

Theoretical-empirical Article

Education by the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes as Transmodernization from Capitalist Consumerism

Educação da Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes como Transmodernização ao Consumerismo Capitalista



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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the critical debates raised by the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes (ENFF) in one of its courses, in order to highlight how this education fosters self-defense initiatives that marketing should acknowledge in consumerist discussions. **Theoretical approach:** the decolonial concept of transmodernity and Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed are used to base our analysis. **Methods:** with a decolonial perspective as our guiding epistemology, we collected data from an online course offered by ENFF. Initially, the authors viewed all videos individually, and subsequently, discussed the pre-analyses. The second round of analysis included coding the data, so we could reach categories of analysis. **Results:** an approach aligned with the pedagogy of the oppressed is adopted by ENFF's, since it: raises awareness of its students about the hegemonic structure that oppresses them; criticizes the illusion this oppressive structure creates about benefiting all, emphasizing that a rupture is only possible if the oppressed are behind it; and proposes a path beyond this oppressive structure, specifically through agroecology. The education by ENFF can thus be interpreted as a transmodernization from capitalist consumerism, given it foment, from subalternized settings, self-defense awareness among its students, who come from oppressed contexts. **Conclusions:** consumerism has been scantily questioned in marketing. However, its activism has been hardly able to deal with the racism, sexism, and coloniality associated to this concept. By presenting a form of educational perspective that resides outside of capitalist principles, a new self-defense model can be considered in the search to protect individuals from market forces.

Keywords: consumerism; education; transmodernity; Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST); Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes.

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Cite as: Hemais, M. W., Quintão, R. T., & Barros, D. F. (2024). Education by the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes as transmodernization from capitalist consumerism. *Revista de Administração Contemporânea*, 28(2), e230270. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-7849rac2024230270.en>

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RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar os debates críticos levantados pela Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes (ENFF) em um de seus cursos, para evidenciar como tal educação fomenta iniciativas de autodefesa que o marketing deveria reconhecer em consumerismo. **Marco teórico:** o conceito decolonial de transmodernidade e a pedagogia do oprimido de Paulo Freire são utilizados em nossa análise. **Metodologia:** tendo a perspectiva decolonial como nossa epistemologia, coletamos dados de um curso on-line da ENFF. Inicialmente, os autores visualizaram os vídeos individualmente e, posteriormente, discutiram conjuntamente as pré-análises. A segunda rodada de análise incluiu a codificação dos dados, para formar as categorias de análise. **Resultados:** uma abordagem alinhada à pedagogia do oprimido é adotada pela ENFF, uma vez que: conscientiza seus alunos sobre a estrutura hegemônica que os oprime; critica a ilusão de que esta estrutura opressiva beneficia a todos, enfatizando que uma ruptura somente é possível se os oprimidos estiverem por trás dela; e propõe um caminho para além desta estrutura opressiva, especificamente por meio da agroecologia. A educação da ENFF pode, assim, ser interpretada como uma transmodernização ao consumerismo capitalista, uma vez que fomenta, a partir de realidades subalternizadas, a consciência de autodefesa entre os seus alunos, oriundos de contextos oprimidos. **Conclusões:** o consumerismo tem sido pouco questionado em marketing. Todavia, tal ativismo tem sido pouco capaz de lidar com o racismo, o sexismo e a colonialidade associados a este conceito. Ao apresentar uma perspectiva educacional distante de princípios capitalistas, outro modelo de autodefesa pode ser considerado na proteção de indivíduos das forças do mercado.

Palavras-chave: consumerismo; educação; transmodernidade; Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST); Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes.

JEL Code: M.

Editor-in-chief: Marcelo de Souza Bispo (Universidade Federal da Paraíba, PPGA, Brazil)

Reviewers: Maribel Suarez (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, CÔPPEAD, Brazil)

Marcelo de Rezende Pinto (Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais, Brazil)

Peer Review Report: The Peer Review Report is available at this [external URL](#).

Received: November 24, 2023

Last version received: March 19, 2024

Accepted: April 10, 2024

Published: April 29, 2024

INTRODUCTION

Consumerism has been debated in marketing since the early 1970s, particularly in the United States (US), when concerns about the defense of consumer interests against corporate abuses became part of the area's agenda (Day & Aaker, 1970; Kotler, 1972). The asymmetry of power between companies and individuals motivated discussions on how to resolve such differences and guarantee the fulfillment of consumer rights. On the one hand, such objectives would be achieved if governmental regulations were implemented and changes at the corporate level, regarding a greater focus on meeting needs and desires of consumers, were adopted (Buskirk & Rothe, 1970).

On the other hand, it was believed that individuals would be better off at defending themselves if they were more informed about their roles as consumers and the performance of companies and understood the laws that existed to protect them (Mann & Thornton, 1978). This model is based on a neoliberal capitalistic logic, as it attributes to individuals the responsibility of defending themselves, since they would be informed about market practices and consumer rights, thus becoming an empowered being, even making governmental regulations no longer necessary (Nath, 2015). This focus on individual empowerment through consumer information emerged in the US around the 1930s and, because of its supposed success in promoting less unequal relation between buyers and sellers, was expanded globally, becoming the main model adopted worldwide from then on (Hilton, 2009).

Nevertheless, such discourse disregards that the empowerment promised by this type of 'education' does not occur equally among consumers, so only a minority is really empowered, while majorities still suffer from racism, sexism, and coloniality derived from capitalist practices (Faria & Hemais, 2021; Francis & Robertson, 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2022; Varman & Vijay, 2018; Varman et al., 2021). Without the necessary information, knowledge, and skills, individuals can find themselves in a situation of fragility in the face of market practices, leading them to a condition of vulnerability that is not inherent to their nature. However, such vulnerabilization can occur at any stage of the production, commercialization, or consumption process of goods and services (Silva et al., 2021). As Adkins and Ozanne (2005) point out, while consumer information programs can have positive returns, most consumers with limited knowledge do not seek help, for various reasons.

Therefore, other educational alternatives, which can also serve to underpin self-defense purposes, are needed. In this sense, we turn to the Movimento de Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Rural Workers Movement [MST]), known for being a political and social movement

that seeks the redistribution of uncultivated land in Brazil, which has as one of its pillars the formal education of its members. The aim of the organization with such educational project is "to collectively build a set of educational practices toward an emancipatory social project, led by male and female workers" (MST, 2023), so all can become individuals more aware of their (social) duties and rights (MST, 2023).

The movement's initiatives in this sense include building schools in their settlements for children, teenagers, and adults, which follow traditional curricula stipulated by the Brazilian government. However, in addition to this, the movement created, in 2005, the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes (Florestan Fernandes National School [ENFF]), aimed to meet the needs of militants of social movements that fight for a fairer world (Associação dos Amigos da Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes [AAENFF], 2023a), both in Brazil and abroad. The school, named after one of the most important Brazilian sociologists, provides "meetings and thematic seminars of short duration and training courses for militants developed in several stages" (Mota, 2015, p. 116), with discussions that challenge capitalist principles and propositions of alternative paths for societal development. Twenty-four thousand people have already taken part in courses and lectures at the school, which has 500 volunteer teachers (AAENFF, 2023b).

The knowledge shared by ENFF is of a critical nature, and its pedagogical approach aims to raise consciousness of the imbalances individuals suffer in the market. It can thus be characterized as a pedagogy of the oppressed, as conceptualized by Freire (1987), through which education is a tool that must be used to help the oppressed become aware of the oppressions they suffer. Such awareness would thus catalyze these individuals to break away from the structures that bond them asymmetrically to their oppressors, thus aiding them to reclaim their lives, humanity, and freedom, in a self-regenerative effort.

By considering that the critical education offered by ENFF touches on issues of self-defense in the market, we argue that marketing should acknowledge the importance of this model when discussing consumerism. However, this educational initiative develops this kind of self-defense moving away from modernist orientations associated to the capitalist consumerist information model that marketing beholds. Consequently, it transmodernizes from this 'traditional' form of consumerism, since it develops mechanisms for individuals to defend themselves in the market based on onto-epistemological principles originated in non-hegemonic contexts that focus on collective empowerment. The decolonial concept of transmodernity relates to the idea that modernity has a darker side, imbued with violence, that erases ways of thinking and being not associated with Eurocentric principles (Mignolo, 2011).

Therefore, to make these non-hegemonic perspectives resurface, efforts must be employed to move beyond modernity and toward subalternized realities, in an attempt at transmodernization (Dussel, 2002).

Given this contextualization, the objective of the present research is to analyze, based on the decolonial concept of transmodernity and Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, the critical debates raised by ENFF in one of its courses, in order to highlight how this education fosters self-defense initiatives that marketing should acknowledge in consumerist discussions. Our contribution thus lies in the idea that this kind of education is more adequate to create individuals/consumers with a better understanding of their surroundings with regard to the shortcomings markets impose over them than the traditional capitalist consumerist information model. By offering education of a critical nature, ENFF promotes a type of knowledge that can help individuals/consumers protect themselves not only when in situations of direct purchase and consumption relationships, but also from the indirect effects arising from market(ing) relationships. Self-defense is therefore not only for individual purposes, but also for the protection of a broader social-environmental context, since it raises awareness about unsustainable production, marketing, and consumption practices.

In this article, we will use the term 'capitalist consumerism' to refer to the kind of consumerism adopted in marketing, as of the 1970s, which emphasizes that the best way to achieve consumer protection is through the nurturing of market practices (Kotler, 1972, 2020). Swagler (1994) discusses how, originally, when the term 'consumerism' first emerged, it was not associated to capitalist principles, as marketing would have it. It was, in fact, related to popular movements, of leftist positioning, even being seen as communist. Evidence of this is how, as of the 1930s, the Black community in the US created consumer cooperatives throughout the country, so as to have stores where to shop without fearing the violent discrimination White businessmen usually practiced over these minorities, and such initiative was considered a type of consumerist activism, with principles not based on capitalist orientations (Carreiro, 2017). Therefore, in order to decolonially challenge the idea that there is only one (hegemonic) kind of consumerism, and respect the subalternized consumerist realities that were forgotten in time, we will use the adjective 'capitalist' before 'consumerism' when we talk about marketing's take on the subject, so as to point out that this is one of many other possible consumerisms, none of which should, alone, encapsulate what the term 'consumerism' means.

In thinking about consumerism in this decolonial way, this frees us from imagining this concept as solely associated with hegemonic contexts of the Global North.

In the Global South, many initiatives focused on defending individuals against wrongdoing in/by the market have been developed by oppressed peoples, but, given their non-capitalist, Southern connotations, they were never regarded as part of a consumerist movement according to the area's Northern norms. In some cases, these initiatives have been in place even longer than when marketing first began to take a shine to consumerism, such as the consumerist activism of *quilombola* communities in Brazil, where the local Black populations descendant from enslaved peoples have long lived and existed in collective resistance against the White hegemonic structures that try to exclude them from the market. Such communities have been developed as spaces that permit these populations to be self-sufficient in terms of what they consume to live harmoniously among themselves and with nature, excluding their need to interact with outside agents, thus also helping to preserve their rich traditions and way of life (Moura, 2020). The discussions we will make in the present article regarding the MST and ENFF follow in this tradition, and break with the idea that consumerism only exists when based on the terms established by hegemonic forces.

After these introductory comments, the rest of the paper is divided into seven more sections. In the sequence, we present the consumerist information model that has been expanded globally; the decolonial concept of transmodernity; and Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed. We then describe the methodological procedures we adopted. In the following, we analyze the collected data; and discuss our proposition of a transmodernization from capitalist consumerism. We, then, make our final considerations.

CAPITALIST CONSUMERIST INFORMATION MODEL: INFORMING CONSUMERS ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS AND THE LAWS

Consumerist discussions in the US started to focus on informing consumers about market practices around the 1930s, when organizations, such as Consumers Union (one of the longest-running and most important organizations of its kind in the world), began to dedicate themselves to such ends (Warne, 1971). At the time, companies provided scarce data about the goods they marketed, so consumers had scarce knowledge of what they were buying and if they were getting the best benefits for their costs. So, as well as communicating the findings of comparative product testing, which were seen as fundamental for individuals to be better informed about available options in the market, these organizations also sought to explain to consumers their rights and the laws in place to protect them (Hilton, 2009; McGregor, 2005).

The success of this consumerist information model meant that, shortly afterward, it was also adopted by European organizations. Nevertheless, it was when the Cold War ended and capitalist market ideals advanced worldwide that consumerist practices expanded globally (Hilton, 2009). In Brazil, concerns with consumer protection and consumerist information emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and were advanced especially by organizations such as Fundação de Proteção e Defesa do Consumidor (Consumer Protection and Defense Foundation [Procon]), Instituto de Defesa de Consumidores do Brasil (Brazilian Institute of Consumer Defense [Idec]), and Associação Brasileira de Defesa do Consumidor (Brazilian Consumer Defense Association [Proteste]) (Hemais, 2018).

The Brazilian consumerist model followed, in many ways, the one coming from the US, which meant adopting the information mode, with an emphasis on informing consumers about their rights and the law. This was especially true after the Brazilian Congress approved Law No. 8,078, in September 1990 (Lei no. 8.708, 1990), more commonly known as the Brazilian Consumer Defense Code (Hemais, 2019). From then on, initiatives were taken to make consumers aware of the Code, and specific classes/courses started being offered by consumerist organizations to teach individuals their rights (Idec, 2023; Procon-SP, 2023).

However, the idea that consumers can be protected when they are aware of their rights is questionable. In fact, only a minority of consumers are protected by laws from corporate mischief, given how majorities around the world still suffer from numerous corporate wrongdoings, particularly those related to racism, sexism, and coloniality (Francis & Robertson, 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2022; Varman & Vijay, 2018; Varman et al., 2021). Consequently, when consumerist information emphasizes that knowledge of laws is a valid way to achieve consumer self-protection, it excludes the realities of these individuals from non-hegemonic contexts, since even when they are knowledgeable of their rights, this does not seem enough to guarantee them 'power' to take on corporations (Varman et al., 2012). The latter are too powerful to be curbed by laws (Alcadipani & Medeiros, 2020) and many even co-opt legal norms, looking to neutralize consumerist advances (Larsen & Lawson, 2013).

Knowledge of laws is a construction directed at the individual, and not the group (Hilton, 2009). Having access to this kind of information is, obviously, important for all consumers. Nonetheless, the way this is framed by the capitalist consumerism information model is problematic since it emphasizes gains only for the individual (McGregor, 2005): if I know about my rights, I win. This one consumer will, of course, become empowered, since he/she will be more informed of the different market dynamics occurring around him/her and how he/she can protect himself/herself,

but this does not mean he/she will have more awareness of the part he/she needs to play in the wellbeing of a grander collective (Davidson, 2015): if only I know about my rights, we all lose. Hence, the continuation of racism, sexism, and coloniality, despite worldwide adoption of the aforementioned model, since the 'I' seems to be the sole option, and not the 'we.'

BEYOND MODERNITY/COLONIALITY: IN SEARCH OF TRANSMODERNITY

The continued dominance modernism has promoted over life has led to the perpetuation of many configurations of violence, extermination, discrimination, racism, and sexism, reinforcing coloniality, the darker and constitutive side of modernity (Mignolo, 2011). Coloniality, however, is often denied by those who impose it over 'innocent victims,' substituting its existence with the 'myth of modernity,' i.e., the denial of the irrational violence of coloniality since modernity is construed as beneficial, given it the 'only' path of development for humanity, offering those outside of the Eurocentric world a way to evolve "from a state of regional and provincial immaturity" (Dussel, 2000, p. 472). Decolonizing efforts have thus engaged with overcoming such colonialist impositions, looking to recenter the preservation of life as humanity's greatest goal (Dussel, 2013).

Argentine-Mexican decolonial intellectual Enrique Dussel stands out in this sense; he has put forward the notion of transmodernity, "a worldwide ethical liberation project in which alterity, which was part and parcel of modernity, would be able to fulfill itself" (Dussel, 2000, p. 473). Dussel's cynicism with modernity and the oppression it promotes through different forms of rationalization led him to envision a kind of ethics — which he defines as 'ethics of liberation,' a praxistal ethics of/for life — that should acknowledge the innocent victims as the 'otherness' that constitutes humanity, but understanding that these unhumanized individuals "have been integrated into the 'World' only in their postcolonial, peripheral and underdeveloped condition" (Dussel, 2006, p. 500). These innocent victims are therefore negated their rights to life, resulting in millions of human beings living in despairing conditions, excluded from the supposed benefits globalization has promised them (Dussel, 2006).

To counter such unhuman project, Dussel proposes an anti-hegemonic understanding of this community of victims, in order to validate their being as an important part of decoloniality, and not just as backwards humans, victimized by their own failures, as modernity would have them (Mills, 2018). Through this perspective, these victims would become political subjects of the unfinished

decolonial project, advancing its struggles so as to “create a transmodern world ‘in which many worlds fit’ and where the global dictatorship of capital, property, and coloniality no longer reign” (Maldonado-Torres, 2011, p. 18). The ethics of liberation Dussel stands behind is thus a praxis that is aware of the imbalances of power, but that aims to criticize and disrupt modernity’s hegemony.

To fulfill Dussel’s ‘possible utopian ideal’ of the ethics of liberation (Caselas, 2009), it is thus necessary to go beyond modernity/coloniality, in an effort to search for alternatives to this hegemonic position. Dussel believes that the last centuries have seen modernity push multiple global cultures to subalternity, resulting in them, now, challenging this status, in an attempt to erupt from this unrecognized state, and claim their space in history (Dussel, 2002). The beyondness of modernity would thus be ‘trans’-modernity, in an allusion to the idea that ‘post’-modernity only reinforced what modernity had established, containing the expansion of different onto-epistemologies, thus negating pluriversal possibilities (Dussel, 2012).

Transmodernity is thus an affirmation from outside of modernity, one that brings to light “modernity’s own excluded cultures, in order to develop a new civilization for the twenty-first century” and return “these cultures to their status as actors in the history of the world-system” (Dussel, 2002, p. 224).

FREIREAN APPROACH TO EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF FIGHTING OPPRESSION AND REACHING EMANCIPATION

Questionably, one of the most important authors when it comes to discussing pedagogy is Paulo Freire, the patron of education in Brazil, whose work on critical pedagogy is worldly renowned (Kirylo, 2020). Freire is one of the most (if not the most) honored Brazilians in history, having been given dozens of titles of Doctor Honoris Causa from universities both in the Global South and in the Global North, and receiving several important awards, such as the UNESCO Prize for Education for Peace, in 1986 (Gadotti, 1996).

Freire’s most famous book is ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’, which has been translated into more than 40 languages, in which he discusses the roles oppressors and oppressed have in an unjust society. According to Freire (1987), the social relations between both of these individuals create a ‘culture of silence,’ which generates and perpetuates an inferiorized and silenced self-image of the oppressed. Consequently, they lose their critical consciousness, and accept without questioning the dominant culture that is forced over them. Naturally, this socio-cultural domination

of the oppressors trickles down into the education system, silencing the voices of the oppressed who wish to ‘transgress’ from such complex structure (hooks, 1994).

This is why, for Freire, education must permit the oppressed to regain a sense of humanity, since this will be the only way to overcome their oppression, which will then put them in a path to freedom (Kirylo, 2020). To be free is not, however, an excuse to oppress the oppressor, for this new obtained power needs to be used to bring freedom to both the oppressed and the oppressor, for only the former is capable of doing this. It is, in the end, “an act of love, through which they (the oppressed) will oppose the disaffection contained in the violence of the oppressor” (Freire, 1987, p. 20).

The pedagogy of the oppressed would then be a system of education that is forged with the oppressed, and not for them, for this would be the only way for these individuals to discover themselves as humans — which is why Freire calls it ‘education as a practice of freedom’ (Freire, 2019). This kind of pedagogy presupposes that these ‘students’ would learn how to reach their freedom by creating their own education system, building their particular paths, and not following one already paved for them — a kind of education Freire refers to as the ‘banking model of education,’ since the student is compared to an empty account that needs to be filled by teachers/professors anyway they wish (Freire, 1987). This ‘revolutionary’ pedagogy would then oppose the established banking model, which transforms students into ‘objects’ that are easily controllable, thus hampering their creative powers. It is, in this sense, a pedagogy that focuses on the human ontology, and works toward associating the subject to its surrounding world, making it possible to transform not only individuals, but also the reality of which they are a part of (Taveira et al., 2018).

Freire, therefore, believes that education is always a political act, and such politics is inherent to all pedagogy (Freire, 2020). Any kind of education that is offered to students is thus part of a larger political agenda, and its supposed ‘neutrality’ must be questioned and put to rest. The awareness of such fact, by both those who teach and those who are taught, is one of the main principles of the critical pedagogy he defends (Walsh, 2015). It is through this understanding that oppressed individuals begin to ignite their critical consciousness, in order to fight against the inequalities and injustices of the societies they live in (hooks, 1994).

It is thus possible to say that Freire’s approach to education is closely related to transmodernity, as idealized by Dussel (2012), since it aims to foment a pedagogy that engages with oppressed peoples/realities in order to break from the oppressive system that coloniality has created and open up space for these subalternized contexts to flourish

on their own terms. [Dussel \(2013\)](#) even acknowledged this, since he believes that, for this fissure to be made in modernist education, it is necessary to work toward “Freire’s transmodern pedagogy of liberation” and practice “‘dialogism’ — the discursive action of the community of subjects in its struggle for liberation — as a method that allows the unfree to practice their freedom” (p. 318).

OUR DECOLONIZING METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

Given the transmodernist nature of ENFF’s educational project, any attempts to analyze it must also come from a decolonial space. This means that we, the researchers of this paper, who are white, heterosexual woman and men with privileged socio-economic backgrounds, academically trained and raised in modernist hegemonic university settings in Brazil and abroad, needed to decolonize ourselves in order to come close to the reality we desire to learn from and study. This process of self-decolonization has been an ongoing project (all researchers have been involved with decolonial studies and activities in Brazil for the last few years and have tried to learn from pluralist realities). However, we admit we still need to decolonize ourselves much more, because our views will always be clouded by who we are and the hegemonic spaces we occupy.

One step in this sense was our attempt to avoid reproducing epistemic reasoning taught to us in our modernist academic backgrounds, so as not to reaffirm Eurocentric structures in our research. We hence moved away from the idea of treating the phenomenon we wished to analyze as an object, distant from us, which we interacted with to extract information from, in the good name of scientific ‘neutrality’ ([Castro-Gómez, 2021](#)). Instead, we followed [Walsh’s \(2018\)](#) suggestion and shifted “from

a posture of ‘studying about’ to ‘thinking with’” (p. 28) regarding how we conducted our research. Consequently, this meant acknowledging that the people and movement we were about to engage with did “not only act but also produce knowledge and construct theory” ([Walsh, 2018](#), p. 28).

In practical terms, this meant that the authors of this research sought ENFF intending to learn from the institution. In the past, all three researchers have had contact with members of the MST and ENFF in some capacity; one researcher, in particular, has been frequently involved with the school’s activities (being invited to go to lectures and celebrations, as well as monthly debate cycle), becoming after some time a ‘friend of ENFF’ — which is a group of individuals that are not directly involved with the school or the MST, but that believe in their social orientations and support their initiatives.

In order to discuss ENFF’s educational project, highlighting its transmodernist consumerist educational principles, we surveyed the courses normally offered by the school and that are available on the school’s website and other platforms, such as YouTube, for example. The themes of the courses are varied, and the courses always have a wide range of support material, such as videos and texts. However, despite various themes ranging from ideology and Marx’s method regarding land regularization, environmental destruction, and diversity, the courses have one thing in common: they aim to empower individuals in their social relationships.

The large volume of courses (about 30) and their vast content imposed on us the need to select one to focus on. Therefore, we chose to analyze the content of the course called ‘Agrarian Question: Cooperation and Agroecology.’ Table 1 offers an overview of the topics discussed in each class and the number of transcribed pages of the classes’ lectures that made up our research corpus.

Table 1. ENFF’s “Agrarian Question: Cooperation and Agroecology” course description.

Course	Topics of the classes	# of transcribed pages
Agrarian Question: Cooperation and Agroecology	Popular Project for Brazil and Agroecology and Agrarian Reform	24
	Fundamental Laws of Capitalism in Agriculture	58
	Nature of the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture	102
	Popular Agrarian Reform	47
	Agroecology	18
	Agroecology and Internationalism	27
	Organization of Production Chains	36
Total of transcribed pages:		312

Note. Developed by the authors.

Two authors viewed all videos individually, and subsequently, all authors discussed the pre-analyses.

Although the course is not about relationships in the market, the material allows students to understand such relationships

better and even create less asymmetrical alternatives. The second round of analysis allowed us to understand better how the teachings help individuals to be active participants in market relationships.

Since we gained familiarity with the material, the approach to Freirean thought became evident, so we sought to present, at the beginning of our analysis, the necessary presentation of ENFF and its pedagogical principles. Explaining the school's conception and the pedagogical project of training social movement activists would be fundamental to understanding its transmodern condition. All content covered in all courses points in some way to reveal how the various forms of capitalist oppression are constructed and limit the actions of marginalized individuals and groups. Therefore, in the following, we present how the most different themes worked on with students are structured based on the reasons and the processes inherent to capitalism that allow the creation and maintenance of oppressed groups. The (re)knowledge of such processes is fundamental for reflecting on the limited actions of other social actors, such as the government. We then discuss how understanding that regulation and laws is not enough to protect the oppressed, but that they must be their own agents of change. In the sequence, we have an example of how a more specific topic, such as agroecology, is worked on based on recognizing the historical capitalist oppression of original peoples, small producers, and others and how such groups build paths to overcoming it. Based on the literature and the coding performed in the second stage of the analysis, we now discuss the analyzed data.

DATA ANALYSIS: THE EDUCATION ENFF OFFERS TO THE OPPRESSED

In the following section, we analyze the collected data, relating our findings to Paulo Freire's work regarding oppressions. Initially, we describe Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes. In the following, we discuss how the critical pedagogy adopted by ENFF raises awareness among its students about the existence of a hegemonic structure that oppresses them, particularly concerning capitalism and how it permits corporations to accumulate power. In the sequence, we debate how ENFF's course details the illusion this oppressive structure creates about having mechanisms (such as government regulations and laws) that benefit all, but that, in truth, fail to do so. The course emphasizes this so students understand that a rupture from such structure is only possible if they become the force behind this change. We then analyze how the school proposes a path toward breaking away from this oppressive structure, specifically by way of agroecology as an alternative to capitalist agribusiness.

Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes and its pedagogical objectives

Inaugurated in 2005, Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes is located in Guararema, in the state of São Paulo, and was built thanks to the voluntary work of more than one thousand militants from different social movements in Brazil, who took turns, throughout five years, to raise from the ground up the five buildings that are part of the school's campus — all erected with ecological bricks produced by the workers at the school (Lima, 2012). The funds for the construction of the school were gathered during three years; one campaign in particular helped raise most of the funding, which was supported by the Brazilian artist Chico Buarque, photographer Sebastião Salgado, and the Portuguese writer José Saramago, who gave away their copyrights to a book (with photos by Salgado and a forward by Saramago) and a song (composed by Buarque), so the MST could guarantee enough resources to start the job (Mello, 2022).

Inside the school's buildings, the classrooms, library, dormitories, cafeteria, and auditoriums are named after important figures that politically inspired not only the MST, but also many other popular moments around the world, such as Frida Khalo, Patativa do Assaré, Antônio Cândido, Marielle Franco, Patrícia Galvão (known as Pagu), Vito Gianotti, Rosa Luxemburgo, and Paulo Freire (Sudré, 2020). Even the school's football field, inaugurated in 2017, is named Dr. Sócrates Brasileiro, as a tribute to the late Brazilian player, who was a supporter of the landless worker's movement and a sound activist in the fight against hunger and poverty in the country (Fernandes, 2017).

The resources to help keep the school running are obtained through funding coming from national and international projects, donations made by social movements and organizations, as well as volunteer individual collaborations by those who believe in ENFF's project (AAENFF, 2024a). Associação dos Amigos da Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes was created in 2010, and counts with around 350 members who are dedicated to raise such financing and donations, as well as to help the school in all sorts of manners — from organizing events to cleaning its facilities (AAENFF, 2024b).

Even though ENFF is formally constituted and has sound facilities and international recognition, it still does not have all the regulatory permits to be accredited by the Brazilian government; considering the nature of its educational objectives, the school is not certified by the Ministry of Education. However, the school's lack of certification has its upside; it permits the organization to educate its students according to the pedagogy it sees as more fitting, which means infusing them with political consciousness — a trademark of ENFF's education (Paixão,

2017) — so it can counter the more traditional educational systems, which try to hide any political awareness from peoples (especially oppressed peoples) (Freire, 1987).

The school, on the one hand, exposes its students to discussions of a more critical nature, based on, for example, Marxist principles (focusing on the relationship between proletarians and bourgeoisies); feminist ideologies (oriented toward the advancement of gender equality); diversity issues (to raise awareness of the plight of oppressed minorities in Brazil and abroad); and the sociology of Florestan Fernandes (a sound criticism of capitalism and how it underdeveloped Brazilian society) (Lima, 2022). On the other hand, ENFF's pedagogy also focuses on a more practical issue: the formative principles of work and task division. With both theoretical and practical focuses, students can have more means to elevate their political consciousness (Sudré, 2020), much needed as a step toward their fight against oppression (Freire, 1987).

According to Associação dos Amigos da Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes (AAENFF, 2020b), the school's mission statement informs who the target students of its courses are: "to meet the training needs of activists of social movements and organizations that fight for a more just world." The training courses are aimed at the general public, with no minimum education restrictions or impediments. Unfortunately, the data regarding the number of ENFF students is not accurate: some publicity materials, such as leaflets and texts published on the website, indicate that the school would have received, in the first nine years of operation (therefore, until 2014), more than 24 thousand students. The figure would account not only for training courses but also for conferences, meetings, and lectures. The number reported is outdated, given that it is 10 years old and the school continued to operate, including in virtual mode, which certainly made it possible to attract students from other geographies.

On its campus, ENFF offers courses on subjects such as Political Philosophy, Theory of Knowledge, Rural Sociology, Political Economy of Agriculture, Social History of Brazil, Business and Social Management, Rural Education, and Latin American Studies, which can last between a week and three months (AAENFF, 2023b). The school understands that it is hard for students who live far away to attend these classes for long periods, leaving behind their familial and social obligations, as well as their working on the land. Hence, ENFF develops the pedagogy of alternance, through which such courses are organized in modules, making it possible for students to attend, for instance, a five-day course, and, after two months, return to the school to attend another module, and so forth, thereby balancing school time with periods of less work (e.g., offseason) on the land (AAENFF, 2020a). The

school's pedagogy of alternance was created based on the specificities of the workload in the field of its students and the distance of the campus to rural areas. Thus, it allows workers to combine their studies with different farming seasons; during periods of greatest work (such as the planting and harvesting seasons), these individuals stay home (also known as 'community time'), while during the offseason they go to ENFF to study.

While attending classes, many students board at the campus, and can use all of its facilities. In exchange, it is expected they help out in day-to-day chores, such as keeping the dormitories organized and clean; cooking for their peers and washing up; and caring for the school's vegetable garden. This volunteer laboring is not seen as only a kind of *quid pro quo*; it is, in fact, an important part of the pedagogical approach adopted by ENFF, since it makes students live a socialist experience and reflect on the possibilities of implementing such social-political orientation in their realities (Sudré, 2020).

ENFF also has formal agreements with more than 35 higher education institutions in Brazil that are certified by the Ministry of Education, such as Universidade Estadual Paulista (Unesp), Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF), Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), and Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), so members of the MST can study at these institutions and obtain undergraduate and graduate degrees (Sudré, 2020). Not only that, but it also has partnerships with over 15 schools in other countries (AAENFF, 2023b). Many of the educators that teach at ENFF (altogether, there are around 500 volunteering) are professors that come from these Brazilian institutions, as well as others in Latin America.

It is estimated that more than forty thousand people have studied for free at ENFF (the school has it as a fundamental belief that education should not be charged), coming from both Brazil and other countries in Latin America, which permits the school to foment an international political and cultural exchange between social movements (Mello, 2022). The first and foremost criteria for a person to be accepted as a student at the school is this individual be involved with some social organization, so what the person learns can be shared among this group (AAENFF, 2020b). The idea that the education obtained at ENFF should be reproduced by its students with others and in other locations is central to the school's pedagogy. No wonder, during the construction of the school, the workers who helped raise its buildings were also given the opportunity to be students, since, throughout the period they volunteered, they went through literacy and supplementary courses, so they could take such knowledge back to the settlements and camps where they lived, in order to help further develop them (Sudré, 2020).

Ever since its inauguration, ENFF has offered courses in its campus. However, with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, in March 2020, the school was forced to stop its in-person classes and rethink its educational practices, in order to accommodate the learning process into an online format. Acknowledging the importance of social distancing and the need to guarantee that the school would not cease its educational objectives, ENFF created an internet site named *Formação em Tempos de Corona*, through which it could continue offering its courses, with the same pedagogical orientations, focusing on raising political awareness of its students, but virtually (the content of this site is currently being moved to another one, called *Formação em Movimento*, in which all of the new material is being deposited).

During the pandemic, classes occurred through a video conference platform and were recorded, so they could later be uploaded to ENFF's site. The school understood that many of its students did not have access to stable internet connections, making it necessary for such material to be made available this way, so it could be watched when possible. This meant that ENFF started having archives of its classes, and began to make them publicly available to any interested parties, who could watch these contents anywhere and anytime. Students could thus be enrolled in courses and have synchronous classes or access their material (videos, suggested readings, and supplementary materials) asynchronously, without necessarily having a formal enrollment in them. Nowadays, ENFF has a whole library of these online courses, so students can choose to study subjects ranging from broader social issues, such as the history of Socialism, land regularization and environmental destruction, feminism, antiracism, and class struggles, to more specific themes focused on analyzing the intellectual work of thinkers such as Florestan Fernandes and Rosa Luxemburgo (*Formação em Movimento*, 2024a).

With the end of the pandemic, ENFF has gone back to offering in-person courses at its campus, but it has kept up its site, since it understands that this space has also become vital for reaching a broader public (around Brazil and, possibly, abroad) and raising this group's awareness about the need for political consciousness of the masses. The school thus uses its site to offer 'pedagogical support' for the 'political formation' of 'social militants of popular struggles,' and highlights that its content is directed toward this activist end, having been produced "by militants, and from the beginning designed to strengthen the battle of ideas in this historical time that increasingly needs to combine political formation with mass struggles" (*Formação em Movimento*, 2024b).

Be it through courses in its campus or online, ENFF continues to critically educate its students about the oppressions they suffer, following a pedagogical orientation

in line with Freire's approach (Freire, 1987). Even though, initially, the idea of transferring classes to a virtual setting was seen as problematic — since this meant losing an important part of the student's learning process, which depended on their experience of working/living with other individuals, in order to develop a collective consciousness about the need to prioritize the good of the community over those of the individual —, now this seems to have been overcome. The online courses serve the purpose of complementing the in-person classes, given they reach a broader audience, of people that support the movement but have difficulties to go personally to ENFF. Now, this grander public can access the school's education, and understand for themselves that the MST's only aim is for greater social good — differently from what its foes say about it. Therefore, these individuals might not have the pedagogical experience of working in the school, but they are exposed to the ethos of the MST, which helps to mold their characters toward being militants of change.

Educating the oppressed about oppression: Teachings about capitalism and corporate accumulation of power

For Freire (1987), the process of rehumanizing the oppressed starts when they become aware of their status. As much as these individuals understand that their lives have more restrictions than their affluent peers, they almost naturalize this situation, and barely acknowledge that their personal difficulties come from an oppression that is imposed over them. It is thus, as the author calls it, a 'culture of silence,' which works to maintain the subalternization of the oppressed. Therefore, efforts to educate these individuals must raise their awareness of the existence of an oppressive structure that has historically suppressed and molded them to accept passively this burden (hooks, 1994).

The idea of discussing capitalism and questioning how it supposedly drives markets toward providing gains to all individuals is recurrent in ENFF's courses (not only in the one we analyzed). Presenting capitalism's basic rules of constitution, operation, and consequences for social life is relevant in this type of knowledge construction. It could be said that understanding capitalism as a system of exploitation is a basic condition for understanding social struggles for the right to access land and have appropriate working conditions. So, it is not a surprise that the course presents debates on how capitalism operates under the logic of abuse and accumulation:

Since the history of capitalism, accumulation has always occurred. However, it does not happen in the same way. From the 1970s onwards ..., we have increasingly lived with the predominance of

financialization as a pattern of capitalist accumulation. In fact, capitalism cannot reinvent itself. Capitalism has an impulse for expansion, it has an expansive nature, and it is colonizing (#1 Class).

New forms of food production imposed by the capitalist system are considered a threat to the health of individuals and the environment, even with the advent of the so-called Green Revolution, which diffused agricultural technologies that considerably increased production. Although the modernization of cultivation techniques between the 1960s and 1970s emerged with the promise of ending world hunger, such a revolution had negative social and environmental impacts. The Green Revolution transformed agriculture into a capitalist enterprise, resulting in an increase of land concentration in Brazil — a phenomena that had a significant contribution from the Brazilian federal government, which offered a series of benefits to large rural producers.

The course offered by ENFF not only provides a historical context for the advance of capitalism in rural areas, but also highlights the relationship established between countries in the world system. The Green Revolution intensified Brazil's dependence on transnational companies from developed countries that produced the new technologies used in agriculture, reinforcing the asymmetrical relationship between the Global South and the Global North:

The Green Revolution is a form of subordination of agriculture to a new stage of capitalism. It is an industrial stage of capitalism, especially as we are discussing capitalism in its form of exploiting agriculture. Agribusiness is the new and recent stage of capitalist exploitation of agriculture. Now, in the 1970s, it is no longer just the latifundium and the state (which fosters agribusiness), but this form is subordinated to the interests of international finance capital (Green Revolution) with an increasingly prominent role of transnational companies and the media as a propagandist of this project (#5 Class).

Classes on various topics (land regularization, environmental destruction, oligopolization and transnationalization of food production, among many others) always contextualize the subjects in terms of the history of capitalism and how its different phases influenced the processes of subalternization of different groups. And, of course, in a highly specialized, globalized capitalist system, it can be difficult to clearly establish causes:

This wealth in securities expands at a much higher rate than that of merchandise or services as I showed in that graph, right? This has produced high liquidity,

that is, a lot of money, allowing investment in the privatization of natural resources ... in certain countries, right? How do they do this? As a foreigner cannot exactly buy land in Brazil, he has to associate with companies, right? (#2 Class)

By contextualizing the historic roots of capitalism in Brazil, and in Brazil inserted in the global context, particularly its effects over the country's rural areas, ENFF's course establishes an educational base that undermines this social-economic-political orientation that currently guides our societal evolution. It is important to note that such content is not simple, nor is it treated in a simplistic way — as some might assume. It thus begins to educate its students about how they have experienced the oppressions this system inflicts over those coming from non-hegemonic origins, with the objective of removing them from a state of numbness, so they may regain consciousness and feelings about the sufferings they go through on a daily basis (Freire, 1987).

With the 2008 crisis, investment funds lost a lot of their investment portfolio and lost a lot of value and the economies of the North are no longer able to pay their employees' pensions, because they are not profitable. ... a pension fund, so it manages the investment portfolio of public and private pensions, in 2004 we had more or less seven pension funds investing in land [in the Global South] in 2018, it went to 76 with more or less 14 billion dollars in land acquisition in 2020, this has already jumped to 300. ... Half of the land resources come from these 300 funds, so an interesting thing is the workers of the world. They have no idea that their pensions are being used to facilitate land grabbing and the capture of natural resources in the Global South. And this is one of the interesting questions for us to comment on solidarity between workers from the North and South (#3 Class).

Only with this awareness is it possible to start exposing these individuals to the fact that, to change such scenario, it is they who must do it (Freire, 2019), as will be discussed in the next subsection.

Educating the oppressed to be the force behind change: Teachings about the failures of governmental regulations and laws in benefiting all

Freire (1987) explains that once the oppressed are conscious of the existence of a structure that works to undermine them, they must start to understand that the only way to amend this unfavorable situation is if they become

the force behind such change and accept the responsibility of being the agents of transformation. Consequently, any education directed at raising awareness of the oppressed about their deprived status must help them develop this sense of burden, so they can begin to shift into this roll. From passive beings, these individuals are now transformed into people with a critical consciousness, which permits them to question the essence behind the mechanisms that sustain the hegemonic structure (Freire, 2019).

These struggles that are being articulated and expanded and gaining multi-scalar dimensions, they also present new strategies compatible with the attack force of the new expressions of capital, which is financialized via deaths, mining and the carbon market and biotechnology, etc., right, so the image of MST occupying the railway tracks shows that in addition to the land dispute, territorial dispute involves controlling and questioning the associated infrastructure flows, right? And the fourth image is of an indigenous person demonstrating the process of self-demarcation of their reserves in Western Pará. It is once again that the state refuses to fulfill its duty of guaranteeing access to territories and the preservation of this territory for indigenous and other communities. Many communities have advocated self-demarcation as a more autonomous process of guaranteeing their territories (#4 Class).

We see such Freirean considerations in the way the course offered by ENFF highlights how capitalism has developed a narrative about the importance of legal dimensions as the most effective and common mechanisms to guarantee that individuals are treated equally in society. This is not to say that the content analyzed here rules out the importance of laws; they are seen as fundamental bases for societal development and safeguarding individual and collective rights when adequately created and applied. The issue is that, at the same time this hegemonic narrative emphasizes the integrity of laws, it ignores the fact that they are created for specific purposes, and in diverse cases these are not necessarily aligned with guaranteeing equality among all.

many fires used as a weapon against traditional peoples and communities ... burned 80 to 90% of indigenous territory, small farmers' homes along with the decimation of these territories and an entire migration of these people to the urban periphery. We really have the criminal and genocidal use of fire both for the use of cattle and soy, mainly in Brazil, but also for cleaning people, right? (#3 Class)

and in the countries that provide it in a legal form. This market is about nature, about land, from here

it is the forestry code, the land grabbing law, these are forms of maximum privatization of public lands and collective territories, to then be the possibility of being the productive ballast of this fictitious capital. And then not only for the production of agricultural monocultures, but also to serve as a monopoly bank, for the land market (#1 Class).

The argument made by ENFF is that laws have a limited reach (or their effective application is sparse) when considering all the complexities that highlight the market relationships between corporations, governments, individuals, and society. The course teaches its students that having knowledge about such legal tools is important, but goes a step further, and discusses how corporations have the power to mold markets because many laws are developed with their interests in mind; in some circumstances, governments even consult with corporations when writing determined laws. In the case of agribusiness in Brazil, this seems quite clear.

The land will perform three important functions in this process that help us understand the entire current land grabbing process. ... this deforestation process. ... Those interested will remove the noble wood, okay? And this is very easy to do because you can trick the satellite images. Then you actually deforest with the chain, I don't know who has seen this image, it's a very crude thing, it's a giant, huge chain that is dragged and then knock down everything that's left, right? This leaves all this fallen part and it dries out. And then you can set fire, so that's why these biomes that are so humid like the Amazon and Pantanal, they catch fire, they catch fire, right? There's no point in Bolsonaro saying no. ... That's what you call forming a farm, right? When you open it, you take out all the vegetation. You have a huge price inflation trend. ... It's important to make an observation here, right? What we have seen happening is the advance on public lands, right? The so-called vacant lands are undesignated lands. Well, by law they have to be allocated to agrarian reform by law, as well as by the Brazilian Constitution ... or conservation units or indigenous lands. These lands that are not in the private domain, they belong to the Union, are in the public domain ... and it is precisely on these lands that it has advanced, especially this all-financial capital, but not just on lands, they are not empty of people on the contrary, they are full of traditional communities of squatters (#2 Class).

The long excerpt above helps us exemplify how ENFF teaches how capital is successful in creating conditions to circumvent laws and forms of regulation, especially when it associates itself with national governments. The course

thus explains how the actions of global agribusiness not only impacts the environment and the quality of food and health, but also has important political effects. The power they have over the market creates asymmetries not only between them and consumers, but also with governments: “the state has been hijacked by agribusiness and has changed the entire process of the chain: the inspection and control agencies, the legislative and judicial branches. All are allies in the expansion process of agribusiness” (#4 Class). The understanding that the entity responsible for protecting the interests of the Brazilian population may be compromised is relevant for building basic political participation strategies.

On the one hand, in the illegal appropriation of land through violent coercive methods of expropriation, but then always an attempt to legalize this illegality in order to provide the legal security that these agribusiness investors will require, right? ... Those maps that I showed of the expansion of land detected by the census and deforestation and violence and fires are processes directly related to this expansion of land grabbing that has persisted and stronger in recent times, right? This process then presupposes a fight for the legalization of this illegality to somehow value land as a commercial financial asset. ... The dynamics of the government after the [2016] coup and especially now with Bolsonaro, they work strongly toward the effective deregulation of land grabbing control, right? Regardless of the legislation, the dismantling of the INCRA control bodies, but also the environmental control bodies, right?

Such dominance over the market has permitted agribusiness to influence public agents to work toward their corporate interests. The course talks about how in no other moment of Brazilian history has the federal government approved so quickly new agricultural laws as in the former President Bolsonaro’s period in office. During his four years as president, Bolsonaro — who was heavily backed by agribusiness and the politicians that represented these corporation — sanctioned laws that flexibilized the use of 2,182 agrochemicals in Brazil, many of which were banned in the past for being highly toxic. This was the highest number of registrations ever given out by a Brazilian president. It is no wonder then that one of the most famous phrases that marked the Bolsonaro government was by his former Minister of the Environment, Ricardo Salles, who said, on April 2020, that the government needed to change regulations and norms related to agriculture in Brazil as quickly as possible, so as to facilitate the growth of agribusiness, since all of the media’s attention was on informing the population about the horrific scenario that unfolded in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

Brazil has had legislations since the 1970s on the registration, production, use, and trade of agrochemicals in its territory, regulated by the different regulatory agencies and ministries. Laws and regulations related to agrochemical use aim mainly to ensure the safety of rural workers, consumers, and the environment. Therefore, it is important to note that agribusinesses are not necessarily outside the law. However, due to their power, even in relation to the state, they are able to mobilize large resources to influence both the political game and public opinion.

Therefore, as a countermeasure against politics that influence how laws are created or modified depending on determined agendas, the course begins to plant the idea among its students that, if legal mechanisms are insufficient to defend them from many sorts of corporate wrongdoings, then they have to take on the responsibility for protecting themselves. The course shows its students that the biggest hurdle for the oppressed to accept such responsibility lies within themselves; in the end, it is comfortable to believe your best interests are being sought after by market players that say they have mechanisms in place to protect you. Such players create a narrative that highlight laws as guaranteeing equality for all, but which clouds the fact that the market establishes a hierarchy of interests, so much so that some are better defended by these legal measures than others.

There is overexploitation of land, soil, water and work, what is the evidence for this? You have the failure of dams, you have water supply crises, we have worsening rates of greenhouse gas emissions, increased contamination by pesticides and an increase in fires, right in itself, right from the destruction of these biomes all the worse in the quality of the population’s food, the return of hunger, so these are all elements that show us that there is therefore a centrality to the issue of land that we cannot lose sight of, right? (#2 Class)

The course thus argues that, like these students, there are others who also aspire to true social changes and are willing to act in order to reach such aspiration. By acknowledging that they are not alone in this struggle, it is easier for the students to embrace the idea that they have a role to play in this broad market dispute, and should not shy away from it. Hence, the course aims to push its students out of a comfort zone by making them realize how defenseless they really are. Only then it is possible to discuss with them the different possible paths they can adhere to in order to break away from their oppression, as will be discussed next.

Educating the oppressed about the paths to break away from the oppressive structure: Teachings about agroecology as an alternative to agribusiness

Freire (1987) argues that the only individuals who can break oppression are the oppressed, since the oppressors have no interest in promoting a rupture from a structure that provides them with power. However, at the same time these structures make the oppressors a dominant being, the act of oppression is not a natural human state, which means they are dehumanized when engaged with such violence. Therefore, the oppressed are the sole ones in this oppressive relationship that can overcome this condition, and restore humanity to all, since they possess, as the author puts it, the ability to love — a capacity their oppressors do not have.

Where there is agroecology, there cannot be violence against women, where there is agroecology, there cannot be LGBT-phobic sensations and practices, there cannot be racism, there cannot be prejudice, so in fact it is a change in the way of life, that is why it is organic in the sense that it comes from the earth, comes from the roots and that actually causes us to make these changes (#1 Class).

The author discusses how the act of loving must be of oneself and of the other, since you cannot truly love thyself if you bear hatred toward someone else. By loving themselves, the oppressed deny their status of inferior, backward beings, cast upon them by their oppressors, and begin to regain their sense of self-worth. This reestablishment of their humanity consequently means not accepting the oppression imposed over them, leading to a rupture from the hegemonic structure that has held them down. By forcing themselves out of oppression, the oppressed dissolve oppression itself, since the concept of an individual being inferior to another is erased, and a new configuration between peoples is established, with all parts involved being considered equal peers.

Consequently, the absence of oppression caused by such love leads the oppressors to also not be able to experience this role, given they are no longer in a relationship of opposites, in which power means inferiorizing another being. According to Freire (1987), once the oppressors accept this transformation, they restore their human condition, making the structures that once created societal hierarchies start to crack. New paths are, therefore, possible to be developed, away from oppression, now that the element that unites peoples is love, which gives them freedom to choose their own destinies and how they relate to one another.

The course offered by ENFF therefore reinforces this orientation that a rupture by the oppressed from the oppressive structure is possible. It presents the idea that an important

element that sustains capitalism is agribusiness, since it is a “new, recent stage of the capitalist exploitation of agriculture... subordinated to the interests of international financial capital with an increasingly present role of transnational companies and with the media as the propagandist of this project” (#5 Class). The course thus berates agribusiness for what it is: “a project of death,” which “harms the environment, conspires against biodiversity, disregards environmental externalities, generates a perverse concentration of income and land, marginalizes the countryside, and increases urban marginality” (#1 Class).

Hence, to counter such hegemonic force, an alternative means of food production, based on an anti-capitalist perspective, is highlighted: agroecology. More than a mode of agricultural production of healthy foods, agroecology seeks to be a grand life orientation, focused on transforming the way peoples relate to the environment, imbricating the former with the latter, in order to overcome the modernist idea that humans are separate entities to nature. It is thus a political instance, socially and historically located within popular peasant and *quilombola* struggles against the white man's oppression and in search of rescuing citizenship and dignity of those oppressed by capitalism. It bases itself on knowledge others that overcome the problems associated to monoculture and the breakdown of biodiversity — inextricably related to agribusiness —, in order to produce food on a scale that humanity naturally demands, but using once subalternized methodologies to achieve this.

This path toward agroecology as a rupture from the capitalistic agribusiness is not a utopian ideal. As the course discusses, the MST have already taken steady strides in this direction; it is, for instance, the largest producer of agroecological rice in Latin America, with vast production chains solely dedicated to agroecologically oriented ways of production. Therefore, any worries related to the feasibility of implementing this sort of food development process in a large scale are dismissed, making it possible to imagine that Brazilian people, especially those marginalized from capitalist markets, can be fed entirely with agroecologically derived foods.

In the long run, the consequence of adopting an agroecological orientation is particularly noticed in the improvement in health of the population, since agroecological foods are produced without agrochemicals, and can therefore help mitigate many harmful physical conditions that foods developed by agribusiness cannot (given how, in some cases, the consumption of these actually lead to health problems). In addition, agroecology demands greater attention to the preservation of the environment, which comes from not only developing products through processes that do not harm the environment, but also adopting sustainable practices throughout the whole supply chain.

agroecology has the knowledge to overcome monoculture and the breakdown of biodiversity, inexorable consequences of agribusiness. Just as it can rescue citizenship and the dignity of small people, it can also produce clean food on the scale that humanity naturally demands with other methods (#1 Class).

The course thus presents agroecology as a response of the oppressed to oppression, one that moves away from the agribusiness way of live, breaking the hierarchical structures that segregate peoples from themselves and nature, making them mistakenly believe they have no responsibility in the well-being of their peers or the surrounding environment. Agroecology, therefore, aims to restore the humanity of the oppressed, given this 'alternative' life orientation is self-sufficient, which permits these individuals to develop a reality tailored for themselves, becoming independent, apart from agribusiness — and, in consequence, its oppressions.

The abolishing of oppression through the adoption of the agroecological perspective results in the once-oppressed becoming aware that their role in society is not about satisfying their individual needs — as capitalism would have them believe. It is about building structures that aim for the collective betterment of their lives, but, most importantly, of all beings that surrounds them, since agroecology stands for an understanding of life that starts with the wellness of the collective so the individual can, as a result, thrive. To be involved with agroecology is, therefore, an affirmation of altruism, which has been one of the most distinguishable marks of the MST. And to act altruistically is, in the end, an act of love, one that recenters live as our main humanly goal.

DISCUSSION: A TRANSMODERNIZATION FROM CAPITALIST CONSUMERISM IS POSSIBLE

When analyzing the educational model ENFF promotes based on the decolonial perspective from Latin America, it is possible to interpret it as a form of transmodernization, since it develops itself from the margins of modernity, and seeks its evolution based on its own particular onto-epistemologies (Dussel, 2012). In consequence, this transmodernist educational project ENFF promotes can also be seen as relating to consumerism since one of its focuses is on self-defense initiatives. However, differently from the capitalist consumerism information model, it does this with the aim of enabling people to understand the oppressions they suffer, so that they can act upon this acquired knowledge and change their surroundings collectively (MST, 2023). As a result, society is strengthened, curbing market developments that harm consumer rights, empowering the individual as part of

a broader cluster, more prepared to deal with social problems that affect this collective.

Through this transmodernist perspective, defending individuals is not about grand judicial structures or legislations, or agencies and organizations supposedly devout to consumer protection. Rather, it is about actions of a more grassroots nature, between the marginalized, in search for independence, which necessarily means raising their sense of self-protection as a measure of safeguarding the whole. In this case, the 'whole' is not only the individual and his peers, but all aspects of society, which include peoples, organizations, governments, corporations, laws, and, especially, the environment, seen as all interconnected elements. Empowerment, in this sense, does not mean being better prepared to deal with corporate wrongdoings; instead, it alludes to having the respect for all forms of life as the center of human efforts, resulting in the empowerment of life, and not just the individual.

As Dussel (2012) underlines, for transmodernity to be fully achieved, many subalternized realities that were disposed of by modernity need to resurface and be seen as accepted ways of being and knowing. The efforts undertaken by ENFF are one part of this transmodernization process, but not the only one. Many other non-modernist models that also develop self-defense initiatives must be acknowledged as other parts of this process. Even though we are not going into details about these in the present paper, it is worth mentioning the enterprises developed by Black consumer cooperatives in the US (Carreiro, 2017) and those based on the principles of *buen vivir* (Brown & McCowan, 2018) as sound examples of such 'alternative' models. Therefore, a transmodernization from the capitalist consumerism fostered by marketing is not only possible, but seems to be already in course.

Considering this understanding, we present Figure 1, based on Dussel (2012), to illustrate how this transmodernization process occurs. As shown, the efforts to transmodernize from capitalist consumerism are not an attempt at substituting this traditional model; transmodernity is, after all, also constituted by modernity. That is why the circles that represent other non-modernist models that develop self-defense initiatives intersect with the one related to capitalist consumerism, since all of them help to form this transmodernization.

The intersection between these circles pertains to the notion that the models they represent all share the common goal of fomenting individuals/consumers self-defense. The difference between them being that, while the capitalist consumerism fostered by marketing is more prone to see in markets a possible path to reach this objective, the other models go for alternative outlooks, more in tune with their particular subalternized *loci*, focusing on non-capitalist, non-hegemonic courses of action.

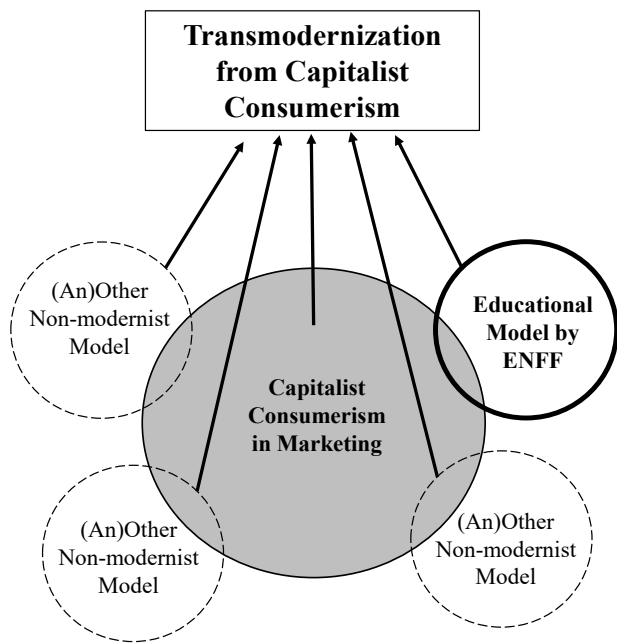


Figure 1. Transmodernization from capitalist consumerism.

Source: Developed by the authors, based on [Dussel \(2012\)](#).

Therefore, in the case of ENFF, its educational model intersects with the traditional capitalist consumerism model associated with marketing because both have in common worries related to (at least) three issues. The two models are prone to the idea that teaching individuals about market practices is important to offer them more clarity on how to defend themselves. In this sense, the latter focuses on informing consumers about the most appropriate behaviors they should adopt, so as to be conscious of their consumption practices (such as comparing the prices of the same product being offered in different establishments), and, in doing this, be better prepared to act accordingly in the market. Differently, the former is more interested in educating individuals about the oppressions markets inflict over them and their peers, by way of discussing the structures that perpetuate racism, sexism, and coloniality over oppressed peoples, with the hopes that this will help them become cognizant of their subalternized status in society and want to fight against this circumstance.

A second issue that the two models have in common concerns the importance of discussing how companies operate in the market. On the one hand, the capitalist consumerism model does this by informing consumers about the quality of the products offered by different companies, based on comparative testing, which results in rankings about which goods are the best for consumption purposes. This, consequently, makes consumers more aware of which companies have their interests at heart, so they can choose more wisely what they buy, supposedly empowering

them in the market. On the other hand, ENFF’s educational model has the objective of showing how corporations are driven toward prioritizing only their interests in the market, putting at bay those of individual citizens or even going against them if this means obtaining more corporate gains. These corporate practices are many times not presented to society as being harmful, so ENFF believes it is important to unmask them as such, so its students can become knowledgeable of these wrongdoings and of how to act countering them.

A third issue that makes both models intersect relates to the way governments act in the consumerist scenario. The capitalist consumerism model describes this agent as using regulatory and legal means to defend consumers from corporate practices that might harm them. So, individual rights are protected because governments help better the market by weeding out corporations that do not comply with regulations and laws. Consumers, therefore, have their interests guaranteed, since besides them is a force up to par with corporations and willing to act against them whenever necessary. ENFF’s model, for its part, questions how successful government actions are in controlling corporate practices, since many regulations and laws are put in place with the interests of corporations underpinning them. Consequently, individual rights are not necessarily protected by such governmental mechanisms, which is why students are encouraged to adhere to other social systems aimed at defending them and society from these regulatory and legal ‘gaps,’ not depending on governments to do so.

At the same time both models share a common interest in determined issues, in many others they do not, which explains why most areas of the circles do not intersect. ENFF, for instance, offers a diversity of courses that, even though are of a critical nature, do not necessarily raise awareness of market practices, since they are more worried with philosophical discussions surrounding life. However, the biggest reason for there being non-intersecting areas between the circles is that non-modernist models are developed by peoples that have been marginalized by modernity, and suffer from the racism, sexism, and coloniality it imposed over them. Their approach is hence aimed at containing these forms of violence, which is why their self-defense models also reflect on such issues. As a consequence, these non-modernist models advance an agenda that capitalist consumerism poorly deals with, since it delimitates a consumerist problem as being strictly related to a consumption issue, disregarding all of the complex social-economic-political-historical aspects that surround it ([Faria & Hemais, 2021](#); [Rodrigues et al., 2022](#)).

This is why the transmodernization from capitalist consumerism is necessary, since the inclusion of the needs of marginalized individuals seems to not be a possibility when

thinking about these traditional self-defense initiatives. As the analysis of ENFF's courses show us, non-modernist initiatives are already working toward rehumanizing their own and helping these individuals to defend themselves of the oppressions capitalist markets inflict over them. However, these efforts can be further reinforced if the transmodern ideal is sought after, since its aim is to create the possibility for an-other *locus* to be constituted, composed especially of all the different subalternized realities once forgotten by modernity (Dussel, 2002). With this being accomplished, distinct activisms will be able to join forces and develop more strength in their collective voice, making it hard to be ignored or silenced. As a result, real social change might start to become tangible, resulting not only in better conditions for all to self-defend themselves, but also, and more importantly, in recentering life as our main humanly objective, as ENFF is teaching us.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our proposal of learning from and engaging with the education offered by ENFF, in order to decolonize from capitalist consumerism, is not a common approach in marketing. After all, it is an effort of transmodernization of a concept that has been kept 'unchanged' in the area since the 1970s (see, for instance, Kotler's papers from 1972 and 2020 on consumerism), when discussions about the subject first emerged in marketing. However, maybe exactly because the last few years have seen a number of authors question the hegemonic structures that are in place in the area, and criticize how they perpetuate racism, sexism, and coloniality in marketing (Faria & Hemais, 2021; Francis & Robertson, 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2022; Varman & Vijay, 2018; Varman et al., 2021), it is more than time for us to not only rethink consumerism, but also marketing as a whole.

The present study has sought to make strides in this sense. We have shown, for instance, that 'other' ways to defend individuals from market wrongdoings, not based on capitalist fundamentals, exists. The education ENFF provides its students not only prepares them to be more aware of the articulations capitalist agents engage with in the market, but also offers them knowledge on how to collectively defend themselves against the power discrepancies present in their relationships with such agents. Therefore, if these arguments we are making are seen as valid, as we believe they are, marketing needs to start acknowledging that consumerism is a phenomenon of much broader delimitations, and of a plural and complex nature, which the capitalist version the area has forwarded is ill-equipped to deal with. We are not saying that marketing should adopt these 'other' consumerist models as its reference, since this would never work given the differences of epistemes underpinning the area and these alternative models. We are not looking here to push for a

radical transformation of marketing; our contribution lies in the attempt to make the area more open to learning about and from distinct outlooks regarding consumerism, so it can better understand how to advance an agenda of consumer protection that truly defends the interests of all individuals.

In this sense, we believe this paper also brings a contribution to marketing in epistemological terms. By adopting the decolonial perspective as our guiding analytical orientation, we not only adhere to a tradition originated in the Global South, showing how a phenomenon in marketing can be theorized based on Southern outlooks, not depending on the Global North for our intellectual developments, but we also forward a discussion regarding an epistemology that is of a critical nature, and (maybe because of this) still scarcely discussed in marketing. And, by all means, if distinguished academics in the area are crying out for 'decolonizing marketing' (Eckhardt et al., 2022), then to develop a study in this sense seems adequate. However, even though we, here, have recognized the importance of such 'distinct' epistemology, and talked about how it underpins one particular and important organization, it is important that other (critical) epistemologies be made evident in the area, so a pluriversalization of perspectives is sought after, countering the universalization marketing has always pursued.

Even though we are here focusing on marketing, we believe the decolonial approaches we engaged with in this paper, particularly those related to Paulo Freire's theorizations, can also bring important insights for contemporary administration. If we look at the way the MST and, specifically, ENFF are run, with its members being greatly involved in their day-to-day activities, sharing responsibilities so a collective consciousness can be reached about how to fight oppression, so strides can be taken toward social advancements, maybe this kind of 'non-traditional' organizational arrangement can teach us another way to think of management, based on the realities of the oppressed (instead of the elites), but for the good of all life. And, if this really is a path management academics and practitioners would want to explore, it is imperative we seek Paulo Freire's thoughts as inspiration and discuss them attentively in the field, since this would bring us more clarity as to how much capitalist management practices are oppressive. Efforts are already being made in this sense, showing us how Freire can help us refine management ideals related to sustainability (Dallyn et al., 2024), social change (Cavalcanti & Silva, 2024), and politization (Shoukry & Fatien, 2024). However, there seems to be a lot more contemporary administration can learn from Freire and decolonialism.

With this in mind, we will continue to pursue this path in our future researches, but hope that other marketing (and management) colleagues join us in carrying on

discussing not only the particular consumerist approach we are here raising, but also develop decolonial analyses related to broader marketing subjects, looking for other transmodernist options that could help the area to both understand its flaws and seek alternative ways forwards. In terms of the MST, in general, and ENFF, in particular, and the inspiration they could bring to consumerism (and marketing), our (meaning us and our colleagues) future research could continue to analyze the online courses the school offers, in order to compare possible findings with the ones presented here, in order to confront our initial results, and improve our understanding of the phenomenon we wish to better grasp.

It could be very well possible that even more learnings might come of this, helping us solidify the idea that this sort of education is more appropriate for consumerist ends than the current capitalist information model. In addition, it would be important to explore courses and disciplines offered by ENFF *in loco*, to participate in the classes at the school and engage with students and instructors. From our experience, they are quite open to this, and having this sort of experience could bring an even deeper comprehension of the educational emphasis given by ENFF, and other possible contours to their critical pedagogy that the online courses might not be able to put forward.

In a wider-ranging frame, it would also be important for our future research to adopt decolonial perspectives to analyze additional phenomena in marketing as a way to discuss the coloniality associated to them, and even present transmodern examples coming from marginalized contexts that could help us overcome this occurrence. For instance (and in line, to a certain extent, with what is being studied here), more research could analyze the education of marketing and the way it disregards many sensitive issues that the area is clearly involved with, but prefers to ‘overlook.’ It is as if what we teach in marketing is sterile, since we talk about concepts, tools, and techniques that supposedly bare no political underpinnings, given they are purely ‘corporate-oriented.’ However, as Freire (1987) reminds us: there is no such thing as ‘neutral’ education, since all neutralities hide options. In this sense, the ‘options’ marketing has made in its educational directions need to be flushed out, and other pedagogical perspectives (preferably, of a transmodernist origin) be sought after, so what we teach in marketing becomes more attached to the realities of the majorities the area tends to ‘forget.’

If we are to advance decolonial discussions in marketing — as some would praise us to do (Eckhardt et al., 2022) —, and stir up future research to follow in this path, it is imperative that we consider the coloniality, the violence imposed by modernity, present in many phenomena in the area. Therefore, we encourage more studies to focus on,

for instance, the coloniality of knowledge in marketing, in order to unravel how only knowledge of Eurocentric origins seems to be accepted as part of the discipline, imposing over its academics a control on the way they develop their thoughts about marketing, dismissing any other kinds of knowledge (especially of a critical nature) that do not align with such dominant perspective. It would also be important to understand how the coloniality of being forces itself over marketing academics in such a way that those from the Global South start believing that they should follow the behavior and actions of their Northern counterparts, transforming these Southerners into individuals far removed from the social and academic realities of where they live and work, since they start to believe these Southern locations and ways of life are less developed in many aspects than those from the Global North. A third line of research could analyze the coloniality of gender present in marketing, in order to unveil the patriarchy, misogyny, and multiple gender discriminations that are present in many dysfunctional social interactions of which marketing is part of (especially in the Global South), but that the area has been absent in dealing with.

It is worth highlighting that any attempts of engaging with a decolonial study in marketing can only be considered as such if a counterpart is given to the extraction of data that any academic research entails. This usually means the researcher must get involved with the causes of the transmodernist reality/movement he/she wishes to participate in, thus helping it to achieve its goals and flourish, on its terms and not the academic’s. The researcher, therefore, must assume a political stance toward his/her research, which is usually frowned upon in traditional circles for not being ‘scientific’ or ‘neutral’ (Castro-Gómez, 2021). However, if we are to decolonize from consumerism, in particular, and marketing, in general, and create less asymmetrical societies, it is imperative to be an activist researcher, for this is the only way to make relevant transformations, so we can start diminishing the hegemonic structures in the area, which hide behind a taken for granted ‘scientific neutrality.’

As we mentioned earlier, it is important to have in mind that the study we presented here is an initial effort by the authors to rethink (and, to some extent, to decolonize from) consumerism. The learnings we gained from watching the courses offered by ENFF is one small step in this direction. Therefore, we hope to continue in this path, to better understand the transmodernist reality of the MST, in order to get more involved with the movement. Hopefully, this will help us further foment the idea that loci outside of the modernist capitalist locus can generate grand contributions for our betterment not only as researchers, but, more importantly, as people, who must be aware that we live in a cosmos — and definitely not in a (an academic) bubble.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors have stated that there is no conflict of interest.

Fast-Track

This article was evaluated on a fast-track basis as it received the award for Best Paper in the Marketing Division presented at the 47th ANPAD Annual Meeting (EnANPAD 2023).

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Authors' Contributions

1st author: conceptualization (equal), data curation (equal), formal analysis (equal), funding acquisition (equal), investigation (equal), methodology (equal), project administration (equal), resources (equal), software (equal), supervision (equal), validation (equal), visualization (equal), writing – original draft (equal), writing – review & editing (equal).

2nd author: conceptualization (equal), data curation (equal), formal analysis (equal), funding acquisition (equal), investigation (equal), methodology (equal), project administration (equal), resources (equal), software (equal), supervision (equal), validation (equal), visualization (equal), writing – original draft (equal), writing – review & editing (equal).

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Data Availability

The authors claim that all data used in the research have been made publicly available, and can be accessed via the Harvard Dataverse platform:



Hemais, Marcus Wilcox; Quintão, Ronan Torres; Barros, Denise Franca, 2024, "Replication Data for "Education by the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes as Transmodernization from Capitalist Consumerism" published by RAC-Revista de Administração Contemporânea", Harvard Dataverse, V1.

<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/BLSJBP>

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