


Traditional and cultural knowledge of peasants: Agricultural production based on empirical knowledge

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the traditional and cultural knowledge of peasants in agricultural production, especially empirical knowledge. It focuses on contributions to the theories of Social Movements, considering the dispute in the field of knowledge and the resistance to empirical productions in areas of Agrarian Reform settlements. The objectives include analyzing conceptions of rural education, identifying traditional peasant practices, and analyzing how the MST conceives and recreates itself based on traditional knowledge. This is a bibliographic and field research, whose theoretical framework is based on authors such as Caldart (2009; 2012), Freire (1987) and Santos (2007). The field research, carried out with the leaders of the MST and peasants from the 25 de Maio Settlement and the Dom José Gomes Settlement in the municipality of Chapecó/SC, highlighted the evolution of production techniques, combined with technology and the strengthening of cooperatives, improving living conditions in the settlements. The interviews indicated a problem of non-succession of families in the lots of settlements, leading to rural exodus and the formation of small estates. Despite this, the settlements maintain experiences of resistance and the production of healthy food, such as the small farmer's market in Abelardo Luz. In the course of the research, production experiences were observed that avoid the use of chemicals and techniques that are aggressive to the soil, showing that it is possible to have income without adhering to the conventional model of production, valuing nature as an essential part of life.

Keywords: Knowledge, MST, Traditional, Culture, Peasants.

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INTRODUCTION

This research on the traditional and cultural knowledge of peasants aims to contribute to the theories of Social Movements, considering the constant dispute in the field of knowledge and the resistance to empirical productions in the areas of Agrarian Reform settlements. In this sense, *rural education* deals with such knowledge as a starting and ending point in its teaching methodologies. Guided by the question "How do peasants conceive traditional and cultural experiences and their relations with scientific knowledge?", this study sought to identify, based on the experiences of the MST, knowledge that has been built over generations, such as how to deal with the land and live with people, respecting and preserving values, empirical and traditional knowledge.

As it is a path built throughout the elaboration of a master's dissertation in Education, the general objective of this study was unfolded in four specific objectives, namely: a) To analyze conceptions of *rural education* regarding the traditional and cultural knowledge of the MST peasants and their relations with scientific knowledge; b) To identify traditional peasant knowledge practiced by MST settled farmers and means of preservation and continuity passed down from generation to generation; c) Analyze how the MST and training processes, in the context of *rural education*, conceive and recreate themselves based on traditional knowledge and preservation of the Creole seed; and d) Relate the concepts discussed by *rural education* with the struggle of social movements.

As for the methodology, the study is characterized as a literature review, field research and intervention of the researcher, who is the son of MST settlers. The approach used was dialectical historical materialism, and the analysis tool was Bardin's (2016) content analysis methodology.

In the following text, some relevant aspects were addressed, such as the theoretical framework based on the studies of Caldart (2009; 2012), Freire (1987) and Santos (2007), and some considerations reached through field research. It should be noted that this production is part of the result of a research developed for a long time in the place where the researcher Robison Risso belongs, the MST 25 de Maio Settlement, located in the municipality of Abelardo Luz/SC.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BONAVENTURE'S CRITICAL THEORY

To approach Critical Theory, it is essential to start from the premise that its purpose is to explain or understand reality. Analyzing theory critically implies, primarily, describing what is in relation to what is not yet, but can become. Critical Theory reveals the essence of phenomena through the understanding of their historical development and the context in which they were constituted (Santos, 2007). Its comprehension, in this study, is fundamentally based on the studies of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), whose purpose is to understand how criticism can influence the search for social emancipation, and generate the spirit of nonconformity in the face of reality,



culminating in the construction of a path for a new theory that guides towards the overcoming of exploitation and social injustice.

According to the author, one of the issues that is central to this discussion refers to the experience of the people, who sometimes have expectations that become rooted in their culture that those who are born in such a social situation die without overcoming this state (Santos, 2007). In ancient societies, experiences coincided with the expectations of the people, because those who were born poor and illiterate died in the same condition in which they were born. On the other hand, in modern society, the state we are born into can be overcome in the course of life. For Santos (2007, p. 18) "This discrepancy between experiences and expectations is fundamental to understand what we think, and how we think about social emancipation in modern society".

The contradiction between experience and expectation is evident in a society where the expectations of the population at the global level are predominantly negative. This is because the governmental structure that organizes and elaborates social policies is geared to serve the interests of big capital, to the detriment of the majority of the population, which belongs to the working class. As a result, changes reported by the media often indicate deteriorations in essential areas of life, such as health, social security, and education. Even facing a crisis marked by discrepancies between experiences and expectations, regulation and emancipation, it is indisputable that we need a more just, dignified and inclusive society for all people, without exceptions.

Thus, based on this assumption, social movements are inserted, aiming to think about mechanisms of contribution to the search for social emancipation, in view of a structural transformation in society, through access to housing, means of production and life with dignity. The problem, in practice, is that theories are usually not in line with reality, and do not actually bring contributions that help to break the paradigms that bar the revolution of the social structure.

Today we are experiencing a complicated problem, a discrepancy between theories and social practice that is harmful to theory as well as to practice. To a blind theory, social practice is invisible; for a blind practice, social theory is irrelevant (Santos, 2007, p. 20).

The author's reflection is important for social movements, which need articulation to account for the contradiction that exists between theory and practice, after all, it is essential to build a new way of producing knowledge, which generates alternatives that lead to the revolution that the movements aspire to. As a result, it is necessary to mention:

[...] The most troubling thing about today's world is that so much social experience is wasted because it takes place in remote places. Very local experiences, not very well known or legitimized by the hegemonic social sciences, are harassed by the media, and therefore have remained invisible "discredited". In my view, the first challenge is to confront this waste of social experiences that is the world (Santos, 2007, p. 24).



According to Santos (2007), indolent reason or metonymic reason contributes to the waste of social experiences by contracting, diminishing and subtracting the present. This phenomenon occurs because most people's conception of the world is fragmented, which impedes the vision of the totality of the relationships established in the various spheres of society. In this context, a contradiction arises: people expand the vision of the future as something grandiose, while at the same time contracting the perception of the present, making it impossible to fully understand it. The ideal would be the opposite movement: expanding the present and contracting the future, accumulating more experiences in the present for a better preparation for the future.

When analyzing from the point of view of the existing dichotomies, one stands out: that the only rigorous knowledge is scientific knowledge, and other knowledge has no validity or utility in applied science. Such a statement is intended to belittle popular knowledge of groups such as peasants and indigenous peoples that has been built up over centuries of experiences.

And as such, the social practices that are organized in this type of knowledge are not credible, they do not exist, they are not visible. This monoculture of rigor has been based, since European expansion, on a reality: that of Western science (Santos, 2007, p. 28).

Thus, it is essential to shed light on the class struggle, since having the peasant and his knowledge as a reference, it is necessary to infer that there are constant attacks by the capitalist system, whose purpose is to erase the importance of their experiences, forcing a dependence on multinational companies in the entire production process, as Marx already pointed out in his theory on capital. To keep the experience alive is to sustain resistance against the possible extinction of the peasantry and its traditions.

During the studies in the Technical Course in Agroecology, it is possible to understand that this monoculture is strongly present from the origin of the production process, which is the domain of the seed. From the moment the farmer loses the independence of his own seed, he becomes hostage to the entire technological package of production of the large corporations. The next step is the unfeasibility of peasant experiments, which do not apply to the genetic changes already established in the seed and which have caused a vicious cycle that will run through the entire production line, until the trade of the final product, which leaves only a small part for the producer.

Another process of monoculture that must be learned is the naturalization of differences, which ends up hiding hierarchies, which classify people according to their ethnicity, class or sexual orientation. Hierarchy is a result of this naturalization, after all, the idea that these classifications are natural is constructed, making it seem that hierarchization is a natural process.

Unlike the capital/labor relation, here hierarchy is not the cause of differences, but their consequence, because those who are inferior in these natural classifications are inferior "by nature," and therefore hierarchy is a consequence of their inferiority; in this way, differences are naturalized (Santos, 2007, p. 30).



With regard to changes in social relations in the Western tradition, globalization proves to be a powerful tool for nullifying local knowledge, valuing only those of universal interest. Such logic appears, mainly, in the big brands that locate their consumers according to the products they provide, making the global hegemonic, dominant and unique, and ignoring the local culture.

Capitalism uses this premise of globalization to impose its methods of domination of the spheres of labor and nature. In this sense, it is worth reflecting on the difference in the approach to land by peasant and indigenous peoples in relation to capitalists: while the peasant looks at the land in different cycles, that is, the land that produced well in one year must rest the next year to then return to cultivation, the large producer uses the land in a predatory way. With repetitive cycles of commodity monoculture, making frequent use of synthetic fertilizers.

For capital, what matters is productivity and not the quality of production, which makes peasant products less important. Thus, the peasant is surrounded by the invasion of capital and finds it increasingly difficult to keep his experiences of life and production active. Hoarding becomes more important than anything else, even if it impacts the environment and people's lives. "With the development of commerce and private property [...] commercial needs became a priority and production ceased to be focused on the needs of those who produced to meet commercial profit" (Tonet; Lessa, 2008, p. 97).

According to Tonet and Lessa (2008), this process of change in the commercial relationship is what led to the emergence of social classes, which culminated in the appearance of numerous social contradictions. From these transformations, divisions of labor were imposed on society, which made mercantile relations increasingly important.

With the emergence and development of capitalism, this situation became even worse. The essence of bourgeois society is the private accumulation of capital, and this is only possible if men live in a society submissive to the demands of the global process of capital accumulation. It therefore becomes the decisive reference point of all spheres of action of men. On an individual level, a successful life is the life of someone who has accumulated wealth. On the social level, men are reduced to labor power, which is nothing more than a commodity like any other (Tonet; Lessa, 2008, p. 98).

Following the notes of Tonet and Lessa (2008), when analyzing Marx's theory, we can infer that capital is the social relationship created by men and that dominates the whole society. Thus society becomes alienated from capitalism through the submission of the human being to capital. In the midst of this relationship of domination exercised over men through the exploitation of labor and maintained by the human need for survival, science presents itself as a powerful tool of the social system, especially with regard to agricultural production, where small farmers who do not have large areas for cultivation and state-of-the-art machinery suffer from unfair market competition. Keeping popular knowledge alive in this scenario is a major challenge for smallholder farmers. To try to



overcome this contradiction between science and popular knowledge, Santos (2007, p. 33) emphasizes that:

[...] the possibility that science enters not as a monoculture, but as part of a broader ecology of knowledge, in which scientific knowledge can dialogue with secular knowledge, with popular knowledge, with the knowledge of indigenous peoples, with the knowledge of marginal urban populations, with peasant knowledge.

It should be noted that scientific knowledge and popular knowledge do not cancel each other out, each has its relevance. It is undeniable, for example, that in order to make advances in relation to the study of planets with space travel, science is fundamental, but when it comes to the preservation of the biodiversity of planet Earth, popular knowledge is much more effective, after all, modern science is more focused on destroying biodiversity than understanding it in order to preserve it. In this sense, indigenous peoples are the ones who still maintain a large part of our planet's biodiversity, precisely because they understand that they are part of it and not its owners and that they depend on it to exist. Thus, it is necessary to find the middle ground, on which we depend on the two forms of knowledge, popular and scientific (Santos, 2007).

The author also proposes five ecologies to overcome the waste of experience, bringing absent experiences and making them present. We highlight the fifth ecology, which is the Ecology of Productivity.

In the domain of the fifth logic, the productivist logic, the sociology of absences consists in the recovery and valorization of alternative systems of production, popular economic organizations, workers' cooperatives, self-managed enterprises, solidarity economy, etc., which the capitalist productivist orthodoxy has concealed and discredited (Santos, 2007, p. 36).

Social movements in their most diverse forms of organization, each according to its objectives, bring the logic of breaking the orthodoxy of the capitalist system, after all, they aim at human emancipation through class struggle, whether in urban or rural areas. Specifically citing the MST, when it organizes people to occupy the land and make it productive, generating the livelihood of thousands of people, it is contributing to strengthening the sociology of absences. When Santos (2007) reflects on ecologies, he points out ways to strengthen families after the conquest of the land, after all, the challenge is enormous to build sustainable production processes that keep people in their production units. It should be noted, however, that all social movements are based on the Ecology of Productivity.

The sociology of absences seeks to make present experiences that, although available, are treated as absent, and it is essential to bring them to light. Together with the sociology of absences, the sociology of emergencies emerges, which aims to analyze the future in a concrete way, considering progress as a non-linear process. This approach seeks to conceive the new, even without



pre-defined solutions, and to build a world full of possibilities and alternatives, contrary to the single vision promoted by capitalism (Santos, 2007).

According to Santos (2007), it is necessary to approximate the objectives of the Social Movements, seeking to find points of convergence in what is common between them, that is, it is necessary to create intelligibility without destroying diversity. This process is only possible through what the author calls Translation, in order to be able to capture all the richness of each social organization, analyzing the experiences that are being wasted and that hold immeasurable riches.

Critical theory, which is the basis of this text, needs a different rationality from the one we are used to. Based on this assumption:

We need another kind of rationality, and then we start to think about a broader kind of rationality, we need to reinvent critical theory according to our needs today. One thing that is clear to us is that there is no general knowledge; nor is there general ignorance (Santos, 2007, p. 52).

There is no less relevant or more relevant knowledge, each knowledge has its importance according to the reality in which the subject is inserted and according to his historical and cultural construction and with the relationships he has established throughout his trajectory. When Santos (2007) points out that there are two types of knowledge, the knowledge of regulation and the knowledge of emancipation, he makes it clear that both have starting points and points of arrival, and that ignorance represents total chaos and knowledge is order, the way out of this state towards enlightenment. Knowledge is to put things in order, in society and in reality. Dominating knowledge within classes is dangerous for the current social system, because through it people become aware of their exploitation and thus can understand the need to organize themselves to break the chains of domination of capital (Santos, 2007).

Also according to Santos (2007), modern science developed within the knowledge of regulation, therefore, it is not favorable to emancipatory knowledge. That is why the need for emancipatory knowledge to be that of the ecology of knowledges, after all, it is not possible to meet human demands only with scientific knowledge to the detriment of popular/empirical knowledge. This ecology of knowledge aims to learn new knowledge without ignoring what has already been acquired.

Throughout my training within the pedagogy of the Movement, it becomes evident that neoliberalism promotes the radicalization of the present. According to this view, the failure to solve social problems is attributed to the incomplete development of the market. Thus, it can be inferred that economics determines the way in which the environment reflects social relations and guides which knowledge should be preserved and which should be hidden. There are experiments in peasant production without the use of chemicals that show extraordinary results, both in the quality and



quantity of what is produced. However, this form of production is not of interest to the large market, because the science that develops "pesticides", genetically modified seeds and high-tech machinery would not obtain the desired economic return.

The term "neoliberalism" is recent, dating from 1945, and is generally used to denote adherence to the liberal doctrine of the Anglo-Saxon tradition that states that the freedom of the individual within the law is the best way to achieve, through pragmatic methods, prosperity and progress. At the heart of this notion is the defense of free-market capitalism. The State should only intervene to re-establish free economic competition and individual initiative (Caldart, 2012a, p.578).

According to Caldart (2012a), capital uses neoliberal educational policies, through the private sector, to act directly in Brazilian education.

However, in spite of the fact that we find in these propositions much of the neoliberal ideology practiced by like-minded governments and corporations that act directly or indirectly in education – training skills for the market, flexibilization of state control over private education, individualization of the pedagogical act, technocratic evaluation to stimulate competition between educational institutions through rankings, rewards and punishments, elementary compensatory education (reading, counting and writing) for the so-called poor, association of educational objectives with those of governability, etc. – it is irrefutable that, even in the most orthodox neoliberal experiences, everyone claims some role for the State in education (Caldart, 2012a, p. 579).

Caldart (2012a) also points out that the MST maintains that it is not enough to guarantee access to public schools. There is an urgent need for a profound review of the ways of researching and producing knowledge. Without a radical critique of Eurocentrism and its current form – neoliberal single-mindedness – education serves as a "weapon" in favor of the dominant sectors. Knowledge is a powerful weapon, which can be used for liberation, but if it is not based on critical theory, it can be another form of alienation from the capitalist system.

According to Santos (2007), there are two aspects of knowledge, cold knowledge and hot knowledge: cold knowledge refers to the vision of obstacles, and hot knowledge is the will to overcome them. Through it, it is possible to understand the need to break colonialism, analyzing the power structures of the State that expropriates many people of their own humanity.

The possibility of giving people back their humanity begins with the concept of democracy, which occurs through the process of breaking power relations and initiating what can be called "shared authority". Social movements work with the idea of shared authority, where everyone is part of the decision-making, has the right to an opinion and thus also takes responsibility for the results.

Capitalist society sustains itself through two systems, the system of exclusion and the system of inequalities. The system of inequalities occurs through the capital/labor relationship, after all, without the exploitation of the worker's labor, there is no accumulation of capital. Karl Marx (1867) categorically theorizes this process of generating capital through what he called *surplus value*. The system of exclusion aims to keep those who are outside, on the margins of society, as invisible, not



being valued and respected as subjects of rights. The sociology of absences sheds light on these subjects who are hidden.

Santos (2007, p. 68) believes that "[...] The ecology of knowledge that I propose to you will have many possibilities to face this problem, especially to confront some disastrous and harmful traditions in the theory and critical practice of modernity." Thus, in order for all cultures and knowledge to have their spaces in each reality, it is necessary to use ecology as a tool for democratization and liberation of those who are exploited.

Several Latin American revolutionary movements, such as the government of Hugo Chávez, contradict the logic of silencing those who are marginalized and denied their humanity. The problem is that many social movements are very distant from each other, which makes them fragile and susceptible to being easily undermined by the current system (Santos, 2007). Based on this assumption, Santos (2007, p. 96) infers that "The problem with social movements is that at a certain moment they have an enormous activity, they are in the press all the time, and the next month they are no longer there, they are in reflux, people do not go to assemblies and meetings".

Based on the author's analysis, corroborating my experiences as a subject formed in the struggles of the MST, I affirm in relation to the demobilization of social movements, that this brings to light a chronic problem in countless social organizations: when there is an emergency demand, people mobilize around this objective, and from the resolution of such demand, Stagnation returns and leaders find it difficult to bring their members together. This is remarkable in the realities of agrarian reform settlements, because after the conquest of the land and the structuring of the settlements in their most diverse demands, people start to fight only for their individual demands, and no longer mobilize collectively, weakening the sense of community.

From the elements listed, it can be said that peasant social movements have a great challenge ahead, which is to find a balance between their objectives and articulation with other movements in order to strengthen the struggles for social emancipation. The experiences built over centuries by each people need to be taken into account when discussing the structure of a society based on the ecology of knowledge. The sociology of absences is also the possibility of bringing to the present the experiences that are at risk of being wasted. For neoliberalism, what does not generate economic value has no value, but for native peoples and peasants, each knowledge is important in the maintenance of traditions and in the right to humanization (Santos, 2007).

CHAMPION AGRICULTURE

The populations of the countryside, the waters and the forests (peasants, indigenous peoples, quilombolas, riverside dwellers) have been strongly present in the political scene in Brazil in recent decades, and struggle to conquer and resist in their territories. These subjects organize themselves in



movements that deconstruct/construct/reconstruct territories, which is why they are called socio-territorial movements (Fernandez, 2005).

Peasant agriculture is a way of agricultural development and life for families who, by having access to land and available natural resources, begin to produce food that guarantees their livelihood. This model differs from the capitalist mode of production, which expropriates the worker of the fruits of his labor.

Peasant production units, by having as their centrality the social reproduction of their direct workers, who are the members of the family themselves, present a different rationality from that of capitalist enterprises, which are based on wage labor to obtain profit. As peasant families reproduce their specificity in a social formation dominated by capitalism and given that the peasant economy presupposes markets, peasant production units suffer the most distinct influences on their way of doing agriculture (Caldart, 2012, p. 26).

The peasantry faces a process of ideological confrontation due to hegemonic capitalist expressions, such as subsistence agriculture and family farming. Since the colonial period, subsistence agriculture has discriminated against peasant production, considering the peasant subaltern and inferior for not meeting the demands of the large market and large-scale monoculture.

After the process of the Green Revolution, in the mid-1950s, the concept was introduced that peasants should enter into contracts with capitalist companies, coming to be called Family Farmers.

The expression family farming brings as a corollary of its conception the idea that the possibility of growth of peasant family income can only occur if there is the direct and indirect integration of family farming with capitalist companies, in particular agro-industries (Caldart, 2012, p. 29).

This process of consolidation of family farming brought with it the subordination of farmers to capitalist enterprises, making them reproducers of the dominant technological matrix of production. On the other hand, the conception of peasant agriculture incorporates the perspective of production and autonomous way of living, without denying modernity. The central focus of peasant agriculture is the production of food both for the reproduction of the family and to feed society in a broader sense.

RURAL EDUCATION

It is not possible to approach the history of *rural education* without first examining its movement and recognizing this new space for the deepening of ideas and values collectively constructed by workers, subjects of their own history, including peasants, as well as educators committed to the working class, who, until the moment they assumed historical protagonism, they were perceived through other perspectives and conceptions.



Rural education goes back to the times when the colonels had a space on their own farm for literacy and schooling of the children of the employees, at the levels that the former wanted. This time still persists in rural farms in Brazil in agro-industries and industries, with markets and internal tricks that "crest" people, forcing them to buy their products and follow their ideals.

The origin of *rural education* goes back to popular peasant movements, in which the subjects themselves begin to organize their lives based on the needs they identify. Thus, in the mid-90s, more precisely in 1997, ENERA (1st National Meeting of Agrarian Reform Educators) took place in partnership with UnB (University of Brasilia). From this date on, the practices already carried out in the peasant areas were systematized and solidified in the field of class confrontation. Rural *education*, outdated in its concept and practice, gives way to *rural education*. The emphasis on *DO in the field* refers to the subjects by which it is thought, the peasant subjects.

It is essential to explain that the concept of *rural education* has been hijacked and distorted by the Brazilian elite in such a way that agribusiness calls itself a defender of *rural education*, employers' federations and employers' unions. In view of this, it is necessary to say that as workers, we will continue to build education at the level of literacy, schooling at all levels, according to our demands, which are much greater than the utopia of the full freedom of the human being.

The history of education in the Landless Movement is a journey made with persistence and struggle. For the basic education of the settled children, parents, teachers, young people and students have fought hard. Collectively and with the conditions of each moment. The education proposed by the MST has a different organization, work and matrices, since the reality is also different. It is also urgent to think that, in fact, such an organization is getting bigger and more complex. The workers' struggle grows in necessity and strength. Therefore, the challenges also increase and become more complex. Education needs to assume the tasks that fall to it in this process of strengthening the organicity of the MST, of clarity of the pedagogical political project, as well as of the pedagogical principles.

According to Caldart (1996), pedagogical principles refer to the way of doing and thinking about education, in order to concretize one's own philosophical principles. They speak of the elements that are essential and general in our proposal of education, including especially the methodological reflection of educational processes, drawing attention to the fact that there can be differentiated practices based on the same pedagogical and philosophical principles. In other words, the pedagogical practice that takes place in a settlement school is very different from the pedagogical practice that takes place in any other school.

The word education has many meanings. For the MST, it is the process of human formation, through which people insert themselves into a given society, transforming themselves and transforming this society. That is why it is always linked to a conception of the world. For the



movement, education is never neutral: either it transforms the reality to which it is inserted or it helps by perpetuating a system that increasingly elevates the commodity and increasingly lowers the human being.

Throughout my path in education, both in the practice of rural educator and in my academic training focused on *rural education*, I acquired the awareness that the freedom of the land is not only a matter for farmers. The freedom of the land is everyone's business, because it is not enough to have schools in the countryside, it is necessary to help build schools in the countryside, with a political pedagogical project linked to the causes, challenges, dreams, history and culture of the working people of the countryside. Rural education should not be thought of as a partisan political project or a social movement, but rather as an education that is linked to the needs of all rural people, linked to their realities so that learning is not empty, meaningless for their lives.

From the studies provided by the MST's pedagogy, which is based on the reality of the student and the preservation of the cultural roots of each community, rural *education* acts in its methodologies and practices. The peasant, especially the settler, unconsciously denies his own condition as a country person, seeing himself as inferior rather than different from the urban person, thus falsifying his identity. Rural *education* works from the perspective that rural people can identify themselves as belonging to something, with all its values and particularities.

Rural education, with its differentiated pedagogy, seeks the implementation of an apprenticeship that identifies the peasant as a son of the land and that has with it a close connection of struggles, achievements, healthy life, differentiated values and love. It is believed that within this education lies the germ for the transformation of the entire society. This education questions social structures and the culture that legitimizes them, questioning society. This formation goes far beyond the school, it occurs through the entire historical process of each individual and each society through daily life and experiences, it is always linked to a certain political project and a conception of the world.

With the pedagogy of the Movement, it is believed that for the realization of *rural education*, it needs to become an educational project that is included in public policies. One of the political objectives of *rural education* is to help mobilize and organize peasants in social movements that strengthen and identify their collective presence in society and that is their main space of education for participation and for the necessary social struggles.

According to Caldart (2009), it can be said that the school desired for the countryside is the one that helps to know the reality or realities. It must start from what one thinks, lives, does and says. It needs a curriculum that meets the needs of each reality. First, you must be very clear about your goals, and from them, seek to know what must be done to achieve them. The need to produce



agroecologically is also valued through *rural education* so that the preservation of all forms of life occurs and so that the land continues to generate quality food, also in the future.

At this point, Caldart (2009) points out the importance of *rural education* being linked to the food production process, working on the school floor with the awareness and tools necessary for the mastery of the productive technique that agroecology proposes as an alternative to the agribusiness production model.

If free action is free only in so far as man transforms his world and himself, if a positive condition for freedom is the awakening of human creative possibilities, if the struggle for a free society is not free unless through it an ever greater degree of individual freedom is created, the revolutionary process must be recognized as eminently pedagogical (Freire, 1987, p. 134-135).

For the author, every time we talk about social practices, work, culture, we can also be talking about education, and it is for this reason that education cannot be conceived in a way that is disconnected from reality. School is the continuation of reality and not a place of escape from it. Reality must be the starting point and the end point of education. Common sense and daily knowledge should be the starting points that, through study, analysis and understanding, will be transformed into scientific knowledge that will return to society in the form of new practices, transforming reality.

Understanding that *rural education* is more comprehensive than simply the rural space, it involves a proposal for transformation for the whole society, because there is no human development if only one of the social sectors develops and the others remain stagnant. From my studies and experiences, I consider that *rural education* is not a ready-made proposal, it does not present finished solutions. It is under construction and must be adapted to each reality in which it is inserted. She does not ignore formal education and traditional content, as they are also part of learning, but they must adapt to the needs of each reality.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Education is not neutral: either it transforms the reality to which it is inserted or it helps by perpetuating a system that values the commodity and oppresses the subjects. Freedom of access to and use of land is not only a utopia for farmers, it is also for humanity as a whole. Thus, we understand that the land is not private, it is public and the right of all people who want to produce on it, without exception. In this sense, it is not enough to have schools in the countryside, it is necessary to build rural schools, that is, schools with a political pedagogical project linked to the causes, challenges, dreams, history and culture of the rural working people.

Rural education is a powerful tool to keep peasant experiences of production alive. The traditional knowledge developed in the classroom drives the educational processes, thus giving



meaning to the contents addressed, that is, contextualized. In summary, it can be said that the desired school for the countryside is the one that helps to know the reality or realities, starting from what is thought, lived, done and said. It needs a curriculum that meets the needs of each reality.

The need to produce agroecologically is also valued through *rural education* so that the preservation of all forms of life occurs and so that the land continues to generate quality food in the future as well. From this perspective, dealing with the contents from the concrete reality of the countryside, valuing the peasant, strengthens the cultural dimension of the peasant's resistance in his conquered land. The traditional knowledge practiced by peasants, when brought to formal education environments and approached with due importance, can become scientific and be the basis for an education thought out at a general level.

According to the results of the empirical research carried out, it was observed that from the occupations with the objective of conquering the land to the present day (2024), the people interviewed demonstrate a strong link with the cause of the social movement as a tool to fight for dignity and transform the reality in which they lived before joining the MST. It is also evident that there have been many changes in the context of technologies used in small-scale farming. At the beginning of the settlements (1986), work was predominantly manual, carried out with rustic tools such as axes, sickles, machetes and ox plows. Faced with land of inferior quality and low productivity, survival was a challenge and many families ended up abandoning their plots, migrating again to urban centers.

Over the years, the traditional production techniques brought by the peasants, combined with technology and the strengthening of cooperatives, have facilitated the evolution of the settlements and consequently improved the living conditions of the settlers. The traditional peasant knowledge is present from the preparation of the soil, the cultivation and improvement of the Creole seed, the use of medicinal plants, the planting times based on the phases of the moon, the preparation of organic fertilizers to reduce the cost of industry and the way of living in the countryside, with particularities of each community. forming a specific culture.

An issue that emerges strongly in the statements of the interviewees is the concern with the non-succession of families in the lots of settlements. The tendency for only the elderly to remain on the properties has led to difficulties in terms of labor for work, which, in turn, has contributed to the rural exodus in these regions. This reality has a direct impact on the structuring of the community, since schools face a decrease in the number of students, cooperatives suffer from a shortage of members, which makes it difficult to maintain their activities and, consequently, the process of selling lots favors the formation of small estates.

Still in the settlements, experiences of resistance and life with regard to the production of healthy food are still active. In Abelardo Luz, the Small Farmer Fair is held every Saturday, and



settled families have access to this space in the city to sell their products, thus valuing their production. During the field research, it was possible to learn about two production experiences that deviate from the patterns of capitalist agriculture, being a peasant family in the Dom José Gomes Settlement in Chapecó (SC) and one in the community of Santa Rosa III, in Abelardo Luz (SC). Both production experiments aim to avoid the use of chemicals and farming techniques that harm the soil and natural resources. These are examples that it is possible to have income without having to adhere to the conventional mode of production, treating nature as indispensable wealth for life and not as a simple commodity as the capitalist system of society treats it.

Santin (2023), brings the observation that the Landless movement has taken on a dimension that goes beyond the struggle for land, that is, it is not only by conquering a piece of land that the problem is solved, but it is also necessary to advance in the issue of the model that is used. According to the author,

With our experience we can see that with diversity productivity is much higher, maybe you can harvest a little less corn per hectare, but along with corn you can harvest other plants, other products and in addition you take care of the land. By understanding the cycles of nature, you can reap much better results, but then it refers to a series of public policies, for example agribusiness agriculture.

People are also in need of human fulfillment. Capital conveys the idea that it is necessary to have money in order to have fulfillment, but it is noticeable that this system is leading farmers into debt, causing depression from their youth in the countryside. Thus, the peasant experiences accumulated in generations of agroecology are consolidated as a confrontation with the conventional agriculture model and as a way of obtaining income for small farmers.

Santin (2023) also analyzes traditional knowledge that:

We bring traditional knowledge as a basis, that is, to produce in diversity in quality and not in quantity. Speaking from a technological and scientific perspective, the greatest university we have is Nature, and unfortunately we still need to acquire a lot of wisdom and knowledge about it. So the challenge is how the new generations can get to know more about Nature. Nature for us has a production effect as well as a therapeutic one.

From the field research, some elements were present. For the peasants, the relationship with the land, with the signs of nature and the use of medicinal plants is very present. In the words of Santin (2023):

When we are stressed with traffic with our daily lives, from work, getting home and going to the fields, putting our hands in the dirt and our feet on the ground is an excellent therapy. Knowing nature is very important, after all, for example, why is the watermelon ripe at the time when we need liquid the most or why are citrus fruits ripe in winter? These elements show that nature is giving us the signals and we need to learn to understand these signals. Why did the ancients tell children to put their feet on the ground? The earth is a unifying element, which unifies, for example: if there are two piglets of different sows in the pigsty and we throw a litter of earth in the middle, they do not fight, because the earth leaves them



with the same smell. Another traditional knowledge is about plants, for example, here we are implementing an agroforestry, where we can organize the plants according to those that need a little more shade, those that need less, as we organize in the same place several different species.

Regarding the seed, Luz (2024) analyzes it as follows:

When I was a child, I lived with my grandparents and as they already had a piece of land, they were always very capricious, they took great care of the seeds mainly, they never bought a grain of seed. When I was a child, they exchanged a lot of seeds among the neighbors, which gave a lot of variety to each type of crop. I never ate a bought corn or rice in my childhood days, we always grew our own food and harvested.

One of the foundations of agroecology is the seed. It is essential to have mastery of the seed so that there is no dependence on the technological package implemented by companies that aim to dominate the production process. Traditional knowledge has taught us to understand the signs of nature, it teaches us what we need to understand to reap good fruits. Science is important, but practice brings us immeasurable experiences.



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