

## The Role of Brazilian Rural/Field Schools in Overcoming the Coloniality of Knowledge

### O papel das escolas do campo brasileiras na superação da colonialidade d conhecimento

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#### Abstract

The article addresses the role played by rural schools and Brazilian peasant social movements in confronting the coloniality of knowledge. The importance of this discussion lies in the global environmental, social, and food crisis and how coloniality contributes to the worsening of this situation. The research question is: How do rural/field schools in Brazil contribute to resisting the coloniality of knowledge and valuing local knowledge, especially in the food and educational practices of rural communities? This study main objective is to discuss the role of rural schools in resisting the coloniality of knowledge in the Global South. To this end, we propose an exploratory methodology using bibliographic resources. We concluded that Brazilian rural schools contribute to the resistance against the coloniality of knowledge and the appreciation of local knowledge in the face of contemporary reality, through a liberating and decolonial education that breaks the hegemonic forms of land exploitation and promotes a healthier and environmentally viable relationship between food production and consumption.

**Keywords:** territorial educational practices, epistemologies of the South, liberating pedagogy, decoloniality.

#### Resumo

O artigo trata sobre o papel desempenhado pelas escolas do campo e pelos movimentos sociais camponeses brasileiros no enfrentamento da colonialidade do conhecimento. A importância desta discussão se encontra na crise global

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ambiental, social e alimentar e em como a colonialidade contribui para o agravamento desta conjuntura. A pergunta da pesquisa é: Como as escolas do campo, no Brasil, contribuem para a resistência à colonialidade do conhecimento e à valorização dos saberes locais, especialmente nas práticas alimentares e educativas das comunidades do campo? O objetivo central do trabalho é debater o papel das escolas do campo na resistência frente à colonialidade do conhecimento no Sul Global. Para tal, propomos uma metodologia exploratória com utilização de recursos bibliográficos. Concluiu-se que as escolas do campo brasileiras contribuem para a resistência à colonialidade do conhecimento e à valorização dos saberes locais diante da realidade contemporânea, por meio de uma educação libertadora e descolonial que rompa as formas hegemônicas de exploração da terra e promova uma relação mais saudável e ambientalmente viável de produção e consumo de alimentos.

**Palavras-chave:** práticas educativas territoriais, epistemologias do Sul, pedagogia libertadora, descolonialidade.

## First Words

The coloniality of power is difficult to understand, it is deeply rooted in the colonization history in America and the enslaving of individuals in the Global South. This concept refers to the colonization continuous legacy, which is expressed in the imposition of Western hegemonic knowledge, which marginalizes and subordinates local, traditional and community knowledge. Such marginalization process impacts directly the autonomy and identity of local communities, whose knowledge and practices are seen in the perspective of the non-white population inferiority, even in contexts where they show effectiveness and cultural depth. In the Latin American and Brazilian contexts, coloniality is also revealed in food and education practices, with direct impact on the food and nutritional security (SAN, acronym for Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional) of field populations, where the traditional knowledge about food growth, production and consumption is under pressure from capitalism and Western globalism.

Food and nutrition challenges intensified by the covid-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>, are the result of colonialism, even after the political-administrative independence

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<sup>1</sup> FAO; FIDA; UNICEF; PAM; WHO. The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2021: transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all. Roma: FAO, 2021. E-book. Retrieved from: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb4474en>. Accessed on: Apr 19, 2022.

of colonized countries<sup>2</sup>, and from the universalization of global projects, such as Westernism, power coloniality, globalization and neoliberalism<sup>3</sup>.

Taking that into account, we sought to investigate how Brazilian rural schools contribute to the resistance to knowledge coloniality and appreciation of local knowledge, especially in food and education practices in field communities. We propose a debate about the role of field schools in the resistance to the coloniality of knowledge in the Global South. When looking into how field schools, as knowledge spaces that include the production of food and reproduction of regional food traditions, we recognize the notoriety of this social space in the discussion of decolonial perspectives of knowledge.

This is a qualitative exploratory study, based on a literature review supported by authors who discuss field issues, the liberating pedagogy and decolonial studies. The bases SciELO, academic google, and CAPES Catalogues of Theses and Dissertations were surveyed, prioritizing productions addressing education practices in rural areas with epistemologies of the South and traditional knowledge. The selection criteria included the theme relevance, currentness and contributions to the debate about knowledge coloniality and pedagogical resistance. The resulting theoretical corpus supported the critical analysis of experiences of rural schools and education practices of social movements. Understanding the results of the coloniality of power and knowledge in the establishment of social inequalities in the Global South and the relevance of discussing knowledge and resistance in the space of rural education, we propose decoloniality as a theoretical methodological perspective. The epistemologies of the South can be highlighted as knowledge developed outside the Eurocentric perspective. Although such knowledge is not officially recognized as scientific, it resists and remains in the daily life of peripheral peoples, thus providing visibility and validation to a diversity of existing knowledge in the Global South, proposing a plurality that defies the colonial logic<sup>4</sup>.

Seeing rural schools as spaces of knowledge construction and counter-hegemonic practices allows us to interpret them as symbolic and political

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<sup>2</sup> QUIJANO, Aníbal. *Ensayos en torno a la colonialidade del poder*. 1.ed. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Del Signo, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> MIGNOLO, Walter. *Histórias locais/projetos globais: colonialidade, saberes subalternos e pensamento liminar*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> MACIEL, Vanessa Policarpo, DE BITENCOURT, Vanessa Colares, WAGNER, Flávia, & DA ROCHA, Luciano Daudt (2023). *Epistemologias do Sul: possibilidade epistemológica para a educação brasileira*. *Contribuciones a las Ciencias Sociales*, 16(7), 7799–7811.

regions of resistance, whose limits go beyond the physical territory to include epistemological, pedagogical and socio-cultural disputes. By articulating field education and local knowledge and with a critique to the coloniality of knowledge, this study considers a region not only as a geographical delimitation, but as a field of tensions and historical possibilities, constituted by social practices and popular struggles that ascribe new meanings to it.

This article is structured with the introduction, followed by the section called Coloniality of knowledge: peasants' resistance. Next, we address the following theme: From rural education to field education: a pedagogical change. The next section is called Liberating pedagogy and decoloniality, and finally, we present the final considerations of this text.

## **Coloniality of knowledge: peasants' resistance**

To break colonial power structures, it is necessary to decolonize social practices and ways of producing knowledge<sup>5</sup>. The modern colonial capitalist thought builds up a historical view where knowledge is seen as a scientific and universal objective, thus creating hierarchies in more or less advanced societies. Therefore, "the search for alternatives to the deeply excluding and unequal conformation of the modern world requires an effort to deconstruct the universal and natural character of a capitalist-liberal society"<sup>6</sup>.

The Latin American social thought has developed as a critical response to the dominance of the Eurocentric and colonial thought, which has shaped, so far, the interpretations and knowledge about Latin America. This type of knowledge is based on separations and classifications that sustain a view of modernity as a universal and desirable model, thus ignoring the cultural and historical particularities of diverse societies<sup>7</sup>. However, academic and educational discussions about Latin America have questioned the idea of unilateral knowledge and proposed multiculturalism as a way to build up

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<sup>5</sup> QUIJANO, Aníbal. Ensayos en torno a la colonialidad del poder. 1.ed. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Del Signo, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> LANDER, Edgardo. Ciências sociais: saberes coloniais e eurocêtricos. In: LANDER, Edgardo (org.). A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais: perspectivas latinoamericanas. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2005. p. 8-23. Retrieved from: [http://professor.ufop.br/sites/default/files/tatiana/files/a\\_colonialidade\\_do\\_saber\\_landier.pdf](http://professor.ufop.br/sites/default/files/tatiana/files/a_colonialidade_do_saber_landier.pdf). Accessed on: Sep15, 2023. p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> LANDER, Edgardo. Ciências sociais: saberes coloniais e eurocêtricos. In: LANDER, Edgardo (org.). A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais: perspectivas latinoamericanas. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2005. p. 8-23. Retrieved from: [http://professor.ufop.br/sites/default/files/tatiana/files/a\\_colonialidade\\_do\\_saber\\_landier.pdf](http://professor.ufop.br/sites/default/files/tatiana/files/a_colonialidade_do_saber_landier.pdf). Accessed on: Sep, 15 2023.

knowledge. The heterogeneity of ways of thinking has been often addressed by authors from the Global South.

The colonial power structure was responsible for producing social discrimination that, over time, started to be classified as “racial”, “ethnic”, “anthropological” and “national”, depending on the historical contexts, agents involved and populations affected<sup>8</sup>. This kind of discrimination contributed to the consolidation of an imaginary of superiority of the dominant party on those subordinated, thus supporting different kinds of exploitation. The enrichment of colonizing countries, based on the exploration of natural resources and the use of enslaved workforce in the colonized countries, resulted in a colonial heritage marked by persisting social problems, mainly in South America and Africa.

Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the main hegemonic centers of power established ways of producing knowledge aiming at supporting capitalism cognitive demands, which started to be considered as “rationality”<sup>9</sup>. This type of knowledge production, based on the Eurocentric perspective of those in power, was naturalized over time and also accepted by colonized peoples, thus consolidating the hegemonic power view as universal. In such a limited view of knowledge construction perspective, the mastering of knowledge is ascribed exclusively to the European people, which, in turn, consolidates the power of subjecting others and imposing their culture on them. Eurocentrism represents the coloniality of power, imposing a view of subordination to other cultures. From the epistemological standpoint, European knowledge and narratives were treated as global projects<sup>10</sup>. This concept promoted the idea that Europe represents the most advanced stage of human, economic and cultural development, thus establishing a model that other societies in the world should desire to reach.

Even after the end of colonialism in American countries, the coloniality of power relations still exist since alongside this invention, the axis of the coloniality/modernity was consolidated to classify peoples of the world as inferior or superior, according to their ethnic group, race, culture and history.

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<sup>8</sup> QUIJANO, Aníbal. Ensayos en torno a la colonialidade del poder. 1.ed. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Del Signo, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> QUIJANO, Aníbal. Ensayos en torno a la colonialidade del poder. 1.ed. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Del Signo, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> MIGNOLO, Walter. Histórias locais/projetos globais: colonialidade, saberes subalternos e pensamento liminar. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2003.

Several scholars from the Global South have been working on the change of perspective and terms of dialogue in knowledge construction, by reflecting in a critical way on the imaginary imposed by modernity and have shown particular and local histories that are not in accordance with the dichotomic knowledge produced so far. Such rupture consists in changing the critique of the imaginary of the modern global system from its interior to a critique in the perspective of coloniality, from the outside of the modern global system<sup>11</sup>.

Therefore, coloniality subjugates great part of the knowledge production in Latin America and there is strong influence including in cultural issues such as food production and consumption traditions. In such context, food coloniality refers to the perpetuation of colonial power practices and structures that influence current food systems. This is observed in the imposition of eating habits, food production and distribution and the marginalization of local food knowledge and cultures. The colonial agrifood chain explores nature and keeps unequal power relations, thus resulting in the destruction of traditional food cultures and the imposition of food products and practices from dominating countries<sup>12</sup>. Such dynamics contribute to the people's loss of food and nutritional sovereignty, mainly those who live in the fields. Thinking food decoloniality requires approaching knowledge that challenges these patterns, thus strengthening the field life and people's food sovereignty.

Food coloniality provokes issues related to food production methods, which do not allow food to reach everyone's tables, thus producing a kind of erasure of Indigenous' and Black individuals' food culture issue. The Brazilian food culture was not built harmonically by the mixture of three influences, in fact 'this is a history of invisibility and destruction of the food culture of Indigenous and Black peoples' "<sup>13</sup>.

Traditional food was mostly substituted throughout history by the ultra-processed food industry since this food started to be seen as the mark of the Western eating habits, the one that makes female workers' lives easier since they do not have to be so involved in the preparation of food. Therefore,

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<sup>11</sup> MIGNOLO, Walter. *Histórias locais/projetos globais: colonialidade, saberes subalternos e pensamento liminar*. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> AZEVEDO, Elaine de. *Colonialidade alimentar*. In: CAMPELLO, Tereza; BORTOLETTO, Ana Paula (org.). *Da fome à fome: diálogos com Josué de Castro*. São Paulo: Elefante, 2022. p. 309-315.

<sup>13</sup> AZEVEDO, Elaine de. *Colonialidade alimentar*. In: CAMPELLO, Tereza; BORTOLETTO, Ana Paula (org.). *Da fome à fome: diálogos com Josué de Castro*. São Paulo: Elefante, 2022. p. 309-315. p. 312.

the reduction in *in natura* food consumption and the increased intake of ultra-processed food created a new issue regarding the maintenance of the Brazilian food security, that is, lack of nutritional quality results in increased obesity and the occurrence of non-communicable chronic diseases.

One of the global problems associated with coloniality is, therefore, food insecurity resulting from the predominant ways of producing and consuming food. The global crisis of access to safe food in the necessary amounts to keep the health of individuals around the world, which predominates mostly in African and Latin American countries shows much lower effect on the food security in Europe and North America. However, it still raises some questions about how these global problems reach all countries even if in an unequal way.

Famine is a social problem since by reaching a large proportion of human groups, it makes whole societies ill. Contrary to the Malthusian debate that famine is a catastrophe caused by demographic explosion and lack of food for all, it is known that global food production is sufficient to provide suitable diet to all people. The problem resides in not having money to purchase such food<sup>14</sup>.

Although food security continued to worsen in Latin America and the Caribbean, the deterioration has decreased after a relatively sharp increase in 2020. In the following year, 40.6% of the population suffered moderate or severe food insecurity, a 1.1% increase since 2020, which is withing error margins. Severe food insecurity increased by 1.4 percentage points, reaching 14.2%, which represents an increase of about 10 million people in one year and almost 30 million when compared to 2019<sup>15</sup> (FAO; FIDA; UNICEF; PAM; WHO, 2022).

Famine distribution in the world presents evident historical roots, being mostly concentrated in the regions that were subject to colonial domination. To map global famine, one must identify areas that were colonies, except for the United States, which results in a representative number of around 90% accuracy<sup>16</sup>. Among the characteristics of colonial agriculture, monoculture with the purpose of catering for the needs of colonizing countries appears as one of the most relevant. This system aimed to enrich powerful countries to

<sup>14</sup> ABRAMOVAY, Ricardo. O que é fome? São Paulo: Abril Cultural: Brasiliense, 1985.

<sup>15</sup> FAO; FIDA; UNICEF; PAM; WHO. The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2021: transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all. Roma: FAO, 2021. E-book. Retrieved from: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb4474en>. Accessed on: Apr 19, 2022. Tradução nossa.

<sup>16</sup> ABRAMOVAY, Ricardo. O que é fome? São Paulo: Abril Cultural: Brasiliense, 1985.

the detriment of their colonies, which perpetuated impoverishment of the latter and contributed to the persistence of global famine. Some problems that might be highlighted as aggravating circumstances for the famine in colonized countries are the underuse of lands, monoculture in large properties, food as commodity, waste and destination of agricultural production to the production of animal food to support the bounty of individuals in the Global North<sup>17</sup>.

The Green Revolution started before the World War II in the United States was based on the idea that famine and poverty predominated in countries with a technologically underdeveloped agriculture. With the intent of fighting famine, that revolution aimed to boost progress in those nations. However, although the agricultural production in those countries really increased, famine never decreased. This is due to the fact that seeds modified in laboratories used in the new agriculture require a series of technological resources, such as agricultural machinery, fertilizers and pesticides – which resulted in economic dependence. This technological package, which is inaccessible to small farmers, strengthens the power of large farmers, thus promoting land ownership concentration<sup>18</sup>.

The great Brazilian problem related to the production of food resides in the underuse of land: “[...] a lot of land without people and a lot of people without land. This means, abandoned land and desired land”. Therefore, the agrarian reform is a necessity to reduce poverty. Most of the Brazilian food is produced in small family farms<sup>19</sup>.

Colonial agricultural systems based on monoculture that aggravate food insecurity in this region of the world started to be questioned by growing movements of Latin American Indigenous peoples and peasants’ movements. In Brazil, the appearance of the Landless Movement (MST, acronym for Movimento dos Sem Terra) can be considered one of the most important processes of subjectivation in Latin America<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> ABRAMOVAY, Ricardo. O que é fome? São Paulo: Abril Cultural: Brasiliense, 1985.

<sup>18</sup> ABRAMOVAY, Ricardo. O que é fome? São Paulo: Abril Cultural: Brasiliense, 1985.

<sup>19</sup> ABRAMOVAY, Ricardo. O que é fome? São Paulo: Abril Cultural: Brasiliense, 1985. p. 64.

<sup>20</sup> QUIJANO, Aníbal. El labirinto de América Latina: Hay otras salidas? Revista Venezolana de Economía y Ciencias Sociales, Caracas, v. 10, n. 1, p. 75-97, abr. 2004. Retrieved from: <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/177/17710105.pdf>. Accessed on: Jun 09, 2022.

It is possible to identify an intrinsic relationship in the social fight for agrarian reform and liberating pedagogical practices that emerged inside the Rural Landless Workers' Movement<sup>21;22</sup>.

The fight for land in Brazil, exemplified by the Rural Landless Workers' Movement (MST), is not only a resistance movement, but also a space of knowledge production and the education of critical subjects. This movement emerging pedagogy values educational practices that integrate the concrete experiences of field individuals, thus promoting liberating education that is deeply rooted in the peasants' community social and cultural realities. "While seeking to regain their right to work and dignity, these subjects and their struggles teach us something else about social transformation processes and the educational practices linked to them"<sup>23</sup>. The main principle of such pedagogical practices is social transformation by promoting the right to land and the right to education as inseparable elements in the social justice fight.

The pedagogical dimension of peasants' social movements goes beyond the classroom, becoming a continuous education process that is developed in the daily routines of their fights and occupations. The collective experience of organization and resistance enables the construction of knowledge that breaks colonial and capitalist logics, thus promoting the resignification of relationships between people, land and knowledge. Such a critical approach strengthens the subjects involved and empowers them to act as protagonists in the transformation of their own life conditions and the overcoming of coloniality power<sup>24</sup>.

In this context, it is relevant to observe the identity formation of the landless subject as a process that is deeply rooted in collectivity and social

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<sup>21</sup> CALDART, Roseli Salete. A pedagogia da luta pela terra: o movimento social como princípio educativo. In: REUNIÃO ANUAL DA ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DE PÓS GRADUAÇÃO E PESQUISA EM EDUCAÇÃO, 23., 2000, Caxambu. Anais eletrônicos [...]. Rio de Janeiro: ANPED, 2000. Retrieved from: <http://23reuniao.anped.org.br/textos/te3.PDF>. Accessed on: Nov 8, 2024.

<sup>22</sup> POLICARPO, Thaíse Arnold. Permanências e rupturas entre a educação rural e a educação do campo no estado de Santa Catarina (1990-2023). 2023. 188 p. Thesis (Socioeconomic Development Doctorate Program), Universidade do Extremo Sul Catarinense, Criciúma, 2023.

<sup>23</sup> CALDART, Roseli Salete. A pedagogia da luta pela terra: o movimento social como princípio educativo. In: REUNIÃO ANUAL DA ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO E PESQUISA EM EDUCAÇÃO, 23., 2000, Caxambu. Anais eletrônicos [...]. Rio de Janeiro: ANPED, 2000. Retrieved from: <http://23reuniao.anped.org.br/textos/te3.PDF>. Accessed on: Nov 8, 2024. p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> CALDART, Roseli Salete. A pedagogia da luta pela terra: o movimento social como princípio educativo. In: REUNIÃO ANUAL DA ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO E PESQUISA EM EDUCAÇÃO, 23., 2000, Caxambu. Anais eletrônicos [...]. Rio de Janeiro: ANPED, 2000. Retrieved from: <http://23reuniao.anped.org.br/textos/te3.PDF>. Accessed on: Nov 8, 2024.

fight in relationship with land. The landless' subject identity character is not static or naturalized, but rather a social and historical construction that emerges from contradictions and challenges imposed by agrarian exclusion and fight for rights. It is linked to the experience of the social movement, where collective practices such as occupations, marches and community actions play a central pedagogical role. Such experiences allow the subjects to recognize themselves as part of a greater collective, with common objectives and shared values, breaking the isolation imposed by poverty and marginalization conditions. Therefore, the landless identity goes beyond a simple claim for the right to the land; it exists as a political position to face structural inequalities and fight for social justice. This process is deeply instructive, to the extent to which the landless subject learns to interpret their reality and give new meanings to their relationship with the world from the fight context.

Landless subjects develop their education, humanization and development as social subjects by means of the movement they take part in. In the current context, they are frequently recognized as people's fighters, and their collective action contributes to the construction of their own identity, even if it is not fully expressed as individual awareness and practice in all members of the MST<sup>25</sup>. By connecting pedagogical practices to the agrarian reform objectives, MST proposes the type of field education that subverts traditional education paradigms. This education proposal challenges the historical invisibility of peasant populations and affirms the core position of land as the structuring element of a decolonial education. Therefore, not only does the MST fight social exclusion, but it also promotes epistemological sovereignty that values local knowledge and proposes alternatives to the hegemonic development model. Such pedagogy of fighting for land is, therefore, a powerful response to coloniality, by creating conditions so that the field becomes a space of resistance and creation of new horizons of social and food justice.

## **From rural education to field education: a pedagogical change**

The field education trajectory in Brazil reveals a history of resistance and fight for recognition of education practices that consider field particularities,

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<sup>25</sup> CALDART, Roseli Saete. A pedagogia da luta pela terra: o movimento social como princípio educativo. In: REUNIÃO ANUAL DA ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO E PESQUISA EM EDUCAÇÃO, 23., 2000, Caxambu. Anais eletrônicos [...]. Rio de Janeiro: ANPED, 2000. Retrieved from: <http://23reuniao.anped.org.br/textos/te3.PDF>. Accessed on: Nov 8, 2024.

in connection to social movements that demand policies of education and development that not only integrate but also value the peasants' lives.

The field education conception, which is still recent, seeks a rupture with the traditional and homogeneous view that for a long time considered rural education as an extension of urban education<sup>26</sup>. This belief ignored local realities and needs of the field peoples, where life is strongly linked to the land, the agricultural work, and the community culture.

The discussion proposed by this study starts from the Brazilian post-redemocratization context, mainly from the 1990s onwards, the period when the struggles of the social movements of the field intensified claiming an education model that respected the territorial and cultural diversity of rural populations. In this historical mark, the distinction between rural and field education appears, as well as pedagogical proposals linked to Freire's pedagogy, agroecology and the South epistemologies. Although the theme of field education is broad, our article focuses on the recent process, understanding it as part of contemporary disputes for food sovereignty, social justice and knowledge decolonization.

Global capitalism and the market economy motivated the creation of a global economy that goes beyond the boundaries of national states<sup>27</sup>, where local economies are frequently subject to the global market interests, that is, the interdependence between different regions of the world, deepen global social and economic inequalities<sup>28</sup>. With the industrialization and urbanization of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was an expansion of schools, promoted by the need to minimally instruct a population for the work in factories and cities. However, rural education continued without considering the particularities of rural populations and based on elitist political and economic interests.

Rural education had a well-defined objective of preventing rural/urban migration, and from its implementation process, the pedagogical ruralism appeared<sup>29</sup>. For the pedagogical ruralism movement, "[...] the essential interest

<sup>26</sup> MILETTO, Milene Ferreira. Agroecologia e a questão da segurança alimentar: contribuições para o ensino de Ciências a partir de uma ilha interdisciplinar de racionalidade em contexto de escola do campo. 2022. 207f. Thesis (Education in Sciences Doctorate Program) – Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2022.

<sup>27</sup> BRAUDEL, Fernand. A dinâmica do capitalismo. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1987.

<sup>28</sup> WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel et al. A reestruturação capitalista e o sistema mundial. Perspectivas: revista de Ciências Sociais, São Paulo, v. 20/21, p. 249-267, 1997. Retrieved from: <https://periodicos.fclar.unesp.br/perspectivas/article/view/2069>. Accessed on: Nov 6, 2024.

<sup>29</sup> POLICARPO, Thaíse Arnold. Permanências e rupturas entre a educação rural e a educação do campo no estado de Santa Catarina (1990-2023). 2023. 188 p. Thesis (Socioeconomic Development Doctorate

was the maintenance of part of the rural population, to guarantee workforce, by convincing students to remain in the field”<sup>30</sup>. Therefore, the movement ended up developing a social and economic control project characteristic of the Modern Colonial World System<sup>31</sup>, which, as described by those authors, is structured around a global work division and power and knowledge hierarchies.

This process aims at the development of the agrarian sector and also the strengthening of an agrarian economy subordinated to central interests such as raw material exports and the maintenance of a cheap workforce that place Brazil in the periphery of the Modern Colonial World System. Thus, rural education was shaped to sustain the global productive system, preventing peasants from moving to urban centers and potentially destabilizing the workforce balance between the periphery and the center, as demanded by the modern colonial logic.

The National Rural Education Campaign (CNER, acronym for Campanha Nacional de Educação Rural) is a relevant mark in the Brazilian rural education history, and that author explains that “the work developed by the Campaign was established from a mixture between the cultural values found in the field and on the very modernizing thought of the policy”<sup>32</sup>.

Negative stereotypes built around the field population were transformed into an instrument of domination, that is, they sought to project on the peasants the desire of getting free from their “cultural delay”, then, with this purpose, the process of modifying the cultural characteristics of the field population started<sup>33</sup>.

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Program), Universidade do Extremo Sul Catarinense, Criciúma, 2023.

<sup>30</sup> MILETTO, Milene Ferreira. Agroecologia e a questão da segurança alimentar: contribuições para o ensino de Ciências a partir de uma ilha interdisciplinar de racionalidade em contexto de escola do campo. 2022. 207f. Thesis (Education in Sciences Doctorate Program) – Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2022. p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> QUIJANO, Aníbal; WALLERSTEIN, Immanuel. La americanidad como concepto o América em el mundo moderno-colonial. In: QUIJANO, Aníbal. Ensayos en torno a la colonialidad e del poder. 1.ed. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Del Signo, 2019. p. 135-150.

<sup>32</sup> POLICARPO, Thaíse Arnold. Permanências e rupturas entre a educação rural e a educação do campo no estado de Santa Catarina (1990-2023). 2023. 188 p. Thesis (Socioeconomic Development Doctorate Program), Universidade do Extremo Sul Catarinense, Criciúma, 2023.

<sup>33</sup> POLICARPO, Thaíse Arnold. Permanências e rupturas entre a educação rural e a educação do campo no estado de Santa Catarina (1990-2023). 2023. 188 p. Thesis (Socioeconomic Development Doctorate Program), Universidade do Extremo Sul Catarinense, Criciúma, 2023. p. 77.

The country's redemocratization exposed the need for a specific type of education for the field. The Federal Constitution of 1988 recognized the right to education for all, which included peasant populations. From the 1990s onwards, social movements, mainly those linked to the Agrarian Reform (MST) started to claim an education model that respected the peasants' identity and extinguished the stereotypes related to those peoples<sup>34</sup>, this movement can be highlighted as a "[...] transition point between the rural education and the field education paradigm"<sup>35</sup>.

Over decades, the Brazilian field education moved from an education model seen as an extension of the urban educational program to a critical education model, linked to the local culture, agricultural work and the specific needs of field populations. The organization and action of social movements, such as MST, was fundamental to consolidate a pedagogical model aiming at the appreciation of local knowledge, preservation of cultural identity and the overcome of stereotype that considered the peasants in a culturally inferior position. Therefore, field education emerges as a resistance and emancipation practice that challenges colonial imposition of knowledge and offers a space for the construction of fairer and more inclusive pedagogical, cultural and social alternatives for peasant communities.

In this resignification process, it is possible to understand that the region, in the context of field education should not be understood only as a geographical limitation, but rather as a social, historical and political construction. Educational practices linked to the fights for the land and appreciation of local knowledge constitute a form of insurgent regionalization, which challenges cultural and epistemic homogenization imposed by the colonial logic. Field schools emerge as spaces of symbolic and territorial disputes, where disputes are observed between different society, development and knowledge projects.

The transition of the rural education to the field education paradigm represents the overcoming of an oppressive model, which imposed the urban and homogeneous pedagogy on the field life reality, to reach a model that prioritizes field demands and the protagonism of field dwellers. Such

<sup>34</sup> POLICARPO, Thaíse Arnold. *Permanências e rupturas entre a educação rural e a educação do campo no estado de Santa Catarina (1990-2023)*. 2023. 188 p. Thesis (Socioeconomic Development Doctorate Program) - Universidade do Extremo Sul Catarinense, Criciúma, 2023.

<sup>35</sup> MILETTO, Milene Ferreira. *Agroecologia e a questão da segurança alimentar: contribuições para o ensino de Ciências a partir de uma ilha interdisciplinar de racionalidade em contexto de escola do campo*. 2022. 207f. Thesis (Education in Sciences Doctorate Program) - Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2022. p. 26.

movement seeks to free the education process from the impositions of an urban logic that according to Paulo Freire, results in “bank education” — where knowledge is deposited unilaterally<sup>36</sup>.

The field education theoretical base was conceived by Paulo Freire. Therefore, there is a movement that defends education that promotes the liberation of peasants from the colonial and prejudiced narratives, thus promoting critical and transforming education, one that values the field culture, history and social role. Thus, by associating field education pedagogical practices with Freire’s theories, an education environment is sought where peasants are active subjects in the construction of a type of knowledge that results from their fights and expresses their identities, thus promoting autonomy and social justice. The inter-relation between field education and social movements has contributed to the strengthening of pedagogical practices that challenge and resist hegemonic structures, by legitimating the field populations’ knowledge and voices and promoting alternatives to the dominant model of knowledge and development historically imposed<sup>37</sup>.

By breaking the colonial and homogeneous logic of rural education, field education reinforces the protagonism of field populations, valuing their cultures, identities, and local knowledge. This critical and transforming pedagogical model goes beyond the impositions of the capitalist system and Eurocentric knowledge, thus consolidating resistance and social justice practice. From Paulo Freire’s theoretical contributions and the actions of social movements, such as the MST, field education advances as a space of collective construction, where education is more than a right, it is indeed an instrument of fight for autonomy, equality and overcome of historical inequalities that marked the Brazilian field.

## **Liberating pedagogy and decoloniality**

Pedagogy inspired by Paulo Freire appeared as a transforming proposal aligned with the principles of decoloniality, seeking to break the oppressive structures of power and knowledge. In addition to proposing reflections upon the so-called bank education, in which teachers deposit their knowledge and students are passive receivers, that is, one teaches the other learns. Freire

<sup>36</sup> FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia do oprimido*. 18. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1988.

<sup>37</sup> POLICARPO, Thaíse Arnold. *Permanências e rupturas entre a educação rural e a educação do campo no estado de Santa Catarina (1990-2023)*. 2023. 188 p. Thesis (Socioeconomic Development Doctoral Program), Universidade do Extremo Sul Catarinense, Criciúma, 2023.

presents proposals for an inquiring education, of dialogue, knowledge exchange, and the collective construction of knowledge. From the pedagogical inquiry, critical awareness is built. The objective of a liberating education model is to humanize people, while the oppression generated by coloniality is dehumanizing<sup>38</sup>. Social practices of peasants' movements educate and humanize individuals, recognize their collective memory, their histories, and strengthen human rooting processes<sup>39</sup>.

Insurgent pedagogies that emerge in the field territories are not limited to overcoming Eurocentric curricula or to the inclusion of local content: they claim schools as spaces of permanence, production of owned knowledge and guarantees of the right to education. However, this dispute is far from being only conceptual. The concrete reality has demonstrated that, even in the presence of historical fights for recognition, field schools are systematically closed in the country, mainly in more vulnerable regions. In the state of Sergipe, for example, 404 field schools were closed between 2007 and 2015<sup>40</sup>.

Although some education processes that occur inside the movement cannot be developed inside schools, the MST includes schools as part of the pedagogical movement. The fight for schools started with the awareness that the movement was a movement of the families, the settlers. "the school that fits in the movement pedagogy is a school that is grander than itself"<sup>41</sup>.

In field schools, a liberating praxis approach represents a means for the field communities to reestablish their identities and empower their cultural traditions and lifestyles. Freire's pedagogy, therefore, is not only a pedagogical methodology, but rather a political and ethical posture that values the knowledge of oppressed subjects and seeks to promote students' emancipation and critical awareness. It takes indignation in the face of social

<sup>38</sup> FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia do oprimido*. 18. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1988.

<sup>39</sup> CALDART, Roseli Salete. A pedagogia da luta pela terra: o movimento social como princípio educativo. In: REUNIÃO ANUAL DA ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO E PESQUISA EM EDUCAÇÃO, 23., 2000, Caxambu. *Anais eletrônicos [...]*. Rio de Janeiro: ANPED, 2000. Retrieved from: <http://23reuniao.anped.org.br/textos/te3.PDF>. Accessed on: Nov 8, 2024. p. 19.

<sup>40</sup> CORREIA, Elis Santos. O fechamento das escolas do campo em Sergipe: um olhar sobre os dados do Censo Escolar (2007–2016). 2018. 211 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Educação), Universidade Federal de Sergipe, São Cristóvão, 2018. Retrieved from: [https://sucupira-legado.capes.gov.br/sucupira/public/consultas/coleta/trabalhoConclusao/viewTrabalhoConclusao.jsf?popup=true&id\\_trabalho=6312076](https://sucupira-legado.capes.gov.br/sucupira/public/consultas/coleta/trabalhoConclusao/viewTrabalhoConclusao.jsf?popup=true&id_trabalho=6312076). Accessed on: Aug 1, 2025.

<sup>41</sup> CALDART, Roseli Salete. A pedagogia da luta pela terra: o movimento social como princípio educativo. In: REUNIÃO ANUAL DA ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO E PESQUISA EM EDUCAÇÃO, 23., 2000, Caxambu. *Anais eletrônicos [...]*. Rio de Janeiro: ANPED, 2000. Retrieved from: <http://23reuniao.anped.org.br/textos/te3.PDF>. Accessed on: Nov 8, 2024. p. 19.

injustices to foster changes<sup>42</sup>. Because they are based on this indignation principle, field social movements act pedagogically and politically in favor of social transformation.

The liberating pedagogy is also decolonial for showing resistance options to the imposition of Eurocentric knowledge that disregards local particularities. At the same time, it challenges the dominant model that sees the field only as a provider of workforce and resources for the urban market. In reality, field schools seek to build a curriculum that expresses their experiences, knowledge and local challenges, thus valuing the traditional and community knowledge.

Implementing decolonial education in field schools requires overcoming historical and structural obstacles. First, there is the challenge of deconstructing “bank education” as described by Freire, in which knowledge is transmitted unilaterally, disregarding local knowledge<sup>43</sup>. Such deconstruction requires educators that are engaged in and qualified to apply participative methods that recognize students’ protagonism and the richness of community knowledge.

Field education originated in the discussions that permeate the movement pedagogy is challenged to think about the construction of collectivity in field communities. The appreciation of multicultural and decolonial education in field schools contributes to the construction of inquiring societies. Landless individuals, for example, “are the subjects of a movement that questions the way of being of the current capitalist society and the culture that it reproduces and consolidates”<sup>44</sup>. In fact, strengthening field education requires interaction between schools, local communities and social movements.

An essential aspect of decolonial field schools is the appreciation of agricultural and food traditional practices, which contribute to the rural communities’ food sovereignty. By incentivizing local production of food and respect to biodiversity, those schools promote an alternative to the monoculture model and the intensive use of pesticides, which result in food insecurity and environmental degradation.

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<sup>42</sup> FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia do oprimido*. 18. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1988.

<sup>43</sup> FREIRE, Paulo. *Pedagogia do oprimido*. 18. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1988.

<sup>44</sup> CALDART, Roseli Saete. A pedagogia da luta pela terra: o movimento social como princípio educativo. In: REUNIÃO ANUAL DA ASSOCIAÇÃO NACIONAL DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO E PESQUISA EM EDUCAÇÃO, 23., 2000, Caxambu. *Anais eletrônicos [...]*. Rio de Janeiro: ANPED, 2000. Retrieved from: <http://23reuniao.anped.org.br/textos/te3.PDF>. Accessed on: Nov 8, 2024. p. 7, author’s emphasis.

By recognizing and legitimizing traditional agricultural practices, field schools also strengthen the resistance against food coloniality, which erases and destroys local food cultures to favor global standards<sup>45</sup>. Therefore, decolonial food education, by appreciating field individuals' knowledge, contributes to the construction of sustainable and balanced relations of food production and consumption.

This decolonial perspective allows field schools to play a transforming role where learning is not limited to traditional academic contents, but rather involves the education of individuals with an identity linked to the territory, committed to social justice and respect to cultural and environmental diversities.

Therefore, when discussing the challenges and perspectives of liberating and decolonial education in field schools, the importance of these spaces is reinforced for the construction of options to the traditional bank education model. By incorporating local food knowledge and challenging the imposition of global food standards, these pedagogical practices contribute to knowledge decoloniality, thus resisting the hegemonic logic and fostering the kind of education that legitimates local knowledge. This approach is connected to the broader movement of decoloniality in Latin America, where social movements such as MST, fight for education that respects the peasants' cultural identity and promotes their autonomy in relation to colonial and capitalist development models historically imposed. Thus, field schools appear as spaces of resistance and emancipation, enabling communities to respond critically to contemporary challenges such as food insecurity and inequality.

## Final Words

Discussing the coloniality of knowledge and proposing decolonial knowledge perspectives, mainly in the context of field education practices, is extremely relevant from the social standpoint. This is especially relevant when addressing food and nutrition security of individuals in the Global South. The ways of producing food and exploring the land have become more and more unsustainable, and in this context, field schools developing curricula that recognize peasants' food cultural traditions represent spaces of resistance to knowledge and power coloniality. Recognizing local and

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<sup>45</sup> AZEVEDO, Elaine de. Colonialidade alimentar. In: CAMPELLO, Tereza; BORTOLETTO, Ana Paula (org.). *Da fome à fome: diálogos com Josué de Castro*. São Paulo: Elefante, 2022. p. 309-315.

traditional knowledge strengthens individuals' links to the field and their cultural, social and political identities.

The liberation pedagogy, when criticizing bank education and inquiring traditional education and proposing the humanization of learners, appears as one of the decolonial options of knowledge construction. Field schools, mainly in contexts of social moments challenge the ways of oppression used by traditional education based on modern colonial principles; however, these are still obstacles to be overcome.

Our reading led us to conclude that Brazilian field schools contribute to the resistance to knowledge coloniality and to the appreciation of local knowledge when facing the contemporary reality of food insecurity, environmental degradation, and global social inequalities. They promote liberating and transforming education which proposes a rupture with the hegemonic ways of land exploitation, mainly for field communities, but the results of such process might benefit society as a whole. This might be achieved with the promotion of a healthier and environmentally viable relationship between food production and consumption.

To achieve such goal, efficient public policies of agrarian reform are necessary to support field education and family farming. In the education scenario, decolonial pedagogical practices require the continuous education of educators committed to participative methodologies and appreciation of traditional knowledge.

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