

## Agroecology and food sovereignty: Struggles for justice and healthy food in urban peripheral territories

*Agroecologia e soberania alimentar: lutas por justiça e alimentação saudável em territórios periféricos urbanos*

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**ABSTRACT** In this work, we highlight lessons learned from research carried out by the Nucleus Ecologies and Encounters of Knowledge for Emancipatory Health Promotion (NEEPES) in partnership with the Center of Integration in Serra da Misericórdia (CEM) and the Movement of Homeless People of Bahia (MSTB), in peripheral territories in Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. The research sought to support and systematize knowledge and emancipatory practices of health promotion carried out by these experiences, based on four transversal thematic axes: food, care, housing and environmental protection, in addition to communication. The article focused on collective reflections on the first thematic axis, involving strategies to promote agroecology and food sovereignty, with experiences of production, circulation, and access to healthy food. Based on these reflections, we aim to contribute to discussions regarding the idea of Sustainable and Healthy Territories (SHT), especially through the lessons learned from the systematization of territorial experiences based on the notion of Emancipatory Health Promotion, which points to important contributions from the dimensions of environmental and cognitive justice. The systematization of these experiences highlights a movement of re-existence of traditional and community knowledge, which points to possible paths for the construction of SHT in urban peripheries.

**KEYWORDS** Agroecology. Food sovereignty. Health promotion. Sustainable and Healthy Territories. Environmental justice.

**RESUMO** Neste trabalho, destacam-se aprendizados com pesquisa realizada pelo Núcleo Ecologias e Encontros de Saberes para a Promoção Emancipatória da Saúde (Neepees) em parceria com o Centro de Integração na Serra da Misericórdia (CEM) e o Movimento dos Sem Teto da Bahia (MSTB), que atuam em territórios periféricos no Rio de Janeiro e em Salvador. A pesquisa buscou apoiar e sistematizar conhecimentos e práticas emancipatórias de promoção da saúde protagonizados por essas experiências, tendo por base quatro eixos temáticos transversais: alimentação, cuidado, moradia e proteção ambiental, além de comunicação. No artigo, enfocaram-se as reflexões coletivas em relação ao primeiro eixo temático, envolvendo estratégias para promover agroecologia e soberania alimentar, com experiências de produção, circulação e acesso a alimentos saudáveis. Com base nessas reflexões, visou-se contribuir com discussões sobre Territórios Sustentáveis e Saudáveis (TSS), especialmente pelos aprendizados possibilitados com a sistematização das experiências territoriais com base na noção de Promoção Emancipatória da Saúde, que aponta para importantes aportes nas dimensões de justiça ambiental e cognitiva. Com a sistematização dessas experiências, destaca-se sua capacidade de resistir, a partir de um movimento de reexistência de saberes tradicionais e comunitários em periferias urbanas, que apontam caminhos possíveis para a construção de TSS em periferias urbanas.

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**PALAVRAS-CHAVE** Agroecologia. Soberania alimentar. Promoção da saúde. Territórios Sustentáveis e Saudáveis. Justiça ambiental.



## Introduction

In this article, we present some of the main lessons learned from conducting the project ‘Connections between agroecology, housing and care in the construction of sustainable and healthy urban territories during the COVID-19 pandemic: potentialities for the reduction of vulnerabilities and the promotion of emancipatory health in Rio de Janeiro and Salvador’. The research was conducted between March 2021 and February 2023 by the Nucleus Ecologies and Encounters of Knowledge for Emancipatory Health Promotion, of the National School of Public Health Sergio Arouca of Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (NEEPES/ENSP/FIOCRUZ), approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP/ENSP) with a Certificate of Presentation for Ethics Assessment CAAE 2761321.3.0000.5240, number: 4.656.068. It was conducted in partnership with the Center of Integration in Serra da Misericórdia (CEM) and the Movement of Homeless People of Bahia (MSTB), and funded by the ‘FIOCRUZ INOVA Program – Sustainable and Healthy Territories in the context of COVID-19 pandemic’, registration number 64170465183530.

The research sought to support and systematize knowledge and emancipatory practices of health promotion whose protagonists were CEM, performing in the territory of the ensemble of *favelas* known as Complexo da Penha, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and MSTB, acting in two occupations named Quilombo Paraíso and Quilombo Manuel Faustino, in Salvador, Bahia. In order to attain this objective, the research was structured on four transversal thematic axes: i) agroecology and food sovereignty – involving experiences of promoting Food and Nutritional Security and Sovereignty (FNSS) and income generation in both territories; ii) decent housing and environmental protection in urban peripheries involving environmental protection areas; iii) education, self-care, and prevention against COVID-19 – involving community actions of self-care using medicinal plants and herbs, and the relation with public

health and the Unified Health System (SUS) in COVID-19 prevention; iv) communication and sharing, foreseeing activities and products for experience exchange intra- and inter-territories, and the production and dissemination of educational and training material, written and audio-visual. Besides these thematic axes, the research also sought to deepen the reflection on interdisciplinary and intercultural connections between the notions of Emancipatory Health Promotion (EHP) and Sustainable and Healthy Territories (SHT).

Due to length limitation of this article, we will focus especially on the collective reflections regarding the first thematic axis of the research: agroecology and food sovereignty. However, discussions conducted along the project in relation to the other themes will also be addressed, considering the transversal character, interconnecting actions in these different thematics.

In the course of the project, workshops were held, as well as questionnaire application, field research with observant participation, interviews and focal groups. These debates were animated both by a set of general guiding questions and by other questions named seeder, which deepened the intercultural dialogue. The latter is understood as the exercise of cognitive justice and ecology of knowledges<sup>1</sup>, i.e., respectful relations between scientific knowledge and those produced by social movements and community organizations in their struggles on the territories.

The questions discussed under the theme agroecology and food sovereignty were as follows: How to ensure access to agroecological food, ‘true food’, as a strategy to combat hunger and food insecurity in urban peripheries? Which strategies were mobilized by CEM and MSTB to establish new connections between rural and urban, in articulation with peasants’ movements and the fight against agribusiness? How do actions involving healthy food retrieve and valorize ancestral knowledge? How do healthy practices valorize knowledge and traditions of community and

social integration, such as the production of dishes and festivities?

The project also sought to deepen reflections on the relations between agroecology and food sovereignty, in its relation with issues of health promotion, struggles for dignity and emancipatory processes, construction of communities of well-living, strengthening networks and articulations between different urban peripheral and rural territories, potentialities and limits in the relationship with the academy, among others.

Drawing on these reflections, the proposal is to contribute to the discussions regarding the idea of SHT<sup>2,3</sup>. In this sense, it is considered that the learning enabled by the systematization of CEM's and MSTB's territorial experiences, based on the notion of EHP, point to possible contributions as from the dimensions of environmental and cognitive justice.

The notion of EHP arises from articulating formulations of three interdisciplinary fields of knowledge: collective health, political ecology and the epistemologies of the South, to advance in the understanding of contemporary emancipatory processes around the articulation of four dimensions of (in)justice that traverse different struggles and emancipatory processes – social, sanitary or for health, environmental, and cognitive. Based on this perspective, NEEPES has been seeking to provide support, as shown in the example of the research project that fundamentals this article, to social struggles for health, dignity and territorial rights in rural and urban areas<sup>4</sup>.

Social and sanitary justice are well worked upon by collective health. It draws on the understanding that there is no decent society when inequities make vulnerable certain groups or social classes, allowing usual forms of illnesses and deaths that could be avoided with the effectiveness of established health promotion policies and with the combat against processes of determination associated with social injustice. To these two dimensions of justice, the notion of EHP proposes the incorporation of two more: environmental and cognitive.

The first dimension is related to how is understood the environmental injustice occurring on the actual territories and how to revert it. It implies the comprehension and denouncement of how the hegemonic economic development provokes socio-spatial inequities that engender or amplify risks and vulnerabilities, at the same time they affect territorial rights of peoples and communities<sup>5</sup>. Cognitive justice refers to recognition and validation of knowledge produced outside the academy by different populations that struggle for existence and dignity, especially in the context of the Global South<sup>6</sup>.

For a long time, Latin American social medicine and collective health considered as unquestionable the bases of scientific medicine and biomedical technologies, thus centering its criticism on capitalism's unfoldment and its deep inequalities. Therefore, there was a stress on the idea that the main objective to be achieved, by means of state planning and scientific and technological development, should be to place the indicators of countries like Brazil on the same level as the Global North countries. As a product of Eurocentric modernity, this critical perspective paid little attention to the questionings of the ontological and epistemological characteristics in the understanding of health and its inequities.

It is considered of crucial importance to articulate other dimensions of justice, especially environmental and cognitive, to the struggles for social and sanitary justice, which have been the focus in the past 40 years. It is about expanding analytical and interventional references in a nebulous context in which the current reading keys are insufficient. It is in this sense that the strategic importance of knowledge and practices produced in the struggles of territorial experiences is understood, including when they activate ancestry, knowledge and practices of traditional peoples and communities to advance in the ecology of knowledges and paradigmatic transition in the face of the contemporary civilizational crisis.

The next section will present the research strategies mobilized in the project, including territorial experiences of CEM and MSTB. The subsequent section will delve deeper into the actions related to agroecology and food sovereignty, its relation with popular ecology, and cognitive and historical justice. Finally, we will present our considerations concerning the arguments expressed along the article.

## Research strategies in the systematization of territorial experiences of CEM and MSTB

The idea of territorial experiences is very significant to the way one sees and interacts with the ongoing processes in the pulse of life in the territories. One understands that the idea of experience expresses a 'living gesture' of people, communities and movements that construct the sense of their lives in the struggles for well-living, health and dignity. Experience often joins what science divides, with its rationality and objectivity external to the subjects' lives, "such as body and soul, reason and sentiment, ideas and emotions"<sup>7(125)</sup>.

Given the complexity involved in the understanding of experience, one recognizes the impossibility to apprehend and transmit the full experience, because there are social and political limits that guide this work in a perspective of ethics and the policy of care, i.e., "active solidarity, reciprocity, and cooperation"<sup>7(125)</sup>. However, experiences should always be considered and articulated with scientific analyses, since the latter, on their own, may become disconnected from the lives and ongoing emancipatory processes.

The concept of territory, in its turn, is central to thinking about coexistence between people, as well as different forms of power, oppression and resistance produced in the spaces where the social subjects live and resist. This concept enables to advance in the

ecological and social processes that construct the social space<sup>8</sup>, as much as in the conflicts and struggles existing within the communities around the possibilities of dwelling, circulating, planting and eating healthily.

The concept of territory refers to the seminal dialogue with Milton Santos, the historical and multiscale processes and their territorialities, i.e., the dynamics of 'de/re/territorialization'<sup>9</sup>. The author proposes the retrieval of Michel Foucault's formulations regarding notions of environment, space, fluxes and circulation that connect natural and social processes. For Haesbaert<sup>10(28)</sup>, the territory changes "gradually from a more 'zonal' territory or areas of control (typical of a nation-state) into a 'network-territory' or control of networks (typical of large companies)", marked by new dynamics of 'territorial containment' that define the territorialization rhythms, but also the rhythms of resistance.

In dialogue with these formulations, we sought to advance in the systematization of CEM's and MSTB's experiences and struggles for territory. The relationship with these organizations was strengthened as from NEEPES's Meeting of Knowledges (ESN) of 2019, under the title 'The Countryside in the City: resistances, (re)existences and interculturalism in care and food'. At the time, this meeting represented a strategy for the shared construction of agendas and research issues involving exchanges of experiences and conceptual frameworks on social struggles and emancipatory processes for health, dignity and territorial rights. The ESN joins together partners of the academy, social movements and organizations performing in different territories, in interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogues, with the objective of promoting the making together in the construction of knowledge that gives support to struggles for dignity in the territories<sup>11</sup>.

At the 2019 ESN, two potent questions permeated the debates: 1) How to ensure that agroecological food, 'true food', reaches subjects in contexts of great social and economic

vulnerability? 2) How to work with community practices and traditional knowledge of health care in contexts that unite the countryside and the city? With the perspective of deepening these and other questions, even more so in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, NEEPEs proposed a research project with the participation of CEM and MSTB in its elaboration.

During the two years of its realization, the project developed different research strategies that deepened the participation and the recognition of the organizations, as well as triggered reflections. Initially, a series of workshops were held throughout 2021, with the participation of subjects from CEM and MSTB and inter-institutional partners of the project, such as social movements and organizations, universities and other units of FIOCRUZ, focusing on reflections about ongoing actions in both territories, which dialogued with each of the thematic axes of the project.

Between the last months of 2021 and early months of 2022, the second strategy of the research was implemented, with the application of questionnaires in both territories. The outcomes of this work was systematized and based a set of reflections with CEM and MSTB for the elaboration of materials that present the results of the project.

The third strategy of the research, starting in the mid-2022, involved fieldwork with participant observation, interviews and focal groups.

Finally, between the last quarter of 2022 and the first of 2023, in accordance with the 'sensible collaborative'<sup>12</sup> methodological proposal, the collective reflection was deepened with the territorial subjects on the outcomes of the different research strategies. A series of meetings were held to dialogue about the material produced and qualify it, with emphasis on: i) the production of four intercultural notebooks on the four transversal thematic axes of the research; ii) the elaboration of audio-visual pills produced by youth from the territorial experiences; iii) a documentary on the project and CEM's and MSTB's territorial experiences.

This process of collective reflection culminated in the seminar of the project's finalization, held in March 2023, in which, besides sharing and dialoguing about the final versions of the aforementioned material, there was also reflection on the possibilities of future unfoldment of the research.

## **Agroecology, food sovereignty and popular ecology: promoting healthy food in urban peripheries**

It is important to observe that in the territories of action of CEM (*favela*) and MSTB (occupations), food insecurity and hunger are situations present in daily life, affecting many people. These issues were observed during the application of the questionnaires in the territories, from questions asking whether the participant had gone through or was still going through situations of hunger and food insecurity. In the context of the questionnaire application, (year 2022), these issues became more acute due to the accelerated raise of food prices and the dismantling of social public policies<sup>13</sup>. It is important to notice that the sub-districts nearby the areas of research in Salvador (Periperi and Valéria) and Rio de Janeiro (Complexo do Alemão and Penha) are characterized as 'food deserts': "localities of worse access to healthy food within the municipality"<sup>14(25)</sup>. These issues point to the complexity of promoting strategic struggle banners, such as agroecology and food sovereignty, in vulnerable urban territories, whose 'containments' the experiences must be transposed for the pulse of sustainable and healthy life.

At the same time, in CEM's and SMTB's actions to promote healthy food, from a focus of agroecology and food sovereignty, important learnings are observed regarding the processes of cognitive and historical justice in relation to the 're-existence' of ancestral knowledge

in urban peripheral contexts. The actions also affect a process of community territorial management that unfolds in instigating perspectives of popular ecology, pointing out hints to reflect on urbanization and environmental protection in peripheries of large cities. These territorial experiences highlight effective strategies to advance in the challenge proposed by Ailton Krenak<sup>15(66)</sup>: “how to reconvert the industrial urban fabric into a natural urban fabric, bringing nature to the center and transforming the cities from within?”.

In the trajectory of CEM and MSTB, it was noticed that the themes of agroecology and food sovereignty became strategic struggle banners. Through the years, these two experiences articulated a set of actions around these themes. In the understanding of this article's authors, they point to instigating learnings in relation to the perspectives of facing the dilemmas of hunger and food insecurity in contexts of strong social vulnerability, together with the valorization of food cultures, which subjects bring from reminiscences of a former rural way of life, often rooted in ancient traditions (as those from indigenous and African origins).

A significant learning that emerges from MSTB's experience is the importance of articulating the struggle for decent dwelling with spaces for the production of food and medicinal herbs. In the history of MSTB, the articulation between these struggle banners was being articulated as strategic agenda. Instead of focusing on occupying buildings in urban centers, the movement started to focus on the occupation of land that enabled to articulate the struggle for decent housing with spaces for agroecological production.

The importance of this articulation became clear in the process of construction of the occupations Quilombo Paraíso and, later, Quilombo Manuel Faustino. These two occupations were built in spaces in the surroundings of the Environmental Protection Area (APA) Bacia do Cobre/São Bartolomeu. As stressed by Pedro Cardoso, of MSTB's coordination, as from the occupation Quilombo Paraíso:

*[...] we started to give relevance to this agenda. [...] the conditions in which we are living provided the elements for us to start to develop this agroecological idea of relationship with nature, taking care of the forest, building conditions for existence from inside the forest.*

In this process, there was also a strengthening of the articulation with the Movement of Small Farmers (MPA) and the movements and organizations called Web of the Peoples (Teia dos Povos), highlighting the connections between the construction of communities of well-living with the struggle for housing.

As stressed in the primer ‘The struggle for the city and the construction of communities of well-living’, within the movement, over the years, the idea became clear that:

*[...] a large number of families who are in the spaces of MSTB migrated from the countryside to the city. It was from them that arose an alternative against food insecurity [...]. From this, emerged the proposal of having a collective area to plant<sup>16(23)</sup>.*

With the support of partners, the MSTB started to organize *mutirões* (joint efforts) for the preparation of a first vegetable garden in the occupation Quilombo Paraíso. Therefore, the preparation of these vegetable gardens became a MSTB's strategic action to promote agroecology and food sovereignty in the context of occupations dynamized by the movement.

By means of the collective vegetable gardens, the MSTB seeks to strengthen community bonds around the production and circulation of healthy food, involving *mutirões* to enable the preparation of vegetable gardens and the distribution of food to all the people in these occupations. Thus, the implementation of these vegetable gardens constitutes a strategy to face the logic imposed by the agribusiness and, in a broader way, the ‘food empires’<sup>17</sup>, while becoming important spaces for social and political training.

The productive backyards, together with the collective vegetable gardens, are another strategic action in the promotion of agroecology and food sovereignty in the MSTB occupations. Besides the direct production for the families who produce, the productive backyards are strategic as seeds and seedlings bank in contexts of de-structuring of collective vegetable gardens, as occurred in the occupations Quilombo Paraíso (due to the need to liberate the space of the collective vegetable garden for the construction of the housing ensemble Paraguari II) and Quilombo Manuel Faustino (with its production hampered due to intense rain). In these contexts, the productive backyards are crucial because they preserve the diversity of species of edible plants and medicinal herbs, which can be planted in larger quantities in the collective vegetable gardens when it becomes possible to reactivate them.

With the construction of the occupations Quilombo Paraíso and Quilombo Manuel Faustino, the MSTB also consolidated the proposal of the recovery of a deforested area and the implementation of a Reference Space of Popular Health and Agroecology in the APA Bacia do Cobre/São Bartolomeu, including the construction of a Living Pharmacy. In this process, there was a strengthening of the partnership between MSTB, People's Web and MPA, with the perspective of creating an agroforest in an area of over 35 hectares as a way to restore the APA Bacia do Cobre.

In the occupation's spaces there are several trees, especially fruit trees, both in the backyards and in the communal paths. Thus, besides the proposal of action in the APA area, the perspective of constructing an agroforest also strengthened the process of planting fruit trees in the occupation's spaces.

Another relevant action dynamized by MSTB to promote agroecology and food sovereignty in the context of the occupations is the proposal to create seedling nurseries. With NEEPES' support, a nursery was built in the occupation Quilombo Manuel Faustino,

being the first one in an occupation of the Movement. The perspective is to replicate the experience in other occupations and low-income housing ensembles, with the purpose of ensuring seedlings for the collective vegetable gardens, the productive backyards, and the agro-reforestation in the APA Bacia do Cobre. Another purpose about the nurseries is to create the possibility of income generation for those who are involved, with the partial commercialization of the seedlings produced.

By connecting food and health in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, the MSTB organized the distribution of food baskets in the occupations, housing ensembles and nearby areas, as a strategic action to ensure food security in that period. The purpose was to make it possible for subjects to carry out social distancing, as preconized by public policies to face the novel Coronavirus, hence reducing the risks of contamination and avoid becoming ill. For this action, there was the relevant articulation with several of the movement's partner organizations. As an unfoldment of this action, there was the articulation with MPA for the distribution of agroecological baskets, highlighting the strategic importance of the articulation between rural and urban movements.

During the most intense period of the pandemic, around 500 food baskets were distributed in the occupation Quilombo Manuel Faustino and over 400 in the occupation Quilombo Paraíso. In total, the MSTB was able to articulate the donation of over 4 thousand food baskets in the occupations and housing ensembles dynamized by the movement, as well as to subjects in situation of vulnerability and food insecurity in spaces near the areas of its direct action.

In CEM's trajectory, already during the early years, the agendas of agroecology and food sovereignty were gradually established as structuring axes, driven by the articulation with the Carioca Urban Agriculture Network (Rede CAU) and the participation in the Food Security Council of the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro

(CONSEA-RIO). As from 2013, CEM's actions became dynamized around these thematics.

Since 2015, with the formation of the Local Arrangement of Penha, CEM started to articulate a network focused on the promotion of Urban Agriculture (UA), involving an agroforest located at its headquarters and agroecological backyards among the inhabitants of Complexo da Penha. As stressed by Ana Santos, one of CEM's idealizers and manager, from that moment on:

*we started to understand that the demand was urban agriculture and how it occurred in different spaces. This was when we gained strength in daycare centers, cultural centers and backyards.*

In 2017, typical tensions of vulnerable territories as *favelas* hampered the permanence of CEM in its headquarters, engendering numerous difficulties, but also a certain transformation in its perspective of performance. Drawing on this context, dissemination actions of the Local Arrangement of Penha were dynamized, as well as CEM's connection with the different demands emerging from the territory. As Ana Santos points out:

*[...] at the [former] headquarters, we had a large production, as a certified agroforest. With the loss of the headquarters, we started to strengthen even more the work in the backyards and collectivized spaces and the process of listening advanced [...] to understand that in order to make urban agriculture one must not necessarily have to plant. The women wanted to be in the kitchen, they wanted to change food habits and they wanted to work on the issue of medicinal herbs. The daycare center already wanted teaching methodologies to work with the children on the theme of urban agriculture [...]. Then we started to create micro-networks of dialogue with the axis of urban agriculture and food sovereignty, but not necessarily with everybody planting.*

In 2019, CEM achieved articulating a space to build the new headquarters, in the area

named Promised Land (Terra Prometida), in Serra da Misericórdia. Presently, the spaces of production of food and medicinal herbs articulated with the Local Arrangement of Penha comprise an agroforest and a seedling nursery in CEM's headquarters, and plus seven productive agroecological backyards in Serra da Misericórdia, dynamized mainly by youth and women. It is important to highlight, in this sense, CEM's focus on actions with women, youth and children.

In the occupation process of Promised Land, the innovative and emancipatory relevance can be observed from a perspective of housing that articulates the dwelling space with the production of food and medicinal herbs and plants. The territory's landscape clearly shows this differentiated logic of occupation, crucially important to ensure green corridors and the protection of the territory.

The productive agroecological backyards dynamized by CEM are strategic, both to produce food for the territory and to boost other actions around the thematics of agroecology and food sovereignty. In this sense, it is noteworthy the action in the community named 'coffee with politics', with the performance of *mutirões* that trigger the discussion of several themes with the people involved with CEM, as for example, the valorization of traditional knowledge and the retrieval of food culture in relation to the production in the backyards.

The Agroecology School is another strategic action dynamized by CEM with children and youth, disseminating the dialogue around the thematics of agroecology and food sovereignty in the territory. This issue became explicit with the application, by the project, of the questionnaire with dwellers of Serra da Misericórdia. The respondents were divided into three groups: i) those who participate directly in the actions of CEM; ii) those who participate indirectly, from the activities carried out with children and youth; and iii) those who do not participate. It was observed that among those who participate directly in CEM, and



those families with children at the Agroecology School, several thematics that are in the agenda of CEM were better known and the respondents were able to dialogue more easily.

Another issue worthy of note is the Collective Kitchen of the Collective of Women in Action. The kitchen is understood as an important space of political action, as stressed by Ana: “for us, the kitchen is the fighting trench...”. It is a trench with various dimensions of fight. For example: for another perspective on decolonial and intersectional feminism, which questions female liberation from the kitchen space as a banner of a hegemonic feminism based on the liberation of middle-class women, through the maintenance of submission and oppression of economically vulnerable women, mostly from African descent, to work as domestic workers, not rarely in conditions analogous to slavery. Therefore, besides generating income for women within the *favela*, the collective kitchen contributes to the valorization of ancestral knowledge about food, in dialogue with agroecology and food sovereignty. It is also a strategy of communication through food with the people on the territory and other places in the social space.

This set of CEM’s actions shows the complexity involved around the idea of UA from an agroecological and food sovereignty perspective. Besides the potentialities of these actions to contribute to combating hunger and food insecurity by means of food production in urban contexts, emancipatory experiences such as those of CEM seem to show an extended understanding of UA, involving a broad multiplicity of practices, arrangements, scales, spaces, and subjects, which point to:

The possibility of multiple reaches, simultaneously, not only with the objective of meeting the demand for food in the city, but highlighting the unequivocal contribution of UA to food and nutrition security<sup>18(52)</sup>.

In the context of the pandemic, CEM also articulated the distribution of food baskets

to subjects of its territory, a strategy action to ensure food security and so that people would be able to have the option to restrict their circulation. It was crucially important to articulate with several partner organizations, especially Family Farming and Agroecology – AS-PTA, together with whom CEM achieved to articulate the donation of over 500 agroecological baskets.

In CEM’s and MSTB’s strategies to promote access to food in urban peripheral contexts, it is also possible to observe an important learning regarding the understanding of healthy food. It is not only about ensuring access to nutritionally adequate food, but also about taking into consideration the fact that these are pesticide-free and are in syntony with food cultures of the territory’s subjects. This is opposed to the logic and frailties of the industrial agri-food system<sup>2</sup>.

Drawing on the actions presented, one can see that CEM and MSTB also focus on a process of territorial community management that unfolds into a potent perspective of popular ecology, pointing to other possibilities of urbanization and environmental protection in the peripheries of large cities<sup>19</sup>. In this sense, one understands that territorial experiences as those of CEM and MSTB express instigating paths that respond to the call of Krenak<sup>15(71)</sup>:

Let us build a forest, suspended gardens of urbanity, where there can exist some more desire, joy, life and pleasure, instead of tiles covering streams and rivers. After all, life is wild; it also emerges in the cities.

## Final considerations: ‘seed-ruins’ for emancipatory reconnections rural-urban

In the effort of synthesis of the multiple learnings made possible by carrying out the research, we highlight that despite the

vulnerability processes that mark the territories of CEM's and MSTB's actions, e.g., the situations of hunger and food vulnerability, these experiences have articulated various strategic struggle fronts to face contexts characterized by oppression, violence and radical exclusions. We understand that especially in relation to actions conducted to promote healthy food from an agroecological approach, in articulation with other struggle fronts, it was possible to highlight how much these territorial experiences have promoted emancipatory processes. These involved struggles for food security and sovereignty, as well as environmental protection from a popular ecology perspective, which is crucially important to promote health, dignity and territorial rights in urban peripheral territories.

From the perspective of environmental and cognitive justice, we consider that it has been possible to highlight the contribution of territorial experiences, such as those of CEM and MSTB, as to expand the horizons of the collective health field in relation to other possibilities of future, beyond the protection against becoming ill in a pandemic period. But, most of all, that it has been possible to point out paths for a paradigmatic transition in the face of the civilizational crisis that the society encounters in the present days.

These experiences express the emergence of dreams and hope, which insist in arising, even in the face of recurrent attempts of silencing, with a set of absences, exclusions and racisms that were historically imposed to subjects who live in peripheral contexts of cities like Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. Their capacity to resist, drawing on a movement of re-existence of traditional and community knowledge in urban peripheries, points to instigating paths for the proposal of construction of SHT, promoting access to 'true food', agroecological food, in spaces of socioeconomic vulnerability. Thus, the importance of taking into consideration territorial experiences as those of CEM and MSTB is highlighted to reflect about public policies that seek to support the construction

of sustainable and healthy cities, with more justice, inclusive and democratic.

The perspective of NEEPES, MSTB and CEM, besides other academic partners, is to give continuity to the issues that emerged from the research on which are based the reflections presented in this article. The aim is to delve deeper into these issues, in conceptual and methodological terms, as well as in relation to the support to social struggles in both territories.

One highlight of the research was the importance of retrieving and valorizing ancestral knowledges and practices in the territories under study. We propose that this issue be further studied in future projects, bearing in mind the complexity required by the theme. Nevertheless, it is observed that the idea of retrieval and valorization of ancestry is pointed out from different perspectives: creole seeds, ancestral knowledge, practices of care, among others.

This process points to a permanent movement of reconnections between rural and urban, by means of the emergence of 'seed-ruins', which can flourish and emerge as paths to an ecology of knowledges and a deep civilizational transition. In this sense, it is understood that the idea of 'seed-ruins' can contribute to emphasizing the importance of ancestral knowledges related with the ways of life of traditional peoples and communities, for experiences of agriculture in urban spaces. As stressed by Santos<sup>7(282)</sup>, 'seed-ruins':

[...] are an absent present, simultaneously memory and alternative future. They represent all what the groups made subaltern recognize as original and authentic concepts, philosophies and practices, which although historically defeated by modern capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, are alive not only in the memory but also in the interstices of daily life of exclusion and discrimination, and are a source of dignity and hope in a post-capitalist and post-colonial future.

In the new connections established between rural and urban, drawing on the experiences of agriculture in the cities, as with the protagonism of CEM and MSTB, knowledges and ways of being and existing of peasants, indigenous, afro-descendants, and other traditional peoples and communities are placed as 'seed-ruins', which can germinate and flourish. Therefore, it is about dynamics and possibilities of bridges, capable of interlinking past, present and future, not as rigid and crystalized spaces, but as dynamic, pointing to multiple possibilities of constructing pluriverses<sup>20</sup>.

## Collaborators

Palm JL (0000-0002-4697-8827)\* contributed to conception and planning, data collection, analysis and interpretation, writing and elaboration, and approval of final version of

the manuscript. Porto MF (0000-0002-9007-0584)\* contributed to conception and planning, revision, and approval of final version of the manuscript. Fasanello MT (0000-0003-4759-5075)\* contributed to conception, critical intellectual review, and approval of final version of the manuscript. Rocha DF (0000-0002-7909-2125)\* contributed to writing, elaboration, critical intellectual review, and approval of final version of the manuscript. Souza J (0009-0003-1196-8666)\* contributed to data analysis and interpretation, critical intellectual review, and approval of final version of the manuscript. Santos APC (0009-0003-9269-001X)\* contributed to data collection, and approval of final version of the manuscript. Santos RCF (0009-0000-5225-4078)\* contributed to conception and planning, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and approval of final version of the manuscript. ■

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