooking, and selling food have always been a part of my life. Like most of the customers I spoke to, I was unaware of the transformative potential of the MST before attending the AdC events.

The food debate introduced me to the land concentration debate. It was a journey from an individualistic perspective, when I questioned my consumption habits and looked for a healthier diet, towards a collective perspective, thinking about how to benefit society by using it as a connector. Thinking about these paths made me wonder: does the topic select the researcher or the researcher selects the topic? For me, it's both.

There is a dialectical link between me and the movement that was "glued" by food. The more I attempted to understand their practices and representations, the more I felt I needed to let go of some "neutral/impartial academic posture". As I became more familiar with the people who are part of it, I was struck by the wealth and dynamism they exhibit.

My analysis of participants' dreams was not sufficient at some points; I had to dream about them as well. I had to respect the logic and meaning of their discourses and practices at all times. Otherwise, I would not be able to comprehend them fully. "The fruit only appears when it is ready"

stated one of the interviewees regarding the creation of the AdC "only" now, after more than 30 years of struggle. For the movement to be mature enough to create a space that combined resistance and hope, it had to go through the stages it did. Similarly, I believe that this research is the fruit that appeared in my life "only" now, as I was ready for it after having discussed it with my family, friends, professors, and supervisors.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Amsterdam's Ethical Committee for this research. For the safety of the leaders and supporters, all names of the interviewees were changed to Brazilian fruit names, to keep them anonymous.

CHAPTER 2 – THE LANDLESS RURAL WORKER’S MOVEMENT AND THE ARMAZÉM DO CAMPO INITIATIVE



Figure 6: MST Bahia State Agrarian Reform Fair (Photo: Jonas Santos/MST gallery)

“The settlements are created communities, with young and old people sharing. There are many needs, for food, school, water, culture, training, dialogue on issues of gender, sexual diversity, racism... But those people will live together and share and create together. It is not just a benefit, a guarantee or a social program. **Popular Agrarian Reform is a life project**” (Interviewee Cupuaçu, MST National Coordinator, 2022).

The Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST) is the main actor, object and element of this research. MST’s size and organizational structure make it one of the world’s most important social movements. It is composed of about 450,000 agricultural families and 90,000 encamped families participating in 1,900 community associations, 160 cooperatives, and 120 agro-industries. It emerged in 1984, during the waning of the military regime, at a moment when there was an increasing societal pressure for political democratization and land tenure. They are a result of the clash of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives in the food system. The Movement’s main struggle is for agrarian reform, as an essential component of social and systemic transformation

(Borsatto and Carmo 2013; Carter 2015) looking for a national project based on food and land justice. They define food system transformation through the idea of Popular Agrarian Reform (PAR).

More than just land tenure, the word "popular", added in the agrarian reform struggle, is meaningful, because they look at how people will be able to work on the land, the possibilities and challenges of producing food on the land, where they will sell it, to whom and how they will do so. It is for this reason that the PAR struggle is a fundamental part of food sovereignty. Because it involves agricultural credit, basic sanitation, energy, education, health, tax incentives (like those that some large producers receive today), technologies, cultivation conditions so that farmers can actually produce food on those lands and, of course, food security for the communities (Carvalho et al 2022). It is a life project that aims to promote the well-being of peasants, land, and community dynamics.

Their main political actuation can be separated into three moments: the occupation of the land, the organization of the settlement and the management of the food production. All three moments are in articulation and dialogue with the State, the media, the settlers, supporters and other farmers and other social movements (Borsatto and Carmo 2013; Carter 2015). I found that most interviewees, even National coordinators or AdC workers, presented themselves as settlers, many of them being second and third generation settlers. However, many explained to me how the construction of community ties is not a fast and easy process. Especially during the first moment, the occupations, emphasizing what Carter refers to as "struggle on the land" (2015). Growing up in an encamped situation affects how you perceive social problems, such as being evicted:

“I witnessed strong scenes from a very early age. I have a very specific memory, for example, of a truck full of people that has being evicted from another camp, and my mother running go get them sheets, covers, clothes... I remember everyone wet, that mud, child crying. Eviction is a very violent thing” (Interview Cambuci, MST Paraná, 2022).

Following the conquest of land and the implementation of the agrarian reform policy, encampments later became settlements, recognized as such by the State. Even so, they usually lack basic infrastructure, such as sanitation, electricity, and access to education, culture, and leisure activities. The settled families usually remain organized to continue to advocate for conquering basic rights.

The families usually organise into groups that discuss the needs of each area (water, health, education, energy, etc.). To carry out specific tasks, families are also segmented by sectors, according to the needs and demands of each settlement, but always in connection with state and national leaders. Decision-making bodies are oriented to guarantee the participation of men and women, young and old, represented in the assemblies. Besides the micro-level of organisation, on

the macro level, MST's largest decision-making space is the National Congresses that take place, in which settlers can share their struggles and solutions. In addition to the Congresses, every two years the MST holds its national meeting, where the definitions deliberated in the Congress are evaluated and updated. The MST challenges archaic land inequality engaging in legal protest and civil disobedience. It negotiates with the state and it is highly networked and decentralized, giving a huge contribution to Brazilian democracy (Carter 2015).

Four stages of development in the MST history: formation, consolidation, institutionalisation and globalisation

Carter (2015) divides MST history in four stages: formation (1979-1984), consolidation (1985-1989), institutionalisation (1990-onwards), and globalisation (1996-onwards). The movement's formation and consolidation included a process of national expansion and organizational development. The concept of "the social function of land" is a key element of their consolidation period, which they pressure to have it described in the Brazilian Federal Constitution, of 1988: "AGRICULTURAL AND LAND POLICY AND AGRICULTURAL REFORM". In Article 184, it is stated that:

"It is incumbent upon the Union to expropriate for social interest, for agrarian reform, the rural property that is not fulfilling its social function, upon prior and fair compensation in agrarian debt securities, with a clause for preserving the real value, redeemable within a period of up to twenty years, from the second year of its issuance, and whose use will be defined by law" (BRASIL 1988).

In Article 186, the parameters of "social function" are defined:

I – rational and adequate use;

II – adequate use of available natural resources and preservation of the environment;

III – observance of the provisions that regulate labour relations;

IV – exploitation that favours the well-being of owners and workers" (BRASIL, 1988).

The MST gained wide international recognition after institutionalizing (1990 and onward) and becoming the primary interlocutor with the federal government on land reform. The movement's fourth phase was shaped by joining La Via Campesina in 1996. In the late 1990s, Via Campesina's expansion and opposition to the World Bank's market-based agrarian policy helped globalize MST struggles. The movement also opened up to urban militancy at this time. As one National Coordinator explained to me, "Popular Agrarian Reform is not a demand that can only come from rural people. Our base, our ground, will always be the peasants, and the peasant displacement is key to the formation of urban peripheries". Interviewee Dende, São Paulo State leadership himself comes from the urban world: "I'm still learning to plant beans in cotton

[laughs]”. The dialogues with the city are important to show the products that the movements produce in the land, that is, the reason-why they occupy: for producing food.

“The dialogues that we can do with the city are about the quality of the food that they are eating, and the issues of hunger and food sovereignty. We are the country with the largest amount of arable land in the world, and the question remains: who are we feeding? Agribusiness only produces what makes money [...] it does not feed the Brazilian people, whether rural or in the city. Now we want to have a more direct dialogue to the city. Show **what we do and why** we do” (Interview Dendê, MST São Paulo, 2022).

The key idea, to “show what and why” the Movement acts, is the main reason why I believed they are entering now a new stage. Communicating with the urban supporters comes to the forefront as a way to “organize the poor”. The hegemonic narrative in the food system tries to separate peasants from urban workers, in the displacement process, making as if the for ending land concentration is not a problem of the city. The urban generally appears in the literatures on agrarian social movements, food sovereignty, agroecological transitions and food system transformation as a contextual component or as a locus and source of marginalization, and in both cases as a place where the agrarian issues need to be addressed. But in the case of the MST, the urban is a key element to address food system counter-hegemonic narratives and it makes significant contributions to resisting the urbanization of capitalism's human-centeredness.

In order to promote this dialogue, the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST) developed. MTST's first efforts at urban activism can be traced to the occupation of Campinas in So Paulo during the 1997 National People's March, however, this intervention was coordinated within the Landless Rural Workers' Rural Movement (MST). The first proper occupation as a new sociopolitical actor, distinct from the MST, took place in Guarulhos in 2002. Along with the creation of the MTST, the MST created multiple actions in the cities, as new stage of historic development focus on communicating, such as the Solidarity Kitchens and the Armazém do Campo space. Their main goal is to be there, where no other politicians, NGOs or church can reach: they organise the poor. That is what terrifies the elite and the media.

The fifth stage of development: media criminalization portray and the new focus on communication (2016-onwards)

“What terrifies the elite and the media, when talking about the MST, is that they had managed for 38 years, to **organise the poor people**. And they don't give up on it, that is non-negotiable” (Interview Lucuma, journalist, 2022).

One of the reflexes of the MST criminalization processes during the 1980s and 1990s is the image that was constructed by the mass media in daily in newspapers, magazines, and editorial or opinion material. There are several examples and research that point to the criminalization of the

movement (see Oliveira et al. 2011; Ayoub 2006; Adissi 2010; Rocha 2013). Cassimiro (2003), for instance, in an analysis of the construction of the MST image between 1984 and 2002, identified that, in the main Brazilian press vehicles, reports published used denominations such as "anarchists", "*baderneiros*", "agents of disorder", "agitators", "out of the law", "unemployed people", "rioting people" when it comes to designating the movement. Negative denominations are similar to the strategies used to convey the "ghost of communism", assuming what the author calls an image as "the undesirable" in a discourse of criminalization.

The interviewees, Lucuma and Nespera, both have critical views of how the hegemonic media portrays the MST. The second started working as an intern within the National Secretariat of the MST, during a tense period: the CPI da Terra, when very heavy attacks from the institutional structures tried to destabilize the movement: "it was very costly, but also very important for me to understand how the traditional commercial media portrayed the MST, because I was inside, I was seeing the difference between what was happening and how they were talking about it on TV".

As of today, she coordinates a non-hegemonic media group in Brazil whose approach is not directly connected to the Movement per Hei, but focuses on the working class. "We report from a working-class perspective, and to working-class receptors." Editorial choices are therefore based on what is relevant to the working class. "This is our ink, we don't believe in impartiality". The media she works for talks about the food system for a perspective of food justice, as she added: "we are trying to image an agroecological revolution, not only looking at the issue of healthy food alone, but mostly questioning the food system as it is".

Interviewee Dende shared with me some of his thoughts about the media's relationship with the MST. In his opinion, during the formation period, when Brazil was experiencing a widespread misery, the major portrayal was around the idea of "**pity**". "Poor landless". Then, when the Movement begins to gain weight and political structure, the terrorism portrayal begins, which took place in the mid-1980s and had terrible practical effects until recent. "They were killing our people and the media was being a witness, without saying anything". The persecutions and criminalization were at its peak.

During Lula's government (2002-2010), because the movement gained political participation, they incorporated this "unionised" role of rural workers. To make any public policies for rural work, the State had to dialogue with the MST. Several agrarian programs could only be implemented thanks to their organisation, such as Pronera, Luz para Todos, and many others. "We created this legitimacy and it was impossible for the media to pretend we were not there", Dende said. But then, during Dilma Rouseff's government, the media portrayal changed towards hiding,

trying to avoid. “They just completely ignore our actions, our struggles, everything we did was hidden”, said Dende. In 2016, with impeachment of Dilma and the subsequent turn to the extreme-right wing in the government management approach, the criminalization arose even more.

In 2016, the main subject of this research, the Armazém do Campo initiative, officially opened its doors. My next session will examine the background and development of this initiative, which I consider to be a consolidation of the Movement's intention to combat media criminalization. Two majors background for the consolidation of the initiative are the Agrarian Reform Fairs and the dismantle of two food policies: PAA and PNAE.

The Agrarian Reform Fairs



Figure 7: Between October 22 and 25, 2015, the MST held the 1st National Agrarian Reform Fair in Água Branca Park (Photo Joka Madruga/MST gallery)

The AdC background comes from the Agrarian Reform Fairs, organised for over 15 years. Initially, each state coordinated separately to organize fairs in which producers and consumers were able to establish a direct relationship. 2015 marked the first national fair, held in Água Branca Park in So Paulo. It gathered around 200 thousand people, sold 420 tons of products, and prepared over 75 types of typical dishes. As well as the diversity of the settlers' flavours, the event demonstrated the settlers' agroecology practices and discourses. Aside from selling food, the fair offered lectures

and debates related to agrarian, environmental, cooperative, and gender issues, followed by political-cultural activities featuring artists from settlements and camps, as well as supporters of progressive artists. MST's goal was to show consumers who they were and what they made, generating awareness and inciting a desire to buy their agroecological products more frequently. Following the success of the fair, the movement began looking for a physical and permanent venue for an open daily fair. The state of São Paulo articulated with politicians, entities, unions and other movements, to start finding a space, a warehouse.

Initially, their focus was on organizing and articulating political prices, dialoguing within the Movement, and organizing logistics with settlements. Throughout 2017 and 2018, the National Fairs continued. But in 2019, the João Doria government (PSDB) banned the fair. Progressive social movements and left politicians mobilised and fought for continuity in response to power disputes. *Banquetaços* were some of the standout activities, with agroecological food being sold, cultural activities and debates featuring famous chefs. Following all the articulations and political demonstrations in the city, the fair was officially entered into the city's tourism calendar (by law 17162/2019), but was discontinued in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to being a controlled space where they could manage the number of people entering, the AdC São Paulo became the most important platform to sell the products from the settlements; this became their major source of income during the pandemic.

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The dismantle of PAA and PNAE policies



Figure 8: Organic soy harvest in Mato Grosso do Sul in the 2020/2021 harvest, in which peasants harvested more than 40 tons of organic soy (Photos: Noemi Pacheco/MST gallery)

“Our production was usually sold in two ways in the cities: in the agrarian reform fairs and through the public policies such as the PNAE and PAA. But, as the resources of these public policies decreased a lot after 2016, the life of the settlers became very difficult, and we had to rethink where to sell our products. Another problem was that we depended a lot on middlemen, people who go there, buy our products very cheaply and sell it for much more expensive prices in other spaces. So, in order to improve these points, we opened the AdC” (Interview Açaí, MST Paraíba, 2022).

Dismantling two major food public policies, the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), played a key role in forming the AdC. As part of the Zero Hunger program, these policies preferred agrarian reform settlers and paid a 30% premium for organic food bought directly from family farmers. The program was both agricultural and social. This scheme creates an institutional market for small-scale family farmers and makes their products available to those experiencing food insecurity in the same region through food pantries, social welfare organizations, schools, and hospitals. More than 450,000 family farmers benefited and 2 million tons of food were purchased between 2011 and 2018. Besides improving local and regional circuits and local market networks, the program also affected income distribution, money

circulation in the local economy, a more sensible use of rural regions, and the preservation of local cultures (Vilhena et al 2019).

However, under the Bolsonaro government, substantial decreases in funding transfers and intense political attacks resulted in policies disappearing (Camargo et al. 2021). The policy was criticised for paying farmers a low price and for not contributing to the development of more localised food systems. However, managing the finances is an important part of scaling up agroecology. In any case, farmers who wish to produce agroecologically have access to a secure and constant market.

Since the policies were dismantled, the logistic networks created were no longer usable, so farmers either moved resources elsewhere or stopped producing. As a result, they sold their goods even cheaper. Meanwhile, school and hospital food has declined in quality. The Movement had logistic articulations that already existed for the program so, after the creation of the AdC, they transfer the knowledge and adapt the logistics of collecting and distributing the products. It was a way to drain part of the production of settlements that were no longer being bought by the institutional markets, further shortening the path between production and consumption and being an alternative to flow of production.

The Armazém do Campo initiative

The AdC are spaces that concentrate the final product of all that we believe in [the MST]. The goal is to communicate and form awareness for the urban world, especially the policy-makers, media and other social movements supporters, to talk about the role of family farming in the food system. Our food is the channel of this conversation” (Interview Cambuci, MST Paraná, 2022).

After the dismantle of the National Agrarian Reform Fairs and the PAA and PNAE public policies, a strategy adopted by the MST to stay on the agenda was to connect the land agenda to the food agenda. The Armazém do Campo (AdC) became the most important channel to sell the food produced in the settlements, but more importantly, the market turned out to be communication tool, with political and socio-cultural goals.

“Today, the political situation that was put to us with Bolsonaro government, hinders us in doing some actions that we used to do in the past. We are living in a country commanded by a fascist, who is against the landless and where violence is on the horizon. Some of our political actions, such as the occupations, get a little blocked from being carried out. And we know that **food is a source, a beginning, a path where we have space to discuss our agendas with the people.** [...] In the battle of ideas, we have this as a very strong argument: healthy food production” (Interview Pitaia, AdC São Paulo, 2022).



Figure 9: Armazém do Campo in São Paulo (Photo: Luara del Chiavon/MST gallery)

The initiative started in So Paulo. From 2016 to 2022, the number rose to 34 points spread across 13 Brazilian states. They offer services via a physical store, delivery, and ordering. The Movement expects to double this in two to three years. In addition to showcasing products from a variety of social movements, quilombolas, riverine and indigenous communities, each store also displays products from local family farmers in the area. The main discourse is to present *why* he movement fights for the Popular Agrarian Reform (PAR): to produce *comida de verdade*, which they described as:

“Food produced according to agroecological principles, which consider not only the health of the products but also the health of the farmers. [...] In the shelves we display our brands, our products, and show the public *why* the movement occupies land: to produce *comida de verdade* for people” (Interview Pitaia, AdC São Paulo, 2022).

The AdC also gives support and structure to the movement. The initiative helped expand cooperatives from 2 to 9 in Minas Gerais, for example. The number of people involved in the processes increased, as did the number of CNPJs registered: “The AdC both changed the MST from within, for us to start looking at our faults, and changed the way people see us from the outside. It came from Armazém's initiative that all the people who worked went through a process of professional management training, for instance” (Interview Murici, AdC Belo Horizonte, 2022).

The goal is to make food a channel of conversation. This is how one of my interviewees described their view of the AdC role in the MST struggles for food sovereignty. Having a space to sell their products is more than consolidating a market; it is also about using food to dialogue with

city supporters from many angles. Food is the tie that connects urban-rural struggles, and those linkages have come to the forefront in recent years for both academics and activists engaging in agrarian challenges, agroecological transitions, and food system transformation. It is also a result of grassroots experiments, farmers' participation in urban policies, and the application of agroecology in food production, that a new agenda attempting to link urban and agrarian social movements has emerged.

“More than selling our products, our proposal was to be the MST's window to the world, where we will be able to show that the Popular Agrarian Reform works, and the 950 products in the store speak for themselves” (Interview Murici, AdC Belo Horizonte, 2022).

AdC is the solidification of this necessary process to glue the debates. From the 10 consumers that I talked to, half of them knew the MST before the AdC initiative emerged, and half did not. This corroborates with what the leaders and settlers said in their interviews: slowly the initiative is creating space to discuss with the urban world, especially with those to whom the Movement did not have any approach before. Through the commercialization of food, they got the attention of people that come from the healthy food debate, people who were not necessarily aware of the land issues that the countryside has to deal with can produce these foods.

Another finding was that three interviewees were members of other social movements, which indicates that there is a link between being part of a social movement and being interested in the MST initiatives. Six interviewees also indicated that the quality of the products itself was the main reason for buying from the AdC, while three responded that supporting the MST was the main reason. It can also indicate that, although the Movement thinks that the consumers are there to support them, mostly, they are there for buying healthy food for a fair price – be it from MST or not, they would buy in the AdC anyway.

Interview ID	Knew the MST before the AdC	Member of any social movement or supporter of any specific cause?	Primary reason to buy in the AdC	Secondary reason to buy in the AdC	Go to political-cultural events (if yes, how often)
21	No	No	Support family farming	Healthy food	Yes, weekly
22	Yes	Yes, street art and poetry groups	Healthy food	Support the MST	Yes, monthly
23	Yes	Yes, ecologists	Healthy food	Support environmental responsible place	Yes, weekly
24	Yes	Yes, LGBT	Support the MST	Support environmental responsible place	Yes, occasionally
25	No	No	Healthy food	Support the MST	No
26	Yes	No	Support the MST	Support family farming	No
27	No	No	Healthy food	Support family farming	No
28	Yes	No	Support the MST	Healthy food	No
29	Yes	Yes, Slow Food	Support family farming	Healthy food	Yes, occasionally
30	Yes	No	Healthy food	Support anti-capitalism practices	No

Table 1 – Interviews with consumers

One key aspect in the dialogues between the AdC and the consumers is the notion of food as a source. Consumers receive information about the food's unique characteristics. This includes the location where it was produced, the processes involved, the values, and the people who participated in this chain, and this makes a huge impact. As interviewee Embaúba said, “people are slowly seeing that the reason why MST occupies land is to provide conditions for people to survive and to produce food, for the urban and the countryside”. It is possible to see that the AdC operates as a counterweight to the so-called “food from nowhere regime” which is defined by a geographical gap between production and consumption, because it encourages consumers to know where, how, and by whom it was manufactured.

The MST leaders mentioned to me that they seek fair prices for both consumers and producers. This is for the benefit of the countryside and the cities, not for profit. This demonstrates that their goals are much more political than economic. "The margin is just to continue to do our political objectives, which is to advertise the products of Popular Agrarian Reform and engage in dialogue with urbanites. Even being cheaper than the others organic markets in São Paulo, the products are still more expensive than the ones sold in the large scale supermarkets. Therefore, although their main audience is the working class, the AdC's actual consumers are more from the middle class:

“Our target audience has always been and always will be the working class. Even the neighbourhood that we are in [in São Paulo], despite being in the city centre, it is lower-middle-class. I don't think it's the most suitable place to open an organic market in São Paulo, if you plan to study the matter. Unfortunately, those who consume these products are still mostly upper-middle-class. [...] The challenge lies in reaching this working class, that was unable to consume organic food” (Interview Pitaia, AdC São Paulo, 2022).

The aspect of communication with socio-cultural goals was clear in a conversation with interviewee Cupuaçu, when she said that “those who are in the city sometimes cannot think about the social relations behind the food” to explain why it is crucial for the AdC to dialogue with urban supporters. Although their goal is to reach all the working class, their main audience is still supporters who were already somehow connected to left-wing social movements or politico-cultural organizations. This was also corroborated in my conversations and observations in the AdC São Paulo. But still, as it is a public store, other audiences, that are not always so familiar with their agenda, are growing:

“As a result, we are gaining a new type of consumer, who had never heard of the MST before, but was looking for healthy food. The consumer then ends up at the AdC. Later they realize that the debate is much larger than the individual's perspective on healthy eating. AdC is like a door displaying how healthy food can be integrated into non-toxic relationships” (Interview Cupuacu, MST National coordinator, 2022).

The idea of “food that is inserted within non-toxic social relationships” is a key element discussed here. It has been the idea of the Movement to connect to consumers by showing them that what they produce in addition to being organic and without poison (agrochemicals) is a type of food that signifies a social relationship of struggle for land and for democracy, and that provokes reflection on what it is like to live in community, where the relationship between human beings and nature is not just based on profit or exploitation. It is based on mutual respect and embedded in the narrative of sovereignty.

The food agenda is more common in the urban middle class, but people do not necessarily associate it with the previous struggle for land. If you are defending healthy food, you will have much more adherence. There is an effort from the rural social movements to form an association about this, said Nespera. The event aims to bridge the gap between the healthy product at the end of the chain, and what it implies in all the steps before it: “Making this glue is difficult, but our goal is to make people understand that what it consumes demands a whole previous process.” It is our responsibility to organize these debates”.

Discussions

My conversations indicated that the AdC is not achieving their main target: the urban working class. Most of the consumers that I observed are clearly from the upper or middle class.

Using questions about their education, professional status, clothing, and way of speaking and acting, I gathered this information. As it usually happens in organic/agroecological markets. Multiple reasons for that can be seen, like the price, the location, and the buying habits of those consumers.

So, the AdC might intend to connect with the working class, but this is not what is really happening – at least for now. After the conversations, the feeling that I got was that some of those consumers tend to think that, because they have monetary access and because they are able to individually solve their own issues within the food system, they think they are already being “revolutionary” in some senses. This individualistic perspective was felt in many of the conversations I had.

However, there was little abstraction when the discussion got into the more collective ways of producing, distributing and consuming. At the AdC, more than selling food, the space condenses MST years of struggle and is a step toward communicating food sovereignty ideas to city residents. As difficult as it may be to "make the glue" between food and land agendas, the AdC is helping it to develop, making this dense land debate a bit lighter, and linking the final product (food) with its history of struggle for land reform. To discuss how this communication network operates, in the next chapters I will present the major discourses and practices that MST is using in the AdC as a way to talk about food sovereignty.

CHAPTER 3 - DISCOURSES OF AGROECOLOGY, SOLIDARITY AND HEALTHY FOOD

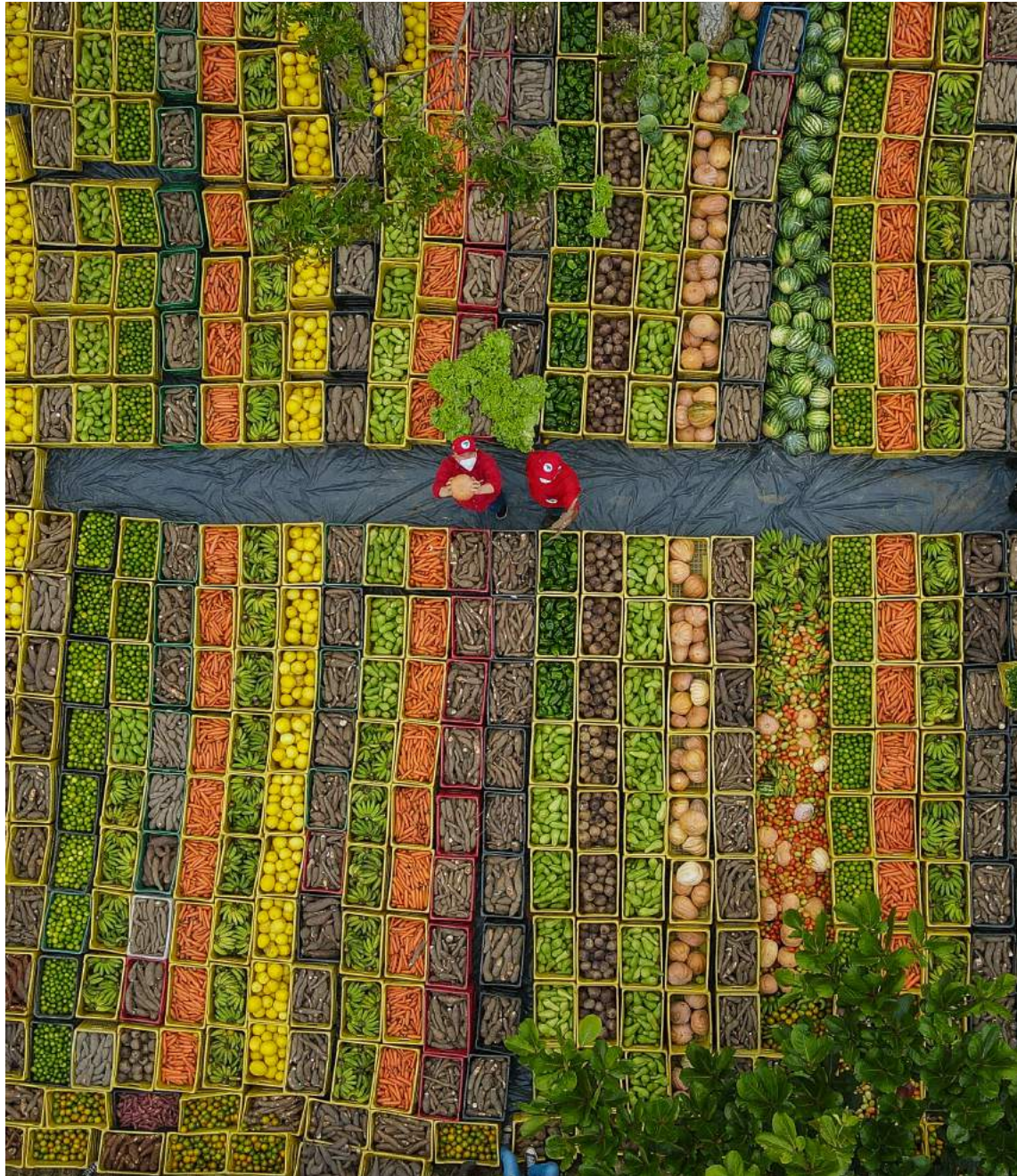


Figure 10: Food production from the Che Guevara settlement, in Moreno, metropolitan region of Pernambuco. The image depicts Lula's meeting with the rural worker, on August 16, 2021 (Photo: Ricardo Stuckert/MST gallery)

As presented in the previous chapter, the Armazém do Campo (AdC) is considered here as the turning point to the fifth stage in the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) development because it is the major space of communication with multiple stakeholders in the urban context, connecting struggles towards a more sovereignty system. Their engagement in collective action in the AdC aimed at influencing patterns, values, and beliefs through discourses and practices of food sovereignty. In this chapter, I will present three main discourses: agroecology production, solidarity distribution and healthy food consumption. These three ideas intertwine will be analyzed separated here just as intent to dismember complex relations.

Agroecology as a “way of living”



Figure 11: Phrase on the side of the dairy shelf at AdC SP with the words: "Agroecology way of life", next to Terra Viva milks, cooperative that focus on industrialize and commercialize the production of the Agrarian Reform Settlements in Santa Catarina (Photo: Gabriele Maniezo/personal archive)

“Talking about **agroecology is inside our belly**, and when we talk about something that comes from the inside, there is another permanence, not only in us but also in the people that listed to us” (Interview Habanero, Produtos da Terra Paraná, 2022)

Inside the belly. Agroecology discourses are part of the Movement's ideological and principle development. Discussing this way of production with the settlers has “another permanence” because it has a connection with the traditional peasantry way of living, their

background and their own beliefs. Agroecology explores how processes, communities and agricultural production are connected. It is not related to one specific kind of farming (organic, regenerative, integrated, industrial or intensive), but is a practice-based transdisciplinary field. Embracing the epistemologies of indigenous and peasantry traditional communities, it prioritizes living with beings in harmony while improving the majority's living conditions through education, nutrition, housing, and social organization. That is why agroecology is included here as a discourse that is a part of the food sovereignty principles (Altieri and Toledo 2011; Rosset et al. 2011).

In the MST development history, the agroecology discourse was not present in the formation, consolidation or institutionalization stages as explicitly as it became in the fourth stage (globalization). The dominant political discourses in those periods focused on creating an industrial model, which fostered tight organization and worker specialization, based on the Green Revolution⁵ narratives. During the occupation of the land, the narratives for food production used a technological package composed of transgenic seed and agrochemicals, which initially provided a certain level of production and apparent monetary benefits, but generates costly long-term economic, social, and ecological impacts for settlers (Carter 2015; Fernandes 1999).

The agroecology discourse arose in the globalization stage, being institutionalized in the IV National Congress, in 2000, when its principles were embraced, but the actual word “agroecology” still did not appear in the 12 Political Lines presented in the final document (<https://mst.org.br/2009/07/08/linhas-politicas-reafirmadas-no-iv-congresso-nacional-do-mst-2000-2/>) (Borsatto and Carmo 2013).

⁵The Green Revolution was a set of technology-based initiatives that occurred between 1950s and 1960s, that increased agricultural production. The initiatives resulted in the adoption of new technologies, including high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of cereals. It was associated with chemical fertilizers, agrochemicals, and controlled water supply (usually involving irrigation) and newer methods of cultivation, including mechanization. All of these together were seen as a 'package of practices' to supersede 'traditional' technology and to be adopted as a whole (Conway 1998; Pingali 2012).



Figure 12: Multiple elements from the 4 Congress slogan highlights the Movement most important struggles: hunger, land, education, food and the base is the MST flag (Photo: MST gallery)

As a result of the globalization process, the agroecology discourse was institutionalized in the IV National Congress, held in 2000. However, the word "agroecology" did not appear in the 12 Political Lines presented in the final document (<https://mst.org.br/2009/07/08/linhas-politicas-reafirmadas-no-iv-congresso-nacional-do-mst-2000-2>). Agroecology came into existence in association with La Via Campesina's (LVC) debates and practices in a transnational route of discussion (Desmarais 2007; Fernandes 2004), which was consolidated as a practice at the Fifth National Congress in 2007. According to the document "Political lines reaffirmed at the V National Congress of the MST", point number 11: "Defend native and creole seeds. Fight against transgenic seeds. Practice agroecology and agricultural techniques in harmony with the environment. Rural settlements and communities must primarily produce food without pesticides for the domestic market" (MST, 2007).

It acquired the character of an agrarian program in the VI Congress, in 2014, in which the People's Agrarian Reform (PAR) plan was launched highlighting agroecology as part of food sovereignty struggle. The concepts of agroecology are articulated by MST members as illustrated

by a leader from Mato Grosso do Sul and the perception of the Interviewee Embaúba, from AdC Imperatriz:

“All of our struggles, from the moment we occupy a land to the creation of the settlement community, are so that people can produce agroecological food and survive from their lot. “Agroecology for us is about encouraging life, people, and nature.”
“Deconstructing monocultures' ideas does not happen in a blink of an eye. A settler-to-settler exchange is held with settlers from other states that are already practicing agroecological practices”.

Specifically, the idea of "encouraging life" and the "settler-to-settler" practices demonstrate how agroecology is seen by the Movement as more than a production-based narrative. The narrative shift they promote is gradual, as a product of an organic process of social construction, rather than a clash of ideologies and overlap of influences (Borsatto and Carmo 2013).

An example of these contradictions can be found in the settlements of Itamarati and Itamarati II, in Mato Grosso do Sul (MS), where Interview Maná-cubiu resides. It is the largest settlement in the state, located in the municipality of Ponta Porã. In 2002, before becoming a settlement, the territory was the site of at least two private megaprojects: Companhia Mate Laranjeira and the Itamarati Farm, a mechanized farm dedicated to soy, corn, and cattle production, on 50,000 hectares.

The farm developed into a genuine showcase for what we now refer to as the agribusiness narrative. It attracted various national and even global corporate organizations that desired to adopt their technological and "efficiency-based" agricultural methods. After it became a settlement, in addition to maintaining the mega-enterprise characteristics, it also ended up incorporating political peculiarities, such as the families organizing in four different associations of workers, with different political-ideological positions (Terra 2009). Despite the MST's leadership position in agroecological production, soy and corn production are still dominated by large-scale, agrochemical-based production. Leaders' understanding clashes with settlers' perceptions, which are influenced by multiple narratives. As the interviewee told me:

“Settled families restrict cooperative work, trying to see the Movement's collective understanding of the land as a solution rather than a problem. They are too deep into an individualistic narrative. They prefer to deliver the food to any of those companies, middlemen that pay minimal wages and will resell for a lot of profit, than delivering to the MST cooperative” (Interview Maná-cubiu, MST Mato Grosso do Sul, 2022).”

In spite of MST's role in enabling residents to access resources and services they did not previously have, improving the quality of life, the leaders have a difficult time discussing agroecology production. The challenges are in gaining a better understanding of how agroecological systems work as well as in the development of its use as a social, political, and cultural tool. There

is still more speech than practice in agroecology discourses, as demonstrated in the Itamarati case. To reach a deeper level of organization and capillarity in agroecology in the settlements, the Movement needs to work more with the settler-to-settler solution, with training, implementing technical courses and sharing successful practices and challenges between the settlements.

Comida de verdade: what is healthy food?



Figure 14: Shelf with products (Photo: Gabriele Maniezo/personal archive)



Figure 13: Close-up of the label "food without poison" (Photo: Gabriele Maniezo/personal archive)

The concept of healthy food used here is food produced without the use of agrochemicals. Brazil is one of the countries that consumes the most pesticides in the world, and the number of records for the use of chemicals has increased exponentially. The average annual use of pesticides in Brazil between 2012 and 2014 totalled 877,782 tons, according to the atlas *Geografia do Uso de Agroquímicos no Brasil*. However, in 2017, with around 550 thousand tons of active ingredients, Brazil became the largest consumer of pesticides in terms of product volume on the planet. Data from the Commission on Human Rights and Minorities of the Chamber of Deputies was presented in Brasilia in 2019. In this scenario, the debate over pesticide use takes place constantly as a result of the struggle of Social Movements for food sovereignty and popular agrarian reform.

It is no coincidence that the expansion of the healthy food discourses that the AdC represents and embraces parallels the expansion of the organic agenda in the country. This is an alternative to the hegemonic use of pesticides. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the number of organic producers increased 200% from 2012 to 2020, from almost 5,900 to more than 17,700 thousand. The number of production units increased by more than 300%, from 5,400 in 2010 to 22,000 in 2018. However, most of the organic production is maintained by private companies. Nonetheless, when it comes to consumption, the mismatch is clear: only 15% of respondents from large urban centers actually regularly consume organic products, although a survey by Datafolha from the same year showed that 78% of their respondents were sure that consumption of food with poisons is unsafe. It shows the disparities between the notion that we need to become healthier and the actual possibility to do so. There are many reasons for this, including the higher prices for organic products and a lack of knowledge about the agrochemicals we consume daily.

AdC stores feature healthy food discourses on shelves, walls, and labels. As in the image above, the tag “comida sem veneno” identifies the agroecological products. As explained by one of the AdC workers, the selection of each element in the store has a meaning: “We use the idea of healthy food in all of our branding initiatives, folders, events, everything, so that people know what we are about. [...] I see healthy food as based on agroecology, and promotes health to the families and the nature” (Interview Fruta-do-milagre, AdC Cascavel, 2022).

One of the great triumphs of the MST in this fifth stage of development was to point out the direct relationship between agroecology production and healthy food consumption, and the AdC is the point where those two converge. Sounds logical, but it's not a directly made association, especially because the discourses about production and consumption are, in general, divided. Agroecological products not being in the spaces of conventional markets also enhances the idea that more close relations between consumers and producers can be beneficial for both. As Habanero

said: "When we manage to bring the consumer closer to us, when we talk about ourselves, about how it is produced, by whom, it is very different than when they just see an organic product on a supermarket shelf". In addition, according to her, many consumers were influenced by the "big organic debate" and ended up discussing food sovereignty, agroecology and healthy foods.

"A lot of discussion in our WhatsApp groups happened because some people joined looking for organic products only, and had no political reflection on how healthy food means that it is healthy not only for consumers, but also for the farmers and for the land. One of my tasks was to chill out the debates [laughs], but making clear that we are going to talk about politics as well. We build the discourse little by little. First we talk about health...then organic... agroecology...land...agrarian reform... MST!".

According to the interviewees, people are more open to MST if they talk about 'this healthy food you're eating at the moment'. However, before that, before the food arrives at the table, people disassociate. However, some consumers are becoming more aware of the importance of seeing healthy food as health for farmers and nature besides the consumer only:

"I personally want to buy from small producers, if in the AdC or street fairs. The farmer tells me it's agroecological. I buy it, I believe it. But I don't know for sure, I've never been to his land, there's no label guaranteeing anything. Do I doubt? No. I'd rather buy from him, even if it is not that organic, than buying a certified one inside a supermarket, full of plastic, from far away" (Interview Esporão-de-galo, consumer, 2022).

Healthy food discourses are a practice example of applying food sovereignty principles because it refers to people's right to wholesome, culturally acceptable food that is produced using environmentally friendly, sustainable practices, as well as their right to design their own food and agricultural systems. Through the AdC initiative, the MST is opening a space of healthy food discourses because, instead of catering to the needs of markets and businesses, it places those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the center of food systems and policy.

Landless solidarity



Figure 15: Food donations from the AdC Recife (Photo: Olívia Godoy/MST gallery)

The concept of "Landless Solidarity" is part of the formative basis of the movement, and its practice is understood as a political principle. Therefore, it was also a key principle when organizing the AdC. Every October solidarity is celebrated in the Movement, with three main actions. The actions are a collective effort to create national unity, with data systematization, dissemination of initiatives and construction of a powerful platform for agitation and propaganda for MST initiatives. The first is the Jornada do Che Guevara, which happens around the 8th, (the day he was captured and later murdered), where various mobilization actions for blood donation and collective work are carried out. Then, around the 12th, the Jornada Sem Terrinha takes place, whose focus is on working in children the power to be supportive. Finally, on October 16th, the International Day of Food Sovereignty is held, with actions based on food. This combination of the three events is called "National Days of the Landless Movement: Cultivating Solidarity", which are part of the historical and political formation of the movement, according to the national coordination:

"We ourselves are the result of a lot of solidarity, because in the camps, right at the beginning of the 80s, still under the military dictatorship, we faced many difficulties, restrictions and we had a lot of solidarity from supporters, with enormous emphasis on the Catholic Church, with the Social Pastorals. [...] Solidarity is the only possibility to build

grassroots work, dialogue with the populations that live in the urban and rural peripheries of our country" (Interview Cupuacu, MST National Coordinator, 2022).

In April 2020, in the begging oh the COVID-19 pandemic cases getting serious, a coincidence reflected the paradigm clash between the hegemonic narratives and solidarity discourses. On the same day that Madero⁶ laid off 600 workers, the MST donated 12 tons of rice. This specific situation may sound weird, but it's quite representative if we look at what it symbolically represents. The food chain belongs to a businessman who openly supported the Bolsonaro government. One of the network's partners, Junior Durski, gained visibility for having said, on March 23, that Brazil should give up social isolation in the name of the economy. In his justification, he minimized the deaths caused by the disease. MST donations during the pandemic, on the other hand, were fast articulated and organized during 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Besides the fresh food from its agricultural production distributed, the solidarity actions from the MST also included the preparation of lunchboxes to assist individuals who do not have access to cooking facilities and the organization of Solidarity Kitchens. Those actions were all articulated because of the AdC initiative, using their facilities, personnel and space. Their fast articulation capacity showed how social movements could reaches people and places that the state did not even try, only possible through the popular mobilization developed over the years. "If you go to 'Deep Brazil', you'll find the MST. There's no way" (Interview Dendê, MST São Paulo, 2022).

Other actions also established community and collective gardens, in the encampments and settlements, and it reflects a desire to assure the communities food security (Carvalho et al 2022; Galindo 2021; Akram-Lodhi 2013), which is connected to the solidarity principle of farming in the settlements. The creation of the 'roçado solidário' was also a way of bridging the gap between rural and urban worlds and discussing agroecology/healthy/solidarity. For example, in the Contestado settlement, near Curitiba, Paraná, on weekends, urbans supporters gathered near the AdC store and joint efforts for planting, cleaning, farming, planting in the settlement the food that would be used in the Marmitas da Terra name of the donation of lunchboxes initiative. "That's why everything is connected when it comes to solidarity in the MST actions. Talking about solidarity is talking about the place and role of each one in society, and AdC are part of this new narrative" (Interview Rambutão, AdC Recife, 2022).

According to one journalist that supports the Movement that I have talked to, the publicity involving those actions also gave to the MST the possibility of connecting with urban periphery:

"This national food donation campaign during the pandemic was very well publicized... And people have noticed, not only those people who are receiving the food, but also the others who find out from third parties and like, *'look how cool'*... I didn't see the agro pull over on the periphery and unload trucks and trucks of food like the MST did" (Interview Lucuma, journalist, 2022).

The MST's solidarity actions that were developed in the context of the pandemic began as a response to an immediate concrete need of the Brazilian working class, of the people. But solidarity goes far beyond journeys and acting during the pandemic. In those actions, the AdC network

actuated as the “open door of the Movement”, where the movement manage to stay in touch, in direct contact with the urban workers, and “it played a fundamental role just by being there, being available for the ones who needs” (Interview Pitaia, AdC São Paulo, 2022).

Besides food, the solidarity initiatives also donates books, as a way of sharing knowledge about the food system itself, by putting in the baskets, for instance, a notebook called “From Where Comes Our Food”. According to Cupuacu interviewee:

“We feed not only the hunger for food, but also the hunger for culture, for literature. [...] the idea is to recover the history of agriculture, the manipulation by the hegemonic large agriculture model, capitalism, agribusiness and the fight for the right to agroecology, real food, healthy food.

Landless Solidarity combine this idea of sharing food and sharing knowledge and it is through spaces like the AdC that they practice the solidarity daily. The collective as a principle of living. This strategic space helps giving cohesion to both mobilizations *for* land and *on* the land (Carter 2015). It helped promote solidarity between different MST groups and generations and also between MST and the urban supporters from other social movements, political parties, unions and universities.

Discussion: the agroecology/healthy food/solidarity discourses applied



Figure 16: On the ceiling of the space, three phrases are in flags: "Cooking is a way of loving others"; "Happy is he who transfers what he knows and learns what he teaches"; "Agroecology is the way" (Photo: Gabriele Maniezo/personal archive)

The MST recognize that dismantling the industrial agrifood complex and restoring local food systems must be accompanied by the development of agroecological alternatives that meet the needs of small-scale producers and low-income nonfarming populations while opposing corporate control over production and consumption. And this is what they do at the AdC. By incorporating agroecology, healthy living, and solidarity discourses, there is a direct involvement of settlers, as well as their active participation in technological innovation and dissemination through settler-to-settler communication.

The attempt to build a cohesive and coherent community and production style in the Itamarati I and Itamarati II settlement examples illustrated how it can also create a dichotomy between 'us' (the landless people), and 'them' (the landowners and the government), who have to compete with settlers' inherited cultural values. As a result, the MST's division between "us" and "them" might as well be reproduced internally. 'us' refers to the settlers, while 'them' refers to the leaders. It is pertinent to think about why the movement wants to promote those dialogues with the urban world so much, if the settlers themselves are not yet fully involved. The case also demonstrates how agroecology discourses are still more in speech than in practice of the Movement political action. The AdC is a path, a way for them to promote agroecological products, but to reach a deeper level of organization and capillarity in agroecology in the settlements, the Movement needs to work more with the settler-to-settler solutions, with training, implementing technical courses and sharing successful practices and challenges between the settlements.

Co-creating a social movement means taking into account multiple actors articulating private beliefs, interpretations and preferences into shared values and meanings, in a process that takes place with competition or/and conflict. Although MST is horizontal oriented when it comes to governance, leaders and settlers are frequently in disagreement, especially because of the many stakeholders that influence internal decision-making processes, as well as different inherited cultural understandings.

The AdC is an initiative promoting food sovereignty because it is working with local communities in the settlements to create a meeting space. Building a collective movement for food sovereignty requires forging alliances, supporting each other's struggles, and extending solidarity, strengths, and creativity to peoples. Solidarity is a principle that is interconnected with agroecology and health. In order to promote social transformation in Brazil, the MST views its land reform settlements as key locations where the values of the "new man and woman" (Carter 2015) are to be embraced and spread and the AdC is where these principles materialize.

All of this made it easier to see the larger ramifications of its effort to change Brazil's unfair land tenure. Newfound concerns about gender issues, environment, human rights, health, cultural diversity, national development, and international solidarity started to influence and supplement the MST's traditional emphasis on class analysis. They expanded it to include food sovereignty. Amongst these eclectic ideas, it shaped a more holistic view of social change.

CHAPTER 4 - MATERIAL AND SYMBOLIC PRACTICES

Material and immaterial symbols and rituals have always been significant for the creation of imagined community and identity ties, since MST's emergence. Both the progressive Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church of Lutheran Confession in Brazil played an integral role in the articulation and politics of land struggles. Their impact shaped Movement perceptions and organizational practices, establishing connections with ecumenical, cultural and ritual aspects known as the *mystique* (McGeoch 2018).

Celebrations, songs, dancing, dramatizations, and food celebrations are part of the *mystique* as spaces where values are fostered and transmitted. *Mystique* is a component of the MST's everyday routine of articulation. It can be found in every action, mobilization, meeting, and assembly. It represents a fusion of rural workers' struggles and a dream for better days with the idea of “conquered land”. Incorporates the solidarity principle discussed in the last session into everyday practices. The *mystique* is associated with a utopia and the power to create original dreams, alternative models, and initiatives that are distinct from history, using the potentialities of the real world (Coelho 2014; McGeoch 2018).

Bourdieu (2006) brings powerful contributions to the understanding of the symbolic question in *Armazém do Campo* as a communication network. For the author, the *mystique* is "cultural and political" practices, and as such, its performance becomes a privileged moment for processing "constructions of representations" – understanding "representations" as conceptions of reality, through which subjects and their ground their world. The symbols are a representative component to what is understood here as *mystique*. Material and symbolic practices offer an indirect way to talk about the main struggle for land, agrarian reform, cooperativeness, and the discourses presented in the last chapters: agroecology, solidarity, and healthy food. The symbolic is constituted as the making of this social movement, and, more than that, it provides the apprehension of its praxis (Coelho 2014).

Two elements of material and symbolic practices are analyzed here in the following sessions: First, the use of the green, yellow and red colours in the branding process to create the AdC, combined with how the uses and impacts of the colours are presented in the MST flag and in its daily use reproduction, the MST cap. In section two, I examine how the Movement's notions of struggle and permanence on the land are expressed by the AdC's political-cultural events, which represent a means of communication with urban supporters about the importance of Popular Agrarian Reform (PAR) (Bourdieu 2006).



Figure 17: Lula's 2022 presidency campaign slogan combine the colors red, green, yellow, blue, white and black (Photo: Printscreen)



Figure 18: Landless Rural Workers' Movement Flag (Photo: MST gallery)



Armazém do Campo - SP

@ArmazemDoCampoProdutosDaTerra · ★ 4,9 286
avaliações · Loja de produtos orgânicos

Enviar mensagem

Olá! Diga como podemos ajudar.

Figure 19: Facebook page of Armazém do Campo São Paulo, May 2022 (Photo: Printscreen)



Figure 20: Figure 20 - Printscreen from Armazém do Campo São Paulo page, May 2022 (Photo: Printscreen)

“Tudo nosso nada deles”: The reds and the greens

“This cultural interconnection, the symbols, the colors, the events, conveys what we want to say when words can't reach, and raises the discussion that we want to bring to society. It strengthens us as a movement” (Interview Dende, MST São Paulo, 2022).

“Wearing this shirt feels better to hear you”, said Djonga on stage at the Breve Festival, in Belo Horizonte, wearing the green and yellow Brazilian Football Confederation⁷. Breve was the second major music event held in Brazil after Lollapalooza in São Paulo. In both cases, multiple artists' manifestations had a political tone. Secondly, Djonga spoke of restoring pride in the colors of the national flag (green, yellow, blue, and white), which had been captured by the conservative and Bolsonarist wave in the country. “They think everything is theirs, they appropriate the idea of family, they appropriate our anthem, our flag, everything. But, here is the thing: *é tudo nosso e nada deles*”⁸. A massive repercussion on social media followed his speech. The movement of the progressive-left politicians, culture-makers and social movements, to “rescue” the national symbols, is connected with what the UOL newspaper called “The rescue of the *amarelinha*”⁹, following a movement from others artists and public figures that are re-signifying the shirt of the Brazilian soccer team.

Lula's campaign for the presidency also emphasized restoring the colors of the national flag. As it can be seen in the photos above that opened this chapter, the communication team's orientation to reduce the use of the traditional Worker's Party (PT) red colour became clear at the launch of the campaign, with the insertion of yellow, green, blue and black. The candidate made his first official candidate speech in front of a large Brazilian flag, while the national colours fluttered on the screen. The logo with the motto “Let's move forward, Together for Brazil” (*Vamos Juntos pelo Brasil*) also used a stylized flag, with a pattern to be adopted throughout the campaign. Not all red was banned, as it was still present in the clothes and flags of the militants. However, there was a clear intention to give prominence to green and yellow for the communication of the event.

The same combination of red, white, black and yellow (in this order of quantity) is seen at the MST flag. In the movement, the flag arose as a method of defining, through symbols, their

⁷ <https://midianinja.org/news/djonga-resgata-orgulho-ao-usar-verde-e-amarelo-em-show-com-essa-camisa-aqui-e-mais-gostoso-de-ouvir-voces-gritando/>

⁸ “Os caras acham que tudo é deles, eles se apropriam do tema família, eles se apropriam do nosso hino, eles se apropriam de tudo, mas é o seguinte, é tudo nosso, e nada deles”. The idea of tudo nosso is connected with the idea that what is mine is yours. The music “Tudo Nosso, Nada Deles”, by Igor Kannário, competed for the best song of the Salvador Carnival of 2015.

⁹ <https://www.uol.com.br/esporte/reportagens-especiais/o-resgate-da-amarelinha/>. To learn more about the symbolic dispute between the use of the Brazilian soccer team's shirt, see the podcast O Sequestro da Amarelinha, a co-production of piauí magazine, Swissinfo and Radio Novelo, presented by Jamil Chade and José Roberto de Toledo.

struggle for the Popular Agrarian Reform (PAR), according to the Caderno de Formação Number 19. The Movement was concerned with developing a symbol that would identify it to the entire society. This symbol could also represent something common and sovereign for all of its members. On their official webpage, each colour and element of the flag has its own symbology:

“Red: represents the blood that runs in our veins of each worker and worker and the willingness to fight for land reform, the transformation of society;

White: represents peace, which will only be conquered when there is social justice;

Black: represents our mourning and our tribute to all workers and workers, who listed in the struggle for the new society;

Green: represents the hope of workers and landless workers regarding the victory of every land-owns we have achieved;” (MST 2022).

Along with the colours, three other elements of the flag are also explained in the website:

“Machete: Represents the work, struggle and resistance tool. It goes beyond the map to indicate that the movement is internationalist;

Map of Brazil: represents the national struggle of landless and the need for land reform to take place throughout the country;

Worker: Represents the need for struggle to be done by women and men, by whole families” (MST 2022).

In 1987, at its Third National Meeting, the MST adopted one of its principal symbols—its red-colored flag—and agreed to sponsor an internal competition for the composition of its anthem. In the same year that the flag was instituted, in the Caderno de Formação Number 13, entitled “Our strength depends on our dedication”, the MST systematized some guidelines on the use of its flag, and it is evident the Movement's investment in disseminating it in order to be “as recognized as possible and obtain respect in society and recognition of its social and political importance”. In their view, it should be used in encampments, settlements, schools, unions, community centers, and political acts: “wherever the people gather, the flag must be there” (MST 1987). According to Carter (2015: 122) this represented “a significant process of identity construction took place during the movement’s consolidation phase, engendering a culture of resistance that became a vital part of the movement’s mobilizations and daily activities”.

In the same material, they highlight that “the use of the flag must be very respectful and ceremonial. Therefore, we must instruct our companions to display the flag, with a small ceremony, taking the opportunity to sing the Anthem of the Movement and make some speeches about the current date”. Through these words, there was the intention that the two symbols considered most relevant to the Movement (flag and anthem) would be used together, in a complementary way. The MST hoped that through instilling a sense of worth, adoration, and respect for its flag in its members, they would be able to “direct,” “animate,” and “motivate” the subjects to continue

fighting. As the carrier of their beliefs, worldviews, dreams, and goals, it would therefore become the synthesis of all the MST believed in (Coelho 2014; Vieira 2007).

Regarding the MST's official explanations about its flag, the meanings of its colors and designs contrast with the various images created externally about the Movement. Although the MST flag seeks to convey a soft and harmonious image of its articulation, the hegemonic media only use it in moments of tension and conflict, associating it with violence and disorder. For example, for those who do not sympathize with the causes and ideals of the Movement, the man who holds the machete vertically, next to the woman in the center of the flag, can be interpreted as the violent and truculent image of the MST, as discussed already in the previous chapters.

Another difference is the type of letter used: it is curving and rounded, which is normally used in branding strategies to show them as light, innocent, childish, as can be seen at the very beginning of this chapter. In some spaces, like AdC's social media pages in many cities, the color used is a dark green. However, others, like the AdC official website, have a lighter tone, as in the figures above. In addition to the traditional MST red, the AdC spaces feature a combination of green and yellow along with artwork on the walls, flags, banners and pictures. However, the MST flag is usually positioned in the entrance, as a constant celebration. The space communicates the connection between the MST and the AdC: "the goal is for the viewer to identify immediately with our idea of that space". A '*coxinha*'¹⁰ person cannot enter here without knowing that this is an MST space" (Interview Pitaia, AdC São Paulo, 2022).

The ornamentation and the selection of colours, photos and elements in the AdC was designed by the MST Culture Sector. Each element stands for their identity: "our paintings, drawings, colors, everything here was carefully chosen to make up our face, our identity. "A lot of *xita*, a lot of colorful items, and, of course, a lot of red" (Interview Murici, AdC Belo Horizonte, 2022). AdC's representative over 1300 km away said the same thing, but added that the red isn't the only color: "The decoration is a combination of paintings, flags, and shelves, but it is all woven into the narrative of the place." It's the movement's way of being. It is red, but it is also green, right? (Interview Fruta do Milagre, AdC Cascavel, 2022).

Another element is one of the MST's mottos, which in the AdC São Paulo is written on a big banner right in the entrance: "*Se o campo não planta, a cidade não janta*" (if the rural does not plant, the urban does not eat", written in green. The idea of the banner was that it would show the goal of the Movement. By showing the urban world the social relationships behind the food, the people behind it, and the land struggle involved in producing healthy, agroecological food. The

movement's catchphrases were crucial in defining its fight and establishing its political culture. These well-known sayings are the product of discussions at the movement's national and state meetings. These catchphrases express the issues of a peasant uprising that took place at several political turning points.

“There's a whole historical process that people see and feel when they come to the store, see our flag, see our inspirations' people on the walls, photos from the settlements... They can touch our products, see how our colors shine, not only the red. It is all communicated through the space itself. The people behind the food. This is very important” (Interview Embaúba, AdC Imperatriz, 2022).

In order to reaffirm the image of symbolic elements and incorporate them into the daily lives of the settlers, militants, and other MST supporters, other objects end up becoming symbols for the MST struggle, such as the cap and other materials that carry the flag image. The case of the cap is analyzed in the following session as a way to see how the materialization of colours develops. As a means of reaching out to the urban supporters, the AdC and colour scheme in it signify the integration of rural workers into Brazil's political arena. Urban support is a crucial step in the fight for food sovereignty since rural workers have used numerous mobilization cycles to put their demands on the public agenda and demand that the state uphold various civil and social rights. After all, the activists require more than just food and water to survive. In order to struggle for social change, they also need to share a mystique, to believe, to have aspirations, and to foster a feeling of utopia.

The daily use of the flag symbols: the case of the cap



Figure 21: MST political act, landless wearing the cap (Photo: Manuela Martinoya/MST gallery)

"The cap communicates a lot, it speaks for itself. It is a symbol of struggle and it is not just our struggle, it is a struggle of the working class as a whole, in the countryside and in the city" (Interview Dendê, MST São Paulo, 2022).

The topic of the cap became the subject of plenty of discussion on Twitter during my fieldwork period, which reverberated to the hegemonic media. MST was greatly affected by it. In first publication (already deleted) on Twitter, on March 7th 2022, a user criticized the use of the accessory among young people at events such as parties and clubs. Critics say that the use of the cap would trivialize the social movement from the moment it began to be used by a segment of the population that isn't actually involved in the Movement's politics. Quickly, the subject created a wave on Twitter, and several MST supporters started posting photos with the cap, including politicians and influencers. The official answer from the Movement came the next day, in a thread on Twitter followed by a video by Laura Sabino, one of the MST's communication managers. Throughout the video, she urges citizens to leave the controversy behind. She also encourages the use and spread of the Movement's brand and word, including at functions that are not connected to the Movement's political acts. The translation of the caption is as follows:

“On social media, all they talk about is: "After all, who can wear the MST cap?"
▶ The MST cap is a symbol of the organization, as are the flag, the anthem, the black canvas, the sickle and the machete. Landless workers have been wearing caps for almost 40 years in their daily lives in the struggle for Agrarian Reform and the production of healthy food! But we still haven't answered the question, have we? So, to contribute to this debate, we have our colleague Laura Sabino who prepared a video for you. WATCH and SHARE! #MST38Years” (MST 2022).

It is available on AdC websites and in AdC stores in several colors (green, black, and white), besides red. The prices range from R\$25 to R\$59.98. According to him, the Movement sold around 3000 caps only in March 2022, which was five times more than the regular sales. They even created a page just to sell the accessory: “MST cap: the cap of the Brazilian left” (Link:<https://www.bonedomst.com/>). The debate was also an entry point for many people who did not know the AdC, as some of the interviewees told me. It also caused logistic problems for them:

"The cap boom was insane for us because it happened overnight, and then, people don't just care about the cap, they want the whole basket, right? And we didn't have enough people to do the logistics, staff to assemble the baskets and distribute them at the speed we needed. We didn't expect this but what we really want is for people to use it and support us as much as they can" (Interview Dende, MST So Paulo, 2022).

I saw the impact of the "cap boom" in the store between my first and second observations. On my second observation period, I noticed that they had reorganized the space at the entrance, separating the caps from the other components. In addition, they had hired a new employee to handle the cap demands. The same movement was mentioned by the other AdC cities: “I like to joke here that, now, if you put the movement stamp on an ice cube, people will buy it *[laughs]*” (Interview Rambutão, AdC Recife, 2022).

The use of the cap represents a promotion of the peasant culture and identity, while offering a space for symbolic commemorations, festive celebrations. With the advance of capital pressure on peasant, landless, quilombolas and indigenous territories, it is essential for popular movements to have urban support in propagating their struggles for Agrarian Reform in the city, as well as in the countryside:

“It doesn't make much sense for people to think that wearing an MST cap is disrespectful. Agrarian reform is a problem for Brazilian society, not ours! It's from the countryside and it's from the city. We are fighting over something that should have been done a long time ago. So the more supporters we have, who recognize themselves in the cause, and want to wear it, the better. There are more than 15 models available to meet everyone's needs” (Interview Araticum, MST National Coordinator, 2022).

The Movement as a whole understands occupying the land, as well as the urban spaces of knowledge, arts, and poetry, as an integral part of constructing the meanings of the MST's struggle. Interviewee Dendê said he feels proud when he sees people who are not from the MST wearing their symbols, because “using these symbols is making a commitment to society and saying that **we are determined to occupy everything, land and ideas**”. For Nespera, it also shows the change in the portrayal of MST in the media, as was discussed in the previous chapter:

“Ten years ago, seeing people dressed in MST accessories was rare. There are several factors that made the cap, the t-shirt and even the AdC itself better received. Because we are communicating and creating spaces for dialogue with our urban supporters, that creates hope” (Interview Nespera, journalist, 2022).

One consumer that I talked to was wearing a cap at the time of the interview. As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and an activist, he said the importance of using the cap is because “social invisibility is the most harmful”. As being from a marginalized group himself, he believes that wearing the cap is a way of breaking cycles of persecution and prejudice. In addition, him believes that visibility brings awareness:

“The people who carry this flag here [*hold the LGBTQIA+ flag*], know the importance of visibility to break prejudices, for people to see who we are and what we are. **If you are not seen, you do not exist. When you bring a symbol to the movement, it exists. The MST exists.** [...] Not only consuming what they produce, but also carrying their symbol [*holds up his cap*], it is a way of, more than supporting the movement, supporting social justice” (Interview Macaúba, consumer, 2022).

The combination of red and green, as well as the case of the cap, represents the importance of material and symbolic elements in the construction of mystique. It could be placed as a critical and strategic practice in the Movement's organization, as it would aid in the formation of worldviews, values, articulating what is expected of its members, identifying allies and adversaries in the struggle for land, and constructing representations of the reality that will accompany the struggle and resistance. As the subjects internalize the symbols, a sense of belonging to the MST is also being built (Carter 2015; Coelho 2014).

Wearing the cap, the bag, the t-shirt, what does that represent? It shows that the struggle extends beyond fighting for land. Also, it involves fighting on the land (Carter 2015). You bring the debate into everyday life, on the bus, at work. It overcomes the idea that the movement is far away, in the countryside, “far”. Par is part of the urban reality, and the AdC aims to address that. The Agrarian Reform is relevant to both urban and rural areas. Therefore, wearing the cap is somehow, a way of bridging the gap between the two, as much as the discourses presented in the previous chapter. At its meetings, schools, cooperatives, land mobilizations, settlements and AdC stores,

these symbols are clearly apparent and give a sign of the people's organic devotion to the cause. They serve as a distinguishing feature of the MST food sovereignty fight.

Politico-cultural events

“Food is linked to everything, culture, music, artistic and mystic manifestations... and these spaces create these micro-environments in which, even if you go just for see a concert, you can end up meeting people, finding a job, joining a social movement [laughs]. AdC is a very healthy micro-environments not only in terms of nutrition, but also of having possibilities of life there, and the culture does that if you... you see possibilities (Interview Esporão-de-galo, consumer, 2022).

Another material and symbolic element of the MST mystique in which the AdC acts as a communication network between the MST and the urban supporters are the politico-cultural events held in the space. In So Paulo, AdC São Paulo, more than 100 books were released and more than 500 artists showed their work from 2016 to 2020 - when the pandemic stopped all the in-person events. Additionally, there are cultural performances held at the store, which range from national struggles for Agrarian Reform to international struggles (Coelho 2014; Canclini 1984).



Figure 22: Workshop about seeds for kids in Armazém do Campo São Paulo (Photo: Brasil de Fato/MST gallery)

Music and poetry are critical aspects in the representation of the mystique in political-cultural events. The compositions utilized may or may not be members of the Movement, as long as the themes represented in the creative products are relevant to the subjects' experiences and connect to the social struggle (Coelho 2014). According to Castro (2005:24):

“The role of mysticism is varied, but it is part of a process of making itself, it becomes collective with unity and identity of the MST and the people who participate in it in the circumstances of confrontation and resistance with the latifundium and the State, in these two decades of existence. The formation of groups, teams, collectives, sectors, brigades, to carry out activities and resolve issues of the Movement made and makes people embody the mystique of participating in the Movement. And the Movement, being incarnated in this mystique of participation, makes itself present in its own making”.

Interviewee Murici discussed this concept looking at connection between the music and identity:

“The songs we play here portray our identity: it is the *samba de roda*, the Latin American music, *forró*... Here it is a mix of cultures from the city, from the farm, from the *favela*, from the settlements. The urban public that will listen to our music that we listen to in the settlements, and will have our settlers coming to the events and listening to music from the city. These two things had no contact before the AdC” (Interview Murici, AdC Belo Horizonte, 2022).

Another interviewee talked about how he sees this relations. Escropari is a consumer, a poet and part of Slam (street poetry) collectives. He has already performed at the AdC at an event in support of Venezuelan political struggles, in which he recited a poem of his, called Programa do Chavez. He talked about the importance of poetry in the construction of the idea of hope (also like the author Caldart, 1987). He also told me about how he feels honoured to be part of an initiative that he sees as powerful for the creation of resistance:

"I like to perform at the AdC. It is important to connect and dialogue. It's also a place of coexistence and resistance [...] All the symbols refer to resistance: the t-shirt, the cap, the bags. Che Guevara and Paulo Freire everywhere. Things from Venezuela and Cuba. And of course, the food products from the settlements" (Interview Escropari, consumer, 2022).

Most of the political-cultural events organized are based on cooking and sharing food. On Sundays, they have the Pantaneiras afternoon, during which they cook the traditional dish, *tropeiro beans*. Making typical food, playing typical music, and talking about the difficulties. For me, it is a space for the formation of political and class consciousness, as well as for the appreciation of the settlers' lifestyle” (Interview Maná-cubiu, MST Mato Grosso do Sul, 2022). Understanding the dimension of art in its making, the mystique in the MST acquires the connotation of being also a moment of celebration. And, when celebrated, such a practice “emotionalizes the struggle”, making it more human. In this direction, “the party consists not only of representing, but also of imagining how it could be otherwise; not only to know, but to transform; not only transform, but feel the pleasure of transforming” (Canclini 1984, p. 34). As an artistic manifestation, political events have the capacity to invent and imagine a different reality (Coelho 2014).

Politico-cultural events are not only about selling food, but also about debating it. Moreover, the dimension of art in mystical presentations, in addition to its playful and beautiful side, also acts in the real, that is, in the political practices of the subjects. From this point of view, the most radical political sense of socialized art is to produce, instead of spectators, critical actors; instead of catharsis or nonconformity, an imagination capable of trying effective actions, seeking process of societal transformation (Canclini 1984; Bourdieu 2006). These concepts are articulated by the AdC workers, as Interviewee Pitaia demonstrated:

“The AdC is a cultural and political space, to dialogue with people. Through the events we can **debate the food system**. We talk about what is healthy eating and why do we insist so much on having Agrarian Reform. Most important: we bring people to give lectures and dialogues to show the relation between these two” (Interview Pitaia, AdC São Paulo, 2022).

Commemorative dates that, in some way, recall the achievements of the Movement or the left in general are celebrated in the space, connecting the settlers to the urban supporters. The objective of these activities is to transform the AdC into centers for training, discussion and dissemination of ideas: “we want to be this reference to the left, a left space, made by the left and to the left, to be a place of culture that stands against the hegemony of the cultural industry that is the current situation and where we feel safe to be who we are” (Interview Pitaia, AdC São Paulo, 2022).

The same was reported by four different consumers:

“People already understand the AdC space as their own space. It's not ours. We take care of it as a gardener **takes care of the plant, as a peasant takes care of the field**. But from the perspective that we take care of something that does not belong only to us. We are here to provide it, to maintain the network”.

“We need to cultivate spaces like this, that are just gatherings spaces. The AdC shows that it is essential that we move towards a cleaner future, in the broadest sense of the word: that you consume healthy foods and also healthy moments *[laughs]*”

“I feel ideologically welcomed here, because it goes far beyond a market of a social movement, the AdC is a place to reflect about what we eat and why.”

“I feel welcomed and protected. And that's strong. Protection is a strong word [...] It's a space that people who think more progressive agendas feel save, it is rare in this current government”.

Finding these spaces for dialogue, for comfort, for identification, and for feeling safe, is not easy. It is connected to the idea that “you can't interpret a dream if you don't dream a little together with it; you cannot understand the logic of a symbol if you do not accept and respect this logic; it is not possible to understand a social movement in depth if one does not live a little of its reasons and feelings” (Caldart, 1987, p. 13). Feeling welcome, save or protected represents also the possibility to get together and rethink the food system that the progressive urban supporters envisage.

Discussions – the mystique applied in the daily life

The movement learnt how to foster a sense of mystique among its members under the guidance of the church and liberation theology. It has achieved this by developing a rich symbolic repertoire, which is displayed at ritual gatherings. Its repertoire includes its flag, songs, chants, theatrical performances, poetry, and moving speeches. These expressions inspire feelings of shared sacrifice, camaraderie, and idealism and provide opportunities for joyful commemoration. All of this has nourished a strong sense of identity, a powerful social energy, and strong convictions. Together, they evoke and harness the feelings that give the group energy, bravery, and persistence. They are its elusive power sources. Vargas Netto (2007), researching the construction of the “mystique of resistance” in the MST in comparison with the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) highlights how the artistic manifestations in the social movements are relevant for the construction of what he calls a “culture of struggle”. From his perspective, live performances are seen as a form of critical expression, denunciation, communication and sharing. Additionally, the AdC's use of the colors red and green, the cap, and the political-cultural events they hold all contribute to the mystique of resistance (Coelho 2014).

I identified three main functions for the mystique in the AdC: First is “animation”, having the function of celebrating with the subjects the joy of living the struggle, as a privileged link of mediation between the individual and the group. The second is “pedagogical”, where political-cultural events are constructed to politically educate the present, as elements of awareness. A third function will be to link the land and food struggles to political actions involving demonstrations and also to garner support for the occupations or food distribution initiatives. Therefore, the mystique should not be considered solely through the prism of “art for art's sake”, but rather viewed as products of social, cultural and political relations (Coelho 2014). It is related to the idea that “the symbolic language of art, due to its emotional nature and lack of commitment to a formal logic of communication, is capable of revealing with remarkable richness the process by which subjects live and re-elaborate their daily history” (Caldart 1987:147). In other words, the AdC is a communication network to discuss food sovereignty, which can be seen in its daily mystique practices because the symbolic practices cannot be dismissed as afterthoughts or a distraction from the MST's struggle for land; rather, they are integral components of these practices. It is necessary to think about their meanings both for those who create and for those who consume the mystique in the AdC. This includes how they are responsible for promoting hope and resistance.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS – “THE FRUIT ONLY APPEARS WHEN ITS READY”



Figure 23: First National Agrarian Reform Fair in 2015 (Photo: Joka Madruga/MST gallery)

Guafí coffee was the starting point of this research. Since the worker at the AdC stopped cleaning the dishes and sat by my side to talk about the amazing coffee he served me, I have been thinking about the place. Delicious food, good people, positive vibes. The findings of my research are based on academic reflections, but also on my own experiences in the space. Talking to the settlers, workers, consumers and MST supporters gave me an overview on how the discourses and practices have become interconnected. Due to my too positivist education background and epistemological reasons, I split these two concepts into separate chapters in this study. I also separated the theoretical approach from the methodology to describe how I saw the dynamics presented in the setting. However, the organic life and the beauty of my interactions with the amazing people who shared their knowledge with me is not linear. More importantly, my findings highlight the significance of more adaptable institutional frameworks that are more flexible to combine social movements practices and political-cultural symbolisms and discourses.

With my findings, I argue that the AdC represents a fifth stage in the MST development (2016-onwards), where the goal now is to communicate with urban supporters and amplify the supporters-base in a cross-scalar way. In this phase, the focus is on communication, in which food sovereignty is discussed through discourses and practices with urban supporters (such as other social movements, the counter-hegemonic media, and left-wing policymakers) in a multi-level, dynamic way. There is a "softening" in their discourses and practices at this stage, using the food agenda rather than the land agenda in the AdC initiative as a way to gain more supporters. The process of "feeding the rebellion" is crucial in the fifth stage, because the AdC is where the resistance gathers, finds an inner force, and hope is created, through *conviviality*. Using the AdC, the MST demonstrates why they are occupying the land: to produce healthy food based on agroecological principles and to distribute it with a sense of solidarity and collective responsibility. Therefore, my conclusion is that the two main roles of the AdC in the MST struggle for food sovereignty are:

- 1) **Autonomy:** The AdC enhance sustainable CBNRM, showing how it is possible to enhance food autonomy;
- 2) **Conviviality:** The AdC represents a cross-scale networks that enhance MST connection with multiple stakeholders, connecting rural and urban through the idea of conviviality;

My previous chapter described the role of the AdC in the MST struggle for food sovereignty. There is nothing really revolutionary about their discourses and practices presented here. They just combine principles that were discarded, forgotten, or simply not permitted by the hegemonic mainstream food system narratives, because they were not aligned with the capitalist mantra. They promote exactly what has been disregarded as too radical, too naive, or too expensive, showing that it is possible. I have argued how the AdC represents a fifth stage in the Movement's historical development, in which the focus is on communicating with multiple stakeholders. Two empirical chapters explain how this communication happens: discourses and symbolic practices. The MST uses these elements to communicate with urban supporters, creating a network and a sense of hope. Their vision of social change is based on a food system where food is understood as a commons, and not only a commodity. In the struggle for a utopian society, the MST, through the AdC, can represent and act. That is what is called feeding the rebellion.

Autonomy: Strengthening resourceful communities

My data have shown that autonomy is a relational strategy that combines resistance, creation, and solidarity. The call for food sovereignty and re-peasantization in agrarian struggles (van der Ploeg 2009) has led to political agroecology in terms of farmers' autonomy, but the AdC challenges and possibilities have demonstrated the need for investment in collective organization and infrastructure beyond the level of the settlements. Farmers' markets, consumer cooperatives, community supported agriculture, basket subscriptions, and other options allow them to provide healthy food, but they maintain their autonomy. For instance, autonomy means that they will discuss the better way to have infrastructure for gathering, storing, and transporting food; autonomy means they will decide which are the appropriate programs and spaces for seed exchanges; autonomy can likewise mean that they will administrate the creation of energy production systems and water collecting facilities. We also need to be careful not to see their epistemologies as inherently "equitable" and "inclusive" because they are both shaped by unequal power relations within and between social movements, as well as their relationship with the local communities. Having autonomy also means supporting their local understanding of culture, and being able to implement their collective ways of functioning based on participation, self-regulation, and self-negotiated norms and goals. Therefore, if resourceful communities, like the landless settlements, do not depend on institutional markets (like the PAA or PNAE policies), and have spaces like the AdC to sell their products, they can have more autonomy to produce and decide how to organize themselves, allowing them to avoid the hegemonic agribusiness model and strengthen their sovereign food systems, which is an instrumental aspect of achieving food sovereignty.

Conviviality: the combination of mystique and hope

AdC discourses and practices are relevant to the concept of conviviality (Giraldo 2016). Today we are more and more lonely at home, working online, shopping online, everything is just one click away. It is very easy to have a market list to purchase the same items repeatedly. You will receive your fruit, which will be wrapped in plastic. At the same time, conviviality is missing from the relationship. The sharing moment when choosing the most delicious fruit in the basket. The recipe or tip discussed while picking up a vegetable. Through the process of conviviality, the AdC role focuses on the combination of food and land issues. It is a platform that may lighten up this ongoing conversation by connecting the finished product to the MST's historical struggle for land

reform: food. Through the discourses and practices described here, steps closer to food justice and land justice are implemented via transformational action in both rural and urban locations, questioning and proposing changes to the food system from the bottom up, feeding the rebellion and also the rebels. The MST relies heavily on hope to articulate their political struggles and mobilize people for social transformation. It provides a sense of belonging to the landless, where an imagined community without spatial boundaries emerges. An elemental connection to the land that is also detached from any geographical space. Rural and urban communities are equally attached to the needs for a reframed narrative in the food system (Franzosi 1998).

The AdC acts in the struggle for a utopian project of society. By giving space for farming practices that decolonize food system imaginaries and practices, the AdC disrupts the productivist and extractive logics that have marginalized care as ‘unproductive’. Among the key contributions of the AdC in this regard is its attention to emotions as relational factors, i.e., it recognizes that solidarity does not only reside in individuals or in environments, but in both, using discourses and practices that connect their intersections. In the AdC, alternative construction networks are being woven. A collective conscience for social mobilization for transformation is gradually built in such spaces as they recreate the solidarity mystique, reinforce common values, and reinforce solidarity. Social movements engage at multiple scales to preserve their interests, autonomy, rights, and voice. It is possible to scale-up cross-scalar alliances with the AdC initiative because it encompasses the knowledge and understandings of the rural and urban supporters of MST; activists, politicians, practitioners and engaged scholars, combining in asymmetric alliances. In the AdC, the MST articulates the struggle for food sovereignty by democratizing communities' collective choice processes and articulating networks with multiple stakeholders - states, NGOs, other social movements, indigenous and quilombolas communities, family farmers, activists, political parties and consumers, in a cross-class, cross-ethnic and cross-local alliance. The organization of the peasantry promoted by the AdC also facilitates MST leaders to gain formal representation in government, becoming elected to municipal and federal positions. This may result in grassroots movements receiving more political and financial support, publicity, and recognition from governments, funders, and development organizations. Nevertheless, it suggests a rise in bureaucratization and a reduction of local autonomy in local governance. Therefore, in opposition to the first finding. This contradiction raises a question: How to make more meaningful forms of local communication, where producers, consumers, social movements, state, media and policy-makers interacted in a more sustainable way but in their own ways? A new imagining would not only recognize the global in the local and the local in the global, but also dissolve the boundaries

that rigidly associate the good with the small and local. As a result of food sovereignty, agrarian citizenship would be enabled through the reconnecting of food, nature, and community. This would be in an imaginary of the nation state, but with new forms of citizenship yet to be defined.

The end is also the begging

Future research may examine some of these issues in more depth. For example, how to make the AdC a replicable space or if it is actually possible to replicate the idea at all. As the transformation of the food system continues, communities need to be seen as central decision-makers. Food and land research agendas must work together, as well as with political ecologists and social scientists. This transdisciplinary topic demands transdisciplinary approaches that not only see the researcher as a key point but also see the research object as an active conductor of the research. In the future, it might be interesting to examine how the food cultures embedded in consumers will affect how social movements articulate for food sovereignty, especially in multicultural settings. Communities are shaped by eating habits imported from multiple countries, carrying habits incompatible with biodiversity and food supply, and at the same time, disavouring food that could be part of daily diets, providing a rich amount of nutritional value (and multiple times unknown value). The food we choose is not solely determined by us, but also by a series of political decisions and economic interests of large corporations. These decisions have an impact on the health of the population. The lobby ranges from massive ultra-processed advertising, land distribution and grabbing, lack of access to healthy foods and governmental encouragement to the production of ultra-processed food. Therefore, social movements play an increasingly crucial role in providing plans of action to oppose and topple the present corporate commerce and food regime. They can also provide recommendations for local producers' choice food, farming, pastoral, and fisheries systems.

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