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The "heaping plate" revolutions: popular communication, food media and decolonial thinking in the post-covid Brazilian agroecology movement

1. Brief contextualization (more in the presentation)

This draft presents the preliminary literature review and theoretical framing of my early third-year PhD project. It is built upon insights from my initial fieldwork in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil (Nov–Dec 2023), and an ongoing digital ethnography conducted from Sweden. My project explores how popular communication inform the agroecology movement in Brazil, the role of food in movement practice, and how these entaglements construct a renewed, *counter-colonial* food activism in Brazil after covid and Jair Bolsonaro's government - two events that deeply impacted food security in the country[1]. To that, I am working with ethnography and creative methods with four research participants (collectives that are part of the broad urban agroecology movement): the Brazilian Agroecology Congress, Prato Verde Sustentável, an urban garden in the outskirts of São Paulo, the solidarity kitchens of the Roofless Workers Movement (MTST), and Banquetaço, a collective of direct action.

2.Literature review and theoretical underpinnings

2.1.*Lo popular* and agroecology

By time of the formation of a social struggles field in Brazil and Latin America (1950s and 1960s), reflections on mass media, culture, and politics ignited a transition from an inherited anglophone media and communication tradition to a theory anchored in the realities of the region, which would later be crystallized around the term *comunicación popular* (popular communication) (Aguirre Alvis, 2019) Influenced by the Cuban Revolution, liberation theology, and critical pedagogy, especially the works of Paulo Freire emphasizing dialogical communication, education and liberation in rural communities (1970, 1983), the tradition was developed into theory vis-à-vis the developments in the political Latin-American arena, "given that its representative paradigms are born and developed through the resistance of its citizens, in the battles for meaning shown in how they express themselves" (Rincón & Marroquín, 2019, p. 224)

[1] In 2022, more than half of the Brazilian population was experiencing different degrees of food insecurity as a consequence of overlapping crises (Penssan, 2022).

The rise of popular communication paradigm in Latin America had also to do with the formation of a Latin American cultural studies field highly influenced by the School of Birmingham and Marxist theorists. It engendered a critique towards and a rupture from the excessive focus on media effects and/or questions of structure and power within communication studies in Europe and the United States. This rupture forced experts to abandon media-centric analysis, North Americanisms, and right- and left-wing moral dualisms, leading them to shift "the place where questions and (and observations) are made and to 'look from the other side': that of the people" (Rincón and Marroquín, 2019, p. 43). A seminal work from this time is Jesús Martín Barbero's *De los medios a las mediaciones* (1987), where the Spanish-Colombian scholar delineates a theory of mediation and its concept of *lo popular* – uses, practices and meanings that people establish with cultural products, and which challenge previous binary notions of domination or agency through media (Cabezas, 2016).

The perspective of *lo popular* in communication studies makes Latin America a reference also for the study of (communicative) processes of social change by defying the diffusionist model derived from modernization development theory drawing from the use of media as instruments for top-down spreading of "modern values" to "underdeveloped" countries (Krohling Peruzzo, 2021, p. 54). Thus, the by advancing a move "from media communication to the social practices and mediations that articulate the experiences of individuals with media and political power" (Rincón & Marroquín, 2019, p. 43), it proposes an epistemological and political turn that "broaden the understanding of media to cultures and to popular communication practices" and criticizes "media hegemony from the practices of individuals located in the territory" (idem).

Along the last decades, the new paradigm has been generating a myriad of studies and concepts that extrapolate the traditional view of media to new dimensions and approaches to communication as a multi-dimensional, non-binary/mechanicist and liberating/decolonial social phenomenon encompassing categories such as celebration, dreams, dialogue, communion, just to name a few. Since Nick Couldry started outlining a media practice theory

two decades ago (admittedly inspired on Martín-Barbero *mediaciones* – among other influences), scholars from different backgrounds have turning their sights to "the whole range of practices that are oriented towards media and the role of media in ordering other practices in the social world" (Couldry, 2004) instead of taking for granted the power of different media over oppressing or emancipating people. Later on, scholars such as Alice Mattoni, Emiliano Treré and Hilde Stephansen started addressing the gap between media, communication and citizen/social movement studies by proposing a *social movement media practice* approach to explore the mutually constitutive nature of media, communication, and social movement practice (Mattoni 2012; Mattoni & Treré, 2014; Stephansen, 2016; Askanius, 2020; Mattoni, 2020; Stephansen & Treré, 2020).

Back to Latin America, popular comunication has been recently embracing decolonial discourses reclaiming indigenous oral traditions and pluri-cosmologies to propose a *communication for buen vivir* engaged in the collective (re)construction of our multispecies coexistence in the planet (Contreras Baspineiro, 2016; Arcila Calderón et al., 2018) Comprehensively, this broadening of empirical and epistemological frontiers means also a challenge in terms of outlining the theory. Embedded in the broad realm of communication studies, a field that has been often discussed in terms of its "post-disciplinary" diverse and fragmentated nature (Waisbord, 2019; Sodré, 2019), popular communication is an evolving field with no single definition. Reflecting on this challenge, the Brazilian scholar Ana Cristina Suzina (2021) proposes, instead of an enclosed concept, a dynamic understanding of popular communication through three categories that make the theory identifiable as an epistemology of the South: "a **bottom-up approach**, that requires **embracing the diversity of knowledge**; a strong **connection with social struggles**, conforming with **a "communication movement" in a struggle around meanings**; and **an alternative configuration to mainstream media**, guided by the will of occupying the public debate" (p. 1, 2).

Agroecology, which can the broadly defined as a *praxis* (knowledge and practice) of ecological agriculture[2] aligns with this concept of popular communication in three ways. First,

[2] Agroecology is a growing field of debate, studies, and struggles in recent years since the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has formally established agroecology as a new paradigm

in which agroecology in Latin America is defined by the trinomen *practice-science-movement* constructed on the dialogue between people's doings and knowings, post-colonial struggles, society in general, and academia; second, in the sense that it is multidimensional, multidisciplinary and multiscale (Zanetti Pessôa Candiotto, 2020), bringing together research and practice from ecology, agriculture, anthropology and sociology, among other fields. Third, by defying mainstream meaning-making around the hegemonic agri-food model in Brazil (represented by the powerful export-based agro-industrial sector, also known as "agro") through its own media practices and discourses around agri-food systems change.

Popular communication as a theoretical framework provides a culturally, socially, and historically informed approach with regards to media and communication strategies inside the Brazilian agroecology movement. It subscribes the project to a more holistic, non-mediacentric and culturally situated understanding of interactional practices around the agri-food, such as *mutirões* (collective urban garden task-forces), conversation and deliberation circles (*rodas de conversa*), garden walk-and-talks, collective cooking, among others, alongside with analogic and digital popular media practices, such as podcasts, digital mediated exchanges and social media storytelling, as dialogical enablers of the agri-food commoning and eco-social change. Moreover, it broadens the concept of popular media beyond the classic categories of community radio, print media and street theater performances, extending it to embodied, collective *agri-food practices* derived from community knowledge.

Additionally, it positions the project as a communication *in* social change work that rejects the media-centrism that still places media, above all media in the traditional concept of transmission of information technologies (Feigenbaum, 2014), at the center of analyses of social life instead of as one of many elements within broader socio-cultural and material contexts (Krajina et al., 2014), and contribute to the ongoing dialogue between media and social movement fields. Since the global south cannot be understood only as a geopolitical category, but also in its possibilities as onto-epistemic and cultural resistance against global

for achieving the millennium goals related to the elimination of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition, as well as climate change adaptation and other SDGs (FAO, 2016).

coloniality (Moyo, 2020), the framework proposed by Latin American popular communication can constitute one effort toward thinking *with* the global south (Buskell et al., 2023; Shome, 2019) within a material reality of globalized inequalities and oppressions in urgent need of new political imaginations.

2.2.Food, media and social change

Food is what Marcel Mauss (1967, p. 76) calls a "total social fact": an element that is so central to cultures that it connects all its dimensions. Food and eating are more than essential conditions to human existence, they are also lenses to understand "broad societal processes such as political-economic value-creation, symbolic value-creation, and the social construction of memory" (Mintz & Du Bois, 2002), among other dynamics. Since the mid-1900's, anthropology and, in a lesser extent, sociology have been striving to understand food rituals and dietary habits in terms of their multi-layered meanings for human groups beyond nutrition. Food has been even given a centrality status in some founding works of anthropology and ethnology which looked at the *kitchen* in its socio-cultural and symbolic dimensions (Aktaş-Polat & Polat, 2020, p. 278).

Although it has been pointed that social sciences have not rendered food proper attention (Drouard, 2015), there is a growing academic interest in food and food-related issues in recent years. Following the mediatization of society turn (Hjarvard, 2008), one of these expanding areas is "food media", which can be broadly defined as a multi-disciplinary research field dedicated to studies on the relations between food cultures, ethics and politics, and contemporary media and communication processes and forces . Since the turn of the century, the concept of food media has been used to look at questions such as semiotics of food (Stano, 2015), food in popular culture (Lebesco & Naccarato, 2018), edible social messaging (Wei et al., 2014); food and language development (Karrebæk et al., 2018), food as social medium (Zhang, 2013), "digital food" in research (Leer & Krogager, 2021), food as social differentiation and social practice (Cardon & Garcia-Garza, 2012; Neuman, 2019); and food as a gender identity cultural artifact (Dejmanee, 2018), to name a few. In the Brazilian context, they have been reflecting on topics such as food as cultural resistance communication

(Sousa & Sousa, 2015); mediatization of culinary knowledge and social distinction (Llano Linares, 2019); commensality as symbolic practice (De Souza Lima et al., 2015); food as intercultural communication (Pellerano, 2019), among others.

Central to food media scholarly is the broad concept of "food as communication system" (Aktaş-Polat & Polat, 2020, p. 280), an idea that has been evolving since Barthes (1961) first argued that the shift of humanity from collectors to farmers came with the need for "establishing a food communication by the structuring of this need" (idem, p. 280). In its communicative dimension, food operates as a means *per se*, conveying messages through its sensorial and aesthetics characteristics, such as sight, tasting, and smelling (Wei et al., 2011; Bartz et al., 2023), which can be (re)mediated or not by analogue or digital media in different ways. But food is essentially a means of *creation, exchange and transformation* of meaning with other people (Stano, 2022). It mediates, through interpersonal interaction and sharing (Mauss, 1967), the transfer of nutrients, experiences, emotions, values, beliefs, identities, memories. Thus, acts such as cooking, sharing and eating food can be also understood as exchanges in the diverse dimensions that form the glue of human groups.

2.2.1. (Agri)food as an activist medium

Within food media, there is a growing body of studies on the meanings of food in contemporary social and political change struggles (Northumbria University, 2023). In analyzing the role of food for the Arab Spring and following uprisings, Sutton et al. (2013) advanced that "beyond a simple equation of food and identity", food was "a key catalyst of the world-transforming protests" of the time by playing a central role in "metaphors, daily revolutionary practices and as a key subject of worldwide concern" (idem). In the context of recent conflicts, such as the war in Gaza, where the use of hunger as a war-weapon has been denounced (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2024), food practices have given to processes of resistance and collective action a wider symbolic dimension[3]. In Brazil, the

[3] Such as the globally spread use of watermelon imagery to protest the war and subversively communicate solidarity with Palestine, and the performative open-air meals prepared by the food blogger Hamada Shaqoura for displaced Gaza children. See: https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/israel-gaza-hamas-ndtv-exclusive-one-mans-fight-against-hunger-malnutrition-in-gaza-5935979

heaping plate of food (*prato cheio*[4]) has been historically a symbol of abundance and caring, and was specially ignited in the collective imagery and imagination during hunger crises.

Food has been also proved a powerful ingredient in the melting pot of media, communication and social struggles in Latin America. Having as an intrinsic background historic colonial processes embodied by the plantations (Ferdinand, 2023) and related contemporary eco-social justice struggles, food studies in the region have been exploring questions such as the impact of colonialism and coloniality on diets and agricultural systems (Ochoa, 2021; Janer, 2007), ritualistic and cultural significance of indigenous food practices (Kuhnlein et al., 2009), implications of a "mediatized" dietary habits (Camargo et al., 2024), and the historical and political dimensions of hunger (Castro & Almeida, 2022), among others. Furthermore, tensions between global agri-food systems and local food sovereignty in the region have been given attention in many studies the 21st century (Altieri & Nicholls, 2008; Muñoz et al., 2021; Blesh & Wittman, 2015), when globalization turned into an encompassing analytical background for contemporary development studies.

Nonetheless, food has been a rather marginal topic of interest in the studies of societies in South America (Cardon & Garcia-Garza, 2012). Food related to agroecology movements' communication remain, therefore, a relatively unexplored research field in the region, with few works discussing the role of food practices in the context of advancing food sovereignty, access to land, indigenous rights, and community-centered food systems (Almeida & Cordero Ulate, 2015; Rossi, 2023). This PhD project is a contribution to this field. It positions itself as a food media study firstly by investigating the Brazilian agroecology movement through its constitutive agri-food practices, where food symbolically rearranges itself into a medium (Jacob, 2013) for political messages, and through its sharing and transformative nature. Secondly, by proposing the concept of "agri-food" – i.e., food understood as a continuum from soils (production, cultivation) to mouths (consumption, commensality) - as an analytical category for processes of collective identity formation, social mobilization, and political

[4] Anchored in the diversity of Brazilian food cultures, the "rice-and-beans" plate (and its varieties) is an icon of the Brazilian gastronomy and a common symbol of the fight against hunger and for the right to adequate and healthy food in the country. It is also part of the collective affective food memories and popular imaginaries of prosperity and fulfillment. (Barbosa, 2007).

action within the agroecology. And thirdly, by contributing to a non-mediacentric media research standpoint that depart from people's practices to understand dialogic relationships of nature and culture in which food is an essential link.

The project departs not only from the idea that what we eat "connects us to the land, the soil, and sea, and is an integral part of our identities" (Slow Food, 2024), but also that the ways we produce food can say a lot about our collective struggles and political imaginations. Agri-food practices that follow the principals of agroecology, in this sense, finds in popular communication a multi-layered interplay. As community-making and collective knowledge-exchange, such as observed in the urban gardens and in rural movements using participatory approaches; as movement practice, such as the observed through the *místicas* - collective shared meanings created by artistic artifacts and/or performances (music, poetry, seed mandalas, etc) that galvanize "love for a cause, solidarity experienced in collectivity, and belief in change" (Issa, 2007); as social mobilization and food *commoning*, such as collective cooking and solidary commensality observed at the Solidarity Kitchens and other non-marketized food ways.

In a region where poverty and its more dehumanizing face, hunger, is a defining feature constructed over centuries of colonization, enslaving and destruction of forests, waters, plants, and human and non-human animals, agri-food practices gain a broader political meaning that extrapolates the life-support function of food for communities and groups. Not only eating, but gardening, cooking and sharing can be addressed as counter-praxis to neoliberal and neocolonial forces. "Eating is a political act" (*Comer é um ato politico*), a catchphrase widely spread on the Brazilian social media in recent years, is a call that crystallizes the insurgent dimension of popular agri-food practices intensified during the "hunger crisis" (Azevedo, 2021). They place living, sharing and transforming – all dimensions embodied in food – as categories from which hope can be reassessed, extreme-populist politics can be defied, and a happier coexistence can be re-dreamed and practiced.

2.3. Agroecology as decolonial praxis

A fundamental issue in the study of the transformative potentialities of agroecological agri-food practices is their relationship with decolonial thinking in Latin America (Stroparo, 2023), above all that developed by indigenous and other traditional populations[5]. Quijano (2005) has prolifically addressed how modernity in the region remains deeply intertwined with colonial heritage. After the end of the political control of the colonies, the continuity of the system of domination was due to the permanence of the so-called *colonialities of power, knowledge and being*: the continuous structure of domination and control derived from colonization, which perpetuates racial, epistemological and existential inequalities, and shapes the identity and knowledge of post-colonial societies (idem, 2000, 2005). Central to this process is the imposition of Eurocentric 'universal' standards that erased the diversity of knowledge and the existence of various peoples and territories, and the rising of capitalism as a development of colonialism (Maia & Farias, 2020).

This logic, persisting into present times, manifests in agriculture through neocolonial processes of exploitation, extraction, control, and commodification of ecosystems, peoples, and common goods. Contemporary concrete examples of this can be found in the rampant expansion of monocultures for export over the five Brazilian biomes (Climainfo, 2023), the persistence of a top-down transfer of technical knowledge (Freire, 1983) or/and coercive adoption of market-led agricultural products by peasants (Erdős, 2019; Shiva, 2016) and the imposition of "food deserts" – regions with restricted access to healthy and accessible food – in urban peripheries and impoverished areas (Stowell, 2024).

In Brazil, this regime is based on a conception of development strongly associated with the idea of "progress" largely spread during the Green Revolution, but that still today discursively supports the current hegemonic model serving the global expansion of agribusiness (de Melo, 2023). Rethinking the epistemologies that support this model lies at the heart of the agri-food system transition process in the in the region. Agroecology, in this sense, represents an emergent contra-hegemonic paradigm that has being defying the domination of the "agro" by

[5] "Culturally differentiated groups that recognize themselves as such, that have their own forms of social organization, that occupy and use territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction, using knowledge, innovations and practices generated and transmitted by tradition" (Decree No. 6,040/2007, my translation)

proposing an agricultural model based on the communion, collaboration and coexistence between beings and worlds, in which popular practices and knowledge from peasants and peoples from favelas, waters and the forests are deeply recognized and valued. It proposes a move toward food "real utopias" (Cucco & Fonte, 2015) of pluri-cultures (of crops, knowledges, peoples), liberation (of seeds, soils, animals), diversity (of beings, relationships), and coexistence (Petersen & Monteiro, 2020).

Notwithstanding, agroecology as a new paradigm does not happen in a political void and is far from being a conflict-free panacea. Since at least two decades ago, scholars in Latin America calls attention to the fact that the concept – itself a source of decades-long debates - is problematic misused, for instance, by being frequently reduced/equalized to ecological/sustainable agriculture (Caporal & Costabeber, 2004; Dumont et al., 2021). Others have discussed neoliberal co-optations in which the recent popularization of agroecology has been happening vis-à-vis to depoliticization of the concept and its banalized use for agroindustry greenwashing (Giraldo & Rosset, 2018; Marques & Laschefski, 2022). The risk for agroecology to lose its deeper meaning as transformative praxis, and the capacity to aggregate social forces around a needed agri-food paradigm shift, is real. Therefore, any analysis should consider the intertwining of agroecology and historical popular struggles for rights and social justice in urban and non-urban areas in Latin America, as well as with contemporary political and economic forces. As already discussed, agroecology as a praxis is informed by popular and indigenous knowledge, a science that strives to be pluri-epistemic, and a political struggle. It is the result of peasants, urban farmers, social movements advancing territories of transformation via regenerative agri-food practices and food sovereignty resistance; alliances and collectives articulating different sectors and actors around a transition that still must happen at society and state levels; and all those communicating, researching and teaching these practices through collective action and collaboration. Finally, and because of its counter-hegemonic nature, agroecology is also a field of disputes about a present and a future already compromised by the new climate regime of the planet (Junges, 2021).

2.3.1 *Teko porã*, roça de quilombo, and counter-colonization

In this project, agroecology is approached as a decolonial práxis by drawing from three interrelated concepts developed within indigenous scholarship to form an analytical framework for studying urban agroecological communicative practices in Brazil. They are interrelated in the sense that they all inform the specific Brazilian context in which agroecology has been constructing itself as a new paradigm, and by complementing each other. The first is ***teko porã*, the Guarani *buen vivir***, in which *teko* can be broadly translated as 'being, state of life, condition' and porã means 'beautiful' (Siqueira et al., 2023, my translation). Living in Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil, the Guarani people are the largest Brazilian indigenous group, with about 5 thousand people. The Spanish anthropologist Bartolomeu Melià reports that the Guarani were skilled farmers and way better food producers than the Spanish and Portuguese settlers. Their secret was a collective life system based in abundance and harmony with nature, known as *tekoha* – a dimension where the *bem viver* of a territory is manifested in "a type of economy that the Guarani defined as jopói, which is just the version of the economy of reciprocity so widespread throughout the world and since the earliest times of humanity" (Meliá, 2015, p. 8, my translation). Reciprocity and generosity are key words to the "beautiful life" of *teko porã*, in which these values are expressed "not only with open hands, but also with the spoken word and open ears in the *tekobá* or space of life and coexistence" (Contreras Baspineiro, 2016, p. 221)

Central to *teko porã* is also the break with the human-nature divide embodied in *teko kaví*, which "refers to life that is shared, or to a way of being with other humans and non-humans, society, and nature" (idem). This part of *teko porã* is manifested in the belief that plants, waters, rocks and all nature beings have a soul, a life that is particular to them, and so they establish relations of care and protection with all other beings, forming a cosmopolitics (Chamorro, 2011). In her work *Decolonizing Affects* (2013), a critique to the current hegemonic gender-affective-sexual "monocultures" and the colonization of the "body-earth", the Guarani scholar and poet Geni Núñez speaks of the idea of a body (concrete and symbolic) that "has no walls, is porous to wind, water and the sun", and which is "made in the world", in "relationships with other beings" (p. 119, my translation). Since everything on the planet and "outside" it is interconnected, the onto-epistemic colonial rupture is an artificial construct and, as such, it is only possible to be sustained through the various forms of

violence that has been reducing us to binary and destructive selves, based on fear and disconnection. Overcoming this violence, Núñez argues, requires restoring life interconnectedness and reassessing human and non-human beings "beyond their usefulness, their functionality for others" (p. 116, my translation), an idea crystallized in the expression **reforestation of the mind/though/imaginary**, that the author has been talking about elsewhere[6]. It encompasses a countermovement that embraces radical collectivity through a non-utilitarian praxis, which itself is an anti-colonial expression.

My work builds on this perspective and the related idea that life has an intrinsic value, which has been addressed throughout the History by many philosophers, from Aristotele and Kant to Naess and Agar, and further developed by the indigenous leader, environmentalist, and Brazilian thinker Ailton Krenak (2020a, 2020b) in his writings on "**useless" life**. For Krenak, "life is not useful" because its value is inherent, and so cannot be measured by its economic or productive utility, as is often the case. The idea that life is essentially "not useful" challenges the utilitarian and anthropocentric view predominant in modern society. It lies at the heart of the decolonial praxis of Brazilian agroecology, in which the practices with seeds, plants and soils, along with music, dance, and carnival, assume different meanings: collective call, resistance, cultural bond, and life enjoyment. In this process of carnivalization and polyphony, powerful aesthetic elements and political messages come together, along with memories of struggle and popular culture. They make a case for a transition to agri-food systems *otros*, where the Earth and its fruits become a common, and where all different existences should be inherently celebrated instead of reified and commodified. It means a collective return to the land, kitchens and tables, but also to the feasts, fests and festivals.

The "useless" life is also celebrated in thought of the *quilombola* thinker Antonio Bispo dos Santos. In his works on the life-ways and cosmo-perceptions of the Quilombola community Saco-Curtume, in the municipality of São João do Piauí, talks about the idea of *roça de quilombo* to refer to a onto-epistemic, aesthetic dimension where the morning walks to the crops and the collective food preparations become not only places for work and subsistence, but also for encounters between generations, meanings, memories, modes of life and deeper

[6] See, for instance: https://catarinas.info/nao-ha-cura-do-individuo-se-nao-ha-cura-da-terra/ (in Portuguese)

connections to the earth (Santos, 2015, 2023). Similar to the idea of *tekoha, roça de quilombo* is the material and symbolic place where the other three concepts developed by Santos converge: ***contra-colonização*** (counter-colonization) and its sister concepts ***confluências*** (confluences) and ***viver/saber orgânico*** (living/knowing organically). Counter-colonization, as the third element of the analytical framework of the PhD project, is conceived as a form of resistance and a strategy employed by indigenous and African-descendant communities to counteract the effects of colonialism. It emerges from the traditional and marginalized people's ontologies and involves the active revitalization of cultural practices, languages, and social structures that were suppressed by the colonial project.

Vital to counter-colonization practices are the idea of confluence. It refers to the merging and coexistence of diverse cultures, advocating for a society where diversity, different and the erratic are seen as strengths rather than threats. Santos developed the idea observing the ever-moving natural cycles and understanding that, like the waters of two confluent rivers, "knowledge that is shared, grows" (Nicolau, 2022). It is the recognition and celebration of the interactions and exchanges between different cultural groups, leading to the creation of a rich, multifaceted social fabric. *Compartilhamento* (sharing) is the word used by the author to explain the kind of relationship established in confluence processes. It is not exchange, since exchange relate to object(fying) swaps that are enclosed in themselves, but rather an expanding, spiraling movement, where what is shared is multiplied.

In the context of *quilombola* and other marginalized groups, confluence represents the blending of indigenous, African, and other cultural elements, resulting in unique hybrid identities that challenge the dominant, (mono)cultural paradigms in Brazil. It is based in the "organic living", a concept closed related to other *buen vivir* epistemologies. An "organic living" happens through "relations of *coexistence* between the elements of nature" (confluent relations) and it is related to "mobilization processes arising from the pluralistic thought of polytheistic peoples" (2015, p. 89, my translation and emphasis). It would be opposed to a "synthetic living", based on "relationships of *transformation* of the elements of nature" that inform the "mobilization processes arising from the monistic thought of the monotheistic people" – what Santos calls "transfluence" (idem, my translation and emphasis).

These concepts are relevant to the analysis of the deeper meanings of an agri-food transition that goes beyond debates on sustainable agriculture which easily falls into a neoliberal framing, where industry and technologically-oriented perspectives (Conti et al., 2024) tend to overshadow the contemporary struggles and deeper epistemologies that inform agroecology - thus, reproducing neocolonial dynamics. It subscribes the project into a debate around a shift that breaks with the coloniality of knowledge, being and power (Quijano, 2005) that still informs the realities of urban, rural, and forest communities in Brazil, and the damaging ruptures and binaries that the modernizing spirit of "agro" imposes through its monocultures, pesticides and explorations of bodies-and-territories. (Garcia Ferreira et al., 2022)

Through its networks and practices, agroecology strives to build collaboration and coexistence between nature and culture, a break with divides such as city-land, nature-culture, a dialogue of knowledges, transformative relationships based on joy and abundance, and, ultimately, the liberation of food, peoples and ecosystems from the chains of the current capitalist forces. This praxis communicates a counter-hegemonic positionality that challenges the powers and influence of the market for seeds, fertilizers, machinery, and ultra-processed food linked to agribusiness economic interests, while they are, per se, the re-building of ways of living destroyed by colonialism and modernity.

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