

Drawing resistance: counter-hegemony and aesthetic expressions of the agro-ecological movement in Brazil

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Abstract

This theoretical and empirical article contributes to Organizational Studies by debating social movements, especially the agroecological movement, which has been established as a resistance to the hegemony of agribusiness in Brazil. In addition, the study provides a non-conventional theoretical and empirical “bridge” in this field, including studies in aesthetics and the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse developed by Laclau and Mouffe. In this context, considering the concepts of aesthetics and a Neo-Gramscian discourse analysis on hegemony and antagonism, the aim of this article is to investigate how the aesthetic expressions influence the Brazilian agroecological movement in building a counter-hegemony in the country’s agriculture practices. The research adopts a qualitative methodological approach from the analysis of drawings produced by farmers in the III National Meeting of Agroecology (III ENA), in graphic facilitation panels. It is possible to observe that the aesthetics in the panels of the III ENA allowed farmers to re-design their worldviews, to disclose their concerns, realities and local agricultural alternatives. The panels helped to provide practical guidance, design proposals and build legitimacy for the movement, elements that became central to the counter-hegemonic values and to build the common enemy. The complexity expressed in the relationships built in the panels also stressed that aesthetics can bring an effective, affordable and sensitive perspective in the construction of worldviews of subaltern groups. Thus, the Brazilian agroecological movement, also built through the aesthetic perspective, is revealed as an important resistance to the hegemony of agribusiness and the capitalist model.

Keywords: Agroecological Movement. Aesthetics. Discourse. Identity. Resistance.

Desenhando a resistência: estética e contra-hegemonia no movimento agroecológico no Brasil

Resumo

No presente artigo teórico-empírico, busca-se contribuir para os Estudos Organizacionais trazendo para o debate os movimentos sociais, em especial o movimento agroecológico, que tem se constituído como meio de resistência à hegemonia do agronegócio no Brasil. O estudo estabelece também uma “ponte” teórico-empírica não convencional, neste campo disciplinar, entre estudos em estética e abordagem neogramsciana de discurso em Laclau e Mouffe. Desse modo, à luz dos conceitos de estética e da análise neogramsciana de discurso em hegemonia e antagonismo, investigou-se de que forma as expressões estéticas influenciam a construção da contra-hegemonia no movimento agroecológico brasileiro. A pesquisa adota uma metodologia com enfoque qualitativo na análise de desenhos produzidos por agricultores e agricultoras no III Encontro Nacional de Agroecologia (III ENA), denominados de Painéis de Facilitação Gráfica. Ao final, é possível observar que a estética dos painéis do III ENA permitiu aos agricultores e agricultoras a (re)construção de suas visões de mundo, a divulgação de suas inquietações, realidades e alternativas agrícolas locais, e, principalmente, a orientação de práticas, propostas e legitimação do movimento, que passaram a ser centrais aos valores contra-hegemônicos e na construção de um inimigo comum. A complexidade expressa nas relações construídas nos painéis também ressaltou que a estética pode trazer uma perspectiva efetiva, acessível e sensível na construção das visões de mundo de grupos subalternos. Dessa forma, o movimento agroecológico brasileiro, construído também na perspectiva estética, revela-se como importante ator na resistência à hegemonia do agronegócio e ao modelo capitalista

Palavras-chave: Movimento Agroecológico. Estética. Discurso. Identidade. Resistência.

Diseñando la resistencia: contrahegemonía y expresiones estéticas del movimiento agroecológico en Brasil

Resumen

En este trabajo teórico-empírico se intenta contribuir a los estudios organizacionales trayendo a debate los movimientos sociales, especialmente el movimiento agroecológico, que se ha constituido como medio de resistencia a la hegemonía de la agroindustria en Brasil. Además, el estudio establece un puente teórico-empírico no convencional entre los estudios de estética y el enfoque neogramsciano del discurso en Laclau y Mouffe. En este contexto, a la luz de los conceptos de la estética y del análisis neogramsciano de la hegemonía del discurso y el antagonismo, se investigó cómo las expresiones estéticas influyen en la construcción de la contrahegemonía en el movimiento brasileño agroecológico. La investigación adopta una metodología con enfoque cualitativo en el análisis de los diseños producidos por agricultores y agricultoras en el III Encuentro Nacional de Agroecología (III ENA), denominados Paneles de Facilitación Gráfica. Al final, llegamos a la conclusión de que la estética de los paneles del III ENA permitió a los agricultores y agricultoras la (re) construcción de su visión de mundo, la divulgación de sus preocupaciones, realidades y alternativas agrícolas locales y, especialmente, la orientación de prácticas, propuestas y legitimación del movimiento que se convirtieron en el centro de los valores contrahegemónicos y la construcción de un enemigo común. La complejidad expresada en las relaciones construidas en los paneles también resaltó que la estética puede aportar perspectivas eficaces, asequibles y sensibles en la construcción de visiones de mundo de los grupos subalternos. Por lo tanto, el movimiento agroecológico de Brasil, también construido en la perspectiva estética, se revela como una importante resistencia a la hegemonía de la agroindustria y al modelo capitalista.

Palabras clave: Movimiento Agroecológico. Estética. Discurso. Identidad. Resistencia.

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“A “philosopher”, an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring new modes of thought”. (GRAMSCI, 1982, p. 7)



INTRODUCTION

This study results from the authors' concern regarding the analysis on forms of resistance built by social movements against the current hegemony in Brazilian agriculture. The article focuses on the aesthetic expression as an element that is part of the agroecological movement, considering farmers as 'artists' when facing their realities, conflicts and contradictions of life. It is important, therefore, to understand organizational dimensions that encompass material and immaterial elements (such as emotions and feelings), aimed at explaining the actions of the subjects. These actions can be expressed through alternative instruments, different from those that have been traditionally used in our societies to build culture, knowledge and power.

The object of research in this article is the social movement of agroecology in Brazil. The movement emerged in the country in the 1980s, disseminating knowledge on alternative agricultural practices, as an opposition to agribusiness. It is a response to growing concern about environmental degradation and social exclusion of family farmers, as a consequence of modernization in agriculture (NORGAARD, 1984). According to this movement, agroecology as an agricultural practice has a cultivation method that focuses on the agroecosystem management, instead of on the use of external inputs. The focus on the agroecosystem management challenges the growing dependence on agricultural technologies introduced in the so-called “Green Revolution” (ROSSET, MACHIN SOSA, ROQUE JAIME et al., 2011; HOLT-GIMENEZ and ALTIERI, 2013). Thus, agroecology in Brazil can be considered a counter-hegemonic movement, offering resistance to the practices of agribusiness (which is hegemonic in the country's agriculture).

* Source: *A árvore da vida*, de Portinari – 1957. Acervo digital ©Projeto Portinari.

Against this backdrop, this article aims to investigate how aesthetic expressions, used as a methodology for mobilizing and producing knowledge, influence the Brazilian agroecological movement in building a counter-hegemony in the country's agriculture.

As the theoretical framework, this study adopts the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse and the theories focused on aesthetics and organizations. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) developed a Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse based on two key concepts: hegemony and antagonism. Hegemony acts as a social and political situation with a certain idea about what reality is. The hegemony is formed by contingent alliances of forces that cross the spheres of state and economy, and that rely on civil society as "cement" which allows the hegemony to settle (KLIMECHI and WILLMOTT, 2011). According to Misoczky, Flores and Böhm (2008, p. 182), hegemony "[...] reveals that it is impossible to have only one type of social organization ... and that the seeds of diversity of 'organizational worlds' are all around". The concept of antagonism is also fundamental to this theory of discourse, because the antagonisms that are present in power relations remain even when there is a supposed "stability" of the social order. That is, social movements use antagonisms (creation of a common enemy) as a way of opposing hegemonic discourse (LACLAU and MOUFFE, 2001).

The number of theoretical-empirical researches related to aesthetics and aiming to analysis organizations has grown in Brazil since 2000 (CSILLAG, 2003; LEAL, 2000; 2002; 2007; LEAL, WOOD and CSILLAG 2001; XAVIER and CARRIERI, 2014). Strati (1999) highlights aesthetics as a key element of organizational life, considering it as a form of human knowledge that encompasses aesthetic judgment to assess whether something is adequate or not, whether it is pleasant or not, or if it is indifferent or engaging.

The Italian author Gagliardi (1996) points out three perspectives that count on aesthetic experience in organizational analysis: a) sensitive knowledge, and in opposition to intellectual knowledge; b) indifferent form of expression of social action, with no explicit instrumental purpose; and c) form of communication (contrary to conversation or dialogue) that can express feelings that are not explicit or codified in the hitherto known bases. Gagliardi (1996) emphasizes the profound influence of the aesthetic dimension on the organization, as well as the scarcity of studies on this subject, which is a result of the prevalence of analytical methods considered accurate and measurable in Organizational Studies (see BURREL, 1992).

Therefore, this article seeks to contribute, both theoretically and empirically, to the field of organizational studies, establishing an unconventional theoretical-empirical "bridge" between aesthetics and the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse developed by Laclau and Mouffe (2001). It is necessary to reinforce that neither Gramsci or Laclau and Mouffe set out to deeply study aesthetics. However, the authors argue that agency, dynamism and power are integrated and that agency and structure are part of a specific historical process in the formation of hegemonic discourses. Thus, this type of discourse analysis presents elements that allow investigating aesthetics as a tool in building "common" knowledge, reflected in the identity of the social movement by a process of continuous competition of materiality and discursive structures.

Such a task is obviously risky because it is a contemporary, ongoing phenomenon. A risk that may be necessary when one considers the commitment of the social sciences to the construction of knowledge – which depends on the ability to interpret the present. In addition, it must be taken into consideration that understanding contemporary organizational phenomena demands approaches that are capable of escaping instrumental definitions (against the dominant positivist-functional trend) on organizations and, consequently, leaving behind models commonly used for organizational analysis. It is necessary, therefore, "(...) to build theories that authorize the 'new', theories that do not mutilate the 'new' changing it into incomparable maps of concepts marked by the dominant tradition (...) a journey in which one can leave the usual behind, without being sure of the destination" (MISOCZKY and AMANTINO-DE-ANDRADE, 2005, p. 230).

To organize the ideas and analyzes, this article was structured in six sections. This introduction is followed by a section discussing the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse and the agroecological movement. In the third section, possibilities of the aesthetic approach in understanding organizations, particularly social movements are examined. The fourth section presents the methodology adopted for this research, followed by a fifth section presenting, analyzes based on graphic facilitation panels produced by farmers of the agroecological movement. Finally, the last section presents the final considerations considering the objectives and main contributions of the theoretical-empirical research in order to advance Organizational Studies.

NEO-GRAMSCIAN THEORY OF DISCOURSE AND THE AGROECOLOGICAL MOVEMENT

As previously mentioned, in the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse, agency, dynamism and power are integrated, providing a continuous dynamism of different fields of struggle (OTTO and BÖHM, 2006; KLIMECHI and WILLMOTT, 2011). The field studied here – agriculture – is formed by networks of actors (nonprofit organizations, government, state agents, farmers' cooperatives, companies, social movements, and others), materiality and discursive structures that compete for their own interests. Within the scope of this field of struggle, the social movement of agroecology was investigated as resistance to the hegemony represented by the agribusiness.

The Neo-Gramscian theoretical lenses in Laclau and Mouffe (2001), with roots in the Marxist school of thought, consider the centrality of the struggles that the capitalist relations of production bring up for contemporary politics. Throughout the development of their theory, Laclau and Mouffe were inspired by and used the concepts of the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. There are many critiques regarding this appropriation of concepts and some scholars distinguish the ideas portrayed by Laclau and Mouffe from the viewpoints presented in Gramsci's work (ALCÁNTARA, 2016). Considered as post-Marxists – because their work provides new readings of classical Marxist tradition and raises questions on the appropriateness of these readings to contemporary society – Laclau and Mouffe show similarities with Gramsci's approach. First, both favor the moment of political articulation and understand social relations as connected to the dispute over hegemony. Second, both recognize that hegemony is not exercised over the whole society. Finally, both defend the creation of a new hegemony based on the alliance of subaltern groups (ALVES, 2010).

The main difference between the two approaches lies in the fact that for Gramsci, hegemony refers to the unity of the entire historical block ¹, whereas for Laclau and Mouffe such a situation is impossible. Gramsci considers it possible to establish socialism and a classless society in which party and political activity would disappear. As for Laclau and Mouffe, however, there is no possibility of a final reconciliation, since antagonism is constitutive of society and it represents an open and incomplete element (ALVES, 2010).

In a different position in comparison to economic Marxism, Laclau and Mouffe detach themselves from the assumption that the material basis necessarily defines the ideological superstructure (ANDRÉE, 2011). Laclau and Mouffe's discourse approach encourages studies focusing on "relations of force" (material, institutional and discursive) and their connections to the three levels of mutually constitutive political activity: the global order, civil society and the state (GILL, 1998).

In this way, it is crucial to understand the concept of hegemony, since it represents an important reference to the work of Gramsci (1971). Gramsci argues that the concept of hegemony offers basis to understand the socialist revolution in the world, as well as its failure. For the author, hegemony refers to a form of "consented power" that makes it possible to identify people and their political and social institutions, contrasting with coercive forms of domination. Thus, hegemony occurs when consent is reached, i.e., when power is secured through a kind of intellectual, moral and political leadership (or authority) (SPICER and BÖHM, 2007; LEVY, 2008).

This hegemony is incomplete, temporary and historically specific, which allows the emergence of resistances and oppositions (GRAMSCI, 1971; LACLAU and MOUFFE, 2001; MORTON, 2000). Mittelman (2000, p. 184) points out that: "Different historical contexts will produce different forms of hegemony with different sets of actors". Therefore, the concepts of discourse and power are closely related to the concept of resistance in Neo-Gramscian studies. Resistance emerges opposing universalistic and homogenizing projects (for example: consumerism, neoliberal globalization), with different forms of action (GILLS, 2000).

Thus, in a context of "apparently" consolidated hegemony, any dominant discourse will also necessarily remain incomplete in a dynamic collective process of hegemonic struggle, in which different actors continually articulate other different discourses whose function is to resist or sustain the dominant discourse in prevailing hegemony. That is, in the process of

¹ Special form of connection between structure and superstructure, or between class and parts of dominant class and other specific agents who will work in order to form the social conscience (DIAS, 2012).

hegemonic formation, there is also a process of consent and opposition, which shapes and is shaped by discursive articulations within civil society (LACLAU and MOUFFE, 2001).

Thus, as a challenge to hegemonic stability in Brazilian agriculture, different discourses are posed in a game of struggles in civil society in order to reinforce the need for a more ecologically based agriculture – as is the case of agroecology – in opposition to the hegemony of agribusiness (FONTOURA and NAVES, 2016). Therefore, the category “discourse” in the Neo-Gramscian perspective is intended to emphasize that all social configuration is significant and that the meaning of a given social event is not established beforehand, it is not inherent to the social event. The meaning only appears in a system of discursive relations (ALVES, 2010).

As already pointed out, according to the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse, civil society is the place where hegemony is consented, reproduced, supported, channeled and, at the same time, where counter-hegemonic and emancipatory forces can emerge (MORTON, 2000; LEVY and EGAN, 2003; GILL, 2003; SPICER and BÖHM, 2007; LEVY, 2008; LACLAU and MOUFFE, 2001). According to Gramsci (1971, p. 306), civil society represents “(...) the set of organizations commonly called ‘private’” (which includes business actors and trade unions, in contrast to Hegel’s concepts of civil society).

Although full stability is never achieved in hegemony, some specific alignment of forces and a period of small disorders can be observed, which are adjusted and incorporated, perhaps without any impact to the overall structure. It is precisely in the moments of discontinuity and change that gaps open up and generate a cascade effect of reconfiguration of the whole system (LEVY and EGAN, 2003). This happens when the legitimacy of the ruling class collapses because of a political failure, a context in which voices of the incipient demands of subordinate actors can emerge.

Moreover, in the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse of Laclau and Mouffe (2001), the constitution of an “enemy” is essential for the construction of the identity of a social movement – this is a precondition for the movement’s existence. This happens because, although the stabilization of the social order promoted by hegemony always implies a form of exclusion (MOUFFE 1999), this exclusion does not mean the eradication of antagonism or that those who do not subscribe to the hegemony have no place at all (MOUFFE, 2013). It is important to understand that self-identification is obtained when one delineates themselves through “another part”, “(...) what we are not, and from which we are superior” (OTTO and BÖHM, 2006, p. 10). Antagonistic relations are seen as “radicals”, but with the mutual recognition of legitimacy among ‘enemies’ (MOUFFE, 2013).

Subordinate voices have found space in the actions of social movements that “(...) represent organized social forces, get people together not as a numerical task force, but as a field of activities and social experimentation, and these activities are sources generating creativity and sociocultural innovations”(GOHN, 2011, p. 336).

This process can be observed in the agroecological movement, in which farmers, nonprofits, environmentalists and other actors jointly create networks of social articulation that establish political activities for groups that aim to resist hegemonic practices in Brazilian agriculture; In this case, agribusiness. These dynamics seek, by themselves, to develop “hegemonic relations” to resist hegemony (LEVY and EGAN, 2003).

Only in the 1990s (especially in the United States and in Latin American countries), was the term agroecology used to describe a movement to express a new way of looking at agriculture and its relations with society. Different social movements share the defense of an agricultural model focused on agroecology (WEZEL, BELLON, DORÉ et al., 2009). In Latin America agroecology expands as a peasant and indigenous resistance movement producing technological, cognitive and socio-political innovations and has been related to new political scenarios in Ecuador, Bolivia and Brazil (RUIZ-ROSADO, 2006).

In Brazil, agroecology is consolidated as a resistance movement to agribusiness hegemony, having been established in the country since the adoption of the practices of the Green Revolution (DELGADO, 2008, FONTOURA and NAVES, 2016). Agribusiness, as a hegemony, is directly associated with foreign capital, control, monoculture, biotechnology, as well as a closed and mechanized, highly hierarchical and masculinized structure (WELCH, 2005). Its popularization and establishment in rural areas implies the imposition of ways of life, both in rural areas and in the city, in such a way that social processes invariably pass through agribusiness.

Therefore, in order to challenge the hegemony of agribusiness, different actors in the agroecological movement develop their hegemonic discourses of resistance, in and between their own operations, articulating “chains of equivalence” that encompass the construction of identities, strategies of action and ideologies (BÖHM, SPICER and FLEMING, 2008). Thus, the

Neo-Gramscian discourse analysis in Laclau and Mouffe (2001) allows us to understand the resistance practices of the agroecological movement in the field of Brazilian agriculture struggles.

AESTHETICS AND ORGANIZATION

The concept of beauty is the immediate connection when it comes to the term 'aesthetics'. This, however, reflects only part of a philosophical debate about science and the use of this term, which has been gaining ground in Organizational Studies in recent decades (LOPES, SOUZA, IPIRANGA, 2014). Historically, aesthetics has two important phases. The first refers to its establishment as a philosophical science in 1750. At that point, the theory of beauty was coupled with the normative doctrine of art. The second phase is the contemporary phase, which begun after 1750. From that time on, aesthetics has been gradually replaced by the priority of the judgment of taste. Aesthetics starts to analyze what has been experienced, as in studies aimed at the perception and aesthetic experience of the individual, i.e. aimed at the creative inspiration – such as the philosophical inquiries – that tend to protect subjectivity. Increasingly, aesthetics, as a dimension of human action, has been built through integration with other ways of apprehending, observing, and interacting with reality. Aesthetics then goes on to expand the analysis and understanding of the human and social phenomenon (LEAL, 2007).

Strati (1992) highlights the possibilities of aesthetics for organizational analysis, given its importance as one of the forms of knowledge that provides richness, uniqueness and subjectivity. In the 70s and 80s, approaches that conceived the organizations in the rational and instrumental dimensions and relegated their subjective dimension prevailed in aesthetic studies (GAGLIARDI, 2009). Over time, it is observed the emergence of approaches focused on the apprehension of the 'sensitive', the immaterial, the emotions, feelings, i.e. approaches directed to the action of the individuals.

According to Wood and Csillag (2001), the aesthetic appears as a fundamental resource to analyze some "mysteries" of organizational life. As pointed out in the introduction of this article, Gagliardi (1990) argues that the way we apprehend reality around us is fundamentally defined by sensory experiences. For the author, aesthetics constitutes simultaneously a) a type of sensory knowledge (which opposes intellectual knowledge); b) an expressive form of action, with no explicit instrumental purpose; and c) a form of communication capable of sharing feelings and tacit knowledge, which is not explicit or codified as the hitherto known bases.

In Brazil, the number of theoretical-empirical studies covering the aesthetic dimension in organizational analysis grows (LEAL, 2000; 2002; 2007; WOOD and CSILLAG, 2001; TAVARES and KILIMNIK, 2007; SCHIAVO, 2010; OLIVEIRA, 2012; IPIRANGA, LOPES SOUZA et al., 2013; LOPES, SOUZA and IPIRANGA, 2014; LOPES, IPIRANGA and JÚNIOR, 2015). These studies aim to establish links to the subjective dimension, with emphasis on aesthetics, associating aesthetics with art, tacit knowledge and learning, with the notion of experience and personality, the understanding of organizational daily life, creativity, rationalities, organizational management and culture. In addition, Xavier and Carrieri (2014) emphasize in their study of the Marxist aesthetics that artistic production as a reflection of reality has the potential to transform social life.

Sousa and Romagnoli (2012) reaffirm the potential of aesthetics to, consider the differences, create, renew conceptions about things, and resist the forces that hinder future emergences and that insist on modeling and homogenizing society. In this case, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces could also be reproduced through aesthetics, building identities.

Although not considered in depth in the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse developed by Laclau and Mouffe, the relationship between politics and aesthetics appears in Gramsci's work and in the elaborations of his commentators – which also inspired the authors to carry out this study. For Mussi (2009), the starting point for thinking about the relationship between politics and aesthetics in Gramsci's *Quaderni* is in the study Gramsci elaborated on aspects of literary life of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (especially in the *Quaderni* 21 and 23). The core of his research was the popular attitude toward the arts in general, and especially literature, as a response to historically determined aesthetic and philosophical needs. Mussi recalls that the aesthetic experience in capitalism is understood by Gramsci as a movement of collective aspiration exercised by individuals, reproducing the words of the original: "the 'beautiful' and interesting adventure, as opposed to the 'ugly' and revolting adventure that occurs in conditions imposed by others, not chosen" (Gramsci, Q.21, §13, 2133). (MUSSI, 2009, p. 6).

Gramsci recognizes the intimacy between politics and aesthetic in every social activity, which would involve a dimension of inherited human consciousness, "(...) superficially explicit or verbal, received without criticism, and another capable of uniting humans in the practical transformation of reality, i.e. as a device that provides a profound 'link'" (MUSSI, 2009, p. 6).

According to Gramsci, therefore, aesthetics is the space for social groups to express their conceptions of the world, regardless of the groups' position in society. If the knowledge exists at that moment of sociability, if the knowledge is expressed in the form of thoughts and materializes in human artifices, then it is the body and soul of what Gramsci conceptualizes as "conception of the world". In Gramscian terms, the conception of the world has reference in the world itself, results from the thought and materialization of the "process of real life" (BEZERRA and PAZ, 2007, p. 14).

The aesthetic understood, therefore, as something present in all human activities, something sensitive, capable of capturing those who observe a specific work, and a historically built social process, brings rich possibilities to think of the social phenomena of organization, language and social change. As emphasized by Gramsci (1981), philosophy is contained in language, common sense and good sense in the system of beliefs, opinions, perspectives and forms of acting, as well as in expressions of religion and popular culture.

Laclau recognizes the importance of popular traditions as one of the ideological elements of resistance to oppression. According to Laclau, in the ideological discourses of resistance and change towards the block in power, there are elements of popular struggle traditions that are incorporated into revolutionary movements: "These are invariable elements and they are always evoked as a form of mobilization against hegemonic power of the hegemonic classes and groups" (MOTTA and SERRA, 2014, p. 139).

Thus, aesthetics would constitute a possibility for the expression of worldviews of subaltern social groups (organizations), a form of construction of knowledge (STRATI, 1992), a form of action of the individuals (GAGLIARDI, 2009) and, at the same time, aesthetics would constitute a possibility of interpreting these expressions for those who are not part of these groups. Aesthetic expressions – understood as discourses – thus bring a potential to transform social life (XAVIER and CARRIERI, 2014), hold possibilities of building hegemony, insofar as they allow the consolidation of worldviews that are in opposition to the dominant views. This article analyzes aesthetic expressions of the agroecological movement (captured as discourse), in its counter-hegemonic struggles and, based on the aesthetic perspective, seeks to understand the movement expressions. The article aims to establish a bridge between the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse and an analysis of aesthetic expressions in social movements building resistance, building counter-hegemony.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a methodology with a qualitative approach (DENZIN and LINCOLN, 2011; VIEIRA, 2004), using the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse developed by Laclau and Mouffe (2001). The task of the discourse analyst is to explore the different forms of connection and re-connection of discourses that favor the emergence of identity (DELLAGNELO, BÖHM and MENDONÇA, 2014). Thus, the research analyzed the forms of connection (expressed in the graphic facilitation panels) of the territory elements; the definition of the 'common enemy'; and the resistance that contributes to building identity. More than identifying these elements, the research analyzes, through the aesthetic expression, how they are built and connected in order to become hegemonic in their field of struggle.

The aesthetic expressions of the agroecological movement in Brazil would establish a connection between the elements, in such a way that they could affect the creation of a common identity, as well as strengthen it. The discourse would also emerge from joint practices around aesthetic expressions (MUSSI, 2009). Here agroecology is understood as a macro discourse, or main discourse articulated by the social movement. The consolidation of this discourse, in turn, depends on the articulation and re-articulation of different discourses with less impact within the movement.

In this way, the study analyzed the aesthetic expressions of the agroecological movement portrayed in the graphic facilitation panels of the III National Meeting of Agroecology (III ENA). These panels are methodological elements used by the National Articulation of Agroecology (ANA) to stimulate the debate from the different groups present at the event, in order to democratize access to discussions and information, as well as to record the results of these processes. As stated by ANA: "Using a

graphic and easy-to-understand language, the methodology aims to facilitate the visualization of the issues discussed. The products of facilitation are also an interesting record of the synthesis of the discussions” (ANA, 2015).

As one of the ANA’s interests is to publicize its proposals, all the panels were scanned and published on the organization’s website, which facilitated the access. During the III ENA, panels were produced according to the program of the meeting: Plenaries, Territorial Sessions, Thematic Seminars, Opening Plenary, Women’s Plenary and Closing Plenary (ANA, 2015). For this study, the analysis focused on some of the graphic facilitation panels produced in the Territorial Sessions, which expressed the language peculiarities, symbols and worldviews of the different groups. Jomalinis (2014) points out that the III ENA called for a look at agroecology starting from the territories, with a focus on the collective action. It was decided then to select the panels whose visualization was complete. The panels selected are: Graphic facilitation panel of *Sertão do São Francisco* (territory in the state of Pernambuco, PE, Northeast Region of Brazil) (Figure 1); Graphic facilitation panel of *Chapada do Apodi* (territory in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, RN) (Figure 2); Graphic facilitation panel of the South Region of Brazil (which includes the states of Paraná, PR; Santa Catarina, SC; and Rio Grande do Sul, RS) (Figure 3); and Graphic facilitation panel of *Chapada do Araripe* (territory also in the state of Pernambuco, PE) (Figure 4).

DATA ANALYSIS

The panels analyzed were produced in thematic sessions organized according to the territories and gathering different agroecological groups. It is worth stressing the use of the term “territorial” by the movement – rather than “regional”, for example – represents for the members the notion of resistance. This is because the movement proposes and defends another reference, which involves space, ecology, culture and agroecological experience. The term territory, as a discourse articulated by the movement, is evidenced by the aesthetic dimension, and highlights the dynamicity of the language/action relationship in the Neo-Gramscian approach.

Different from the way other actors understand the concept of territory, in this discourse the objective is to make visible the existing disputes and the diversity of actors in this field of struggle. The focus shifts from individual experiences and technologies, to the context of the experiences (JOMALINIS, 2014, p. 3).

This is not a case of starting from a general concept of territory. The idea is to reflect, discuss, express and share the contents and meanings of the territory, based on the collective and unique experience of different social groups. This is how they “(...) perform diagnoses about social reality, build proposals. Acting in networks, they build collective actions that operate as resistance to exclusion and fight for social inclusion” (GOHN, 2011, p. 336).

The struggle of these social groups for recognition, legitimation and legalization of the territories in which they live is one of the important points portrayed in the graphic facilitation. This process involves, at the same time, contextual diagnosis and identification of groups – important steps in the construction of resistance.

Figure 1 shows the articulation of ‘territory’ – under dispute and demanded as a right – that can be conquered through agroecology. Using drawings, numbers and words, farmers in *Sertão do São Francisco* express, in a complex and articulated way, their experiences, feelings, threats and ideas. The farmers show opposition to the hegemonic model of agribusiness, as well as to the way the model operates in the region (through mega-events and mega-projects, coordinated by large companies, whose actions lead to increased environmental degradation – drought and deforestation). In addition, the agribusiness production systems use agrochemicals in monocultures, bringing risks to human health (higher chances of cancer and autism, for example). Thus, the conflicts highlighted in Figure 1 are clear, and instigated by these conflicts, social actors reinforce their identity of resistance pointing out ways and alternatives. Gohn (2013) calls this strategy “propositional actions”, important elements that identify social movements, expressed in the agroecological potential that is carried out through alternative and popular knowledge, territorial and ecological management, rights to territory and development, inclusion of women, and the right to agrarian reform. The articulations synthesized in graphic expressions define antagonistic relations between agribusiness (and its various expressions) and agroecological farmers. The antagonistic relation makes the constitution of full identities impossible, insofar as the presence of the other part prevents the constitution of the ‘self’ (ALVES, 2010).

In these aesthetic expressions, therefore, there is a complex and dynamic content - that elaborates a diagnosis, and also glimpses the future – without necessarily using words or formats socially and culturally legitimized by dominant groups. The

technician, the intellectual, the farmer and rural worker, the adult or the child can easily access and modify this knowledge. It is possible to identify here what Leal (2002, p. 7) understands as the omnipresence of the “aesthetic”, which would make it, in the author’s words, “(...) a powerful factor of vital importance”.

It should be noted that in the panels there is a strong and dialectical relationship between the construction of territories (and all their specificities) and agroecology, as a macro-discourse of resistance of the social movement. Thus, if on one hand the relationships around the discourse of agroecology are a form of conquest of the territories, on the other hand, the agroecology richness and identity is stronger as farmers from different territories share their unique experiences. These experiences strengthen the agroecological knowledge, as well as enable identifying common points to be addressed in the field of struggle.

The beginning of the critical elaboration is the consciousness of what we are, i.e. a ‘know thyself’ as the product of the historical process up to the present moment, which left in us an infinity of traits received without benefit of inventory (GRAMSCI, 1981, p. 12).

Figure 1

Graphic facilitation panel of *Sertão do São Francisco*

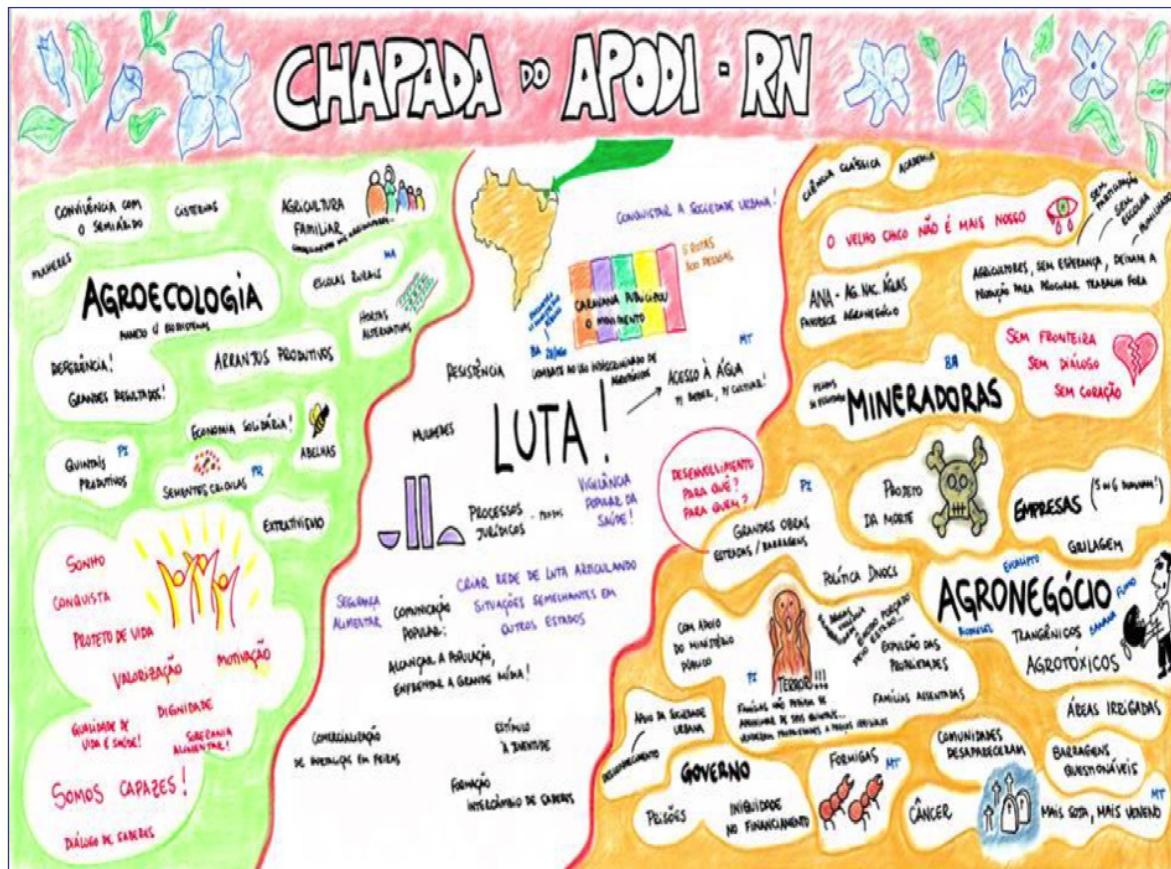


Source: III ENA, 2014.

It is necessary to emphasize that the differences between the territories exist, but they are not obstacles to the movement’s identity building. The territory of *Chapada do Apodi* (Figure 2) is in dispute between miners and *grileiros* (land invaders). This type of conflict is not present in the territories of the South Region of Brazil (Figure 3). In the case of the South, as shown later in this analysis, there is a need to work on the concepts such as food production and consumption in society (which is observed from the illustration of a brain in the panel presented in figure 3). Even with such differences, both territories – *Chapada do Apodi* and the states in Southern Brazil – identify agroecology as a “common” way to confront the agribusiness hegemony in the country.

Figure 2

Graphic facilitation panel of Apodi-RN



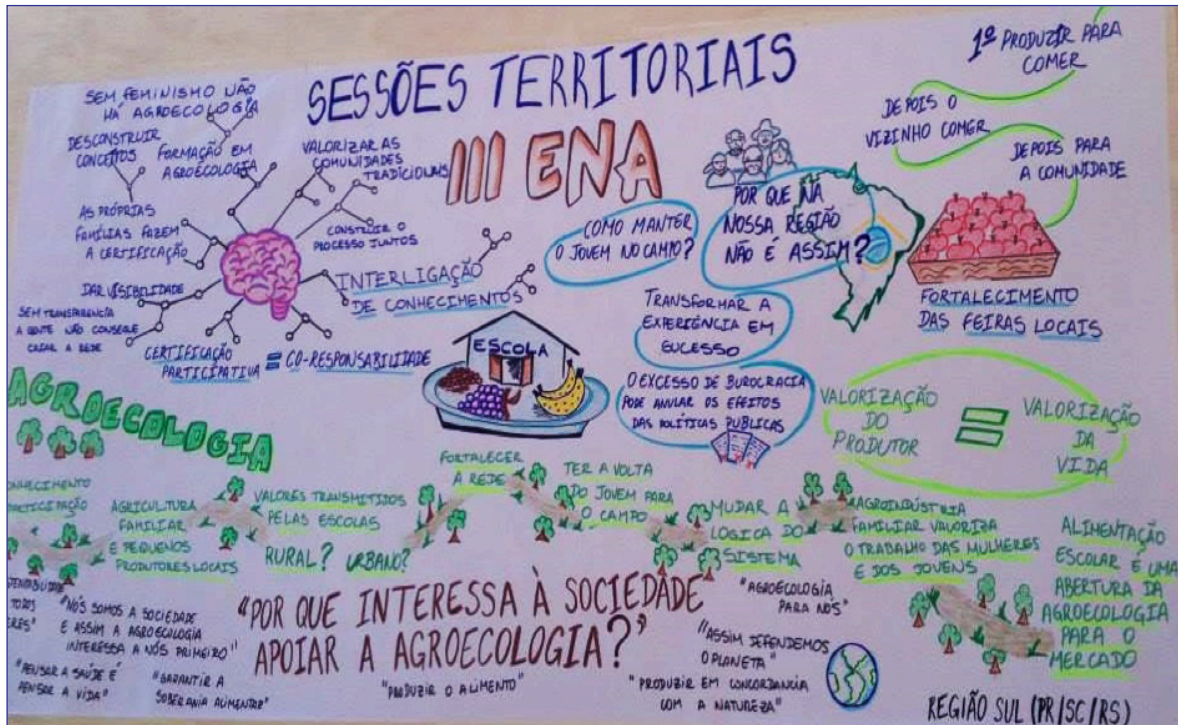
Fonte: III ENA, 2014.

However, to live up to the aesthetic approach, differences and approximations are not only expressed in words, but in colors, lines, characters, and the use of the panel space. For the authors of this article, positioned as observers, there is capture of a subjective aspect, an aspect to which one does not radically oppose a strict rationality – as argued by Leal (2003). Figure 1, for example, shows the illustration of cacti framing the panel's title with the name of the territory "Sertão do São Francisco". This indicates a strong identity with the ecological and climatic conditions of this territory. The figure shows illustrations referring to the problem of drought as an unnatural phenomenon, but socially and historically constructed.

In addition, there is a demonstration against agribusiness and the use of agrochemicals and transgenic (Figure 2). This can be observed in drawings such as skulls, ghosts, monsters that represent a death project. The expressions of the drawings show the agroecological movement has a very different viewpoint regarding the agriculture practices in comparison to the viewpoint advertised by the agribusiness companies. The spaces of the farmers' fair (Figure 1) and the school (Figures 3 and 4) are represented in the illustrations, as safe places, spaces of safety, joy, food, which can be observed also by the colors, diversity and interaction portrayed. Accessible to all participants, the repertoire used in the panels deconstructs and, at the same time, reconstitutes the social life of these subjects beyond the hegemonic determinations. The instrument, the aesthetic approach, facilitates in this sense the articulation of this social group around an idea of reality (KLIMECHI and WILLMOTT, 2011), which is crucial for building counter-hegemony.

Figure 3

Graphic facilitation panel of the South Region of Brazil (PR, SC, RS)



Source: III ENA, 2014.

Figure 4 brings people to the center of the debate – with emphasis on women appearing in two moments – in strong and cheerful illustrations, whose importance is reinforced in the phrase: “clarifying the role of the farmer and women” – a demand of the people from the territory. The issue of gender has been prioritized (it is also present in Figures 1 and 3) by the agroecological movement, having been highlighted in the III ENA with the phrase: “without feminism, there is no agroecology” (ANA, 2015). This panel, in addition to highlighting the importance of articulating the discourse of feminism in the field, shows more emphasis on colors and drawings, quickly captures the attention and interest of observers, and synthesizes, with the use of emotion, aspects that are part of the daily life and would need many words to explain. It is noteworthy the expressions of the characters in different moments, and the use of skulls to illustrate the impacts caused by the main opponents. The resistance, in this case, appears as something central, with a closed fist contorted with traces denoting strength and power.

Figure 4

Graphic facilitation panel of Chapada do Araripe – PE



Source: III ENA, 2014.

The analysis of the discourses expressed in the panels indicates that the aesthetic approach is a means for the construction of the worldviews of agroecological farmers around a macro discourse of agroecology. Thus, they challenge, change, demystify conservative and hegemonic views on social relations and production, both in rural areas and in the city, as well as on education, health, technology and politics. Analysis also show that aesthetics allows these social actors to express the forms of appropriation, of discourses that are almost exclusively dealt with by science. This is the case, for example, of the loss of biodiversity or the disappearance of bees; problems that have been the object of study in science, and for farmers they are crucial for the construction of territories and agroecology (see Figures 1 and 2).

This process of appropriation and reconstruction of knowledge is conscious. The subjects of this process understand its importance and point out the need to overcome the conventional model of education in order to face the challenges of Brazilian agriculture and society. In the panels there is an explicit critique on the closure of rural schools and on the common model of education that treats reality according to the hegemonic perspective. For this reason, the actors demand an original education (Figure 1), which stimulates creativity, leadership, better communication, and exercise

and experience art (Figure 4). This proposal of education would be consolidated in the idea of the Agricultural Family Schools (Figure 4).

Thus, it is possible to build an identity for the agroecological movement in the diversity that reflects the life trajectories, experiences, desires and feelings. In synthesis, to build an identity that expresses the worldviews (GRAMSCI, 1981) of agroecological farmers.

The issue of identity is a crucial element in the construction of resistance according to the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse (LACLAU and MOUFFE, 2001). The unity or identity around the discourse of agroecology is expressed in the graphic facilitation in which some elements are always present, albeit in different positions. In all panels agroecology is characterized as a process that involves more than productive aspects and is linked to ecological, social, organizational, cultural and educational aspects. It is, therefore, something diversified and dynamic, which points out that homogenizing models are inadequate and incapable of reflecting and bringing solutions to the challenges diagnosed by the groups.

Building identity in a position of resistance demands clear identification of a common enemy (LACLAU and MOUFFE, 1985). In all panels it is possible to observe references, often detailed, of this common enemy's different faces.

Conventional education is expressed as a form of manifestation of this enemy (in Figure 1), and this expression reinforces the reference (in Figure 2) to the need to change the logic of the system that is so deeply rooted in people's minds. Large companies, mega-events (Figure 1), mining, mills (Figure 4), agribusiness, *grileiros* (Figure 3), these are actors in this process, actors who orchestrate this system and exercise their powers by exploiting and expropriating family farmers. They are central in the configuration of capitalist society, which interferes in the rural and also urban environments. Figure 3 goes further in analyzing the hegemonic model of society, pointing out as an enemy the government and some of its representatives as well, which reveals the historic (and pernicious) alliance between large companies and the state in Brazil. The enemy continues to be agribusiness, but understanding the ramifications and articulations of this actor leads the agroecological movement to position itself in the face of challenges that involve other instances of society, also opposing "(...) other expressions of the great Capital" (ENA, 2014). Consequently, links with other movements and organizations (such as urban agriculture and the Solidarity Economy, for example) have been strengthened.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that content is not the only element to be observed. The way in which communication and the construction of knowledge have been treated within the agroecological movement is crucial. The communication of the macro discourse of agroecology, in a context of great inequality of power, needs to follow particular paths. Thus, the use and valorization of aesthetics have been very positive in the construction of worldviews, because they are a channel to establish and disseminate discursive structure and materiality, elements that strengthen the identity of the movement. Through this channel, it is possible to establish and disseminate guidance on practices, share and communicate proposals, legitimate the movement. In addition, these structures offer great potential to help understanding contemporary social phenomena. According to Santos and Hissa (2011, p. 29): "(...) the aesthetic-expressive rationality is the least colonized rationality, the most sub-represented in modernity: this is because it went through a special transformation, i.e. it was transformed in something of great dignity, however, at the cost of its marginality".

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to investigate how the aesthetic expressions, used as a methodology for mobilization and knowledge production, influence the Brazilian agroecological movement in building a counter-hegemony in the country's agriculture practices. The aesthetic approach and the Neo-Gramscian discourse analysis as theoretical lenses were the basis for the analysis of the graphic facilitation panels produced by agroecological farmers in the III ENA, national meeting held in 2014.

The panels use drawings, colors, numbers and words to represent farmers' experiences, ideas and proposals, especially regarding the limits and the conquest of their territories. Interpreted as a form of aesthetic expression, the panels show specificities, particular conceptions of the world found in agroecological groups from different territories, groups that identify in the agroecology discourse a way of overcoming the obstacles imposed by the hegemonic agricultural practices in their field of struggles in Brazil. The agroecological movement can capture in a richer, organic and more complex way, the connections and

experiences of each territory, which then become part of the agroecological knowledge and, therefore, are used as tools in the field of struggle – tools directed towards defined enemies, considering that defining enemies is a fundamental process in the construction of resistance. The drawings describe different ‘faces’ of agribusiness and global capitalism, which are connected, influential and reproduce the hegemony that day by day imposes relations in which the agroecological movement is relegated to subalternity.

The analysis of the discourses expressed in the graphic facilitation panels indicates that aesthetics can bring an effective, accessible and sensitive perspective in the construction of the worldviews of subaltern groups, becoming an important approach in the struggle of social movements. Therefore, the discourse of agroecology produced by the Brazilian agroecological movement and expressed in the aesthetic perspective, reveals a great potential for building resistance, prioritizing worldviews that are overshadowed by the hegemonic discourse and practices and their instruments.

The approximation between the perspectives of the aesthetics and of the Neo-Gramscian theory of discourse shows to be useful in order to understand social movements (organizations), which, as spaces of resistance, seek forms of expression that allow the participation of those who, because of the dominant structures, do not have access to formal means of communication. These actors need new tools for identity building. It is important to recognize that graphic facilitation is more than illustrations; it reflects processes of construction and synthesis of reality, processes that can lead to the construction of hegemony.

In the theoretical perspective of Organizational Studies, this article reinforces the importance of investigating social movements and other forms of organization that have not traditionally been the object of studies and research. This may lead to changes in the researchers approach in this field, demanding attention to expressions that escape the functionalist-rationalist perspective, as well as rebuilding apparently stable meanings and relationships, as was possible to capture from the images analyzed in this article.

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