GENEVA GRADUATE INSTITUTE

INSTITUT DE HAUTES ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES ET DU DÉVELOPPEMENT

GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Weaving a Patchwork Political Project: Transnational Feminist Mobilization and the Struggles of Peasant and Rural Women in Brazil

THESIS
submitted at the Graduate Institute
of International and Developments Studies in
fulfilment of the requirements of the PhD
degree in International Relations/ Political Science

by

Carolina FONTES DOS SANTOS

Thesis N° 1608

Geneva
2025

Weaving a Patchwork Political Project:
Transnational Feminist Mobilization and
the Struggles of Peasant and Rural Women in Brazil

INSTITUT DE HAUTES ETUDES INTERNATIONALES ET DU DEVELOPPEMENT
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Weaving a Patchwork Political Project: Transnational Feminist Mobilization and the Struggles of Peasant and Rural Women in Brazil

THESIS
submitted at the Graduate Institute
of International and Developments Studies in
fulfilment of the requirements of the PhD
degree in International Relations/ Political Science

by

Carolina FONTES DOS SANTOS

Thesis N° 1608

Geneva
2025

Carolina FONTES DOS SANTOS

Sur le préavis de Elisabeth PRÜGL, professeure honoraire de l'Institut et directrice de thèse, de Annabelle LITTOZ-MONNET, professeure à l'Institut et membre interne du jury, et de Shirin RAI, Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS University of London, UK et experte externe, la directrice de l'Institut de hautes études internationales et du développement autorise l'impression de la présente thèse sans exprimer par là d'opinion sur son contenu.

Le dépôt officiel du manuscrit, en 4 exemplaires, doit avoir lieu au plus tard le 5 janvier 2026.

Genève, le 1er décembre 2025

Marie-Laure Salles
Directrice

Thèse N°1608

RESUME/ABSTRACT

Titre de la thèse/ Title of thesis: Tisser un projet politique en patchwork : Mobilisation féministe transnationale et luttes des femmes paysannes et rurales au Brésil / Weaving a Patchwork Political Project: Transnational Feminist Mobilization and the Struggles of Peasant and Rural Women in Brazil

Résumé en français: Cette thèse examine la mobilisation féministe transnationale dans le domaine de la gouvernance alimentaire mondiale, en se concentrant sur les expériences et les pratiques politiques des mouvements de femmes paysannes et rurales au Brésil. En analysant leur engagement à la fois local et transnational, je montre comment ces mouvements articulent un projet politique contre-hégémonique qui remet en question le système alimentaire mondial dominant. Je soutiens que ce projet alternatif est tissé à travers de multiples articulations entre les mouvements populaires, sociaux et transnationaux. Je propose un cadre de patchwork-tissage, ancré dans une perspective décoloniale, pour comprendre la construction des solidarités et de ce projet politique au sein de la mobilisation féministe transnationale. L'acte de tisser ce projet politique, lié par des fils d'affection et une éthique du soin, honore la pluralité des luttes qui envisagent collectivement une transformation systémique. Cette métaphore met en avant les savoirs, les pratiques et les formes de résistance des femmes rurales et des peuples autochtones à travers le Brésil et l'Amérique latine. Je soutiens que la nature décoloniale des épistémologies et des méthodologies émergentes dans la région est fondamentale pour la poursuite de ce patchwork et pour le renforcement des solidarités transnationales dans des espaces politiques tels que le Mécanisme de la société civile et des peuples autochtones (CSIPM). En m'appuyant sur le non-structuralisme gramscien et sur un matérialisme historique féministe, j'examine le processus de négociation au sein du groupe de travail sur le genre du Comité de la sécurité alimentaire mondiale (CSA), afin de comprendre comment ces mouvements, organisés par l'intermédiaire du CSIPM, se sont engagés de manière subversive dans la contestation des injustices, de l'oppression et de l'exploitation du système hégémonique. Je soutiens que les crises et les contradictions générées par les systèmes alimentaires néolibéraux ont également créé des ouvertures pour la mobilisation, et des opportunités que les femmes rurales et paysannes ont saisies pour faire avancer leur projet politique, centré sur la souveraineté alimentaire comme alternative radicale.

English summary: This thesis examines transnational feminist mobilization within the field of global food governance, focusing on the experiences and political practices of peasant and rural women's movements in Brazil. Through an analysis of their engagement on the ground and transnationally, I illustrate how these movements articulate a counter-hegemonic political project that challenges the dominant global food system. I argue that this alternative project is woven through multiple articulations among grassroots, social, and transnational movements. I propose a patchwork-weaving framework, grounded in a decolonial perspective, to understand the construction of solidarities and of this political project within transnational feminist mobilization. The act of weaving this political project, bound together through threads of affection and an ethics of care, honors the plurality of struggles that collectively envision systemic transformation. This metaphor foregrounds the knowledge, resistance, and practices of rural women and Indigenous Peoples across Brazil and Latin America. I suggest that the decolonial nature of the epistemologies and methodologies emerging in the region is fundamental to the continuation of the patchwork and to the strengthening of transnational solidarities in political spaces, such as the Civil Society and Indiginous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM). Drawing on Gramscian non-structuralism and on a feminist historical materialism lens, I examine the negotiation process within the gender workstream of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to grasp how these movements, organized through the CSIPM, engaged subversively in contesting the injustices, oppression, and exploitation of the hegemonic system. I argue that the crises and contradictions produced within neoliberal food systems have also created openings for mobilization, and opportunities seized by rural and peasant women to advance their political project centered on food sovereignty as a radical alternative.

To my parents, Isabel and Claudio

Eu não sou um intelectual, escrevo com o corpo.

Clarice Lispector

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the result of years of fieldwork and exchange with women in the Brazilian countryside, during marches and demonstrations, social movement events, and conferences in Rome. I am deeply grateful to the women I spoke with during fieldwork, whether in Brazil, in Rome, online, or over the phone. Thank you for the kindness of your time and for sharing your stories, your lives, your dreams, and your grievances with me.

To the peasant and rural women in Brazil who welcomed me into your homes and shared your gardens, your work, your struggle, and your knowledge: this thesis belongs to you. It is rooted in your courage and strength, and in your tireless fight for social justice and a better world. It stands on your struggle for autonomy and your relentless commitment to bringing other women along with you. *Companheira, me ajuda que eu não posso andar só. Eu sozinha ando bem, mas com você ando melhor.*

To the women and non-cis-heteronormative members of the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism, thank you for welcoming me into the group, for your trust, and for including me in the vital work you carry out within the Mechanism. I remain in deep admiration of the group's strength and of what it meant to be a part of it. It has been powerful to witness the care cultivated among members, the tireless work in preparing for negotiations, and the spirit of subversion you carry into the building of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome.

My deepest appreciation goes to my academic mentor, Elisabeth Prügl, who accompanied me throughout this thesis: thank you for your generosity, patience, and unwavering academic support. Since our first meeting in Rio de Janeiro, I have learned so much from you and grown

immensely, both intellectually and critically. I am truly grateful for your belief in me and for continually inspiring me to move forward.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support I received throughout the years of PhD from the Geneva Graduate Institute, the Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (Sylff Foundation), and the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation. Without this support and recognition of my research potential, this work would not have materialized.

I am also thankful for my friends, Daliane Castanho and Fernanda Torres, who, despite the distance, always cheered me up and listened to me, with affection and care, as I shared the adventures of my PhD journey.

Finally, to my parents, Isabel Cristina Fontes dos Santos and Claudio Antonio dos Santos, to whom I dedicate this thesis. None of this would have been possible without your unconditional love and support. You have always stood by me, encouraging even my wildest dreams, and for that, I will be eternally grateful.

Contents

List of commonly used acronyms

Acronym	Full Name	English Translation
CFS	Committee on World Food Security	
CLOC	Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo	Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations
CONTAG	Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura	National Confederation of Agricultural Workers
CSIPM	Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism	
MMC	Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas	Peasant Women's Movement
MMTR-NE	Movimento da Mulher Trabalhadora Rural do Nordeste	Rural Workers Women's Movement of the Northeast
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra	Landless Workers' Movements
Red LAC	Red de Mujeres Rurales de América Latina y el Caribe	Network of Rural Women of Latin America and the Caribbean
UN	United Nations	
WG	Working Group	
WMW	World March of Women	

Introduction

This thesis examines transnational feminist mobilization within the field of global food governance, drawing on the experiences and practices of peasant and rural women's movements in Brazil. I encountered discussions on transnational feminist literature and the engagement of feminist activism and mobilization within the context of international governance just before applying for the doctoral programme. The topic immediately captured my interest, as I was deeply involved in feminist action in Brazil, particularly through the "Ele Não[1]" ("Not Him") mobilization in 2018, which opposed the rise of a misogynistic, racist, homophobic, and authoritarian presidential candidate. At the same time, I was considering applying for a PhD abroad as a way to distance myself from that emerging political scenario. The intersection of theory and practical activism has always driven me, and I was excited about the prospect of writing from this perspective.

This enthusiasm resonates with the notion of a merged political practice that intertwines theory and praxis, as presented by Elisabeth Prügl (2020) in reference to the methodological approach developed by Marysia Zalewski:

> Rather than creating theory that can be used, we should think of theorising as a way of life, an everyday activity, a practice rather than a prelude to praxis. Opening up the matter in this way, she also questions the privileged position of the academic; if theorising is an everyday activity then perhaps the activist also is a theorist and the academic also is a practitioner. Politics then is no longer relegated to activists and practitioners; it is also something that theorists are engaged in. Theory and praxis are collapsed into the practice of theorizing (Prügl, 2020, p. 6).

[1] The "Ele Não" movement was a mass feminist-led protest in Brazil, which emerged in 2018 in reaction to Jair Bolsonaro's presidential candidacy. The phrase "Ele Não," meaning "Not Him," became a powerful rallying cry against Bolsonaro's misogynistic, racist, homophobic, and authoritarian positions. It marked a historic moment that brought millions of people to the streets across Brazil and in cities around the world in September 2018, united in protest against his candidacy.

At the same time, I became aware of an ongoing discussion on rural women and gender within the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), as well as the engagement of feminist movements in this international policy space. Not only were peasant and rural women's movements from Brazil involved in these negotiations, but a Brazilian coordinator of one of these grassroots movements – whose organization was also part of La Via Campesina – had been actively participating and taking on a leadership role in the process.

That was when I began to recognize and genuinely appreciate the vibrancy of rural women's movements in Brazil. The topic immediately resonated with me – not only because their anti-capitalist struggle defines them, but also because, given my background in international political economy, it aligned closely with my own standpoints.

Within the framework of food systems, many women, non-cis heteronormative individuals, social movements, and various organizations are leading the efforts to connect grassroots movements with international policy spaces. They have been reaching the Rome-based intergovernmental organizations through a variety of interconnected relationships between those movements and the people who comprise them.

One of the main institutions these movements interact with is the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), created under the United Nations mandate, established in Rome, and working in close relation with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). After the food and energy crisis of 2008–2009, and in response to critiques highlighting the problematic nature of neoliberal economic practices that contributed to the crisis, the Committee was reformed in 2009 to include civil society members alongside representatives of business interests in its policy process.

The CFS has thus become an important policy space within the global governance of food security and nutrition, as small-scale food producers and farmers, who had no access to international discussions at the Committee before the 2009 reform, became full participants

rather than mere observers of intergovernmental negotiation. Social movements, activists, and other civil society organizations gained the ability to coordinate their engagement in the CFS in an autonomous manner through the establishment of the Civil Society and Indigenous People's Mechanism (CSIPM), an "open and inclusive space" for coordinating these organizations on various issues related to people affected by food insecurity and malnutrition, including women and gender topics. The mechanism was established in 2010 as an autonomous body within the Committee, with the aim of engaging various organizations working in these areas.

The CSIPM is composed of several Working Groups that focus on specific thematic areas. These groups aim to articulate common civil society positions on key issues discussed in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) policy negotiations. The currently active CSIPM Working Groups include Urban and Peri-Urban Food Systems, Global Food Governance, Protracted Crises, Monitoring, Women and Gender Diversities, and Youth. My focus is on the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group, as it constitutes one of the main spaces where peasant and rural women actively engage in global food governance processes.

The development of the gender topic within the Committee, and its mandate to produce Voluntary Guidelines[2] on the subject, marked a significant participation by rural women and non-cis heteronormative individuals in these policy spaces, through the creation of the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group in the framework of the CSIPM. This effort aims to defend their rights and autonomy, as well as to dismantle patriarchal norms that influence food systems. While challenging gender binaries and the systems that perpetuate them, the group articulates a common position and subversively engages in contesting the injustices, oppression,

[2] The CFS Voluntary Guidelines serve as non-binding legal frameworks that inform the formulation of public policies at national, regional, and local levels, as well as the work of United Nations agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The mandate to elaborate the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender and Women's and Girl' Empowerment was established in 2019 by the CFS Multi-year Programme of Work.

and exploitation of the capitalist system, by constructing solidarity among themselves. But how did peasant and rural women come to occupy this space?

Peasant and rural women are forging transnational connections by sharing their ideas and local knowledge, engaging in transnational articulations to gain political space and influence negotiations within the Committee on World Food Security – a gendered arena shaped by a masculinist intergovernmental structure. They access this international forum through the confluence[3] of their political projects, leveraging collective mobilization to amplify their voices and construct a counter-hegemonic project as an alternative to the dominant, hegemonic food system. The hegemonic project in the food system refers to the dominance of states, institutions, corporations, and agribusiness sectors that promote a globalized, industrial model of agriculture and food distribution, one that prioritizes profit over people and the environment. This model typically undermines traditional, local, and agroecological food practices, while reinforcing inequalities in resource access, land ownership, and food sovereignty. It reflects the neoliberal capitalist structure, reproduces existing power dynamics and capital accumulation. In the aftermath of the 2007–2008 global food crisis, the financialization of agriculture emerged as a dominant pattern, driven by speculation in agricultural commodity markets and the intervention of financial institutions, further exacerbating hunger and inequality.

With this in mind, the questions that guide this work are: How do grassroots peasant and rural women's movements transnationally weave together a counter-hegemonic project in opposition to the dominant capitalist model? How does this process unfold within the Brazilian context? And how is this alternative project reflected in global food governance, particularly within the context of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)?

[3] Drawing on Ailton Krenak (2022), I use the term confluence rather than convergence, as the former acknowledges divergences and contradictions as integral to the process of collective action, rather than implying an unquestionable unity. This notion will be further explored in chapter two.

My aim is to understand how grassroots movements assert their presence in politics of food governance within international policy spaces. I focus on Brazilian grassroots movements to analyze this dynamic because, in addition to being familiar with the country's context and reality – including its activism and social mobilization – Brazilian grassroots movements have strong connections with transnational organizations, such as La Via Campesina and the World March of Women. Moreover, Brazilians have contributed significantly to developing methodologies currently employed by the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism for engaging with the Committee on World Food Security.

This is not to suggest that there is something inherently unique about feminist women in rural areas of Brazil or their ideas, demands, and policy recommendations that enables them to shape policies in the international arena. Rather, it is to highlight that they are gaining space and voice in these global forums, alongside marginalized peasant women from other countries who face similar constraints. At the same time, this work acknowledges the specificities and national particularities of each context – differences that do not prevent these women from engaging with other movements. This makes it all the more important to closely examine their experiences and actions on the ground.

Before proceeding, I will situate myself within the context of this research, reflecting on my positionality and how I relate to the power structures embedded in our society.

Place of speech

Following Brazilian feminist scholars, I want to make a point about the notion of the 'place of speech' (*lugar de fala* in Portuguese). This concept has been widely discussed in Brazilian social and political debates, yet it remains controversial and contested. In *What is*

Place of Speech?, Djamila Ribeiro (2017), Brazilian philosopher and social activist, defines 'place of speech' as the social space from which subalternized bodies assert their existence. She emphasizes the collective reflection of Black women on their condition as oppressed bodies, highlighting their struggle for the right to speak and exist within a society that has historically silenced them. In this sense, the concept allows for an examination of the experiences of subalternized bodies by valuing the common place, understood by Ribeiro (2017) as the *social locus* that shapes the collective experiences of these bodies.

Drawing on Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and her argument around feminist standpoint and the intersection of oppressions, Djamila Ribeiro (2017) challenges universalizing propositions regarding womanhood as well as the hegemonic normalization of realities by highlighting the multiple conditions that shape inequalities and hierarchization of social experiences. Such structural (and material) conditions also hierarchize knowledge. The understanding of "place of speech" that she proposes aims to destabilize dominant epistemic structures that silence certain voices and sustain some forms of knowledge as subaltern.

In this sense, a place of speech involves theorizing from one's social position in relation to hegemonic norms. Engaging with this subject is an ethical commitment that requires critically examining hierarchies, inequalities, and racism. This is the effort I will undertake throughout my work. The ethical approach to addressing social and political issues requires engaging in discussions with an awareness that we are still embedded in a system of power relations where whiteness and masculinity determine who is granted the right to speak.

I am a white woman from a privileged economic and social class in Brazil. In Europe, where I am pursuing my PhD, I may be perceived as just another European – until I speak and am recognized as Latina, potential migrant from the South. In Brazil, my access to Western knowledge and practices places me in a position of privilege. Being white in Brazilian society represents a condition that, when intersected with other axes and systems, grants certain

individuals structural advantages. Although I was born in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, I grew up in a socially and economically privileged environment.

Having lived my entire life in an urban setting, I have always had good access to schools, universities, sports, healthcare, and other essential services – a reality that is not always the case in the Brazilian countryside or in impoverished urban areas. This privileged condition has enabled me to pursue a doctoral program in Switzerland. However, despite this privileged position, having been born and having family in the suburbs, I was unable to ignore socio-economic injustices and inequalities, and unequal power distribution around me. As someone from Brazil, I understand the historical context and territorial disputes that shape grassroots movements, while also sharing a common language and certain cultural traditions with them.

The decolonial commitment I have developed over the past years places me in a critical position toward whiteness, racism, social injustices, and the privileges I have benefitted from, despite my efforts to challenge them. I cannot dissociate myself from my political activism. I am a feminist and political activist, and this will likely become evident throughout this dissertation. Although I have, at times, resisted this tendency, I never intended to adopt a neutral stance. I align with Djamila Ribeiro (2017) in understanding that all knowledge production is situated and shaped by the subjectivity of the researcher. Indeed, this commitment, as María Lugones (2010) argues "permits me to search for social organizations from which people have resisted modern, capitalist modernity that are in tension with its logic" (Lugones, 2010, p.742).

This means that my background and experiences are inseparable from the knowledge I study and seek to build, as well as from my insecurities as a feminist South American researcher in the European academy. Through the exploration of feminist epistemic and methodological contributions during my doctoral journey, I have regained confidence in writing in the first person. This is the methodological choice I have made in this work. It also helps me to share and contextualize my arguments and fieldwork experiences.

Tchella Maso (2023), Brazilian professor and researcher specializing in feminist anthropology and feminist theories, reminds us that the theorist has a body that occupies a social position in society, making the act of theorizing corporeal and intrinsically tied to agency and, ultimately, to existence. In this sense, recognizing the corporeality of those who theorize – and its inherent connection to their social and political positions – is essential to situate the process of knowledge production and dissemination. The body offers a non-binary entry point into the carnal materiality of both transgression and power structures, potentially deepening the researcher's connection and commitment to social concerns. As Donna Haraway (1988) suggests in her concept of "situated knowledges," the embodiment of knowledge production is shaped by contextualized experiences and power relations. This approach, which asserts that knowledge is partial and situated, challenges the presumed universality of truth and the neutrality of objective science. It also calls on us to critically position ourselves within these power structures.

Therefore, this thesis research will exercise the feminist critical practice of struggling for alternative knowledge-building in a politics of sciences where there is a prevalence of the dominant and hegemonic knowledge that underestimates marginalized knowledge. For this reason, I draw on feminist methodology, which provides a powerful framework for feminist knowledge construction, particularly in framing research as an ongoing process and emphasizing the importance of the researcher's positionality. This is an attempt to maintain a self-awareness of my method, to be conscious about what I am doing, methodologically and inductively.

I understand the role of the theorizer as María Lugones (2010), an Argentine decolonial feminist and sociologist, proposes – one that seeks to decolonize gender by placing the theorizer within a historical, collective, and intersubjective understanding of the oppressing ← → [4]

[4] María Lugones (2010; 2003) uses arrows to illustrate the antagonistic forces and tensions that resistance introduces into the oppressing/resisting relationship, emphasizing it as an active dynamic. In short, she uses them

resisting relation at the intersection of complex systems of oppression (Lugones, 2010, p. 746-747). It is, according to her, an intrinsically praxical[5] task. This means not only "learning peoples", as Lugones suggests, but also acting accordingly. As she further argues, "feminism does not just provide an account of the oppression of women. It goes beyond oppression by providing materials that enable women to understand their situation without succumbing to it" (Lugones, 2010, p.747).

Peasant and rural women's movements and the objective of this thesis

I draw on the experiences of Brazilian peasant and rural women's movements and their context to illustrate a transnational mode of mobilization and articulation aimed at constructing an alternative political project that challenges dominant and hegemonic sectors in global food governance. This is not merely as a case study, but as a way to demonstrate the relevance and influence of the Global South, particularly Latin America, in constructing and advancing decolonial knowledge and practices within these articulations and thus contributing to the weaving of this counter-hegemonic project. The project they envision for society is grounded in principles of social justice and the elimination of inequalities.

This thesis provides extensive historical contextualization. I argue that comprehending the experiences and circumstances that have shaped the present reality is essential to understanding the current material condition of peasant and rural women in Brazil, the projects they develop, and how these projects integrate into a broader alternative initiative within international governance spaces.

to signify the tension between subjectification and "active subjectivity", a concept she describes as the "minimal sense of agency of the resister to multiple oppressions" (Lugones, 2010, p.757).

[5] Lugones (2010) uses the term in relation to the practice of praxis.

Like Michella Calaça (2021), an agronomist who works with peasant women, “I see myself in all of them – not to speak for them, but to join them, to study what they do, what we do or could do together, and to engage with their writings in order to understand reality beyond my own daily experiences” (Calaça, 2021, p.38). According to her, being a peasant is not an identity but a concrete materiality – one that entails specific experiences distinct from those in urban settings. Therefore, coming from an urban setting, it is essential to this research that I carefully, ethically, and actively listen to peasant and rural women and engage with their ideas throughout the ethnographic process.

Throughout the research process, I found myself questioning how to amplify the voices of these women and the stories they shared with me. Honoring this exchange is no simple task, as emphasized in the anthropological literature. To address this challenge, I chose to integrate diverse interventions, dialogues, and citations from interviews and fieldwork directly into this dissertation. Methodologically, I decided to present these citations in italics, placing them immediately after the relevant paragraphs to visually highlight their stories and interventions. This stylistic choice allows their voices to “jump into” the text, engaging in direct dialogue with the reader. I opted to pseudonymize the participants, therefore I use capital letters to refer to those I am citing or mentioning.

The grassroots movements I follow in Brazil are the Peasant Women's Movement (*Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas* – MMC) and the Rural Working Women's Movement of the Northeast (*Movimento da Mulher Trabalhadora Rural do Nordeste* – MMTR-NE). They are among the most active peasant and rural women's movements in the country, recognized for their organizational and mobilization capacity, access to information, and extensive reach. The MMC, although now present across the country, originated in the southern region of Brazil, whereas the MMTR-NE emerged in the Northeast.

These movements participate in national mobilizations, such as the Margaridas' March (*Marcha das Margaridas*), which brings together various movements and activists around peasant and rural women's demands. Held every four years in Brasília since 2000, the Margaridas' March aims to establish a dialogue with the State. It was inspired by and named after Margarida Maria Alves, a peasant leader assassinated for defending rural workers' rights. In 2019, Brazilian peasant women marched, chanting in unison: "Without feminism, there is no agroecology" (Marcha das Margaridas, 2019, p.14).

These feminist grassroots movements are also organized regionally through the Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations (*Coordinadora Lationamericana de Organizaciones del Campo* – CLOC), the Latin American regional branch of La Via Campesina, and the Network of Rural Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (*Rede de Mulheres Rurais da América Latina e Caribe* – Red LAC). Transnationally, they are also connected and (direct or indirectly) engaged with La Via Campesina and the World March of Women in advancing an alternative political project centered on food sovereignty.

I work with a tangle of movements and groups that overlap and interconnect, forming part of other organizations, which, in turn, come together in the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSIPM) for relations with the Committee on World Food Security. I refuse to understand this tangle as networks. Instead, I interpret it as a patchwork quilt. What makes this patchwork quilt significant is the act of sewing and weaving together with care, respect, and affection. The patchwork quilt also gives materiality to these relationships. The hypothesis is that the Mechanism has evolved into a feminist, decolonial space, inspired by the participation of grassroots movements. Strengthened by members rooted in ancestral knowledge, these movements collectively build a shared project founded on affection.

Analyzing feminist North-South relations as a construction process through the weaving of a patchwork that involves care for each other, affection, listening to others, and solidarity, I

understand the Mechanism as a group of grassroots and transnational social movements that are attentive to the needs of grassroots movements on the ground and, therefore, that follow feminist decolonial methodologies with a view to develop an alternative sociopolitical project.

This mesh of movements, groups, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations is often referred to by acronyms, which can sometimes be confusing, as many acronyms are similar or share the same initials, even when accompanied by a list of abbreviations. Despite my efforts to make them clearer and more accessible, I have not found a simple solution. I hope I have not burdened the reader too much.

Multi-sited ethnography and fieldwork

Guided by a qualitative and interpretive methodological perspective, I adopt a self-reflexive stance in analyzing the specificities of political and historical events, which are essential for contextualizing the research subject. I explore the encounters I had as an "onto-epistemic opening" in the sense described by Marisol de la Cadena (2021): embracing the possibilities and opportunities of "not knowing" and "slowing down the givenness," allowing the "excesses" of what emerges to take on significance. This practice of "not knowing" was not initially a deliberate approach, even though my fieldwork was designed as an ethnographic study grounded in the co-construction of knowledge. Nevertheless, throughout the process, I ultimately allowed the "excesses" to surface, fully surrendering to the experience of "not knowing".

I was often astonished by what I uncovered, both in the Brazilian countryside and in Rome, and these moments of unpredictability and revelation are integral to the analysis. The unexpected played a significant role throughout various stages of this research, including the

adaptation of fieldwork visits to the realities of the COVID-19 era and the directions shaped by emerging findings.

The primary method envisioned to guide this research – tracing people, knowledge, ideas, and, consequently, their activism and politics – is a transnational and multi-sited ethnography. Drawing on George Marcus's (1995) proposition on multi-sited ethnography, this approach enables the study of multiple situated objects and the tracing of people and knowledge in movement. According to Marcus, multi-sited ethnography is a mode of ethnography that:

> moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space. This mode defines for itself an object of study that cannot be accounted for ethnographically by remaining focused on a single site of intensive investigation. (…) This mobile ethnography takes unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity that destabilize the distinction, for example, between lifeworld and system, by which much ethnography has been conceived. Just as this mode investigates and ethnographically constructs the lifeworlds of variously situated subjects, it also ethnographically constructs aspects of the system itself through the associations and connections it suggests among sites (Marcus, 1995, p.96).

In this sense, my application of this method aims to account for the discontinuous nature of the subject of study – mobile and multiply situated – from rural women at the grassroots level to those engaged in negotiations in Rome, including the epistemic and methodological ideas exchanged in the construction of a political project around food sovereignty.

Therefore, the ethnographer is also mobile, navigating through relevant sites. Multi-sited ethnography operates on the understanding that "cultural formation" emerges across diverse locales, rejecting a "local-global" dichotomy in favor of interconnected sites. Everyday practices, agency, and other subjects of traditional ethnography remain central to multi-sited work, though they unfold across "differently configured spatial canvases" (Marcus, 1995, p.98). My intent is precisely to disrupt these binary "local-global" distinctions in order to make sense of the multiple and (dis)continuous interactions that take place in between. In addition to

allowing the acquisition of knowledge that would not be possible without fieldwork, ethnography enables the (co)construction of knowledge through the interaction between the researcher and the women involved in these movements.

Multi-sited ethnography, in particular, is employed to analyze and conceptualize the political space between Brazil and Rome, as well as the transnational dimension of this research. This means that the ethnographic work not only served as a method for observing, understanding, and co-constructing knowledge with women on the ground but also involved following women, activists, ideas, and political dynamics across this political space.

I drew on participant observation to gather information, particularly during conferences and meetings. This approach allows researchers to engage with the object of study using all five senses, learning "through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine of participants" (Schensul and LeCompte, 1999) and providing a holistic understanding of the phenomena studied (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002). It enables in-depth observation, attentiveness to the internal dynamics and routines of organizations, and active participation in related activities, potentially being recognized as part of them by their members (Fine, 2003; Kawulich, 2005).

Participant observation is also valuable for interpreting nonverbal expressions of emotions, understanding the meanings of terms used by participants, analyzing communication patterns and social interactions, and identifying distortions or inaccuracies in the information provided (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Kawulich, 2005). Throughout the process, I became part of the Women and Gender Diversities Group of the CSIPM, fully immersing myself in this experience through participant observation. The close rapport established with members through this method allows for a deeper understanding of the idiosyncrasies intrinsic to the subject.

The initial idea for this project was to begin the multi-sited ethnographic work on the ground, spending time with the peasant women's movements in Brazil, particularly in the Southern and Northeastern regions, to understand their political organization, mobilization, formation, and the development of ideas and demands that emerge in their everyday lives and subsequently follow the gender negotiations at the CFS. It also involved attending La Via Campesina and CLOC Conferences.

This intention was partly frustrated due to COVID-19. The pandemic significantly impacted my research project, delaying the ambitious multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork I had planned for an entire year. The uncertainty of whether I would be able to conduct fieldwork was a significant disappointment. As a result, I began conducting some key interviews online via video or phone calls. These initial contacts were crucial for my understanding of civil society's participation, particularly that of rural and peasant women within the context of the negotiations in the CFS. I also conducted two group interviews online with members of the MMTR-NE from Pernambuco and Alagoas. These meetings were not originally designed as focus group discussions, but rather as field visits. However, with COVID-19 still present in Brazil at the time and considering the number of older members in these groups, the online meetings ended up functioning as open-ended discussions about their routines, involvement in the movement, and its history. Indeed, they turned out to be rich and fruitful discussions with long-standing members of the MMTR-NE, who were eager to share their expertise on the movement by immersing themselves in storytelling.

An unexpected outcome of the pandemic was that I began my fieldwork in reverse, rather than as initially planned, starting with global food governance in the context of the CFS gender negotiations. The process was not linear as after three visits to Rome, I began to intercalate it with the fieldwork in rural areas in Brazil. A new plan, adopted in response to the unforeseen events of the pandemic, ultimately disrupted the linear approach I had initially

intended to follow. At this point, I also realized that such linearity did not exist, as the interactions between movements in the field and transnational movements in global governance were multifaceted, nonlinear and (dis)continuous.

The gender workstream in the CFS also began online via Zoom, and as a researcher, I was able to register to participate. That was when I first saw the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM engaging in the negotiations. As I describe in chapter three, I immediately contacted the group's coordinators to inquire about the possibility of my participation. As a member, I began following the discussions and online meetings of the Working Group. Later, I attended one round of the CFS gender negotiations online, three rounds in person, and a Committee Plenary as part of the CSIPM delegation. This means that, in addition to sitting under the CSIPM flag with them in the main room on certain occasions, I also was involved in the gender negotiation in the context of the CFS.

This thesis was written during the terms of two very different governments in Brazil. A field visit to Santa Luzia do Itanhy, Sergipe, in 2022 to meet with members of the MMTR-NE, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, was marked by a sense of pessimism regarding the regression in human rights and social issues due to the then misogynistic, racist, homophobic, and authoritarian government, but also by a strong determination to revive the movement's activities. I stayed for almost a week at N.'s home, which is now part of an ecovillage in the countryside, established through the compensatory policy of rural settlement, *assentamento* in Portuguese[6] – which I will discuss further in chapter two. At that time, N. was one of the movement's coordinators. Her mother and aunt were also members of the movement

[6] These settlements emerge from the occupation of unproductive or underutilized land, often leading to eventual legal recognition by the government through INCRA (the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform). This process became possible after Brazil's redemocratization in 1988, driven by strong popular pressure despite ongoing resistance from landowners and the agribusiness sector.

and were previously involved in the Landless Workers' Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* – MST).

When I arrived at her house, her ninety-year-old grandfather looked at me – this white, urban woman – and asked N., *Did she vote for Bolsonaro?* I promptly assured him that was definitely not the case, but I noticed that in a typical Workers' Party household, adorned with many posters of Inácio Lula da Silva, a hint of suspicion was still evident. During this visit, I spent time with N.'s family and attended a local MMTR meeting as well as two coordinators' meetings. I observed not only how the movement operated during these meetings but also how it was interwoven into N.'s and her family's daily routine. N., her mother, her aunt, and I sat together as they prepared for the local meeting the next day. I also took that opportunity to ask more questions about the MMTR-NE.

I made a second visit to grassroots movement members of the MMC in the countryside of Governador Valadares, in Vale do Rio Doce region of Minas Gerais, during the first year of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's administration in 2023. This visit was marked by a renewed sense of hope, change, and the effort to reverse the dismantling of the welfare state carried out by the previous government. The choice of region was based on my prior contact with L. through social media, as we had been introduced by a former national coordinator of the MMC. It ended up being a perfect fit, as it also allowed me to observe some contrasts between the Southeast and Northeast regions, the latter of which I had visited the year before during my trip to N. and the MMTR-NE. I stayed at L.'s home in the Vale do Rio Doce Region, and she took me to a local MMC meeting, sharing valuable insights into its operations, as she is one of the regional and national coordinators. She also introduced me to other members in the region, including one of the MMC's founders. T. spoke extensively about her involvement in labor unions and the challenges women faced at the time. She was eager to share her experiences, recounting

how, as a union leader, she confronted local political parties and opposed a private project that threatened to deforest the area, an effort that even led to death threats against her.

L. also told me a lot about the process of organizing the Margarida's March, which was set to take place that same year. She was one of the MMC representatives on the planning body of the Margarida's March. L. explained that although the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (*Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura* – CONTAG)[7] is one of the main supporters of the March, its development and organization were collective efforts, involving various social movements, feminist groups, and peasant and rural women's organizations. As N. had also mentioned regarding the MMTR-NE's participation, the planning body's meetings began a year before the March.

In 2023, the main slogan of the March was **"**For the Reconstruction of Brazil and for Living Well" reflecting the demand for rebuilding the country after the previous administration. Attending the Margarida's March was not part of my initial plan, but after those visits, I felt it would be the perfect opportunity not only to meet both the MMTR-NE and MMC together but also to connect with other movements. Additionally, it was a chance to better understand their collective political construction and vision for the future as a political project.

I participated in the Margarida's March in Brasília in 2023. The March brought together one hundred thousand peasant and rural women from Brazil, as well as some from Latin American countries. The program spanned two days, featuring conferences, workshops, market fairs, seed exchanges, and concerts, culminating in the march to the ministerial esplanade the following day. During these days, I slept in tents with grassroots movement members in the warehouse. I spent time with women from the MMTR-NE, the MMC, the World March of Women, La Via Campesina, and other organizations. Although the event was crowded, I began to notice that I could connect with some women at different levels within the context of food

[7] CONTAG is s a major trade union federation representing rural and agricultural workers, that playing a key role in Brazilian agrarian politics and social movements.

sovereignty issues. For instance, I first met Luz Haro from the Network of Rural Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (*Rede de Mulheres Rurais da América Latina e Caribe* – Red-LAC) in Rome in October 2022, where she delivered a speech at the CFS Plenary, opening the agenda on the gender document topic. Then, I unexpectedly encountered her again at the Margarida's March.

As mentioned before, the ambitious multi-sited ethnography I had envisioned did not unfold as planned, largely due to the pandemic. Time was too limited to attend specific conferences of La Via Campesina and the World March of Women. Nevertheless, as I noted above, I came to realize that I was able to meet their members at related events.

In contact with a member of the World March of Women (WMW) Brazil, I learned about the Latin American and Caribbean People's Integration Journey in Foz do Iguaçu, Paraná, in early 2024. It seemed like another opportunity to reconnect with the movements and organizations I had engaged with, strengthen existing connections, and meet key members I had not yet encountered. As part of the WMW delegation, I was able to spend more time with its members while also bringing a renewed Latin American perspective to my analysis. From the moment I arrived at the event, I could sense the significance of this connection with Latin American counterparts for Brazilian social movements, particularly for peasant and rural women and the political project they are collectively building.

At first, I envisioned that each part of the ethnographic research would correspond to a specific chapter. While this may still appear to be the case, the overall experience ultimately guided me and provided the data necessary to develop this dissertation as a cohesive whole. Although the experience influenced various chapters, the assemblage of interconnected fieldwork findings will be further explored in chapter three.

Some data collection was also conducted through the analysis of conferences, documents, and websites – spanning national and transnational social movements as well as

international organizations – alongside interviews within the ethnographic process and a review of relevant literature. A closer examination of secondary sources, such as documents produced from negotiation meetings at both the international and national levels, was a crucial step in this research. This approach helped me to grasp the ongoing discussions on gender and women within the CFS, the politics of negotiations, as well as the forum's functioning, while also critically understanding how these debates relate to the claims and ideas of feminist peasant and rural movements.

Thesis dissertation outline

In the theoretical chapter, chapter one, I explore debates and epistemological contributions from the literature regarding notions, concepts, and theoretical lenses to examine the subject of this research. I trace the discussions I find useful for making sense of the research question. Initially, my intention was to follow people and ideas from the ground to understand how they make their way into international governance. I review selected norms translation literature to explore the existing debate on the topic, as this literature offers one way to conceptualize my research question, particularly by situating it within a specific International Relations framework. It can serve as a connection between transnational feminism and feminist International Relations, offering useful insights into how global norms travel and take shape in different contexts. However, this literature is also limited, especially when viewed through a decolonial lens, as it often overlooks power asymmetries and epistemologies from the Global South. Although my study does not focus primarily on what is being translated, I engage with this discussion from a decolonial feminist perspective, examining the transnational interactions of grassroots women's movements.

In my effort to conceptualize the social and political space between Brazil and the international governance arenas in Rome, I contribute to transnational feminist literature while engaging with existing International Relations scholarship to frame this discussion. I contextualize the debate and introduce approaches to North-South divides and solidarity beyond borders in order to incorporate a decolonial perspective that centres on the knowledge production and practices of grassroots communities and Indigenous Peoples from the Global South, specifically from Brazil and Latin America.

Transnational feminist movements and scholars reject the univocal view of neoliberalism and its singular conception of globality, arguing that this oversimplified approach masks contradictions, exclusions, and multiple forms of injustice. Instead, they emphasize the importance of addressing the diverse challenges women face within specific social arrangements. Grounded in feminist political economy, I adopt a feminist historical materialist lens to understand capitalist society as inherently gendered. This approach helps me to analyze Brazilian rural feminist movements, which position themselves as anti-capitalist, resisting neoliberalism's dominance in the form of agribusiness and industrial agriculture. Drawing on Gramscian non-structuralist historicism, I understand the emergence of new ideas, social struggles and acts of contestation as part of historical change that extends beyond shifts in social relations of production. From the feminist political economy perspective I develop, such moments reveal that shifts in production are intrinsically linked to changes in social reproduction.

In this chapter I also discuss global food systems, their dominant hegemonic forms, as well as contestation and mobilization around food sovereignty. In view of this, Harriet Friedman and Philip McMichael's framework offers a valuable analytical tool for understanding the political economy of global food systems, highlighting the interconnections between agriculture, the inherent contradictions of capitalism, and the significance of resistance

movements. Building on this, I contend that the contradictions embedded in capitalism and the prevailing structure of the food system have opened up space for the mobilization of peasant and rural women. The crises generated within this system create opportunities for envisioning and advancing alternative models, such as the political project of food sovereignty that these movements collectively construct, offering new imaginaries for global food systems.

Through decolonial theoretical approaches – particularly those of María Lugones and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui – I argue that resistance and the prospect of imagining alternative worldviews are possible. Such a perspective enables us to envision alternatives and possible ways of living beyond Western modern models. I suggest that this alternative counter-hegemonic project, constructed through the efforts of transnational feminist movements, draws on ontological, epistemological and methodological practices rooted in ancestral knowledge from Brazilian and Latin American rural women's movements and Indigenous Peoples, and therefore also constitutes a decolonial gender project. By embracing this decolonial commitment, I develop, in the following chapters, a stitching/ weaving/ knitting patchwork frame to analyze how this project is constructed, guided by an ethics of care pledge to honour intrinsic differences.

Chapter two aims to explore how the interactions of rural and peasant women on the ground, through mobilization in the Brazilian countryside and their efforts to build grassroots movements, evolve into broader connections, both nationally and across the Latin America. I suggest that these grassroots movements emerge within specific circumstances, particularly in the rural areas of Brazil, where extreme material inequalities, patriarchal structures, and colonial impositions persist. I historically trace these circumstances to contextualize the establishment of these movements and their significance. This approach allows me to make sense of the material conditions and colonial subjugation that have shaped the lives of peasant and rural women. One cannot fully grasp the dynamics of transnational social movements,

especially those seeking to amplify grassroots struggles, without considering these local realities and lived experiences.

I argue that these interactions on the ground and subsequently, or simultaneously, within the Latin American region serve as the foundational step, the groundwork, for transnational engagement with social movements, as well as the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism. I suggest that their collective efforts to build grassroots movements – through political education and feminist schools grounded on their reality and everyday experience – led to the development of specific methodologies and epistemologies that reverberated, much like sound vibrations, with other movements and national mobilizations, such as the Margarida's March. This construction is rooted in ancestral knowledge and practices, often dismissed by Western scientific paradigms, which guide the process and enable these movements to envision alternative ways of living and caring. These foundations, in turn, shape the political project centered on food sovereignty that these movements advance.

In this chapter, I develop a patchwork weaving framework to understand how these forms of knowledge and lived experiences reverberate. I intentionally use the term "reverberate" to convey that principles and values are shared among the movements involved in this project. However, this does not imply uniformity or an absence of conflict; rather, the coalition they build is a continuous and active construction. I suggest that the patchwork takes the form of *Fuxicos*: a traditional craft technique that involves reusing leftover fabric scraps, cutting them into circular shapes, and gathering the edges to form small fabric bundles that, when assembled, resemble flowers. When woven together, these bundles create various materials while retaining their own color, texture, and pattern. I argue that by weaving these diverse patches together, the movements are enacting methodologies and epistemologies through praxis, employing affective relationships and care with other feminist rural activists,

with affection serving as the tool to bind these patches. Through this process, the movements and their members remain diverse while collectively weaving their political project.

The deep connections that social groups in Latin America have developed, shaped by shared experiences of colonization, enable the ongoing weaving of a patchwork among peasant and rural women's movements in the region. Through this weaving, rooted in profound mutual care and consideration, the political project of food sovereignty is strengthened. As I argue in this chapter, drawing on Ailton Krenak (2022), an Indigenous leader and socio-environmental activist, this effort does not signify an unquestionable convergence but rather a confluence, in which divergences and contradictions remain an integral part of the process. I also emphasize the significance of this weaving within the Latin American context for the continuation of the patchwork across subsequent scales of connection. This process reaffirms the decolonial nature of the methodologies and epistemologies emerging in the region, contributing to a transformative initiative of transnational solidarities, as exemplified by the practices of the CSIPM.

In chapter three, I argue that the CSIPM represents a remarkable effort in decolonizing practices and knowledge, despite being an organization based in the Global North. Nevertheless, it is shaped by and reflects many epistemological foundations of the Global South, particularly those from Latin America. As such, it reveals methodologies, practices, and knowledge rooted in peasant and rural women's grassroots movements. In this process of decolonization and accommodating differences, the CSIPM has developed an ethics of care, not as a feminized duty, but as a humanizing action, grounded in listening, understanding, and mutual respect. It is this practice that nurtures affection.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how interactions on the ground, specifically through the mobilization of grassroots women, expand into broader connections that bring their common political project into the realm of global governance, particularly within the CSIPM.

This process is characterized by a dynamic exchange in which grassroots struggles and their visions for social change serve as the foundation of a larger movement. While seeking to dismantle the binary dichotomy between the local and the global, I uncover the connections between these poles – often overlooked articulations that manifest through a wide range of interactions among people. By unraveling these interactions within the context of food systems, we find women, non-cis-heteronormative individuals, social movements, and various organizations at the forefront of these articulations. However, these connections are neither linear nor homogeneous; rather, they are shaped by contradictions, multiple layers of commitment, and continuous negotiation. I demonstrate how (dis)continuities, diverse alliances, strategies, and modes of engagement in global food governance shape this process.

I explore the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM's adoption of a fluid understanding of the South/North divide rather than a strict dichotomy, while acknowledging that the Global South often faces deeper layers of oppression. Even with this fluidity, these categories remain politically significant in analyzing global capitalist and imperial power structures. The CSIPM Working Group navigates the challenge of both questioning and utilizing these concepts to address power structures. I discuss solidarity in the context of transnational mobilization, despite these divides, to understand how it unites diverse initiatives into a common political project, binding their struggles together and sustaining their resistance within the gender negotiation process of the Committee on World Food Security. Therefore, this project, built to confront the patriarchal capitalist system that exploits and oppresses women, gender diversities, land, and nature, unites them in articulating a common position through solidarity.

The common political project they develop in this context is 'common' in the sense that it is grounded in shared principles of food sovereignty and represents a counter-hegemonic alternative to dominant food systems within the neoliberal capitalist framework. As the sewing

and weaving of the patchwork expands, as I demonstrate in this chapter, the variety of colors and textures also grows. Knitting also becomes part of the process. Through this metaphorical framework, I make sense of how different social movements and activists – from grassroots organizations in Brazil to transnational movements and the Mechanism – construct this common political project while maintaining their distinct visions, together composing a patchwork of diverse colors and textures, much like a *Fuxico* quilt sewn together.

I present this patchwork sewing, weaving and knitting framework as an alternative to the notion of "bridging solidarity" as conceptualized by Sara de Jong (2017). Sewing, weaving and knitting entails an ongoing construction through active engagement, where affection and care – rooted in ancestral knowledge and methodologies practiced by peasant and rural women in grassroots movements across Latin America – reverberate into the praxis of constructing this counter-hegemonic project. In the same way that I understand solidarity as being constructed through political struggles rather than given, I see affection as a powerful force that unites the group in shaping common positions. As a political tool, affection plays a crucial role in this project, serving as an essential decolonial practice in collectively resisting coloniality.

In chapter four, I explore how the common position reached within the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM reflects their alternative political project: to uphold rural women's rights, advocate for food sovereignty, and challenge gender binaries along with the systems that sustain them. I examine the negotiation process within the gender workstream of the Committee on World Food Security to grasp how they engaged subversively in contesting the injustices, oppression, and exploitation of the capitalist system. I argue that by seizing the opportunities arising from the contradictions within the capitalist system, this political project centred on food sovereignty represents an alternative to the dominant food governance. My goal in this chapter is to demonstrate how this collective political project,

envisioned and inspired by grassroots movements, is put into practice during the CFS negotiations.

I elucidate, through a feminist political economy lens, how this project, developed as a counter-hegemonic project to the dominant food system and in resistance to patriarchal, racist, and heteronormative capitalism, provokes a reaction in the CFS gender negotiations as a counter-resistance force. The emergence of an alliance of anti-gender member states, along with the leniency of economically neoliberal states, including those more progressive on gender issues, in accommodating conservative reactions to the Working Group of CSIPM while advancing the interests of agribusiness, and financial sectors, validates the potential of this alternative project. Such reactions represent a (re)production of the patriarchal and gendered structure of the capitalist system, which perpetuates capital accumulation by exploiting specific bodies and nature through an ongoing process.

Core to this conflict is the struggle between knowledge sharing and access to rights versus control and appropriation, impacting specific bodies, nature, and resources. What is particular to the gender workstream, however, is that the dispute extends beyond its effects on certain bodies to fundamentally revolve around control over those bodies themselves during the negotiations. In this sense, I understand the attacks on the procedures of these negotiations as a violent process that reflects the ongoing use of primitive accumulation and the enclosure of gendered bodies as global capitalist strategies. The continued exploitation and (re)colonization of women, nature, and colonies remain essential for its perpetuation.

The effort to challenge patriarchal dominance and hierarchical power structures through this counter-hegemonic project also involves resisting backlash, including the rise of an anti-gender stance that seeks to uphold capitalism and its intrinsic systems of oppression. The subversion by the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group during the negotiations process and their resistance to backlash demonstrates that – even if the final document within

this negotiation framework was disappointing in terms of a non-binary approach and inclusivity of diversities – their political project continues through the persistence of the decolonial methodologies and epistemologies they have developed.

In this thesis, therefore, I propose a patchwork-weaving framework, which encompasses knitting as well as sewing *Fuxicos* together as an alternative decolonial lens to understand the construction of solidarities within transnational feminist mobilization. Through the analytical category of affection, I explore its value (of affection) as a political practice and tool that stitches the patches and *Fuxicos* together. Affection enables the construction of an alternative political project to dominant food systems by fostering the confluence of diverse policies rooted in ancestral knowledges and grounded experiences. Such an approach allows us to make sense of this construction process, not by erasing difference, but by positioning it as a source of strength and resistance. The attempts to counter the advancements of this project further demonstrate its potential to open pathways for reimagining modes of existence. The contradictions that emerge in the context of the gender negotiations within the CFS reveal that while the capitalist system functions through oppressive logics to reinvent and sustain itself, it is not beyond contestation and political resistance, demonstrating that alternative worlds are indeed possible.

Chapter 1. Theoretical Chapter and Relevant Concepts: Reflections on Key Concepts and Theories

A brief note on social movements

I choose to approach the concept of social movements through a less deterministic framework than that established by the dominant literature on national social movements. This alternative perspective encompasses a broader range of multi-scale activities undertaken by these movements in their pursuit of social change (Gaarde, 2017; Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 2004). My work adopts a concept of social movements that transcends the classical approach rooted in structural Marxist determinism and economic reductionism, or what Touraine (1981) refers to as the paradigms of "classical sociology".

In these dominant approaches, social movements are often viewed as merely reactive to existing structures, rather than as agents of change for cultural and social norms and values. Such paradigms are inadequate for understanding contemporary forms of collective action because, as Touraine argues, they fail to leave sufficient room for social agency and the transformative potential of social movements in reshaping society.

Adding a feminist lens, I follow Touraine (1973) in emphasizing the agency of social actors, their capacity to shape society, and the specific meanings and subjectivities embedded in the projects and visions of the movements being studied, rather than generalizing their struggles (Wieviorka, 2012). This perspective enables us to consider not only the transnational engagement of grassroots social movements but also the actions of global social movements as complex, dynamic, debated, and negotiated processes (Gaarde, 2017; Wieviorka and Calhoun, 2013).

My understanding of feminist movements was significantly shaped by reading *Living a Feminist Life* by Sara Ahmed (2017). She conceptualizes feminist movements as political

collectives, emphasizing that "a collective is what does not stand still but creates and is created by movement," and that "movement requires us to be moved". This conceptualization deeply resonated with me, as it recalled a lesson, I once learned in a ballet class – that to dance is, fundamentally, to move – and, in doing so, to be moved. From that same class, I also came to understand that dancing requires a body – a body that moves through space, across time, and in specific directions, thereby generating momentum. Movement, therefore, has a material existence.

Tchella Maso (2024), in her thesis on Women's Circles in Brazil, describes them as a personal and collective movement and adds the notion of creation and action as a response to an urgent need to pulse. Following Ahmed's argument, feminist movements are constituted by bodies that are moved "to transform what is in existence" (Ahmed, 2017, p.3), including the ongoing realities of injustice, exploitation, and the oppression of certain bodies within capitalism. Furthermore, feminist movements carry their own momentum, as they constitute ongoing processes that entail the "political labor necessary of having to insist" on putting an end to these injustices (Ahmed, 2017, p.6).

The notion of Translation

Susanne Zwingel (2012) applies the notion of translation instead of diffusion to refer to how norms travel, as the former more broadly encompasses different directions, "cross-cultural encounters and transmission of meanings," as well as "unevenness" and the "power hierarchy between cultures" (Zwingel, 2012, p.124). Understood as a cultural process in anthropological approaches, the term usually designates translating cultural practices and lives into written manuscript or other tools, but it can refer as well to "translating a set of cultural categories and

meanings to another", or yet how "concepts and [things] are translated between social and cultural contexts" (Merry, 2006, p.41).

Sally Engle Merry (2006) highlights the translation of transnational ideas between the global and local through activism, particularly in women's human rights. She emphasizes the importance of examining the "people in the middle," who act as translators between national and international domains, for instance, by translating international legal practices and discourses into local contexts where violations are identified. Her work focuses on understanding how ideas circulate and how these translators operate between different levels in both directions – "from the global arena down and from local arenas up" (Merry, 2006, p. 38).

In this sense, Engle Merry (2006) develops a translation framework that accounts for power dynamics by integrating inequalities in power structures throughout the process, not only inside movements and activist groups, but also between them and other actors involved in translation. According to her, "cultural translation can be an act of power, especially when it means reinterpreting one set of experiences and categories in terms of another more powerful one" (Merry, 2006, p.42).

Although Engle Merry uncovers the power relations present in the "middle" that shape the process of translation, she ultimately concludes that the broader structure of economic and political power in human rights activism more commonly reflects a top-down direction – "from the transnational to the local and the powerful to the less powerful" (Merry, 2006, p.49). Zwingel (2012) follows a similar tendency. She suggests that norm creation and ideas translation are not constant processes – particularly in the women's rights regime – and should take into account situated activism and contextualization, as the translation of norms occurs in multiple directions beyond the over-studied "global to non-global". Nevertheless, the author does not develop an analysis of how the bottom-up process unfolds.

Additionally, the theoretical approach developed by Engle Merry does not account for a historical perspective, which is crucial for my work to situate and contextualize the insertion of the grassroots rural women's movements at the international level. By disregarding a historical perspective, it overlooks the complexity of interactions, reducing them to a straightforward channel or path. As I will further develop in chapter three, my empirical work has demonstrated that the participation and translation of ideas of Brazilian rural women and other social movement members is not a linear or straightforward process but rather a complex, dynamic, and sometimes discontinuous flow.

In trying to make sense of these multiple chains and translate ideas, I realized that what stands out to me more than the exact content or outcome of the translation is the process through which these complex interactions unfold. As Gal, Kowalski, and Moore (2015) emphasize, rather than focusing on accurately replicating a "message" or lamenting mistranslation, examining what emerges through the performative act of translation across interactions and social locations enables us to understand translation as a highly generative process.

In this way, I chose to examine the complexity of the politics of (dis) continuities and engagement of social movements, as well as their movement across time and space, through a metaphor that emerged throughout the research process: the notion of weaving and knitting a patchwork. As I will explain in the following chapters, this frame allows me to uphold a decolonial commitment to knowledge construction and to ancestral knowledge from grassroots women's movements, highlighting their relevance in shaping the alternative political project being construction transnationally.

Transnational Feminism

In my effort to conceptualize the social and political space between Brazil and international governance arenas in Rome, I draw on transnational feminist approach to contextualize the discussion within feminist scholarship and activism. This framework also helps to ponder what I previously referred to as the translation not only of ideas but also of the movement of women within these spaces, which are often dichotomously perceived as local and global. While much of this debate may be canonical, I present it here to situate my argument and, on the other hand, introduce a perspective rooted in decolonial approaches, which focus on the knowledge production and practices of grassroots communities and Indigenous Peoples from the Global South.

Transnational feminist organizing has increasingly been associated with transnational social movements, forming a field of study to which feminist scholars actively contribute. As a result of an amalgamation of social movements, networks, and organizations, new understandings and reconceptualization of transnational social movements have emerged. The notion of going beyond and transcending nation-state-based movements – although these movements generally remain connected to the state in some way – has been a key theoretical contribution to transnational social movements (Desai, 2013; Desai, 2005). However, feminist transnational social movements can also be understood as autonomous movements that center on everyday life and relationships within civil society, aiming for critical political engagement to transform hierarchical relations across different scales (Conway, 2013).

The conceptualization of "transnational feminism" originates from the theoretical framework developed by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (1994) in their work *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*. The authors introduced the term "transnational" in the context of "transnational feminism" to challenge the politics and

binaries inherent in global-local or center-periphery frameworks while recognizing "the lines cutting across them" (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994, p.13). Their objective was to emphasize that localities are not merely passive receptacles but are shaped by distinct levels and historical specificities that must be considered.

Valentine Moghadam (2013), a feminist scholar born in Iran, defines transnationalism as transnational social movements and networks, characterized by "a mass mobilization uniting people in three or more countries, engaged in sustained contentious interactions with political elites, international organizations, or multinational corporations" (Moghadam, 2013, p.7). More specifically, she identifies transnational feminist networks as groups of "women from three or more countries who mobilize for research, lobbying, advocacy, and civil disobedience to protest gender injustice and promote women's human rights, equality, and peace" (Moghadam, 2013, p.59).

While Moghadam (2013) frames transnational women's movements as goal-oriented constituencies, Pascale Dufour, Dominique Masson and Dominique Caouette (2010) broaden the understanding of transnationalism to encompass the political work of constructing solidarities in everyday life through political action within organizations, movements, networks, and events. In their postcolonial theorizing, constructing solidarities is described as follows:

> always the result of a convergence, beyond national borders, of actors' differing interests and identities. Consequently, our analyses reveal how diverse are the paths to transnationalization and how complex – and creative – is the articulation of activists' interests and identities in such a context of extreme diversity (Dufour et al., 2010, p.3).

Their work highlights the political formation of mutual recognition and affinity in movement building as a significant contribution to feminist transnational organizing, a dimension often overlooked in most transnational movement literature. Drawing on spatial analysis from critical geography, the authors argue that the transnational should be understood as a constructed scale for movement activity, rather than simply a level of action.

Transnationalization, therefore, is always situated – connected to specific places, national territories, or even multiple localities simultaneously – and involves a variety of processes (Desai, 2013; Dufour et al., 2010). The insight on 'mutual recognition and affinity movement building' may initially seem banal and or even simplistic, but my fieldwork revealed the pivotal role it plays in politically articulating and mobilizing collective action.

Nevertheless, Dufour et al. (2010) highlight that feminists, through gendered and intersectional lenses, recognize the challenges to transnational solidarities arising from power inequalities rooted in economic, social, cultural, and national contexts among differently situated activists and scholars. While engaging with a transnational feminist approach and recognizing that solidarity and common positionalities can be constructed within the context of transnational feminist movements, I remain critically attuned to the complexities and nuances of power dynamics.

In this sense, Sara de Jong (2017), building on Nancie Caraway (1992), argues that solidarity is not a given but rather a process constructed through political struggles, in which consensus-building leads to a "negotiated solidarity". Such a process entails destabilizing assumptions of sameness, understanding the evolving effects of interlocking systems of oppression and taking responsibility for one's implication in these systems. When considering the construction of solidarities and coalitions cross-culturally, built upon both 'commonalities' and 'differences,' the relationship between the Global North and Global South also comes into question. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) argues, these terms, which loosely refer to the northern and southern hemispheres, do not accurately encompass or reflect marginalized nations and communities. Nevertheless, despite their basis in a geographic framework, the political designations associated with these categories – including the metaphor of the North as developed and transnationally affluent, and the South as developing and marginalized – retain significant political value (Dirlik, 1997; Mohanty, 2003)

In this context, it is worthwhile to discuss the terms “One-Third World” and “Two-Thirds World,” as developed by Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash (1998), to describe social minorities and social majorities, respectively, taking into account the quality of life within communities across both the Global North and Global South. This framework allows us to recognize the continuities and discontinuities that exist even within the same state or community, transcending “misleading geographical and ideological binarisms” (Mohanty, 2003). I will explore this categorization in chapter 3, as it highlights the “fluidity and power of global forces that situate communities of people as social majorities/minorities in disparate forms” (Mohanty, 2003). This perspective is crucial for uncovering the complexities of transnational solidarities and challenging the conventional binary approach to this topic.

Another related aspect of cross-cultural work, I explore in this research, is its consideration of the micropolitics of everyday life, with attention to subjectivities, while simultaneously situating them within the macropolitics of the global political economy. Examining the micropolitics of the context involves focusing on individuals, particularly women’s lived realities, to understand their specificities and differences, as well as structural inequalities and power dynamics (De Jong, 2017; Mohanty, 2003). This approach emphasizes both individual realities at the local/micro level and collective experiences of oppression and resistance at the global systemic level. Understanding “narratives of historical experience” is crucial in this regard, as it reveals the contradictions embedded in imported truths (Mohanty, 2003). I uphold this perspective and see it as crucial because it enables the correlation between everyday local gendered, racialized, and colonial experiences and broader neo-imperialist capitalist structures.

Indeed, transnational feminist movements and scholars oppose the univocal understanding of neoliberalism and its resulting unitary conception of globality, which fails to confront the contradictions and exclusions inherent in this system. They argue that this

homogenized approach to addressing diverse agendas obscures multiple forms of injustice. Hence, feminist manifold understandings of the challenges posed by neoliberalism stem from their focus on the contradictions within social arrangements for women (Conway, 2013; Vargas, 2003).

Chandra Mohanty (2003) also highlights that grounding analysis in particularized realities reveals the reproduction of power structures and colonial systems. She suggests that this approach, combined with an understanding of specific contexts rather than a colonized perspective, informs a strategy for a feminist cross-cultural work. Central to her work is the construction of "non-colonizing feminist solidarity across borders". I follow this engagement by aligning a transnational feminist analysis with a decolonial commitment. While drawing on Brazilian grassroots movements of peasant and rural women to provide an entry point into transnational feminist mobilization around food sovereignty, I remain attentive to the specificities of these movements, their realities, knowledges, and practices.

Therefore, I advance the transnational feminist discussion by adopting a decolonial approach to transnational mobilization, focusing on knowledge production as well as epistemological and methodological contributions of grassroots movements from Latin America.

Feminist Historical Materialism

With a foundation in feminist international political economy background, I adopt a feminist historical materialist approach, understanding capitalist society as a gendered form of social organization. This perspective proves valuable in analyzing the realities of peasant feminist movements in Brazil and their positioning within a neoliberal global context. Peasant

and rural feminist movements identify as anti-capitalist, actively opposing the most prominent manifestation of neoliberalism in Brazil: the dominance of agribusiness, which is rooted in an industrial agriculture model and land concentration.

Inspiring, in this sense, is the work of Sabrina Fernandes (2019), a Brazilian activist, researcher, and political economist committed to social struggles, feminism, and ecosocialism, with a focus on a just ecological transition. Her belief in a grassroots feminism, rooted in the experiences of marginalized, working-class, and peasant women, as the pathway to genuine social and ecological transformation, and as a source of alternative economic practices developed through popular collectives, has stimulated me to advance the topic of this thesis through feminist political economy lens. In particular, Fernandes's (2019) non-dogmatic interpretation of Marxism – treating Marx's ideas as dynamic analytical tools to be continuously re-evaluated, rather than fixed prescriptions, in light of changing social conditions and emerging challenges – has informed my engagement with feminist approaches to historical materialism.

The theoretical framework of historical materialism enables an analysis of "material reality in both its local and micro-, as well as global, systemic dimensions," situating grounded and particularized studies within the broader global economic and political context of the capitalist order (Mohanty, 2003). This international political perspective is instrumental in examining power relations. A feminist historical materialist approach serves as the theoretical lens to uncover power dynamics and the gendered division of labor in rural areas and agricultural work as a result of capitalist structures.

Simultaneously, this perspective allows for an examination of the everyday lives of these rural women and the alternative solidarity systems they establish and practice within their communities. It enables us to explore how, despite the pervasive advancement of capitalism – understood as a project institutionalized by state power –, alternative ways of living persist and

coexist. Moreover, this approach facilitates a contextual understanding of local realities, highlighting the unique characteristics and particularities of the specific grassroots movements under study.

I follow Maria Mies (2014) in understanding patriarchy and capitalism as systems that are not separate but mutually reinforcing structures. Patriarchy underpins the exploitation of women's labor, both paid and unpaid, serving as a cornerstone for the functioning and expansion of capitalism. Building on this, and drawing from Adrienne Roberts (2017), specialized in feminist international political economy, I argue that the production of gendered structures is foundational to the emergence of capitalism and its reproduction over time. Roberts (2017) contends that neoliberalism, as an advanced phase of capitalism, is an intrinsically gendered political-economic project. It operates on gendered assumptions, which in turn shape gendered social relations and forms of organization.

Neoliberalism is understood as a gendered system in its ontology. It is based on problematic premises, much like the liberal political economy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as it relies on state power to expand capitalist market relations. The fallacy of "laissez-faire", in this context, is interpreted as a deliberately constructed project, facilitated through state interventions in the economy and society, designed to compel the poor to conform to market discipline (Roberts, 2017).

This perspective highlights that the gender-based division of labor was forged through the violent processes of primitive accumulation. The development of the capitalist system not only created but also perpetuated the subordinate position of women, undermining their power. This dynamic led to the devaluation of women's work both within the household and in their communities, confining their bodies and labor to the domestic sphere. Consequently, the primitive accumulation of capital serves as a structural condition that enables and reinforces the reproduction of the labor force (Dalla Costa and James, 1975; Federici, 2004; Mies, 2014;

Roberts, 2017). As Silvia Federici (2004) emphasizes, the establishment of a gendered division of labor and the exclusion of women from waged work under this patriarchal order positioned women as primarily responsible for the reproduction of the workforce. From this perspective, the advancement of capitalism was driven not only by the expropriation of peasants through enclosures in Europe and by colonization but also, to a significant extent, by the witch-hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Recognizing primitive accumulation as a profoundly gendered process, Roberts (2017) contends that, much like other aspects of primitive accumulation, the enclosure of the female body – as a counterpart to the enclosure of the commons – remains an ongoing phenomenon within neoliberal capitalism. Drawing on Rosa Luxemburg ([1913] 2003), Roberts further asserts that primitive accumulation is not a singular historical event but rather an ongoing process, driven by capitalism's relentless expansion into non-capitalist regions worldwide. Similarly, Maria Mies (2014) emphasizes that "it became increasingly clear that the capitalist mode of production… needed different categories of colonies, particularly women, other peoples and nature, to uphold the model of ever-expanding growth".

I build on this perspective to frame the retelling of gendered primitive accumulation through a South American lens. Understanding the emergence and global development of the capitalist system, particularly within the Brazilian state during colonization, is essential for contextualizing the position of these peasant feminist movements. Declaring themselves as anti-capitalist, these movements actively resist the dominant expression of neoliberalism in Brazil: agribusiness domination, which is rooted in an industrial agriculture model and land concentration.

In this feminist historical materialist perspective, social reproduction is regarded as a crucial mechanism through which the gendered dynamics of capitalist accumulation are perpetuated. Accordingly, I incorporate a social reproduction lens throughout my analysis.

Crucial to the historical development of capitalism as a gendered process was the separation of production from social reproduction – a process finalized during the nineteenth century, though its roots can be traced to earlier periods. This separation was legitimized by neoliberal economists such as Say and his contemporaries through the imposition of market prices, particularly in their analytical division between natural and market prices of labor, under the guise of the 'automatic workings of the market' (Picchio, 1992).

Labor, like land, became commodified, and the division between public (productive) and private (reproductive) spheres was formalized and institutionalized. As Roberts (2017) underscores, this separation was not natural but artificially constructed. These divisions, alongside other "dualistic and hierarchical divisions, created by capitalist patriarchy…political and economic, body and mind, head and heart" (Mies, 2014, p.35), were established through the expansion of capitalism via brutal force, violence, and enslavement. This enabled exploitation by transforming the proletariat's body into a machine for labor. Simultaneously, it relegated women's bodies to reproductive roles, rendering the undervalued and unpaid labor essential for reproducing workers materially invisible, thereby perpetuating systemic inequalities (Federici, 2004; Roberts, 2017).

While Karl Marx (1909, Vol. I) recognized the importance of the reproduction of the labor force for the expansion of capitalism, he did not extensively analyze this relationship or its disproportionate impact on gender relations, particularly on women. From a feminist historical materialist perspective, the labor involved in the reproduction of the workforce – both in daily life and across generations – is as crucial as the labor force itself for the advancement of capitalist primitive accumulation (Armstrong and Armstrong, 1983; Ferguson, 1999; Roberts, 2017).

By addressing the material foundation of the productive and reproductive dynamics of everyday life, "the promise of social reproduction theory lies in its commitment to a materialist

explanation of women's oppression that rejects economic reductionism without forfeiting economic explanation" (Ferguson, 1999, p.1). This approach allows for an examination of the contradictions and complexities of social relations and "open[s] the door to an anti-capitalist feminist coalition politics" (Ferguson, 1999, p.2).

In this regard, a historical perspective on social reproduction is crucial for transcending structuralist and determinist approaches and for rethinking "the notions of class and class consciousness as a political and lived experience" (Ferguson, 1999, p.11). This means acknowledging "that class never exists outside of other fundamental relations of lived reality (i.e., race, gender, age, ability, etc.)" (Ferguson, 1999, p.8). Social reproductionist approaches, therefore, move beyond the "class-first" perspective by recognizing that multidimensional forms of inequality are not subordinate to class relations, but are the outcomes of human interaction and agency (Ferguson, 1999; Seccombe and Livingstone, 1996). I find it useful, therefore, to employ a social reproduction lens to understand gendered capitalist dynamics, as it facilitates an analysis grounded in material reality without succumbing to economic reductionism. It provides a comprehensive materialist framework for challenging the artificial dichotomy between production and reproduction.

I draw inspiration from Antonio Gramsci's (2000) perspective, which asserts that historical change is not solely contingent on shifts in relations of production, as outlined by Marx, but also on cultural and social factors, aligning with Gramsci's critique of what he termed "historical economism". This Gramscian tradition of "non-structuralist historicism" provides a framework for understanding historical change through the emergence of new ideas, social struggles, and acts of contestation (Ferguson, 1999; Gill, 2008; Roberts, 2017). Furthermore, the feminist political economy theoretical approach I develop in this work helps to illustrate that transitional moments in history encompass both "shifts in relations of production and interconnected shifts in social reproduction" (Roberts, 2017, p.20). The Gramscian inspiration

also allows us to conceptualize the political project of peasant and rural women around food sovereignty as a counter-project – a counter-hegemonic process that proposes an alternative to the dominant neoliberal food system.

Although I do not assume that the process I analyze leads to a hegemonic transition in Gramscian terms – because, as I conclude in the chapter four, the hegemonic neoliberal food system, with its intrinsic patriarchal, racist, gendered, and heteronormative structure, persists and reinforces itself through antigender and liberal economic reactions in the context of the CFS – I do believe that conditions and contradictions that emerge within this system, enable the contestation and articulation of social forces through the resistance of peasant and rural women's movements and their alternative worldview project.

Such a political project embodies, in Gramscian terms, counter-hegemony, which refers to the process by which marginalized or oppressed groups challenge the dominant power structures, ideologies, and cultural norms. It is a form of resistance to the prevailing hegemonic order, aiming to create a new order grounded in alternative ethical views of society, values, ideas, and practices. This process of resistance involves questioning the legitimacy of the dominant social, political, and economic system, often by fostering solidarity among various marginalized communities.

For Gramsci, counter-hegemony is not limited to direct political struggle or revolt; it also entails cultural and ideological efforts, where oppressed groups develop and promote their own intellectual, moral, and cultural frameworks. This approach challenges the ideological dominance of the ruling class and seeks to foster social transformation, working towards a more inclusive and equitable understanding of society, politics, and justice. In this sense, the concept also entails alternative epistemic ways of seeing the world and imagining different forms of inhabiting it.

Global food systems and mobilization around food sovereignty

To conceptualize the counter-hegemonic political project that peasant and rural women construct around food sovereignty, it is crucial to understand global food governance and food systems. In this section, I discuss the conceptualization of the dominant system, as well as the contradictions, crises, and international political context that enables the articulation of its contestation by these women and their social movements. With this in mind, I also revisit key works on food sovereignty and global food governance to situate the discussion around the participation of grassroots women's movements.

Philip McMichael (2013) builds on Giovanni Arrighi's (1994) analysis of systemic cycles of accumulation to develop an understanding of food regimes as historically specific configurations within these broader cycles. These cycles of accumulation illustrate how capitalism progresses through cycles of economic expansion, crisis, restructuring, driven by a hegemonic power. Employing Arrighi's theory as a lens to situate food regimes within the context of capitalist development, McMichael (2013) demonstrates that agriculture and food systems are integral to global capital accumulation and hegemonic transitions.

Together with Harriet Friedman (1989), McMichael conceptualizes food regimes[8], emphasizing the inherent contradictions within each regime that ultimately lead to its decline and the subsequent emergence of a new regime and reconfigurations of global food systems. Through a historical perspective, they argue that global food systems are shaped by distinct historical periods, each characterized by specific interactions between agriculture, geopolitics, and global capitalism. These historical periods correspond to different food regimes and illustrate how agricultural practices and food systems are structured to reinforce power dynamics and facilitate capital accumulation. Global food systems, therefore, are shaped by

[8] In the article co-authored by Philip McMichael and Harriet Friedman in 1989, *Agriculture and the State System: The Rise and Decline of National Agricultures, 1870 to the Present*

systemic power imbalances that privilege dominant nations and corporations while marginalizing and exploiting disadvantage communities.

McMichael (2013) contends that the third food regime, or the corporate food regime (1980's – present), arose under neoliberal globalization and is characterized by the dominance of the agribusiness sector, free trade agreements, and global supply chains. This profit-oriented regime has resulted in the marginalization of peasant and smallholder farming systems, ecological degradation, land grabbing. Nevertheless, within the context of this regime, McMichael (2013) emphasizes the significance of resistance movements, such as La Via Campesina, which challenge this corporate food regime by advocating for food sovereignty as an alternative model. While Arrighi (1994) primarily emphasizes systemic transformations, McMichael (2013) integrates the role of grassroots movements into his analysis. These movements actively resist the corporate food regime and advocate for alternatives that challenge systemic cycles of accumulation from the ground up.

Harriet Friedman (2016) critiques the intensification of the corporate food regime following the 2007–2008 global food crisis, highlighting how the financialization of agriculture became a dominant trend. Speculation in agricultural commodity markets fueled price volatility, further aggravating global hunger and inequality. Simultaneously, land-grabbing by corporations and states intensified, displacing smallholder farmers in the Global South.

Friedman (2016) contends that the crisis intensified the contradictions inherent in the corporate food regime. These contradictions, particularly between the globalized food system and ecological and social sustainability, became increasingly evident, prompting widespread calls for systemic change. The crisis unveiled the fragility and inequities of the neoliberal global food system, underscoring the urgent need for alternatives rooted in justice, equity, and sustainability.

The emerging contradictions, including the consolidation of agribusiness control and the simultaneous dispossession and marginalization of smallholders, spurred grassroots and transnational movements like La Via Campesina to resist neoliberal policies by promoting agroecology, solidarity economies, and localized food systems. As McMichael (2013) argues, Friedman also highlights that these movements have gained visibility, strengthening their fight for food sovereignty as an alternative to the corporate food regime.

Harriet Friedman and Philip McMichael's framework provides a critical lens for analyzing the political economy of global food systems, emphasizing the intersections between agriculture, the contradictions within the capitalist system, and the role of resistance movements. By acknowledging the significance of agrarian struggles and food sovereignty movements in resisting neoliberal globalization, their perspective highlights the agency of these movements in reimagining and reshaping global food systems.

Building on this perspective, I argue that the contradictions inherent to capitalism and to the current food system configuration have created space for the mobilization of peasant and rural women. The crisis generated within this system open pathways for alternative models, such as the political project around food sovereignty that these movements articulate, reimagining global food systems.

There is also a body of literature that examines food systems from a feminist perspective. By connecting the multilateral system to local levels and emphasizing the importance of paying attention to grassroots realities, this literature goes beyond the norms translation approach common in much transnational literature and brings feminist international relations into the conversation – an effort I also incorporate into my own work by combining transnational feminist and feminist international relations lenses.

Carolyn Sachs and Anouk Patel-Campillo (2014), in a normative article, present a feminist perspective on food insecurity and food sovereignty, proposing a new framework for

food justice. They examine both top-down and bottom-up perspectives in global food governance, linking the top-down approach to the dominant gender and food security model, while associating the bottom-up perspective with feminist food sovereignty mobilizations. Their approach is instrumental in understanding global food governance by moving beyond conventional notions of norm diffusion and the formal establishment of international norms. Instead, they focus on the local construction of knowledge and the emergence of concepts and ideas developed by marginalized groups. Additionally, the authors broaden the scope of their analysis by addressing power and hegemony within the international system.

Their positioning is valuable because, like the authors, I aim to emphasize the knowledge creation, concepts, and ideas emerging from grassroots movements in their efforts to reach global food governance, rather than concentrating on their capacity to formally establish norms within international forums. They contend that the food security framework emerged from inherently gendered power structures, reflecting a "development project [that] placed men, and more precisely particular forms of masculinity, at the epicenter of social relations through redefined forms of cross-scalar and spatial governance (i.e., in the market, trade institutions, and regulatory bodies)" (Sachs and Patel-Campillo, 2014, p.400). Consequently, the political spaces shaped by this governance, including international organizations focused on food security and hunger eradication (such as the FAO), are far from gender-neutral, as hegemonic masculinities became ingrained within these domains and perpetuated by power structures.

Taking this into account, the authors assert that, from a top-down perspective, the FAO and other international organizations focused on food security took on the role of "fostering and monitoring the modernization of national agricultural systems and 'managed' agricultural commodity surpluses" (Sachs and Patel-Campillo, 2014, p.401). Conversely, the food sovereignty movement, spearheaded by La Via Campesina, opposes this top-down approach

and its prevailing characterization of food insecurity as simply a result of food scarcity. In confronting patriarchy, women within the movement fight for equitable access to appropriate healthy food and resources, as well as for the recognition of the value of women's contributions to agriculture, food provisioning, and household work.

Sachs and Patel-Campillo (2014) argue that Food Sovereignty, as conceptualized by La Via Campesina, emphasizes that the root cause of hunger and malnutrition worldwide lies in the inequitable distribution of food, land, and other resources. According to them food sovereignty embodies, in this sense, an approach that frames food and agriculture as fundamental rights, intertwined with the right to self-determination and agro-food social relations that prioritize the needs of communities and their control over local food systems.

The authors provide a compelling analytical lens for understanding the functioning of the global food governance system, identifying the top-down approach as the dominant model for gender and food security, while linking the bottom-up perspective to feminist food sovereignty mobilizations. Nevertheless, they make a normative proposition of a third feminist framework for food justice that combines aspects of both feminist food security and food sovereignty, encompassing food production across multiple scales, from large-scale commodity production to small urban gardens. A just feminist food justice could become feasible if shared responsibility among international organizations, governments, and civil society is fostered.

Although their framework emphasizes an intersectional critique of neoliberalism, with gender and intersectionality as central elements for understanding diverse scales of production, it overlooks the contentious efforts required to achieve such claims in face of opposition from elites unwilling to meet these demands. I aim to uncover these tensions and contradictions within the neoliberal system by examining the efforts of women on the ground to mobilize autonomously and construct alternative forms of articulation. Understanding the dominant model as imposing constraints, I examine recent systemic changes and crises to explore how

feminist food sovereignty approaches can permeate this arena despite its deeply gendered structure.

Dominique Masson, Anabel Paulos, and Elsa Beaulieu Bastien (2017) illustrate how the notion of food sovereignty has been re-signified as a feminist issue by what they portray as a transnational feminist network, the World March of Women – actively engaged in food sovereignty efforts since 2006. The authors demonstrate that the concept of food sovereignty, since its formulation in La Via Campesina's 1996 Declaration, has been embraced by diverse peasant social movements worldwide, including women's organizations. According to them, the notion of food sovereignty entails a critique of structural power relations within food politics.

They argue that the concept represents a multidimensional political project of social change rather than a mere 'frame' and is composed of "entwined discourses and practices" (Masson et al., 2017, p.61). Building on what they refer to as "discursive articulations" – or discourses as a site of meaning making practices – they assert that the meanings attributed to the concept of food sovereignty are shaped in a vernacular manner, influenced by the specific contexts and perspectives of the actors involved. In this sense, local groups, such as the national coordinating bodies of the March of Women, can appropriate the concept, linking it to gender and feminist issues and creating preferred meanings and novel discourses that shape their relationship to food sovereignty.

Even though the authors describe the March as a multi-sited and multi-issue "transnational movement built from the bottom up, uniting and strengthening women's grassroots struggles" (Masson et al., 2017, p.62) they contend that the re-signification entails 'vernacular' discourses that shape the meaning of food sovereignty according to local and national contexts across time and space. According to them, this process leads to an uneven appropriation (or deployment) of the food sovereignty project across different places and scales

among the national coordinating bodies. However, even though they aim to situate meanings and contextualize localities, instead of analyzing the process from the bottom up the authors take the opposite approach. They begin by examining the concept as defined in the global context of the Nyéléni Declaration[9] and then explore the vernacular processes through which the notion of food sovereignty is re-signified in local contexts.

Although, in fact, each locality of the March has the autonomy to determine which topics to prioritize and explore within its coordinating body, there exists a set of values and principles that guide the overall actions of the March and are collectively shared by its members. The emphasis on discursive construction prevents them from adequately addressing the political practices that corroborate these values and principles. The authors, therefore, fail to account for a series of interactions and articulations that originate at the local level, where members of the March engage with grassroots movements of rural women and peasants. These interactions, in turn, foster exchanges with other movements, allowing their specificities and demands to contribute to the confluence of a shared political project through collective action.

Drawing on Masson, Paulos, and Bastien (2017), Janet Conway (2018) argues that, as a result of a vernacularization process, the Brazil-based International Secretariat (which rotates geographically to decentralize power, particularly toward the Global South, according to her) played a decisive role between 2008 and 2013 in shaping the popular character of the March and in advancing food sovereignty as a central political agenda within the movement. This popular character, grounded in grassroots experiences, also reflects the class struggle dimension of the March.

[9] The Nyéléni Declaration emerged from the Nyéléni Forum – the first Global Forum on Food Sovereignty – held in 2007, where rural, peasant, and other social movements united around the concept of food sovereignty. The declaration serves as a foundational text in establishing a shared vision for the struggle for food sovereignty, reaffirming and outlining its principles, and emphasizing the rights of people to define their own food systems, control their food production, and ensure sustainable, culturally appropriate, and equitable access to food.

While focusing on the Global South, particularly Brazil and Latin America, from a bottom-up perspective, Conway (2018) identifies limitations to what she refers to as subaltern agency within the politics of March, resulting in an uneven work in which the agency of peasant, rural, and Indigenous women oscillates in presence. Indeed, as I argue in chapter three, there is a (dis)continuity in the presence of grassroots mobilization in such spaces. Nevertheless, envisioning a brother political project that involves manifold interactions and (grassroots, social, and transnational) movements allows us to make sense of this project as a shared construction. Although she makes an effort to contextualize local experiences, Conway (2018) overlooks the set of values and principles that guide the politics of the March, as well as the autonomous agency of grassroots women within and beyond the World March of Women.

I follow Masson, Paulos, and Bastien (2017) in conceptualizing food sovereignty as a political project of social transformation; however, I focus on how it is constructed daily by grassroots movements through their engagement with other forms of mobilization, such as the World March of Women. I therefore perceive it as a project that is constructed and actively practiced through the organizational methods of these movements, with food sovereignty being lived in their daily experiences and shaped by the confluence of these realities. This confluence of visions and experiences is exemplified, for instance, by the participation of the March in the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism, where various coordinating bodies of the March, along with diverse peasant and rural women's movements, come together to deliberate on common positions.

To contextualize and comprehend how these movements were established and organized, as well as to grasp the dynamics of mobilization on the ground, I engage with experts on rural and peasant women's movements within the Brazilian context. Regarding such movements in Brazil, and in a similar vein to Masson et al.'s argument, Vilenia Venâncio Porto Aguiar (2017) – rural sociologist and scholar of social movements, rural women and gender –

employs the notion of "discursive articulations" intertwined with practices to analyze feminist rural mobilization in Brazil (Aguiar, 2017).

The author highlights how divergences among rural women from movements in the South of Brazil (which later formed the MMC) and those from the Northeast (which later established the MMTR-NE), during the 1990s, did not hinder peasant women across the country from mobilizing collectively around their rights in the Margaridas' March. The first edition of the Margaridas' March, held in 2000, aligned with the then-emerging coordination of the World March of Women and marked the entry of Brazilian peasant and rural women into the political arena. As Aguiar (2017) argues, through autonomous organization and collective action, these women began to give visibility to their demands, strengthening their claims with political strategies and proposals.

The author emphasizes that their collective action in the Margaridas' March does not represent a homogeneous or unified entity. Rather, it emerges from significant "discursive articulation" around shared demands for rural women's rights – such as gender equality, women's autonomy in agriculture, and the fight against violence on their bodies – which are enacted through the political engagement of local movements and their connections at national, regional, and "even international" levels (Aguiar, 2017, p.285). Aguiar (2017) views their mobilization as a political project that was consolidated as feminist with the 2011 Margaridas' March, notably positioning itself in opposition to the dominant agribusiness model.

Aguiar's (2017) perspective that the collective action of diverse rural and peasant women's movements is not inherent but rather the result of an articulation among these movements is useful for understanding how participation in the Margaridas' March represents an ongoing process of constructing political mobilization. Nevertheless, her discourse approach falls short in capturing the materiality of the collective construction of this project.

Carmen Deere (2004), Emma Siliprandi (2011), and Caroline Araújo Bordalo (2006) contribute to the understanding of the significance of social movements led by rural and peasant women in Brazil and Latin America. They trace the formation and evolution of these rural feminist movements, as well as the public policies they have successfully influenced. While Carmen Deere is a key reference in studies on women's struggles for land rights, land ownership, and agrarian reform, Siliprandi (2011) focuses on the development of women's mobilization in rural areas, highlighting the various demands that have shaped their history and their coming together around the Margaridas' March. Bordalo (2006) reminds us that, despite this alignment, the historical process of organizational structuring and distinct political traditions have led to the development of different political strategies by the Brazilian movements MMC and MMTR-NE.

The contributions of these authors are relevant for situating and historically contextualizing the material realities faced by rural and peasant women in Brazil. Although they do not explicitly examine the international level or how national feminist rural and peasant organizing connects to global governance discussions, their focus on local and national dynamics helps to reveal the significance of epistemic knowledge and practices of these grassroots rural women movements.

Decolonial theoretical approaches

> I call the analysis of racialized, capitalist, gender oppression the "coloniality of gender". I call the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender "decolonial feminism". (Lugones, 2010, p.747).

It was not initially my intention, but throughout the doctoral research process, I realized that delving into decolonial theories and perspectives was an unavoidable path.

Are you using decolonial theories in your research? Have you heard about these Latin American decolonial scholars? (C. during the Latin American and Caribbean People's Integration Journey, in a conversation about my research in Foz do Iguaçu, 2024).

C. was also a doctoral researcher from Goiás and an activist with the World March of Women (WMW). She was present at the meeting as part of the WMW delegation. Her list of decolonial scholars included Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Bolivian sociologist and historian known for her work on decolonial thinking from an Aymara perspective, and María Lugones, Argentinian philosopher renowned for her contributions to decolonial feminism. At the time, I had recently been introduced to their work and started reading both of them. This encounter solidified my resolve to explore their ideas further in my research.

I wondered whether decolonial theories were compatible with a feminist historical materialist lens and a transnational feminist perspective. Ashwini Tambe and Millie Thayer (2021) argue that transnational feminist approaches lend themselves to exploration through decolonial feminism, emphasizing that these perspectives are complementary and that their discontinuities create a generative space for meaningful reflection. In engaging with Latin American decolonial theorists, I realized that the critique of oppressive colonial modernity is profoundly intertwined with a critique of capitalism and its exploitation, aimed at exposing and denouncing the structures that perpetuate inequalities. The materiality of lived experience, therefore, emerges as essential in uncovering material realities faced by colonized people. Adopting a feminist perspective, I integrate these approaches to contextualize specific historical settings and to understand intersectional forms of oppression, exploitation, and colonial subjugation. I contribute to decolonial studies in this regard by explicitly incorporating the feminist historical materialism lens.

In her theorizing, María Lugones (2010) asserts that the modern, colonial, gender system functions through hierarchical dichotomies and a categorial logic. According to her, the

oppressive logic of colonial modernity is ontologically a “categorial”, dichotomous, hierarchical logic, which sustains modern, colonial, capitalist thinking about race, gender, and sexuality. This dichotomy, as previously mentioned with reference to Maria Mies (2014) and the binary divisions produced by capitalism, also appears in Lugones' discussion of colonial modernity, where it is conceptualized as “categorial” logic. In other terms, modernity structures the world through “atomic, homogenous, separable categories” (Lugones, 2010, p.742), with hierarchical dichotomies, such as the imposition of the human versus the non-human, serving as tools to subordinate the colonized.

Thinking outside this “categorial” logic, “contemporary women of color and third-world women's critique of feminist universalism center the claim that the intersection of race, class, sexuality, and gender exceeds the categories of modernity” (Lugones, 2010, p.742). As a result, individuals at the intersection are absent from this logic, while non-modern[10] knowledge systems, along with their social, economic, cosmological and spiritual practices, clash with the dichotomous, hierarchical, “categorial” logic.

Building upon the concept of “coloniality of power” of Anibal Quijano, Lugones (2008) both expands on his understanding and critiques it by introducing the notion of “coloniality of gender”. By challenging his understanding of gender, based on hegemonic notion of gender as biological dimorphism, she incorporates the oppressive colonial imposition of gender into his analysis of the capitalist system of power as a historical process of racialization, inseparable to capitalist exploitation, and deeply rooted in the colonization of Americas. In this sense, she addresses the imposition of a binary gender system through the coloniality of power, while simultaneously constituting it.

[10] Following Juan Ricardo Aparicio and Mario Blaser, María Lugones (2010) refers to non-modern knowledge and modes of organizing rather than premodern when discussing decolonial and liberatory knowledge production.

As indicated in the epigraph of this section, the coloniality of gender is, therefore, a manner to understand the oppression of women as a result of subalternization "through the combined processes of racialization, colonization, capitalist exploitation, and heterosexualism" (Lugones, 2010, p.747). By disaggregating oppression, Lugones (2010) argues that it becomes possible to access the subjective and intersubjective foundations of colonized women's agency.

Lugones (2010) investigates the "oppressing ← → resisting relation", particularly at the intersection of systems of oppression, or at the "fractured locus" of "the colonial difference". By conceptualizing the colonized as a subject with agency, she acknowledges that the colonized comes to inhabit the fractured locus – fractured precisely because of their presence – which includes hierarchical dichotomies, but is constructed by opposing forces in tension, through active resistance. Seeing the world multiply through fractured locus allows us to grasp the subjectivity of the resistant in relation, reflecting multiple experiences of subjects inequitably marked by the coloniality of gender. In the fracture, or the colonial wound, "sense is contradictory and from such contradiction new sense is made anew" (Lugones, 2010, p.752).

Coloniality of power and gender is exercised at the "colonial difference", which separates the modern from the non-modern in hierarchical terms, manifested in racialized, gendered, economic, social, epistemic divides. Transcending the "colonial difference" takes shape through her understanding of feminist "border thinking", inspired by Glória Anzaldúa's (1987) concept, in which "the liminality of the border is a ground, a space, a borderlands" (Lugones, 2010, p. 753). "In this sense, the border is not only a terrain, but also a geopolitics of knowledge, a geoeconomics, and an emotional issue. On the borders are all of us, Latin American and African American, who embody the experience of coloniality at different levels" (Fonseca and Guzo, 2018, p.80). It is where subaltern epistemology lies.

The resistance to the coloniality of gender is material: "embodied subjectivity and the institutional are equally concrete" (Lugones, 2010, p. 754). It also entails resisting coloniality

at the colonial difference without epistemologically erasing it. This means seeing each other, truly listening to one another, and learning from fellow resisters. An ethics of building coalitions, in this sense, emerges as essential to fostering such forms of relating to one another.

> One does not resist the coloniality of gender alone. One resists it from within a way of understanding the world and living in it that is shared and that can understand one's actions, thus providing recognition. Communities rather than individuals enable the doing; one does with someone else, not in individualist isolation (Lugones, 2010, p.754).

I align with María Lugones (2010) in understanding the resistance as a possibility, not the ultimate goal of political struggle, but its starting point. It is an interaction that initiates an ongoing process of resistance, continuously unfolding since the colonial encounter. By recognizing the possibility of resistance and emphasizing its practice in communal forms, this approach affirms the agency of subaltern groups, making resistance tangible and material through praxis. This perspective enables me to analyze the mobilization of peasant and rural women in Brazil as a process of recognizing their agency and subjectivity – a journey of self-discovery as subjects. Because, as Djamila Ribeiro (2017, p.44) highlights, "defining oneself is an important condition for empowerment and for demarcating the possibilities of transcending the colonizing norm".

It also reclaims the validity of knowledge and cosmologies that differ from those rationally imposed by the modern, colonial, gender system through its racial, gender, and heteronormative structures. The recovery of this knowledge, as "a matter of the geopolitics of knowledge," legitimizes cosmologies, ecologies, and methodologies that, once restored within the community, are transmitted and contribute to the development of the alternative political project being built by these women.

Feminist border thinking, by fostering the shared experience of colonial wounds at the colonial difference, approaches this border from a Latin American place of resistance. Peasant and rural women of Latin America, from their position as colonized resisters, initiate the process

of building coalitions in the region as a first step toward transnational engagement in this project, rooted in deep connection and mutual care.

As Lugones (2010) suggests, they enact decolonial feminism both theoretically and in practice by seeing, knowing, and engaging with other resisters at the colonial difference, drawing from their multiple lived experiences. Their lived reality in Latin America fosters the shared experience of the border space within the fractured locus. The practice of radical listening proposed by Fonseca and Guzo (2018), drawing from Lugones' contributions, finds fertile ground on the continent, facilitating the formation of coalitions among Latin American rural and peasant women who share ancestral knowledge, deeply understand the land, and share the seeds. Together they are able to challenge modern Eurocentric categories, disrupting the modern-colonial subjectivity.

These Latin American women cultivate a decolonial feminism from the Global South, centering and including subaltern women in the pursuit of alternative societal models. As I argue in chapter two, this alternative project is deeply rooted in and unfolds from the continent through decolonial feminist practices, ontologies, and methodologies. Therefore, Lugones' (2008, 2010) perspective enables us to comprehend this project, at its core, as a decolonial gender project.

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2010), a Bolivian sociologist, historian, and activist of Aymara origin, deepens the material analysis within her decolonial approach. In this sense, she suggests reflecting on a political economy of knowledge rather than a geopolitics of knowledge. From her perspective, the notion of geopolitics of knowledge contributes to the recolonization of the Southern imaginary, perpetuating colonial structures that shape knowledge in Latin America, rather than fostering space for practice, whereas a political economy of knowledge enables the dismantling of the material aspects and economic strategies of colonial imposition.

Like Lugones, Cusicanqui (2010) argues that decolonial projects coexist in parallel with Western epistemologies. She also conceptualizes time as non-linear, where the present encompasses not only historical conjunctures and archaic perspectives but also modernizing forces that uphold the status quo, alongside revolts that seek social transformation. In this sense, Cusicanqui (2010) also envisions the possibility of decolonial practices grounded in action in the present moment. As a scholar who approaches decolonial theory from an Indigenous perspective, she emphasizes that an Indigenous modernity project, anchored in the principle of hope, is not only conceivable but achievable.

She evokes the Aymara notion of *ch'ixi* to reinforce the viability of coexistence between differences and opposites, without either losing its essence, contrary to the idea of assimilation into a singular identity or conformism with a process of domination. The *ch'ixi* notion allows for the simultaneous presence of multiple, often conflicting, cultural elements without erasure. Cusicanqui (2010) stresses, therefore, a coexistence that fosters multiple parallel existences, which, without merging, antagonize or complement each other in relation. In this context, an Indigenous modernity project, rather than presupposing a homogenous civilization, aims to preserve the difference.

Although dismissed by processes of "colonization of the imaginary", the *ch'ixi* metaphor, by embracing the idea of a plural society, nurtures a liberating potential through the development of dialogical forms of knowledge construction. This fosters epistemologies, theories, and politics centered on the notion of wellbeing, rooted in the autonomy to build coalitions in the South and anchored in ancestral knowledge to resist the hegemonic project of the North.

In this sense, Cusicanqui (2010) emphasizes that decolonial thought is inherently tied to lived struggles, rooted in the experiences and knowledge of Indigenous peoples, grassroots movements, and rural women, and thus practiced through everyday resistance. She stresses that

decolonization is not merely a theoretical discourse but a material, lived struggle – manifested, for instance, in community-based autonomy, food sovereignty, and daily acts of resistance.

Her perspective resonates with Ailton Krenak's (2022) proposition of alternative worlds, seen through an Indigenous lens of modernity. Rooted in the idea that the future is ancestral, it suggests that the future is envisioned from the present, supported by bonds of affection, politics driven by confluence, and practices of (re)imagining worlds. This belief in possibility forms the foundation for the creation of an alternative, counter-hegemonic project grounded in the shared values of Latin American peoples. Drawing on the ideas of Ailton Krenak (2022), an Indigenous leader and socio-environmental activist, in the following chapters I argue that affection, care, and community-based solidarity are the threads that bind these rural and peasant women's movements together in weaving the *Fuxicos* patchwork.

Throughout this thesis, I follow María Lugones (2010) in an effort to decolonizing gender by analyzing the resistance of rural and peasant women as they develop and extend transnationally an alternative political project aimed at overcoming the modern hegemonic system and its hegemonic dichotomies. I propose a patchwork-weaving framework to understand the construction of solidarities within transnational feminist mobilization, grounded in a decolonial perspective. This framework contributes to existing transnational feminist literature and feminist international relations scholarship by offering a decolonial lens through which to analyze transnational feminist mobilization.

Chapter 2. Stitching *Fuxicos*: Rural and Peasant Women's struggles in Brazil and Latin America

This chapter investigates how rural and peasant women's organizing in Brazil grows outward, across the national landscape and, subsequently, throughout Latin America, to lay the groundwork for later transnational engagement in arenas such as the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM). Drawing on feminist historical materialist lens and on decolonial theories, I begin by situating these movements in territories marked by extreme material inequality, patriarchal hierarchies, and the legacies of colonial dispossession. A historical sketch of these conditions clarifies why grassroots feminist mobilizations arise where they do and why their locally rooted practices and knowledges cannot be disentangled from broader struggles over land, labor, and food.

Building on this context, I argue that political education courses, feminist schools, and everyday acts of care generate distinctive methodologies and epistemologies that ripple outward, "reverberating" rather than simply diffusing, into other movements such as the Margaridas' March. These reverberations draw on ancestral knowledges frequently dismissed by Western science, enabling these movements to imagine alternative ways of living and caring that take shape around the project of food sovereignty.

To theorize these processes, I advance a patchwork-weaving framework inspired by the craft of *Fuxicos*: scraps of fabric gathered into small circular bundles that, when stitched together, form a larger textile while retaining their individual colors and textures. The patchwork metaphor captures both the heterogeneity of the movements and the affective political practice that serves as a tool that binds the patches or the *Fuxicos*. Through this process, the movements and their members remain diverse while collectively weaving their political project.

I also emphasize the significance of this weaving within the Latin American context, as it enables the continuation and expansion of the patchwork across broader scales of connection. This ongoing process affirms the decolonial character of the region's emerging methodologies and epistemologies, contributing to a transformative project of transnational solidarity, as exemplified in the practices and political engagements of the CSIPM. Echoing Ailton Krenak, I show that what emerges is not a seamless convergence, but a confluence: a dynamic coalition that preserves divergence and contradiction even as it advances a shared political horizon.

The Brazilian context: a system of coloniality

> As I move methodologically from women of color feminist to a decolonial feminism, I think about feminism from and at the grassroots, the colonial difference, with a strong emphasis on ground, on a historicized incarnate intersubjectivity (Lugones, 2010, p.746).

In a historical materialist analysis, it is crucial to acknowledge how historical material structures influence our agency. It is impossible to delve into the movements of rural women in Latin America, particularly in Brazil, without addressing the history that has shaped contemporary forms of colonial and imperial practices. The Brazilian territory embodies the experiences of peasant women movements and their realities as both peasants and rural workers within a colonial setting. Examining the Brazilian context is crucial because, as Sarah Ahmed asserts (2017, p.10), "we use our particulars to challenge the universal". Yet, contrasting the role of gender in pre-colonial societies is essential to understanding how the gender colonial system – which operates through hierarchical dichotomies and a categorial logic, as described in chapter one – disrupted "communal relations, egalitarian structures, ritual thinking, collective decision-making, collective authority, and economies" (Lugones, 2008, p.12).

Brazil has a long history of land concentration that dates back to Portuguese colonial regulations established during the colonization and imperial era. Understanding land concentration in Brazil is crucial for grasping the exploitation of both the territory and of certain bodies. The injustices and discrimination inherited from this exploitative colonial system have profoundly shaped the country's structural and social relations.

Through this process, women, particularly Indigenous and black women, experienced the dispossession of their bodies and territories. "Women discovered more and more that their own bodies had been alienated from them and had been turned into objects for others, had become 'occupied territory'" (Mies, 2014, p.25). Just as the enclosure of lands and bodies have facilitated primitive accumulation (Roberts; Federici), the conquest of lands and the subjugation of Indigenous and enslaves bodies initiated an ongoing accumulation process that has sustained the production and reproduction of the capitalist system in the territory. The method of expropriation based on violence, denial of their knowledge, and demonization of peasant women's practices in Europe, during the enclosure of the commons, was also employed – and continues to be used – in the colonization of the Americas and the African continent (Federici, 2012).

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2010, p.28) points out that "the colonial foundations of society is revealed in the fact that the relations it inaugurates are based on a primordial image: the non-human condition of the other". As María Lugones (2010) argues, this process led to subjugation and dehumanization of some specific bodies:

> I understand the dichotomous hierarchy between the human and the non-human as the central dichotomy of colonial modernity. Beginning with the colonization of the Americas and the Caribbean, a hierarchical, dichotomous distinction between human and non-human was imposed on the colonized in the service of Western man. It was accompanied by other dichotomous hierarchical distinctions, among them that between men and women. This distinction became a mark of the human and a mark of civilization. Only the civilized are men or women. Indigenous peoples of the Americas and enslaved Africans were classified as not human in species – as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild (Lugones, 2010, p.743).

Such dichotomous hierarchy represents the foundation of colonial society, where a binary and hierarchical categorical logic shapes modern capitalist and colonial thought. As previously mentioned, Lugones (2010) argues that modernity structures the world in a way that separates ontologically atomic and homogenous categories. The oppressive logic of colonial modernity, therefore, views race, gender, sexuality, etc. through this categorical, dichotomous, and hierarchical lens. Such logic underpins the colonial system that has dominated the Brazilian territory since the 16th Century.

The violent process of subjugation, exploitation of nature and other human beings, through Indigenous and black slavery and the genocide of native peoples, has left an inescapable imprint on the construction of Latin American and Caribbean societies, resulting in social and regional inequalities. This stands in sharp contrast to the discourse of conversion preached by the Christianizing mission implemented by the colonizers. The civilizing mission, formulated by colonizers as an ideological justification for colonization and conquest, included conversion to Christianity as a central tool for imposing modern European normativity. Nevertheless, even while drawing on Christian values, the mission, based on perceived deficiencies of the colonized, authorized violence and justified cruelty in its implementation (Lugones, 2010). The conquest, therefore, took the form of not only territorial colonization, but also cultural, economic, religious and epistemological imposition that excluded a plurality of knowledges produced in the territory (Walsh, 2007). Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) stresses that these colonial conditions rooted on humiliation produced more than physical hardships, but also the loss of dignity and the "internalization of the values of the oppressor".

The devastation of nature and its biodiversity was one of the consequences of this conquest, along with the plundering of minerals and the establishment of large plantations to meet the demands of the metropolis. In the first moment, the land was divided into fifteen hereditary fiefs granted to Portuguese dons. This division is at the root of the latifundia system,

of the monoculture agro-export production, and the early stages of primitive accumulation in the territory.

Consequently, since Portuguese colonization, access to land has been restricted to the ruling classes, despite the continental dimensions of the country. Brazilian history exposes how the exploitation of both bodies and nature in the colony, through the accumulation of capital by the overseas colonizers, was transferred to the elite that was formed to maintain power within the country. Silvia Cusicanqui (2010) highlights that the maintenance of an elite in power through a discourse of modernity conceals processes of archaization and economic, political, and cultural conservatism. Through these processes the colonial condition is reproduced and renewed.

The Land Law of 1850, enacted during the Brazilian Imperial regime, reinforced land concentration. While it did not introduce a completely new regulatory framework for understanding land as property, it formalized and legitimized historical practices and structures that had been in place since the early stages of colonization. Therefore, it consolidated the market nature of the land, transforming land into property in the modern sense of the term; something that can be bought, sold and must have well defined boundaries. Despite the initial difficulties in its regulation and application, in the end, the Land Law was effective in reducing the different conceptions of land property in the Brazilian territory to the market definition of commodity (Carvalho, 1981; Silvia, 2015).

In this sense, groups that have historically occupied and used the land based on criteria other than legal and market standards have had their ways of life questioned, been expelled, violated, and identified as intruders, and criminals. The traditional ways of land occupation practiced by nomad Indigenous Peoples were subsequently restricted by the expansion of capital accumulation. The very notion of Indigenous reserves was developed over the years to restrain nomadism and limit land boundaries. The process of transforming land into property

is, therefore, at the roots of the agrarian conflicts that continue to characterize Brazil today (Silva, 2015). In practice, it represented an "aggressive recolonization" process, as Cusicanqui (2010) describes in the Bolivian context, legitimizing the expansion of latifundia and the expropriation of communal territories.

Until the 1960s, during the military dictatorship, no new land or agrarian legislation was issued. Following the military coup in 1964, the regime decreed the Land Statute, which aimed to regularize land ownership and reduce land concentration, by establishing legal parameters for land acquisition and expropriation – particularly of unproductive land – in an effort to contain peasant and rural mobilizations demanding agrarian reform. Nevertheless, in practice, it was never fully implemented due to the obstruction of agrarian elites and the very structure of the military regime. As a result, land concentration persisted, while repression against peasants and rural workers, as well as violence in the countryside, became widespread during the dictatorship.

The concentration and centralization of land were further intensified during the 1960s and 1970s through agricultural modernization, characterized by the industrialization of rural production. This shift represented a new hegemonic paradigm in agricultural production, promoted by Brazil's military governments, and is distinguished by the growing integration of technology, mechanization of production processes, and the technical-scientific management of agriculture. This production model has deepened historical patterns of land occupation and control, transforming unproductive latifundia into modern agribusinesses focused on the global agricultural commodities market (Milton Santos, 1994, 1996; Xavier, 2017)

This model, which still characterizes Brazilian agricultural sector, fosters a significant rural exodus and migration, further concentrates land and wealth, homogenizes production, increases reliance on imported inputs, creates dependence on foreign markets, and exacerbates poverty and social inequality in rural areas. There has also been a rise in social conflicts over

land, increased indebtedness of small and medium-sized farmers, and the replacement of food production areas with export-oriented crop production (Mesquita, 2015).

The history of colonization, land concentration, and the transformation of land into property are intrinsic to the process of primitive accumulation. This process unfolds through the continuous reinvention of capital accumulation methods, including the enclosure of land and bodies, which has been ongoing since the early stages of territorial occupation. It extends to modern methods of expanding land control through the mechanization of rural areas, oriented toward global market demands, and includes the recent financialization of agribusiness sectors. These neoliberal strategies, which enable new forms of capital accumulation, remain part of a violent and structural process of exploitation. They reinforce the conditions established by primitive accumulation, perpetuating both the endless drive for capitalist expansion and its gendered dimensions.

This exclusionary system has left many dispossessed of their land, native knowledge, and dignity. María Lugones (2008) suggests that the gender system and the "coloniality of power" are co-constitutive of each other. In her formulation of the "coloniality of gender", Lugones includes a concrete perception of the process of dehumanization and classification of people, materialized through the exercise of power. The coloniality is an ongoing process in contrast to colonization; "it is what lies in the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the capitalist world system of power" (Lugones, 2010, p.746).

Therefore, even after the colonization process, this exclusionary system governed by the coloniality of power remained in place. At this intersection is the black woman, stereotyped in Brazil as a maid or sexualized figure – a portrayal rooted in racist and patriarchal representations established during slavery and perpetuated by capitalist, racist, and patriarchal social relations. Such representations are structural to Brazilian society, functioning as a

continuation of the colonial period, with necessary updates to racist and patriarchal oppressions with the consolidation of capitalism (Gonzales, 2020; Calaça 2021).

Social mobilization: movements in movement

Against this background, and with the redemocratization process in Brazil in the 1980s, social and peasant movements emerged to advocate for the basic rights of rural workers and to guarantee social justice in the rural areas, including land redistribution and agrarian reform, in accordance with the recognition of the social function of land established in the 1988 Constitution. Indeed, with the fall of the military regime, widespread social mobilization, and a broad democratization agenda, the material conditions were ripe for an unprecedented struggle over economic models, centered on redefining the role of the State (Marangoni, 2012).

Peasant women have been mobilizing since 1960s through pastoral and ecclesiastic committees in the countryside. Their initial organization was embedded by the religious context of the Catholic Church and its progressist sectors, within which they developed critical perspectives of their social condition and their position in a patriarchal community. In these spaces, rooted in Liberation Theology[11], a political militancy could take shape, enabling women, who were typically confined to the private sphere of the family, to become involved in political discussions (Aguiar, 2017; Deere, 2004, Siliprandi, 2011). Even though seemingly contradictory with the religious environment, some feminist ideas began to permeate these discussions during the 1980s, with the participation of female theologians who encouraged rural

[11] Liberation theology is a Christian theological approach that emerged in Latin America after the Second Vatican Council and the Medellín Conference, based on the premise that the Gospel seeks to help the poor and oppressed. It is an important movement for transformation and mobilization in Latin America, using the human and social sciences to reflect on liberation from unjust economic, political, or social conditions.

women to reflect on the reality of their daily lives and their experience of life as poor women (Aguiar, 2017).

The emergence and vibrancy of social movements in the 1980s also invigorated rural women's organizing, particularly within the framework of 'new syndicalism[12]' effervescence in Brazil (Aguiar, 2017; Deere, 2004, Siliprandi, 2011). The main organizational structures in rural areas were trade unions, or other movements such as the Landless Rural Workers' Movement – *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST). Women played an active role in the renewal of trade unions by organizing meetings, mobilizing people to get involved, and promoting the principles of a new unionism.

Nevertheless, within the context of the trade unions, women experienced discrimination and felt unheard by their male counterparty. Rural women in Brazil rarely had land ownership papers in their names. Many of them were even undocumented, making it impossible for them to be recognized as workers or as individuals with rights. The patriarchal relations they faced at home with their fathers and husbands were frequently mirrored in the political spaces they were entering for struggle. Their specific demands related to gender issues were still unmet or regarded as less important than class and economic concerns, even though some women have managed to attain leadership positions (Deere, 2004).

They did not want a woman to be the head of the syndicate [trade union]. But I made it, I was there. Our presence was important there (T. during a fieldwork visit to a member of the MMC in Vale do Rio Doce region, Minas Gerais, in February 2023)[13].

I want to tell you that rural women were bold and wise to get where we are today. We did not have the right to be affiliated with the syndicate, and when we tried, men would tell us we

[12] New syndicalism, or new trade unionism, was an oppositional movement within trade unions that sought to break away from the 'old' form of political action found in traditional unions. These older structures had become rigid and bureaucratic, characterized by assistencialism and paternalism. In contrast, the new unionism defined itself as authentic, combative, and deeply rooted in grassroots organizing.

[13] All the quotations in italics, as mentioned in the introduction, are drawn from my fieldwork notes. The notes used in this chapter are in Portuguese; the translation to English is my own.

already had a husband or father. Challenging sexism back then was not an easy task. Our struggle was not just to become members, but also to take on leadership roles. I was the first woman to become one of the coordinators of CONTAG [Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura][14]. They would say that as women, we were better suited for secretarial roles, and they would not allow us to take on political positions. I was able to join the syndicate in 1973 because I did not have a husband, and my father was not a member. When I first joined, my initial goal was to seek assistancialism [social assistance] from the union, as they provided doctors and dentists at the time. But later, as I began engaging with other women and with the syndicate at a national level, I realized that the role of the union was not just about providing assistance. Many syndicates did not appreciate our newfound awareness. As men noticed that we were mobilized and understood that the syndical politics were not beneficial to us, they began to boycott me. It was a real struggle to get to that point; for instance, when we needed to attend a meeting related to syndical activities in Brasília, the men would travel by plane, while we had to take the bus (O. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

In this context, Margarida Alves, a combative and prominent woman syndicate leader, gained national visibility and prominence. As an advocate for agrarian reform, women's rights, and president of Alagoa Grande Syndicate in Paraiba, she confronted powerful land 'colonels[15]' in her efforts to defend the rights of rural workers. Her struggle disturbed the colonels and local ruling powers in the countryside of Paraiba, a Northeastern state of Brazil, and she was brutally assassinated at her home in 1983.

However, as the peasant and rural women chant in their marches and manifestations, *they did not know we were seeds*, and that Margaridas – her name, Margarida, means Daisy – would spread everywhere. Her battle later led to the organization of the Margaridas' March, a

[14] This union structure was created in 1963, during the military dictatorship, as a result of the rural workers' struggle. It was organized in a traditional, rigid, and bureaucratic manner, which was unfavorable to critical union action (Aguiar, 2017).

[15] Colonels (*Coronéis* in Portuguese) is a term used in Brazil to describe powerful rural landowners who held authoritarian political, economic, and social control over large territories, especially in the Northeast. The term is still used today to refer to local authoritarianism and elite rural power.

collective action led by “women from the countryside, forests, and waters”, as they call themselves, which takes place every four years in Brasilia[16]. I will elaborate on the joint efforts related to organizing the Margaridas’ March later, but I want to clarify that I choose not to translate ‘Margaridas’ to ‘Daisy’ in honor of Margarida Alves.

In the 1980s, the need for specific forms of organizations to claim their rights and space as peasant and rural women was recognized. In addition to the oppression and exploitation they faced as women workers, there was another shared experience: domestic violence, the burden of housework, and exclusion from political participation both in society and within the church itself. In various Brazilian states, autonomous rural women’s mobilization began to emerge during this period, almost at the same time and under different names (Seibert, 2019).

There isn't the same understanding in a mixed movement; women don’t have a voice. Women have the courage to speak with one another, the courage to share what’s happening, to denounce it to other women – it’s very different (J. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Alagoas, in February 2022).

In this initial phase, women organized politically as a way to occupy public spaces to assert their rights. Although they did not yet identify as ‘feminists’, they sought to denounce the specific oppression and exploitation they experienced due to their gender. Paola Cappellin (1990) describes this autonomous mobilization as having “feminist aspirations”, as they were aware that their condition was closely tied to the subjugation they faced as woman.

People also need to know that the victories we achieved, in the context of the syndicates, were the result of our battles, women’s battles, not men’s struggles. For example, when we say 'the syndicate passed a 30% quota for women’s participation in such and such year at a certain congress,' who was really fighting to make that happen? (I. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022)

[16] Margaridas’ March Webpage (2023). *Marcha das Margaridas*. https://marchadasmargaridas.org.br/

These movements are the result of women's mobilization within a specific historical context. Understanding the current configuration of rural women's movements would be impossible without contextualizing the specific scenario of the Brazilian territory in which they were forged, conceived and built. The historical moment the country was experiencing represented a social impetus for political mobilization. However, as a territory of continental dimensions, it is important to consider not only the gathering of forces on a national scale, but also the country's regional specificities.

In 1986, these autonomous movements organized the First National Meeting of Rural Women Workers of Brazil, with a common agenda focused on women's political participation in syndicates, political parties, the church, and rural communities. Their priorities included rural women's rights, the fight against the latifundia, advocacy for agrarian reform and dignity in the countryside, recognition as rural workers, and an end to the violence perpetrated against them. The recognition as rural workers by both the government and the syndicates was key to their access to workers' rights such as social security benefits, including paid maternity leave and pensions (Aguiar, 2017; Deere 2004).

The national meeting stimulated discussions about the political tools available to rural women for mobilization. Is establishing women's boards or committees in the syndicates sufficient to address their demands? What is the most effective way to tackle women's issues within the grassroots movements in which they are organized? These were questions they began to raise (Seibert, 2019)

This encounter fostered the formation of the prominent and considerably active regional rural women's movements in Brazil. It was pivotal in the creation of the Rural Working Women's Movement of the Northeast (*Movimento da Mulher Trabalhadora Rural do Nordeste* – MMTR-NE) in the Northeastern part of Brazil, and the Coordination of Rural Women Workers' Organizations – South (*Articulação de Instâncias de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais*

– *Sul* – AIMTR-Sul) in the South. The Articulation would later evolve, in 1995, into a national organization with the unification of various autonomous movements that had emerged in the 1980's, including the MMTR-NE.

My name is O., from the Sertão Central in Pernambuco, where the Rural Workers' Women's Movement of the Northeast was first established. I am one of the founders, and I am here to tell the story of the movement wherever necessary (O. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

I want to talk to you about Pernambuco. The MMTR was founded in Pernambuco state, in a very difficult time, in a period of severe drought, of hunger, where coronelismo[17] was (and still is) strong. Pernambuco is also the land of Lampião[18] and Luis Gonzaga[19], both known nationally and internationally, but we did not talk about women in this moment, not even about Maria Bonita[20]. However, we worked for the syndical movement, and we knew we needed an autonomous movement for rural women. (E. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

However, Caroline Araújo Bordalo (2006) argues that the formation of the Peasant Women's Movement (MMC) in 2004, following the unification of several movements from different regions in Brazil into a National Articulation, led to the exclusion of the Rural

[17] *Coronelismo* was a significant political and social phenomenon in Brazilian history, especially prevalent from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century. The term originates from *"coronel"* (colonel), not in reference to a military title, but rather to influential rural landowners who exercised authoritarian control over local politics and social structures, particularly in the countryside. Currently, *coronelismo* is still used in Brazil to describe authoritarian, paternalistic, or oligarchic behavior by political elites, especially in rural or less urbanized areas.
[18] A group of bandits, known as *cangaceiros*, rose up against the domination of landowners and the government in the region. They practiced attacks and looting, adopted nomadic lifestyles, and wore leather clothing and hats to protect themselves from the thorny vegetation during their escapades. Lampião was the most famous and prominent figure of the *Cangaço*, a social phenomenon occurred in the Northeast of Brazil and was active between 2022 and 1938. Among the motivations for the emergence of the Cangaço in Brazilian society are social inequality, poverty, and the lack of access to justice and other services provided by the state. Lampião was killed in an ambush in Sergipe in 1938.
[19] Luiz Gonzaga was a Brazilian musician, singer, songwriter and accordion player. He was responsible for spreading the rhythms of the Northeast all over the country.
[20] Maria Bonita was the first woman to join the group of *cangaceiros*, although she is mostly known for being Lampião's wife. However, her role went beyond just being Lampião's companion; she actively participated in the life and struggles of the *cangaço* alongside the men. Her presence in the *cangaço* opened the door for other women to join the movement, challenging the traditional roles of women at that time in the *sertão*.

Workers' Women's Movement of the Northeast (MMTR-NE). Based on her empirical work, she contends that the MMC and the MMTR-NE represent different political traditions and, therefore, different forms of political action. Although both movements emerged from the context of the rural syndicates, they diverged in the ways they chose to represent rural workers.

The MMC constructed the image of the Movement around the category of 'peasant'. With the exception of the MMTR-NE, regional movements reunited since 1995 in a National Articulation, opted to focus on the category of peasant. The notion of peasant, as discussed by the movement, includes small farmers, artisanal fisherwomen, coconut breakers, extractivists, tenants, sharecroppers, river dwellers, squatters, the landless, campers and settlers, rural wage earners and Indigenous People. From the MMC's perspective, organizing their struggle within a Trade Union meant limiting their mobilization to the professional and syndicate sphere, while the issues they faced extended far beyond workers' disputes. Their goal was to establish a popular movement that could autonomously engage with unions (Seibert, 2019).

According to Bordalo (2006) this approach reflected the MMC's understanding that the Movement itself could become an important interlocutor with the State. As an heir to the Southern movements, the MMC's actions were inspired by the political engagement of those earlier movements. In the South, the social movements were strongly influenced by the 'new syndicalism' and its critique of traditional political approaches of outdated trade unions. The movements that originated from the South developed, like the new syndicates, a more combative and confrontational relationship with the state. The MMC builds on this experience and the belief that the Movement itself is legitimate in establishing political dialogue, voicing its claims and demands.

Bordalo (2006) asserts that, in contrast, the MMTR-NE prioritized the affiliation with the syndicates as a strategy to organize the struggle of women rural workers, which is broad

and also includes women in agriculture, *quilombolas*[21], Indigenous Peoples, fisherwomen, coconut breakers, and artisans. In the Northeast, particularly in Pernambuco, the fight for rights was closely tied to the historical role of trade unions, which served as key intermediaries with the state, legitimized by the grassroots mobilization of rural workers. In this context, female unionists often viewed women's movements as preparatory spaces, equipping women for activism in established public forums such as unions, town halls, and political parties. The MMTR-NE was founded in Pernambuco, deeply connected to this syndicalist tradition. The rural working women were central to its mobilization, honoring their role as workers.

The unionization of women was a very important step in our movement, and it was a Pernambuco's struggle, we brought this topic to different meetings in the context of CONTAG. And we, as women, were also strategic in many different struggles, including strikes and work stoppages (E. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

I discovered the movement, in 1985, when there was a women's articulation within the context of CONTAG. It was a struggle to ensure that the annals of this Congress would include the obligation and right of women to be affiliated with the syndicates (I. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

Bordalo (2006) suggests that these divergent choices emerged from political disputes and competing efforts to mobilize mutually exclusive social resources, particularly within the framework of the political forces faced by the aforementioned movements during the proposed merger into a national movement. She argues that while both movements converge on their approach to women and gender issues, institutional and organizational differences emerge when

[21] *Quilombolas* belong to a community known as a *quilombo* – a territorial space established by individuals who were once enslaved and fought for their freedom. Within this space, they share the values, customs, and a deep connection to the land, living alongside others who identify with the struggles, resistance, and dedication to preserving and valuing Afro-Brazilian culture.

other categories are considered, reflecting their distinct political and historical contexts. The author provides valuable insights into the differences and contradiction that led to the formation of a prominent national peasant movement, which was established at the expense of the exclusion of the rural women's movement in the Northeast.

These insights are crucial for understanding how the political choices of both preeminent movements concerning rural and peasant women have led them to define categories like "peasant" and "rural working woman" in alternative ways. More important than the definitions themselves is the impact these choices have on their partnerships with other social movements, both nationally and transnationally – a point that I will expand upon later in this chapter. It is also interesting to note how, despite their different political and organizational choices, these movements come together to prepare for and march in unison during the Margaridas' March, advocating for public policies at the national level and, through their transnational partners, in international organizations for the formulation of international policy documents. These encounters reflect the fact that, despite their different political traditions, these movements share a broader political vision.

Becoming "political subjects"

Despite their historical contributions to workers' rights and daily efforts, peasant and rural working women have often remained invisible or forgotten in the history of popular class struggles for genuine structural transformation of the society. Their invisibility reflects the ongoing oppression and exploitation they face within a patriarchal capitalist system.

In rural areas of Brazil, the gender division of labor and the assignment of reproductive work to women are accentuated due to distinctly gendered dynamics within the household. The

structure of the peasant family is still considered a homogenous unit, where the father is seen as the personification of the family's interests (Calaça et al., 2018). The households have, therefore, been historically organized through the advancement of the gender division of labor, which institutionalizes gender power relations, and the control exerted by the state and the capital over social reproduction. This has culminated in the centrality of the nuclear family, manifested as a heterosexual union (Roberts, 2017; Ferguson, 1999). As Calaça et al. (2018) argue, although peasant and rural women take an active part in agricultural work itself, most of their labor has been considered unproductive. Consequently, the time and energy that rural women invest in their work become invisible, forgotten and devalued. In this process, rural women themselves also become invisible.

Indeed, Shrin Rai (2024) argues that the burden of social reproduction, including both unpaid and paid care work, entails hidden costs and structural violence. She introduces the concept of depletion, defined as excessive demands of social reproduction in relation to available resources and support, to highlight this form of planetary harm. Depletion involves harms such as physical illness, mental drain, emotional burden, and erosion of community, leading to human exhaustion and planetary depletion. Rai (2024) demonstrates that these damages are unequally inflicted across the planet and are deeply gendered, racialized, and shaped by class and colonial histories. The harms of depletion reveal the lack of recognition of care as essential labor, exposing the need for redistribution and state support, in contrast to neoliberal assumptions that render it invisible.

From a feminist historical materialist perspective, the labor involved in the reproduction of the workforce across generations and in daily life – despite being invisible, undervalued, and often unpaid – is just as crucial as the labor force in driving the advancement of capitalist accumulation (Bakker, 2007; Ferguson, 1999; Roberts, 2017). It regenerates not only life, both daily and intergenerationally, but also the social relations inherent to capitalism (Fernandes et

al, 2023). The exploitation and subjugation of some bodies, through reproductive work, ensure the reproduction of more labor power (Federici, 2012). Nevertheless, the transposition between production and social reproduction divides is not evident in rural areas. The artificial separation between productive and reproductive work, which has been so crucial to the historical development of capitalism as a gendered process and legitimized by neoliberal economist scholars, is further complexified in this context, given the strong intertwining of production and social reproduction tasks performed by peasant and rural women.

But I assure you, although there are no statistics to support this, I can confidently say that 90% of these women, despite all our struggles, are still in the kitchen (I. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

Care and domestic work are assigned to women, especially in rural areas, but these women also take on many agricultural and commercial tasks. However, in rural settings, this division is neither coherent nor clearly defined. Many productive activities performed by women, often in precarious conditions, are frequently not recognized as such, precisely because they are carried out by women. Thus, what reinforces this division is not only the daily reality of rural women, but the fact that, in addition to performing various agricultural tasks, they are primarily responsible for care and domestic work. Their contribution to agricultural work is often seen as a merely "helping hand" in ensuring the family's survival (Calaça et al, 2018).

This approach adds layers to the discussion because these farming activities typically involve highly demanding labor-intensive tasks. The consequence is that the value attributed to not only social reproduction tasks, but also to what should be considered productive work, is diminished, leading to the overall devaluation of women's labor. The separation between productive and reproductive work reproduces further the inequalities in rural areas (Calaça et al, 2018). In this sense, "social reproduction (is) an enabler and facilitator for agricultural work

and production" (Fernandes et al, 2023), while also being intrinsically linked to the exclusion, subjugation, and discrimination of rural women.

In the context of the syndicates, it was common for women's participation to occur as dependents of their husbands or fathers rather than as union members. In some syndicates, only one person per family was allowed to become a union member and it was usually the male head of the household who would join. In certain instances, discussions even arose about prohibiting the unionization of wives (Aguiar, 2017; Deere, 2004). This dynamic has significantly contributed to many years of the lack of recognition of rural women as 'workers', their social invisibility, and their exclusion from social security rights.

To fight for recognition as 'workers', to join the syndicate, and to participate as members and leaders – independently of fathers or husbands – was also to challenge the process that perpetuates the invisibility of the work done by women. Ultimately, it was also a struggle for the acknowledgement of their own existence as peasant and rural women. In the process of fighting for recognition as peasant and rural workers and engaging in political militancy, women could develop the political consciousness needed to recognize themselves as political subjects. The establishment of autonomous movements had an enormous impact on this process. By organizing their mobilization and strengthening their political and union participation, they consolidated their backgrounds as peasants and members of the popular working class, and but also as women, affirming themselves as political subjects.

Well, this is all to say that due to this advance [the organization of the movement and public policies for rural women]*; I am now a 'political subject', a rural worker, settled (assentada in Portuguese) in Sergipe. (V. during an interview in 2021).*

When referring to "settled" or *assentada* in Portuguese, V. indicates that she has benefited from an agrarian reform program in Brazil. She was previously associated with the

Landless Movement (MST) and participated in the occupation of the land where she currently resides, which was previously left fallow. This program became possible after the country's redemocratization process in 1988, resulting from popular pressure despite the resistance and challenges posed by landowners and agribusiness sectors. A government organ, the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform, currently administrates it.

Nevertheless, what occurs in practice is a compensatory policy of rural settlements or *assentamentos*, driven by social pressure from the occupation of latifundia by social movements demanding agrarian reform. Even though the Brazilian state has the responsibility to implement these compensatory measures, they remain sporadic and localized. Although the families that benefit from this social action can see an improvement in their living condition upon leaving the tarp[22], they still require ongoing technical and socio-economic support. Many of them belong to the group of people living in precarious conditions due to the states' failure in implementing the *assentamentos* and are targeted by conservative groups opposed to land reform and the settlements (Leite & Freddi, 2018).

V. mentioned this because she could only benefit from the program after obtaining identity documents and documentation recognizing her as a rural worker.

Since 1988, when rural workers' rights were recognized, we realized that most rural women were undocumented. When they have documents, they are not individual identification documents, they are marriage documents. Or when they were identified they wouldn't be identified as rural women, but as housekeeper. In 2003, the campaign got support from the syndicate, and in 2004, a Program for documentation of female rural workers was launched by the government. The program remained in place until 2016, and in 2019 it was completely discontinued due to the dismantling of social programs by the government [Bolsonaro´s government at the time of the interview] (V. during an interview in 2021).

[22] The tarp set up at the campsite is where landless rural workers sleep during occupation of unproductive land.

The ‘No Undocumented Rural Worker Documentation Campaign’ for documentation of female rural workers was a crucial step in mobilizing the peasant and rural women’s movement in Brazil. As V. highlighted, it marked an important moment for these women in recognizing themselves as political subjects, thereby strengthening their potential to struggle and resist the challenges they face as rural women.

When social security rights of rural workers were regulated in the late 1980s, many rural women realized they could not benefit from these rights because they lacked individual identification documents, such as a birth/marriage certificate, identity card, individual registration card, voter registration card, and membership card of the rural workers' syndicate. They also did not have a lease or partnership contract nor land ownership. Although the access to personal documentation represents a fundamental right, the invisibility to which these women were subjected deprived them not only of rural workers’ rights but also of basic rights, such as health system access and education (Seibert, 2019).

The documentation program was launched as a public policy by the government in 2004, aimed at promoting rural women’s right to citizenship and dignity. This initiative was the result of a large-scale campaign mobilized by the autonomous movements of peasant women, which began in the South in 1994, and expanded nationally in 1995. The ‘No Undocumented Rural Worker Documentation Campaign’, which became later the ‘National Rural Workers Documentation Campaign’, claimed that all women must have their documents that identify them as an individual and by her profession as a rural worker (Aguiar, 2017; Seibert, 2019).

I also wanted to mention an important movement, the AIMTR-SUL (Articulação de Instâncias de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais do Sul). This movement played a significant role in organizing and mobilizing the National Campaign for the Documentation of Rural Workers. We in the Northeast fully supported it. The campaign later became a public policy during Lula’s government [during his first term]. It was the result of our struggle – this is the right word –

but we also learned a lot (E. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

Peasant and rural women who traveled across regions and states, holding meetings in various locations, parishes, unions and rural communities, organized the campaign. Some traveled for weeks to mobilize and inform other undocumented women, many of whom did not even know their own age. The members of the campaign reported experiencing violence as means of preventing them from reaching undocumented rural women (Calaça, 2021).

The campaign represents, therefore, not only the basic recognition of these women's right to dignity, but also a fundamental step in the formation and reaffirmation of their vital recognition as political subjects. Through political militancy, peasant women begin the process of self-empowerment, becoming aware of their rights. This recognition has been reflected not only in the development of some public policies that respond to their demands, such as the campaign for documentation, but also in the establishment of institutional spaces committed to guaranteeing these rights, particularly during more progressive governments.

The MMTR-NE is like a school. I will never forget the women who, during our meetings, would say they didn't know how to speak in public or in front of others. However, today, we see these same women confidently facing any discussion or any man who approaches us with sexism. I never went to university, but this movement is my university (E. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

I didn't even know I was a feminist until I started participating in the movement. Through my involvement, I discovered myself in all aspects. I realized that many rural women have rights today, but they don't know how these rights were won. It was through the struggle of so many other women. This realization deepened my admiration for the women who had come through the movement before me (A. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

Their political participation and engagement in autonomous movements reaffirmed them as subjects of rights. Discovering themselves as a political subject means discovering their agency, and, consequently, realizing their role as agents of societal transformation. As Iridiani Seibert (2019) argues, these reflections, grounded on a gender perspective, were essential in the struggle and organization of autonomous rural women's movements, as they revealed that the oppression and exploitation these women face were historically and socially constructed. Therefore, this condition could be transformed and transcended.

> The contradictions experienced by women from subaltern classes – subjugated to the private sphere of domestic work, which is undervalued, and excluded from productive work or included under unequal conditions that do not guarantee the social reproduction of their families – place women as the largest contingent on the poverty line in Brazil and Latin America. These contradictions can drive these women, out of a basic need for survival, to become aware of their domination and exploitation and to rebel against this situation (Seibert, 2019, p.85).

Understanding themselves as political subjects was also the result of a process of recognizing spheres and spaces of belonging.

We need to think of ways to strengthen ourselves as political subjects. I came to discover myself as a woman, a black woman, a mother, a leader in the movement. It makes us recognize ourselves as leaders, strengthens our colleagues and makes us stronger (F. in a meeting of the direction of the MMTR-NE during my stay in Sergipe in February 2022).

By recognizing their spheres and spaces of belonging, women in rural areas began to understand their specific circumstances and particularities at the intersection of the axes of oppression they are subjected to. Indeed, “in rural Brazil, the peasant women face issues of class, race and gender in a particularly harsh way” (Calaça et al, 2018, p.58). Peasant and rural women’s movements, therefore, are shaped by distinct spheres of belonging, as they speak and identify themselves through their particularities, while striving to make theoretically and critically operational the very singularities that form both the condition of their existence and the aspects they seek to transform (Bordalo, 2006).

No matter where I am, I will always defend the categories to which I belong: as a woman and as a peasant (O. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

Throughout the process, they were able to explore the unique experiences of being peasant and rural women. Michella Calaça (2021: 37) reiterates that the category of peasant represents a concrete "materiality that presupposes (specific) experiences". The material reality of peasant and rural women is indeed a material condition that limits and shape their possibilities as agents in different manners, but it does not determine them.

In this sense, moving beyond structuralist and determinist approaches involves rethinking "the notions of class and class consciousness as a political and lived experience" (Ferguson, 1999, p.11), which implies recognizing "that class never exists outside of the other fundamental relations of lived reality (i.e., race, gender, age, ability, etc.)" (Ferguson, 1999, p.8). This is because contradictions and conflicts transcend class relations, encompassing broader power dynamics. In other words, it means understanding that multidimensional forms of inequalities are not subordinate to class relations, but the result of the interaction of human agency (Ferguson, 1999; Seccombe and Livingstone, 1996). As Michella Calaça (2021, p.62) states regarding to peasant women's experience, "experience and structure are not incompatible; experience shapes structure and is simultaneously shaped by it".

This dynamic seems to be encapsulated by the notion of an 'incarnate, historicized intersubjectivity,' from a decolonial feminist perspective, as suggested by María Lugones: "A decolonial feminism is proposed, with a strong emphasis on an incarnate, historicized intersubjectivity, posing criticism of the racialized, colonial, capitalist, heterosexualist gender oppression, as a lived transformation of the social" (María Lugones, 2011, p.105). Intimate everyday interactions and incarnate material settings are therefore both key to the social transformation these women seek.

Constructing a feminist movement

> To be a peasant is to be a seed; we will be seeds of resistance, seeds of transformation (B. member of the MMC, during an online training session in 2021).

Peasant and rural women movements have acknowledged their political struggles as feminist in nature in recent decades. While their recognition as 'feminist' was not immediate, the construction of a militant feminist consciousness was the result a historical process of organizing their collective struggle and the necessity to define, both politically and theoretically, their own feminism.

Mirla Cisne (2014) argues that their political organization and formation as a collective movement were crucial in shaping their struggle and political action as feminist. According to her, militant feminist consciousness arises from this collective effort to advance their movement. Sirlei Gaspareto (2018) also highlights how, in the context of autonomous women's movement, the collective nurtures and empowers the individual, while individuals simultaneously strengthen the collective. In this journey, peasant and rural women undergo an individual process of self-transformation, liberating themselves from relations of domination and exploitation. They unveil the foundations that sustain and reproduce such domination, denaturalizing definitions of what it means to be a woman. The collective also serves as a space where each woman is nourished and strengthened for her internal battles.

The process of acquiring autonomy over their lives is particularly important for peasant and rural women. This process is constructed through the valorization of their own work, the reclaiming of their ability to lead a movement, and the expression of their ideas. It involves the capacity for decision-making regarding their political organizations, family production, or even the freedom to leave the house to attend a meeting, demonstration, or pursue education. Achieving autonomy, therefore, is key in their journey toward self-determination, embodying

their feminist struggle. Autonomy over their bodies and their sexuality, autonomy in the preparation for their struggles, political autonomy, economic autonomy.

When I first joined the Movement, I had to lie to him [her husband] and say I was taking the kids to the doctor instead of admitting I was going to a movement meeting. But through the Movement, I learned how to value my work, how to negotiate fair prices, and how to sell and organize vegetable markets. Now, I have my economic autonomy – I bought my own motorcycle, I can go wherever I want (L. from the MMC, during my fieldwork visit to Vale do Rio Doce region, Minas Gerais, in 2023).

L. emphasized multiple times during my fieldwork visit the autonomy she achieved after joining the Movement. In fact, her independence in production and cultivation, in generating resources, and in her mobility between her fields and neighboring municipalities is evident. The freedom and decision-making power that women in the Movement have gained in their daily lives is evident and plays a significant role in positioning them as protagonists in various spheres of social relations. Despite their demanding work routines, I encountered women who devote themselves wholeheartedly to activism and uplifting other peasant and rural women.

The transmission of knowledge happens through their daily activities. During my stay at L.'s place – the regional and national coordinator of the MMC, whom I had been in contact with since the beginning of the research – in Vale do Rio Doce region, she took me to visit many grassroots participants of the Movement in the area. At each visit, she shared information and tips about a market they were organizing to sell the products from their productive backyards, as well as how to register to supply local public schools. I also witnessed her advising members on how to access their rights and informing them about relevant public policies.

It was evident that the process of constructing the Peasant Women's Movement in the Vale do Rio Doce region involves a support network encompassing everything from production

– such as vegetable gardens and productive backyards[23] – to distribution and marketing, for example at fairs, which are typical support structure within the movement across the country. This network offers women shared knowledge, opportunities, recognition of their personal and professional contributions, incentives for production, and new ways to generate income, fostering not only self-sufficiency but also autonomy. Additionally, prevention and support for victims of domestic violence are prioritized. Therefore, sharing knowledge and supporting others to achieve such autonomy is also a relevant process in fostering collective self-determination. Through collaborative efforts, members of the movement assist other women in understanding their rights and capabilities, enhancing their confidence and agency.

Catiane Cinelli (2016) draws attention to the fact that the production of creole seeds[24], decision-making around planting, and facing the difficulties of farm life are forms of feminist positioning, as they represent resistance, confronting the husband and other power structures. It also involves challenging technicians who do not recognize women's knowledge and presenting alternatives to the monoculture production system and agribusiness sectors. Everyday life for peasant and rural women is centered on land, seeds, the production of healthy food, water, their culture, spirituality, beliefs, and ancestral knowledge. Peasant and rural feminism has a deep connection with land and territory. The land is where the peasant or rural woman produces, makes a living, nourishes others, and ultimately, where she lives. The vegetable garden and the areas surrounding the home have become spaces from which concrete

[23] Productive backyards are present on most family farms and refers to small plots of land surround the home, maintained through the continuous work of recovering, producing, and improving Creole seeds, medicine plants and herbs, fruits, flowers, and animals for self-sufficiency. In this labor, carried out and coordinated by women, a rich diversity of food and knowledge is cultivated.

[24] Creole seeds, also known as traditional seeds, are varieties developed, adapted, or produced by family or peasant farmers, rural workers, *quilombola* communities, or Indigenous peoples. Selected over decades and passed down through generations, traditional seeds have been used and stored for long periods and are still preserved today by some farming families and seed banks. These varieties evolve through natural selection, cultivated over time without genetic modification, and are known for their adaptation to local environmental conditions. Creole seeds represent all the ways plants can be propagated – whether through grains, branches, leaves, flowers, fruits, roots, or stems. In other words, they encompass all possible methods of plant reproduction. Because they are adapted to specific territories and regional climates, they also enable agroecological practices within sustainable food production models, enhancing small farmers' autonomy.

examples of the importance of diversity have emerged. These spaces have fueled numerous struggles and demands for agroecology, improved quality of life, and food sovereignty. (Calaça, 2021, p.269). They also strengthen solidarity through the exchange of seeds, seedlings, ideas, and knowledge, fostering empathy and support among these women as they reaffirm their autonomy.

With this in view, peasant and rural women take on the challenge of confronting hierarchical power relations, oppression, and violence against them. They are aware that their feminist struggle must be against the structure of social relations of appropriation and exploitation of the patriarchal, racist and capitalist system. The feminist practice that they have historically and socially developed is grounded on the struggle for collective rights (Seibert, 2019).

At the same time, these women have developed a political consciousness by recognizing themselves as subjects of feminism. Peasant and rural women's movements see feminism as broadening the scope of politics, allowing them to understand the diverse expressions of women's struggles across the country. This perspective is particularly relevant when considering their material conditions, which shape specific ways of thinking and engaging in the feminist struggle (Seibert, 2019), as discussed before.

These specific approaches to engaging in feminist struggle also resulted in distinct feminist constructions within the movements these women organized. The Peasant Women's Movement (MMC) and the Rural Working Women's Movement in the Northeast (MMTR-NE) each developed their own feminist frameworks and methods for implementing this proposal: the *Popular Peasant Feminism* and the *School for Feminist Educators*, respectively, which I will present in the following sections.

The Popular Peasant Feminist

The term Popular Peasant Feminism was first discussed by the articulation of Latin American women during the Sixth Congress of the *Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo* (CLOC) – the Coordination of La Via Campesina in Latin America. The final statement of this Congress included the denunciation of racism, patriarchy, sexism and homophobia, demonstrating an understanding that these struggles are interconnected and part of a unified strategy for the structural transformation of society (Calaça, 2021). On their website page, the MMC provides an explanation of their feminism:

> For us in the MMC, our history is part of Popular Peasant Feminism, not only because we are in the (CLOC)/ La Via Campesina and there we play a strong role in the feminism debate, but because this is the term we have built together to show that the struggle of peasant women, often understood as the general struggle of the peasantry, does have a FEMINIST perspective, because it is necessarily anti-patriarchal, anti-racist and anti-capitalist (MMC website page).

The intrinsic connection between defining their movement as feminist and the struggles against patriarchy, racism, and capitalism is evident. The use of 'because' and 'necessarily' in the phrase demonstrates that, rather than merely overlapping, patriarchy, racism, and capitalism are part of the same system of exploitation and oppression.

The MMC has been advancing its feminist struggle through the Popular Peasant Feminism, which is built upon the recognition of a belonging to the categories of women and peasants, along with the popular action these women promote as a movement. It represents a political project, constructed from a feminist perspective and from the unique standpoint and history of peasant women. Such a political prospect also includes a popular peasant agriculture project that seeks to confront agribusiness, patriarchy and racism in the countryside. This feminism is, therefore, grounded on three key elements: the popular class struggle, as they consider overcoming capitalist social relations crucial for achieving a just a society; the feminist struggle for women's rights and political autonomy; and the peasant struggle for an agricultural

project that embraces agroecology and food sovereignty. In the MMC's view, these elements are entangled and interrelated in the everyday lives of peasant women. (Seibert, 2019).

> Popular Peasant Feminism is part of this experience of struggle that takes place in the face of the results of the actions of patriarchy, racism and capitalism in peasant life. As a feminism that is built on the experience of organization, training and struggle of women who make up the Latin American and Caribbean peasantry, who experience the expropriation of their territory, the attack on and denial of their knowledge, the destruction of their way of life, they have no way of building, in a separate way, the struggle against these systems of modernity that have colonized their territory, because they are a class that lives off their work, who have a way of life that is denied and fought against in the name of profit and 'scientificity', they are women who need to show that they are capable for themselves, at home, in their communities, in their organizations. And they have, and this is the Popular Peasant Feminism that we have systematized in this work (Calaça, 2021, p.102)

Popular Peasant Feminism is the product of political thought developed by peasant women through their journey of political formation, trainings, and social struggles. It is, therefore, the outcome of their political thinking and the practice of their feminist struggle. This is developed particularly through the movements' training spaces where they bring together their lived experience and studies. The militant peasant women learn, study, and engage in debates rooted in their reality in the countryside. Such exchange of information, combining theory and practice, fosters the emergence of new social practices (Serbeit, 2019).

We must break down the fences of oppression against women! We need to occupy every space in the world! (R., member of the MMC, during an online training session in 2021)

School for Feminist Educators

In their brochure introducing the School for Feminist Educators, the MMTR-NE explains that it strives to advance their movement not only as feminist, but also as anti-capitalist, anti-racist and rooted on agroecology. These struggles are part of the efforts within the project

they envision for transforming society. As in the case of the MMC, the MMTR-NE understands systems of oppression and exploitation as intrinsic to capitalist system.

The MMTR-NE also develops its feminism through political formation and education. Grounded on the principles and tools of popular education and rural feminist pedagogy, the political formation and training activities aim to build critical perspectives, raise awareness of how systems of oppression are structured, and strengthen participants' self-esteem and diverse selfhood. Such practice envisions fostering the joint creation of strategies for social transformation, through self-organization.

When we created the movement, we discussed our wish and necessity of a specific methodology for working with rural women. We worked already on the gender issue because our methodology led to this process, although we did not even know that the word for that was "gender". When gender became a trend topic, it was not a new thing for us, because our methodology consisted in asking: 'who am I?'. The first thing we discovered with this question was that we were women, and in this sense, we were already substantially working on gender (E. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

So, as E. said, we already had an articulation around feminist politics, but our actions came before the words. We discovered ourselves before the language; we didn't even identify as feminists, though in practice, we were. When we held our meetings in the Sertão, we began with three questions: Who am I? What do I want? And what do I do? From these questions, we made diagnoses and formed groups. This was part of the methodology we created, and it remains a part of our work today. In this rural feminism, we strive for equal rights in all spheres: at home, at work… (O. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

The School for Feminist Educators seeks to foster social inclusion and to deconstruct the hierarchies and structures of domination present in conventional educational spaces. The name 'School' reflects the intention to reframe the educational experience from which many

rural women were historically excluded – although today many are also entering formal educational institutions and universities. It emerges, therefore, as a critical proposal and response to the formal education system, emphasizing the sharing of knowledge rooted in lived experience. The School for Feminist Educators believes that there is no distinction between those who educate and those who are educated (MMTR-NE Brochure).

Our methodology and practical knowledge were crucial, for example, during the third regional meeting of the MMTR-NE in Pernambuco. We organized the entire event, with the goal of offering a well-structured educational program through workshops. The syndical movement of Pernambuco, along with other groups opposed to our event, tried to undermine our work and cancel the meeting. They couldn't succeed because they didn't have a program or an organized agenda like we did. The men's power didn't prevail, thanks to our practice, methodology, and the training of educators (E. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

It is in the lived experience that the self-organization and the struggles of the movement are strengthened. Their reality serves as the foundation for developing a critical perspective, taking into account the diverse intersections that shape their lives. The School is committed to decolonizing rural women's history and to reinforcing their mobilization horizontality, inclusion, collectivity and the valuing women's narratives.

The movement has completely transformed the way I think and act. Today, I have a more feminist outlook, advocating for a fair division of domestic work to be shared by everyone in the household. I've learned a great deal from feminism and agroecology, and I've also learned how to support other women. For me, the Movement is the college I didn't have; now, I have much to teach and to learn. Being able to stand up for my rights in various spaces is a significant achievement for a rural woman, and I owe this to the Movement. I've participated in numerous training courses at the feminist school, which has empowered me to pursue my goals (Z. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Alagoas, in February 2022).

Another specificity of our movement for rural women, which made it feminist back then, was our decision to address issues concerning the body, because it was an unfamiliar subject in the rural world. From the beginning, we introduced discussions about the body, because there was a strong domination over women's bodies (and there still is). However, of course, our reality is different today. We were extremely submissive in rural areas. (E. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

The consciousness embedded in the how they construct their own feminism – particularly their views on the body and patriarchal relations of power – is evident in the interventions mentioned above. For both movements, their everyday experience shape the perspective they develop in these areas. The notion of "the personal is political" appears to resurface in this context, as peasant and rural women strive to dismantle these patriarchal binaries in the countryside while advancing their political project.

Navigating the controversies

As noted earlier, the formation of the movements under study was neither homogenous nor devoid of political disputes. While anchored in the same values and a strong sense of belonging to the countryside, these movements are far from uniform. As previously mentioned, they are composed of a diverse group of women and non-cis-heteronormative individuals, adding complexity to their mobilization. The MMC and MMTR-NE have been established based on distinct institutional choices and differing political approaches to key concepts central to these movements such as 'peasant' and 'rural workers'. Within each movement, controversies and inconsistencies also emerge as part of the ongoing effort to accommodate differences.

A generational issue within the MMTR-NE illustrates that conflicts are an inherent part of the process. During my stay in Sergipe, N. participated in an online meeting of the board of directors of the MMTR-NE – held virtually because, in early 2022, Brazil was still dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 and the Omicron variant. She invited me to join, allowing me to witness their evaluation of a survey conducted within the movements among its members. One of the weaknesses highlighted by the coordinators of all Northeastern states in the survey was the low participation of youth.

The first-generation members of the MMTR-NE do not engage with young people; they do not pass on information from the founding states of the Movement, such as Pernambuco and Paraíba. They find it difficult to pass on reports. In 2016, when voting to amend the bylaws, they opposed the proposal to remove the age limit for serving on the board of directors to encourage young people and to have the executive position shared among three individuals. These senior members are very controlling; they continue to visit the headquarters, manage affairs, and attend all the meetings, including board of directors' meetings, even though they are no longer officially part of it. Although the bylaw changes were approved, intransigence persists to this day. Their behavior is contradictory and obstructs access to information (N., during my stay in Sergipe in February 2022, after the online meeting of the board of directors of the MMTR-NE).

Indeed, I observed some tension when, even before traveling to Sergipe, I had an online meeting with the MMTR-NE group of Pernambuco and was struck by the following intervention:

It is great that you have spoken with V. and some of the younger members of the Movement. But I believe it is important for you to talk to the older generation, the women who participated in the foundation of the Rural Women's Movement in the Northeast, because it is crucial to the documentation you are working on (E. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

Nevertheless, the fact that youth participation was identified as a weakness in the survey reveals a critical step in the effort to address internal conflicts within the Movement. Questions about how to include the youth and retain their presence in the Movement were raised during the call. *A welcoming look at young people is needed*, emphasized N.

I have also observed certain incongruities during my stay in Vale do Rio Doce region. During this time, L. explained to me she is cautious about identifying herself as a feminist. I was initially surprised, as everything I had read so far about these movements – along with their websites and social media – had described them as feminist.

I am cautious in recognizing myself as a feminist, you know. Because when I work with grassroots communities and try to mobilize women to join the movement, mentioning feminism might scare them away. But they are the ones who truly need the movement – they need to be aware of their rights (L. from the MMC, during my fieldwork visit to Vale do Rio Doce region, Minas Gerais, in 2023).

Indeed, Michela Calaça (2021) highlights the relationship with feminism occasionally posed a challenge in the construction of the Movement, as feminism was not always well understood in rural areas, due to entrenched patriarchal structures. Although many coordinators of the Movement were confident in their feminist character and their struggles clearly reflected feminist principles, it was necessary to approach the issue with caution. Consequently, the coordinators did not consistently declare themselves feminists outright but instead focused on creating the conditions that would enable them to do so progressively.

In this sense, part of their mobilization is to expand grassroots discussions to deepen the understanding of what feminism is and its role in dismantling the capitalist, patriarchal, and racist system that exploits women, particularly in rural areas. As a coordinator herself, Calaça (2021) argues that the necessity of continually revisiting this dialogue at the grassroots level remains crucial, as new women join the movement every day, and the collective understanding

of feminism must be constantly nurtured and reaffirmed. As discussed above, the specificities of the intertwined forms of exploitation to which the members of these movements are subjected play a crucial role in shaping the feminism they are constructing. Indeed, although being cautious in using the term “feminism”, there are clear points of convergence between their demands for women’s rights and feminism.

Faced with L.'s observation, I decided to ask how LGBTQIA+ individuals were included in the movement. L. explained that they were well integrated, welcomed, and actively involved. However, her response was accompanied by reflections and a degree of conservatism characteristic of certain states in southeastern Brazil. In their diversity, the forms and axes of oppression intersect in complex and multifaceted ways. While this diversity is embraced and accommodated, tensions persist, stemming from the lingering effects of deeply rooted colonial and patriarchal structures in the countryside. Such a position also reflects the upsurge of neoconservatism groups in the country over the past decade.

Navigating these controversies remains a challenge for grassroots movements in Brazil, particularly in more conservative regions. Therefore, closely examining what unites these individuals and movements in a common project is crucial to understanding how these impasses are not only overcome but also conveyed to partner movements on a transnational scale.

From commonalities to common projects

A very strong sense of commonality in how the movements constructed their feminism can be observed, despite their preference for emphasizing either ‘peasant’ or ‘rural worker’. These women have emphasized the significance of the support network they cultivated within their respective movements. They inspire one another in critical thinking, offer mutual support,

and share resources such as seeds, advice, and care. Their feminist movements fulfill this role, particularly at the grassroots level. The consistent, daily interactions foster trust and allow these women feel solidarity in their skin.

At various times, during online meetings and field visits, women from both movements highlighted that these spaces functioned like a university for them. Many were unaware of their own rights or how to access them. They also emphasized how they learned about feminism and the redistribution of work within households. In this sense, both the MMC and the MMTR-NE share a vision of the importance of valuing their own knowledge and transferring it to others. The legacy of Paulo Freire – Brazilian educator, pedagogue, and philosopher internationally recognized for proposing critical education – is deeply embedded in the framework of social movements in Brazil and is undeniable in the epistemological development of peasant and rural women.

The pedagogy formulated by Paulo Freire inspires these movements in their pursuit of critical, reflexive consciousness and education as a practice of freedom. His methodology emphasizes horizontal dialogue between professor and students, "the educator is no longer the one who only educates, but the one who, while educating, is educated, in dialog with the student who, while being educated, also educates" (Freire, 1987: 68). Considering every person an agent of transformation, Freire (1987) argues that social transformation and overcoming a culture of oppression are possible through inclusive education. The pedagogical act is neither neutral nor apolitical but rather a political and militant form of social participation. Critic education is, therefore, the path to the emancipation of the oppressed.

Both movements are therefore grounded on the notion of *praxis*, as conceptualized by Freire (1987), which unites theory and practice – a set of ideas and practices aimed at transforming reality and producing history through political engagement. These movements pursue this connection between theory and practice to develop critical knowledge and to address

the injustices they experience. The concept of *praxis*, originally Marxist, is associated in Freire (1987) with an educational approach focused on the struggle for humanization and de-alienation, contributing to the process of human emancipation and social transformation.

Political education takes place in women's meetings and through *mística*. *Mística* is a language that embodies sharing and feeling. It has the potential to enhance sensitivity to the causes these movements support and sparks a creative energy that keeps their dreams alive. It brings a powerful sense of solidarity and serves as both teaching and knowledge. The *mística* is typically tailored to the audience and related to the subjects being addressed (MMTR-NE brochure).

Through their movements, these women challenge the artificial divide between productive and reproductive work. This is because they collectively politicize the social contributions of peasant and rural women – their work and the knowledge embedded in it – enabling them to recognize and value themselves as workers, creators of wealth, and bearers of essential knowledge for the survival and resilience of the peasantry, as well as the maintenance of human life itself. They are living proof of the possibility for women involved in subordinate relationships to resist and transform their realities (Calaça, 2021). As mentioned above, their projects are both ontologically anticapitalist, antiracist and against patriarchy. In this sense, Iridiani Seibert (2019) argues that:

> In a classist and racist society, many women continue to be excluded from access to education, the right to study, and even further from opportunities for scientific development. This is particularly true for working-class women and, even more so, for peasant and Indigenous women, whose ways of constructing and transmitting knowledge are rooted in practice, observation, experience, and oral traditions, stories told but not written. These forms of knowledge are often unrecognized or delegitimized by hegemonic perspectives, which validate certain types of knowledge while dismissing others, especially those produced by these women. Hegemonic knowledge is inherently patriarchal and, as a result, fails to acknowledge women's unique ways of producing knowledge. Furthermore, this exclusion is tied to class and race, rendering the knowledge of many women, including peasant women, undervalued or even nonexistent in the eyes of this society. Often, in contexts of dispute over the production of so-called "valid" knowledge and the legitimacy of political subjects within certain agendas, there is a tendency to marginalize individuals from social movements and theoretical counter-hegemonic frameworks (Seiber, 2019, p.12-13).

Both movements are constructing their own political project aimed at the social transformation of reality, grounded in their living conditions. These political projects align epistemologically, as they are constructed from the rural realities of the countryside. The categories of both peasantry and rural workers allow these women to recognize an antagonistic class – the latifundia and agribusiness sector – that through a specific system exploits and dominates them. Their popular project for the countryside aims to replace the predatory and dehumanizing model of capitalism in rural settings, which involves the struggle against latifundia, agribusiness, pesticides, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). In defense of healthy food and life, their model of agroecology and food sovereignty takes shape, grounded in feminist practice.

Rural women practice ancestral agroecology, even before calling it by that name. They know about healing teas. We, as rural women, invented agriculture. Agroecology is ancestral: the name is new, but the way of planting food and medicinal plants, the seeds, we have always learned from our grandmothers (Q., during an online meeting of the MMTR-NE board of directors that I attended during my stay in Sergipe in February 2022).

That is why, throughout the Margarida's March, they chant together '*sem feminismo não há agroecologia*' or without feminism there is no agroecology. The March, as previously mentioned, takes place every four years in Brasilia and takes the form of a political ritual, an active manifestation aimed at expressing demands and initiating processes of dialogue, and negotiation with the state. The first Margaridas' March happened in 2000 as a joint action with the World March of Women, coordinated by rural women's movements and Women's Secretariat of CONTAG. The World March of Women had recently been established in Brazil and was solidified at the I World Social Forum, in close connection with autonomous women's movements as well as both rural and urban trade unions (Aguiar, 2017).

This collective action first emerged as a response to the discrimination and obstacles that rural women encountered within unions and other political spaces. They organized politically to occupy public spaces and present a platform of demands in their struggle against land expropriation, exploitation of their work, and gender-based oppression. In this first edition, their main demand was the right to be recognized as productive beneficiaries and rural producers, with appropriate public policies established by the state. Since then, in every edition, peasant and rural women have demonstrated their growing power of mobilization and ability to negotiate their claims, presenting increasingly well-developed agendas. They have also begun identifying themselves as "women of the countryside, forests, and waters" to include not only peasant and rural agricultural women, but also landless women, campers, *assentadas*, wage earners, rural workers, artisans, extractivists, coconut breakers, rubber tappers, fisherwomen, river dwellers, *quilombolas*, and Indigenous Peoples.

Aguiar (2017) argues that, although CONTAG is one of the main coordinators of the March, its organization has developed a distinct strategic approach for women's mobilization, different from traditional syndicates (trade unions). Various women's and feminist movements, associations, and syndicate groups are part of the collective action. They hold the status of 'partner entities' in relation to a National Commission of Rural Women created within CONTAG, allowing them to maintain their autonomy and specific activities.

Despite differences in institutional and conceptual choices, the MMC and MMTR-NE come together at the Margarida's March and are 'partner entities' alongside other movements. They are part of the effort to construct this collective action by promoting dialogue grounded in the realities of diverse women and genders from the countryside, forests, and waters, and by articulating their common claims regarding political, socio-economic, sexual, and reproductive rights.

According to Aguiar (2017), this specific organizational approach of the March enables them to extend beyond the scope of movements that operate in more localized spaces and transcend the historical claims of rural women. In this sense, their demands are no longer limited to the local level, but their specific issues are 'translated' into concerns connected to broader aspects of the networked movements. This approach also facilitates the construction of an agenda of demands that embraces the diversity of human subjects involved and fosters the development of a common project that is transversal to the struggle for social change.

The weaving of an alternative political project

> One does not resist the coloniality of gender alone. One resists it from within a way of understanding the world and living in it that is shared and that can understand one's actions, thus providing recognition. Communities rather than individuals enable the doing; one does with someone else not in individualist isolation. The passing from mouth to mouth, from hand to hand of lived practices, values, beliefs, ontologies, space-times, and cosmologies constitutes one. The production of the everyday within which one exists produces one's self as it provides particular, meaningful clothing, food, economies and ecologies, gestures, rhythms, habitats, and senses of space and time (Lugones, 2010, p.754).

Although recognizing that the transformations they seek are both structural-economical and symbolic-cultural, aiming for economic redistribution and cultural changes that acknowledge diversity, Aguiar (2017) focuses on the discourses these groups articulate to construct a 'we'. While drawing on Carvalho's (1998) use of the expressions 'movement tissue' as 'heterogenous and multiple' to highlight the visibility and impact of the collective actions of these networked movements and groups in the public sphere, Aguiar's emphasis on discourse does not fully capture the materiality of the tissue's image.

The tissue's image makes me think of the patchwork design I saw during my first visit to fieldwork in Brazil, which took place in Sergipe. I was admiring the patchwork curtain in her living room, while N. was telling me about the diversity of the MMTR-NE, composed of diverse

women and non-cis heteronormative individuals from nine different states in the Northeast, spanning multiple generations and their associated conflicts. As I gazed at the patchwork curtain, shaped like flowers and made from various fabric scraps, colors, and textures, I noticed other objects in her home crafted from similar material, as well as patchwork quilts. It struck me that, much like these patchworks, the Movement was also 'heterogenous and multiple'. It was composed of various and diverse bodies; it was material.

I also saw patchwork quilts at L.'s place in Vale do Rio Doce region. At the Margarida's March in 2023, I noticed patchwork similar to N.'s curtain. There were a few women wearing it as a coat, while others were selling items made from it at a market organized as part of the March. I later discovered that this type of patchwork is called *Fuxico*.

Fuxico is a traditional craft technique that involves reusing leftover pieces of fabric and fabric scraps. The process begins by cutting the fabric into circular shapes, then folding and gathering the edges with a needle and thread. When the thread is pulled tight, it forms a small bundle of fabric. The technique involves assembling multiple small bundles of fabric, which, when woven together, resemble colorful flowers. Its origins dates back to the colonial period, when enslaved women developed it as way to reuse fabric scraps leftover by the landlord's family. It has, therefore, been traditionally associated with low-income communities, albeit recently gaining recognition in the craft fashion sector.

Although the image of weaving a patchwork immediately came to mind as a way to explain how this project is articulated – not only within grassroots movements but also between them, partner organizations, and transnational movement – I later realized it is not an original idea. On the contrary, the weaving metaphor is actively embraced by these movements, as I discovered while reading the book *A Very Beautiful Story*[25], a book written by the women who founded the Network of Rural Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (*Rede de Mulheres*

[25] Red LAC (2007). Uma História Muito Linda: perpetuando a Rede Lac. Recife.

Rurais da América Latina e Caribe – Red-LAC) to recount its history, as well as in the documents developed by the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM). In the book, the section entitled *Tecendo a Rede* or Weaving the Network, puts forward the following idea regarding the notion of weaving:

> In dialogue with the social, political, and economic realities of the continent, the Network's trajectory aligns with other social movements and struggles. It is building essential lessons for this new century: articulating experiences, embracing diversity, and creating new paths toward a fairer and more solidaristic world (Red LAC, 2007, p.11).

Weaving, in their view, involves articulating practices with other social movements and struggles while encouraging diversity. It also encompasses the understanding that this effort is aimed at achieving social justice and solidarity. The perception I had when observing the patchworks in Sergipe is reaffirmed by this view, corroborated by my insight into *Fuxico* itself, with its colorful textures and varieties symbolizing diversity. Stitched together by shared goals of justice, equity, and solidarity – such as in the context of Margarida's March – these movements articulate a common project, forming vibrant and interconnected *Fuxicos*. Its materiality allows us to perceive difference and recognize its existence, as the (re)use of fabric remnants make visible the recognition of knowledges and practices that are not discarded or wasted. I will subsequently elaborate further on this insight in the next chapter, as the act of weaving of the patch expands when additional groups and individuals join and contribute to creating this patchwork.

In this sense, the Margarida's March materializes the common political project these women articulate together through various institutional groups. It entails a strategic rural development project that, in its conception, challenges the actions of the agribusiness sector and its hegemonic development model for the countryside, while reiterating the importance of the role of family farming from a feminist perspective.

The Margaridas' March has become the most important political demonstration of women of the countryside, forests, and waters, in Latin America. In 2023, it brought together

one hundred thousand militant women and diverse genders under the thematic slogan: “For the Reconstruction of Brazil and for Good Living”. Together the ‘partner entities’ have decided that it was time to claim for a true commitment to reconstruction of the country after four years of setbacks in rights and uncertainties under the previous government.

The concept of Good Living was developed within the context of the March, drawing on the collective life experiences of certain Indigenous Peoples as a way to express their social organization, communal living, and political practices. It is grounded in the belief that it is possible to build relationships of solidarity and collectivity, which can be cultivated through shared values and principles. Central to the concept of Good Living is the idea of an integrated world and living in harmony with nature.

The demand for Good Living connects with Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui’s (2010) notion of nonlinearity and nonteleological history, which exists without a “pre” or “post”. She suggests that the past and the future are embedded in the present within a history that moves in circle and spirals: “regression or progression, repetition or overcoming of the past are at stake at every juncture and depend on our actions more than on our words” (p.55). In this sense, an Indigenous world of Good Living is possible in the present, as there is nothing like postmodernity. The Indigenous project for modern society is viable in contemporary times, where, through a spiral movement, decolonization is both envisioned and realized.

Her understanding aligns with the notion that “the future is ancestral”, as referenced by Katiúscia Ribeiro (2020) in relation to the ancestrality of Black people, and Ailton Krenak (2022), Indigenous leader and socio-environmental activist, who reverberates the idea of envisioning possible realities beyond the apocalyptic narratives of colonial Western logic. Both Brazilian authors celebrate ancestrality as a philosophical knowledge that affirms the recognition of the ontology Black and Indigenous Peoples, respectively, and as category that transcends any fixed historical era. They both argue that ancestrality extends far beyond

genealogy, flowing through the lifeblood of time. It is deeply rooted in being, in honoring ancestors, and in preserving the knowledge transmitted through oral traditions.

Ailton Krenak (2022) suggests that an alternative to capitalist society lies precisely in the possibility of establishing a profound and sensitive connection with the memory of "our peoples", a memory rooted in the Earth's core and carried forward by "our ancestors". His proposition subverts the logic of subordination to the colonial perspective, which conceives a singular Western solution for achieving equality and reconciliation. Regarding Black people, Katiúscia Ribeiro (2020) asserts that ancestry is key in unfolding their historical and cultural reality, paving the way for a collective vision of a popular project.

The notion of knowledge, in this sense, is expanded through the decolonization of imposed Western scientific frameworks. Within these movements and collectives, ancestral knowledge and practices are reaffirmed and legitimized, along with their continued presence and significance in the spaces these collectives occupy. The Marcha das Margaridas is one such space where diverse movements and collectives meet, yet it is not unique in this regard; their knowledge has also permeated other spaces, including institutional arenas, transnational movements, and even international organizations. In chapter three, I will further develop this analysis.

The Margaridas seek to construct Good Living practices grounded in the respect for differences and acceptance of diverse ways of life. To them, Good Living means establishing a non-exploitative relationship with nature and people to strengthen food sovereignty and promote coexistence without inequality, "where women of the countryside, the forests, and the waters have autonomy over their bodies-territories. Finally, it entails nurturing relationships in which care and affection are safeguarded by all" (Marcha das Margaridas website, 2023).

Aconchego is also a methodology! (O. during my stay in Sergipe in February 2022, in an online meeting of the board of directors of the MMTR-NE).

There is no exact translation for *aconchego* in English, but it can be described as a feeling of coziness and warmth provided by affection and affectionate relationships. The *aconchego* is expressed through the care for each other. Ailton Krenak (2022) argues that affection is a powerful means for forging alliance across differences. Rejecting Western logic and the colonial perspective, insurgent visions – such as the "cartography of affections" he proposes – pave the way for alternative projects for our society. The coalition that emerges from this vision does not strive for a conventional point of convergency but instead seeks a confluence, uniting through "affective alliances".

In this cartography, as suggested by Krenak, people, their demands and objectives come together in a confluence, much like the flow of a river. This practice creates space for dissent and does not necessarily seek convergent thoughts or solutions but rather a confluence of diverse policies that pave the way for reimagining modes of existence. According to him, affective alliances do not require sameness or standardized equality, as they acknowledge intrinsic inequalities of individuals. These alliances foster encounters that generate affection and meaning, opening pathways for the construction of other possible worlds grounded in a pluriversal cosmovision.

Katiúscia Ribeiro (2020) also addresses the importance of collective organization driven by solidarity, asserting that a society guided by ancestral principles is grounded on the practice of community-based solidarity. In this context, plurality is embraced, in contrast to the traditional Western model of exclusion. According to her, the body-territory perspective – referenced earlier in the context of Margarida's March and the Good Living notion – keeps ancestral marks alive because of the deep connections with ancestral memory, transmitted through resistance and the lived experience of Black people, passed from body to body:

> In the midst of the dystopia of physical reality, the body in contact with other bodies recovers its territoriality, establishing connections capable of dialogues with other bodies that imbricate different histories, strengthen and reconstitute memory, the word

> as life and action, giving meaning and significance and guiding black existences outside Africa (Ribeiro, 2020).

Tchella Maso (2024) also substantiates the vision that the body in relation with other bodies, as a result of agency as a bodily activity, generate specific subjectivities and connections between participants, their ancestors and the surrounding society in her study about Circles of the Sacred Feminine. The affectivity cultivated in these spaces, where political practice emerges through the expressiveness of bodies, fosters bonds of belonging and complicity among participants. Her approach corroborates the passing from body-to-body aspect – the materiality of experiences – within collectivities guided by ancestral principles that shape deep connections and convey practices and knowledge through affectivity.

In the countryside, far from the noise of urban environments, the connection to ancestral knowledge and the proximity to both Black and Indigenous ancestry make rural women's movements inheritors to these perspectives and ways of living in community, as peasants and rural women are also shaped by these categories. Inspired by Ailton Krenak (2022) and Katiúscia Ribeiro (2020), I argue that the affection, care and community-based solidarity is the thread that unite these movements together in weaving the *Fuxico*. These affective relationships and the sense of consideration toward others represent a significant tool in stitching together the patchwork through which collective action unfolds. It is what binds distinct and diverse groups and movements – the remnants *Fuxico*s or patches – even when some dissenting thoughts arise, while still sustaining the flow of confluence. This is also what weaves together the common political project they build, grounded in food sovereignty.

Our essence as rural women - with our diverse, ancestral knowledge, our practices, and our prayers, a deeply rooted theme in the movement – is centered on advocating for a different kind of agriculture. We strive for real, high-quality food produced with care and wisdom, and we fight for the entire population to have access to it (Q. during my stay in Sergipe in February 2022, in an online meeting of the board of directors of the MMTR-NE).

The link between Brazil and Latin America

Feminist peasant and rural movements in Brazil maintain close ties with Latin American movements, owing to their shared history across the continent. Situating the social process of these movements in Brazil within a broader context in America Latina, which has historical colonial and social particularities, is crucial to understanding these close ties. The common dilemmas experienced in the region contributed to a critical understanding of the continent's history, as similar themes converged, bringing together social realities and national issues that led to the construction of shared alternatives (Seibert, 2019).

These territorial connections to the continent are relevant not only because the struggles the women and non-cis heteronormative individuals face in the continent are similar, as a heritage of colonial structures, but also because they share a vision regarding the body and the territory as an ancestral knowledge. Such understanding has favored a strong alliance between these groups of women, whose knowledge the coloniality of power has tried to erase. As a result, a strong sense of belonging is developed in the region. Both movements, the MMC and MMTR-NE align themselves with other forms of mobilization across Latin American. However, the paths taken by each movement have been distinct.

The Peasant Women's Movement (MMC) has been actively involved with La Via Campesina, particularly through the *Coordinadora Lationamericana de Organizaciones del Campo* (CLOC), which, as previously mentioned, is La Via Campesina' branch in Latin America. Michela Calaça (2021) argues that while the emergence of La Via Campesina as a global peasant organization advocating for food sovereignty and agroecology serves as a counterpoint to the degradation of nature and the erosion of diverse peasant ways of life worldwide – with food sovereignty as its unifying principle – CLOC, in turn, challenges capitalism in a more profoundly, because its synthesis lies in the construction of socialism.

Latin American peasant and rural social movements have been therefore closely aligned with socialism and its principles.

The *Peasant and Popular Feminism* described above represents a profound connection between women in the region. Through La Via Campesina, and more specifically through CLOC, a significant exchange of experiences takes place. It also embodies a political line aimed at constructing a unit in the diversity that inhabits this territory. (Calaça, 2021; Seibert, 2019).

In the context of the Rural Working Women's Movement (MMTR-NE), a network was created with their counterpart rural women and movements across Latin America: the Network of Rural Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (*Rede de Mulheres Rurais da América Latina e Caribe* – Red-LAC).

I think Carolina is forgetting about Red LAC (O. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE in January 2022).

H. reacted after I presented my research topic and the international connections of the grassroots movements I was interested in. Although I had heard of Red LAC and had not forgotten about it, I was not considering it at the time because it did not seem to be involved in the Committee of World Food Security (CFS) process. However, one year later, while attending the 50th CFS Plenary, I was surprised to see that Luz Haro from Ecuador, one of the founders of Red LAC, had been invited to speak during the opening of the agenda topic on gender and rural women.

I also want to mention that you should include Vanete Almeida in your research. She was one of the founders of the MMTR-NE. She was a feminist, rural woman, she participated in the syndicate and recognized the need for an autonomous organization for peasant women. Vanete also engaged in international platforms, like the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Meeting, where she observed that rural women were not represented. Although Indigenous and rural women were present, they were neither at the decision-making table nor on the agenda.

She raised this concern restlessly in the corridors then, because these women were there, but their issues were absent from the discussions (V. during an interview in 2021).

Vanete Almeida, whom V. had told you about, played a significant role in establishing Red LAC in the 1990's (O. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE in January 2022).

The perception of Vanete that rural women's concerns were not on the agenda of international arena, served as an impulse to build ties in the continent. As described in a *Very Beautiful Story*, Red LAC was the result of the effort of rural women to maintain this bond, initially through letters.

Despite Luz's participation in the opening of the gender agenda topic during the CFS Plenary, Red LAC was not directly involved in the process. However, indirectly, women connected to it and its history, who were present alongside other movement, embodied it. Just as Luz was there speaking for the CFS Plenary, V., a member of MMTR-NE, had also participated in the negotiations on agroecological practices, acting on behalf of the World March of Women (WMW) from Brazil.

The strong connection in mobilization within the region demonstrates that the specificities of the Latin American continent enhance the axes of oppression under which the grassroots movements develop their struggles. Although Latin America is a territory of diverse struggles and varied forms of feminist expression, a strong sense of anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, and anti-racist resistance – intertwined with colonial experiences and rooted in ancestral knowledge – has given rise to a unique approach to social mobilization and organization. The feminist practices emerging from grassroots peasant and rural movements resonate with their Latin American counterparts, who view peasant and rural women across the continent as guardians of the land, water, agriculture, and life. Silvia Cusicanqui (2010) argues that:

> While historical modernity was slavery for the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, it was at the same time an arena of resistance and conflict, a stage for the development of enveloping, counter-hegemonic strategies and new Indigenous languages and projects of modernity (Cusicanqui, 2010, p.53).

This affirmation aligns with Ailton Krenak's proposition of the possibility of other worlds, viewed through an Indigenous lens of modernity. Rooted in the notion that the future is ancestral, the future is envisioned from the present, sustained by bonds of affection, confluence-driven politics, and practices of (re)imagining worlds. The belief in this possibility underpins the construction of an alternative, counter-hegemonic project grounded in the shared values of Latin American peoples.

During my fieldwork in Foz do Iguaçu, at the Latin American and Caribbean People's Integration Journey, I observed the social and political unity among popular organizations of region. One particular speech during a round table discussion captured my attention, highlighting specific values that emanate from a distinct way of living and engaging in politics in Latin America, especially in response to colonizing practices:

We have a unique form of resistance in Latin America. It is essential to remember our history because it unites us – we were all colonized. We endured a brutal past marked by colonization, the exploitation of our bodies, and the enslavement of African and Indigenous peoples. The values of the Global North continue to colonize us today. Another key instrument of our resistance is our way of living and doing politics. This Journey reaffirms the diplomacy of the peoples – a diplomacy that must prevail because it is not individualistic but collective, rooted in our values. Today, new forms of colonization are unfolding through mining and the appropriation of our territories, with violence at their core. We are building the vanguard in the Global South, waging our struggle both in the territories and in the streets (Andressa Caldas from the Mercosur Institute for Public Policy on Human Rights during the Latin American and Caribbean People's Integration Journey, in February 2024).

In this presentation, Andressa reiterates that these specific values give rise to a unique form of resistance and of organization among Latin American peoples, which she refers to as the diplomacy of peoples. This form of resistance primarily opposes the colonizing practices of the Global North.

I attended the Journey meeting to spend some time with the women of the World March of Women (Brazil) and to better understand their connection with rural woman. They had a large delegation, including a group of women from other Latin American countries. As in other spaces I have visited, I was warmly welcomed by the WMW. But I was surprised to realize, in the context of this event, how significant this Latin American connection was to my thesis. Beyond simply understanding how the grassroots project was shared by feminist organizations linked to rural movements, I came to realize that the regional context in which this project was developed mattered.

In addition to the shared history of colonization, Indigenous communities, peasant and rural women in the continent are inheritors of ancestral knowledge and practices. The affectivity cultivated within and among the social movements, especially feminist movements in Latin America, fosters a sense of companionship, belonging, and solidarity among the participants. The affection and care for others emerge once again as a tool, as the thread to weave together *Fuxicos* in all its diversities. This is a defining characteristic of feminist movements in the region, particularly among Indigenous and rural women. It reflects a practice of articulating and constructing a shared political project, stitched together by affection, while understanding affection as a decolonial tool, as I will further develop in the following chapter.

Encounters and the patchwork

The creation of the patchwork is enriched with each encounter of peasant and rural women promoted by their grassroot movements. Common ideas, claims, and their feminist approach to organizing find confluence at Margarida's March. While the MMC and MMTR-NE pursue distinct paths in their partnerships with transnational movements and Latin American connections, these efforts align during the preparation for and participation in the March. The Margarida's March serves as a primary point of confluence for the projects developed at the grassroots. The care and *aconchego* embedded at the heart of the grassroots movements are shared throughout the construction process and the weaving of the March, as previously demonstrated.

The weaving continues as the transmission of care and affection unfolds throughout the encounters and partnerships developed. Through the CLOC, the MMC is connected to La Via Campesina, strengthening a shared commitment to peasant struggles across the globe. Similarly, despite initial suspicions, the MMTR-NE has forged strong connection with the World March of Women (WMW). These relationships illustrate how grassroots movements, united by shared principles of solidarity and collective care, transcend local struggles and become part of a larger, interconnected network. These connections form the fabric of a broader movement: the assemblage of seemingly simple acronyms that together create the patchwork under construction.

This network could easily be perceived as the typical web often portrayed in globalization studies. However, the concept of a network web falls short in capturing the depth of political and socio-economic exchange, as well as the collective care and solidarity cultivated among the members of these interconnected movements and organizations. Moreover, such profound exchange diverges from the conventional notion of a web, as it is firmly rooted in a

strong commitment to the values, perspectives, and lived experiences of the grassroots. The patchwork more effectively conveys these ideas, as it embodies the image of diversity and involves a collective effort in weaving the connections.

The patchwork takes shape through the efforts of grassroots local movements and their partners within the country, such as the World March of Women and La Via Campesina. Its initial weaving finds a counterpart in Latin America, where political articulations and the politics of affection have nurtured and expanded the patchwork, enabling it to flourish and grow.

This patchwork represents a political project that seeks to dismantle patriarchy, is anti-racist and anti-capitalist, and encompasses not only the struggle for food sovereignty and access to quality food but also the notion of good living. This project finds points of confluence with other social movements, particularly feminist ones, as it draws from rural women – who are deeply connected to the ancestral knowledge of Indigenous and Black peoples – methodologies of affection, care, and solidarity.

We developed our own methodology and way of organizing. Thanks to this methodology, we achieved success in many areas. We managed to bring together rural women, intellectuals, political figures, and activists, all mobilized to "get rural women out of the kitchen." (E. during an online group interview with members of the MMTR-NE, Pernambuco, in January 2022).

These methodologies enable political articulation grounded in exchange and listening, fostering learning processes that make confluence possible. The next chapter explores how the foundations of this political and social project, which encompasses good living, extend beyond the Global South, specifically Latin America, and gain traction in international negotiations in Rome.

Chapter 3. Stitching, Weaving, and knitting the Political Project Together: Solidarity, Ethics of Care, and Affection

In this chapter, I examine how grassroots women's mobilization, led by peasant and rural women, develop into common political project within the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM). While based in the Global North, the CSIPM embodies a powerful effort in decolonizing knowledge and practice, drawing broadly on feminist epistemologies from the Global South, especially Latin America. It challenges coloniality and questions hegemonic models of modernity by creating a space where methodologies and practices rooted in grassroots feminist movements are not only acknowledged but placed at the center. At the heart of this effort is an ethics of care, not as a feminized obligation, but as a relational and humanizing ethic grounded in listening, mutual respect, and the nurturing of affection.

The chapter explores how local struggles extend into broader interactions, reaching global governance spaces, including the Committee on World Food Security through the CSIPM. Rather than viewing the local and global as binary opposites, I trace the often-overlooked articulations between them, formed through the daily, affective, and political engagements of diverse actors. These connections, while dynamic and at times non-linear, are shaped by a multiplicity of commitments and continuous negotiation. Women, gender-diverse individuals, and social movements become central agents in forming these transnational articulations within the context of food systems governance.

Focusing on the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM, I argue that the CSIPM adopts a fluid understanding of the South/North divide, acknowledging its continued political significance in analyzing global capitalist relations. This approach enables them to navigate global power structures strategically while grounding their solidarity in shared struggles and diverse positionalities. Through this lens, I explore how solidarity is forged not

by erasing differences, but by building a common political project through affective, ethical, and strategic engagement. In this sense, the project is 'common' because it is rooted in shared principles, within the context of food sovereignty, and constructed through collective resistance to patriarchal, racist, heteronormative, and capitalist systems.

To conceptualize this process, I develop the metaphor of sewing, weaving and knitting a patchwork or *Fuxicos* to describe the construction of a common project as an evolving form shaped by diverse textures, colors, strategies, and epistemologies. Inspired by the *Fuxico* quilt and patchwork tradition, this metaphor speaks to a method of political construction that is (dis)continuous, non-linear, relational, and deeply rooted in affection and care. I argue that affection and an ethics of care function as political tools that enable this construction, tools that weave, knit, and stitch together the diversity of patches. This framework offers a decolonial approach to transnational feminist mobilizing, emphasizing that solidarity and affection are not a given but built through collective praxis.

The politics of (dis)continuities.

I must acknowledge that overcoming the binary dichotomy of local versus global is no simple feat. Many times, during the research process, I found myself grappling with either understanding the local movements on the ground or comprehending the dynamics of the global and international arena when analyzing international negotiations within the context of global policymaking. What connects these poles, often unseen articulations, simultaneously serves as the means to break free from this binary. Although often invisible, these articulations are not new. Indeed, critical and transnational feminist approaches have long highlighted the interconnectedness between women in a global capitalist system beyond spatial distance.

Chandra Mohanty (2013) brings attention to the fact that not only the local and global are usually foregrounded in this apparent dichotomous relationship, but also a directionality of power is assumed, regardless of the topic covered in the gender and women's studies field. These links encompass various dimensions such as “conceptual, material, temporal, contextual, and so on” (Mohanty, 2013, p.521). These dimensions demonstrate that a wide array of interactions among people takes place between these poles. Such dimensions and interactions, however, have been less explored.

Although it has rarely been undertaken, untangling these interactions is nevertheless essential as a means of comprehending the connections among women on a global scale. In the framework of food systems, many women and non-cis heteronormative individuals, social movements and different organizations are leading these interconnections.

Sally Engle Merry (2006b) seems to refer to these people, in her effort to theorize the translation of human rights principles. She calls these intermediaries “people in the middle”, who according to her have a deep understanding of both the transnational world of human rights and the sociocultural reality of the local, or “those who translate the discourses and practices from the arena of international law and legal institutions to specific situations of suffering and violation” (Merry, 2006b, p.39).

Although the term “people in the middle” challenges the binary opposition of local and global and the notion of a vacuum in between, Merry’s conceptualization of the role of these translators (2006a; 2006b) is static. By neglecting to consider a historical perspective, it fails to capture the multiplicity of interactions, portraying them as a direct channel or course. In this regard, Gal, Kowalski, and Moor e’s (2015) critique of her perspective interprets translators’ “practices as a series of encounters” and sees the translation process as a “multistep circulation”.

While acknowledging the power wielded by the "translators" in this role (due to their familiarity with both global policy-making and local claims) as well as their vulnerability (when confronting international structures and accessing funding), which is valuable in understanding the opportunities and limitations faced by those in the middle, Merry (2006b) underestimates the scope of action of these individuals by defining them as "knowledge brokers" of meanings. This characterization suggests that information exchange is akin to a trade and only a component of discursive arrangements. I understand instead that transnational “human rights activism is not merely a cognitive/communicative process that constructs different frames of meaning but also an emotive/material and embodied practice” (Lazala, 2020, p.15).

According to Merry (2006a; 2006b), the intermediaries are the main actors involved in the ‘vernacularization’ process. This process emphasizes the transplantation, subsequent redefinition, and adaptation on the ground of international agenda and practices, which are often initially developed in another locality, typically in the Global North. Such a dynamic tends to overlook the possibility of collectively constructing ideas and strategies, limiting the capacity to forge a shared transnational political project among those bodies engaged “in the middle”. It also fails to acknowledge the richness of contributions emerging from diverse local contexts.

As Gal, Kowalski, and Moore (2015) highlight, “rather than seeking accuracy in the copy of a ‘message,’ – or lamenting mistranslation – [analyzing] what is being produced as the active, performative work of translation across interactions and social locations” (p.613) gives us the opportunity to explore translation as a very generative process.

At the outset of my research, my aim was to comprehend how ideas originating from the territories – within the context of the rural women’s movements – were being translated into public policies within the global food system. Upon realizing that the involvement of Brazilian rural women and other members of social movements was not a straightforward and direct process, but rather a complex and (dis)continuous flow, I felt lost in translation. While the

primary focus of this thesis no longer centers on understanding the translation process itself, this discussion remains crucial for comprehending the collective political project developed transnationally through arrangements rooted in lived territorial experiences.

Translations serve as connections between realms of knowledge and action, extending beyond mere localities or linguistic differences. In this sense, translations encompass more than conveyed ideas: they not only facilitate coalitions among actors but also enable various positionalities. They might create boundaries while simultaneously transcending them through the convergence of similar and different claims, which generates the sensation of movement, travel, and circulation (Gal, 2015; Lazala, 2020). Making sense of these connections is vital for grasping how the political project of grassroots rural women is being discussed on the international stage.

As described in the previous chapter, some women and non-cis heteronormative individuals are members of more than one movement or organization, just as several organizations collaborate as partners or come together in events and other actions within global civil society. Miriam Nobre (agronomist, activist, and member of the World March of Women Brazil) and G. are examples of women who have been engaged in movements on the ground, in transnational social movements, and in international negotiations through the CSIPM. They both reached Rome through manifold interconnections between those movements and the people who constitute them. Nevertheless, they both had to leave the policy convergence process on gender in the context of the Committee on World Food Security for different reasons.

Well, I think that it is something you are realizing about our participation (as the World March of Women): our presence in these spaces is usually a very punctual engagement, due to the context and request of an ally organization. It is a more "fragmented" presence, and for this reason, it is also hard for us to follow up the strategy related to this engagement and to negotiations as it involves a very exigent dynamic… The functioning of the March is in itself international, and it has alliance with other movements. In this sense, rural women are also

interested in making up and following these dynamics. But the participation in institutional processes is not homogenous. (Miriam Nobre from the World March of Women Brazil and SOF during an interview in 2021).

Miriam Nobre[26] explained to me that the World March of Women's presence in this policy space (the CSIPM) stemmed from an invitation of a social movement, La Via Campesina, considered a partner as a consequence of their 'encounters' at the World Social Forum. The March had also been invited by La Via Campesina to participate and co-organize the Nyéléni Forum in 2007, to strengthen the principle of food sovereignty. According to Janet Conway (2018), their participation in the Forum was crucial in introducing a feminist perspective into the analysis of food sovereignty. There, they also met other social movements, such as the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), which later were also engaged in policy processes within the context of the Mechanism.

Nobre became a facilitator, and another colleague of the March (from Kenia) was elected a coordinator of the Women's Working Group for the period of 2016 to 2017. They withdrew from the process and did not run for elections for these positions again, when they felt that they had achieved their primary objective, which was initiating discussions on the topic of gender within the CFS.

One of the most important point we tried to raise was that peasant women's and girls' rights cannot be separated from food sovereignty (Miriam Nobre from the World March of Women Brazil and SOF during an interview in 2021).

G. was also appointed as coordinator of the Women's Working Group, in a later term. At that time, she was a member of the Peasant Women's Movement, affiliated with both the Latin American Coordinator of Rural Organizations (CLOC), and La Via Campesina. G.

[26] Míriam Nobre consented to be identified by name and chose not to remain anonymous in this interview.

clarified to me that her appointment to this coordination position was negotiated and agreed upon within the context of La Via Campesina, particularly of the CLOC. She emphasized the significance of the CLOC in this process, noting that the women's Group established within CLOC in Latin America served as a model and inspiration for the subsequent formation of the Women's Coordination Group within the Mechanism. *It had to be someone for Latin America, because of our experience in articulating such a group (G. during an interview in 2021)*.

Following these interviews, I became quite frustrated with the implications of the empirical evidence presented. How could one not feel lost in translation? How can I reconcile the translation of ideas from grassroots movements to the international policy space of the CFS, when the presence of these women in this space was not continuous? The complexity of the politics of (dis)continuities and of engagement of numerous social movements, their movement across time and space, evokes the image of a web. However, I chose to refer to it as a patchwork, as I discussed in the previous chapter and will further elaborate on later. Indeed, as mentioned before, the connection between the feminist rural movements on the ground and the international arena, in this case, the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM) is not a direct chain. On the contrary, its correlation is characterized by several (dis)continuities and manifold alliances, strategies, and forms of engagement in global food governance. Yet, in the same way that popular resistance guides the daily lives of rural women, women are also exercising this resistance on an international scale and within the framework of the CFS.

The emergence of the gender topic within the CFS marked a notable participation of Brazilian women in this international process, particularly as members of the Mechanism. Their emphasis on the importance of women's autonomy, a key focus highlighted by rural women's movements in Brazil, as described in the previous chapter, played a central role in the outcomes of the CFS Forum on Women's Empowerment held in 2017. This event initiated discussions

on gender within the context of the Committee. At that moment, the then Women's Working Group of the CSIPM successfully elevated the prominence and link of women's rights and the food sovereignty approach, influencing the outcomes of the Forum. This led to the formal recognition of the significance of women's agency and autonomy. It also resulted in solidifying a vision for the Working Group to steer the internal process of the CSIPM towards prioritizing the dismantling of patriarchal norms that influence food systems.

The Brazilians who participated in the initial years of the CSIPM's engagement with the gender topic in the CFS played a crucial role in advocating for the discussion of this issue within the organization. They emphasized the significance of precisely such women's agency and autonomy, thereby reinforcing the acknowledgment of rural women as a political subject in global food governance.

Could you speak with G.? She provided significant assistance and was highly politically engaged; she had a lot to contribute to our efforts here. The Secretariat Coordinator at the time told me during the in-person round of negotiations, referring to the Brazilian who has been the Coordinator of the Women's Working Group. Such a reaction demonstrates appreciation and acknowledgement to the contributions made by G. during the period she was part and coordinator of the Working Group.

Similar to the grassroots level (in Brazil) where the primary accomplishment for movements lies in achieving autonomy and recognizing rural women as political actors, for the CSIPM group, the autonomy and self-determination of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals, along with their recognition as agents of change at the global level, are crucial to the policy convergence process. In this sense, we could argue that the CFS stands out as a unique body, not only due to its composition and participation of civil society, but also because the articulation within the CSIPM among different social movements represents a distinctive form of transnational mobilization and resistance.

However, as Tchella Maso (2023) has asked "what is the experience of dissident bodies? How can we study them without homogenizing them or making them passive and abstract beings?" This is the challenge of this chapter. Miriam Nobre was not present during the negotiations of the Guidelines per se, but S. also from the March in Brazil followed them online and kept up with the International Committee of the World March of Women. Additionally, I had the opportunity to meet W. from the March in Tunisia while in Rome. G. had to leave the negotiations due to personal reasons, but X. from the CLOC in Guatemala stepped in as a coordinator and was present.

The encounter with the CSIPM

When I started following the discussions, the meetings of the CFS Workstream on Gender, including the first round of negotiations, were held online, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and were happening, therefore, in a very different modality. I was amazed by the interventions made by the members of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM), the 'rationale' behind their propositions, and by how organized and well prepared for the meetings they were. They alternated who would talk by paragraphs and themes. I was curious to understand the strategy behind their interventions, as it was very clear to me that they were coordinated. I had the sense I was missing something and that I needed to join the group, not only to get access to the final negotiations but also to understand how they prepare, exchange ideas, and articulate their common positions.

I realized I needed to participate in this group in order to grasp this dynamic as I was falling into the same trap I wanted to avoid: focusing on the binary poles of the translation process: the local and the global. I was so concentrated on trying to arrange fieldwork in Brazil

and at the same time following the discussions of the Guidelines online, that I thought I would leave the "people in the middle" for a next step. However, I did not realize that as they were all simultaneous and overlapping processes, I had also to engage with these processes in a more synchronous manner.

I decided to contact the Working Group of Women and Gender Diversities of the CSIPM and proposed to become a part of their group. To follow their Group was part of the multi-sited project I had previously envisioned, but to actually become a member was an idea that came to me during the process. At first, I was not sure if I would be eligible to be incorporated in the group, but members of the Secretariat of the Mechanism had a very forthright conversation with me and they were very frank: "you're more than welcome, but we also invite you to think together with us how to collaborate with the group". This conversation made me realize this was the opportunity to exercise the praxis I was willing to grasp throughout the research.

As I mentioned in the introduction, I understand this opportunity as an "onto-epistemic opening" in the sense that Marisol de la Cadena (2021) expresses it, as experiencing the possibilities of "not knowing" and of "slowing down the givenness", allowing the "excesses" of what is uncovered to have a role. This "not knowing" practice was not an intentionally designed approach in the beginning, even if I had planned ethnographic work and a co-construction of knowledge method for my fieldwork. After joining the CSIPM Working Group, concepts I had assumed as given were being practiced in an "expanded" manner by the Mechanism. Concepts such as "co-laborating", facilitation, and self-reflection were complexified by this encounter.

In the preparation meeting for the policy convergence negotiations of the Working Group, it was clear that the group was well organized around neat strategies. The finalization of the first round of negotiation (online) was approaching and one of the goals was not to rush it. The co-chairs had decided that if they had time, the workstream would proceed to review

text already discussed, which in theory was part of the second round of negotiations (in person), dismissing original methodology. These women had this clear and wanted to make sure the methodology was respected, not only because the time between the two rounds would allow members to reflect on their decisions, but also because the next in-person meeting could permit for more inclusive participation.

Another strategy discussed was a CSIPM webinar and bilateral meetings with the participation of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to convince States that most of the CSIPM language proposals are wording already used and supported by human rights international documents. This was a strategy developed after the group noticed that many states were insecure about the international acceptance of some suggested language. Bilateral meetings are also part of this strategy, as certain states could be willing to support some specific language or issue. For instance, a bilateral meeting with the Swiss delegation resulted on their support to the language "gender diversity" and a strong push for agroecology. They revised and suggested language and wording carefully and minutely.

When the second and third rounds of negotiations started in a hybrid format, the Group kept in place the strategies and communication tools they were using during the online meetings. In such meetings, virtual chat platforms were used to discuss and to prepare their interventions as CSIPM members. Even with all the difficulties that emerged with the pandemic, including internet access and/or good Wi-Fi connection, the ones who could benefit from this access made the best use of it. What amazed me from outside was then revealed to me when I joined the Group. Through this chat channel, these women not only articulated their statements, according to the direction the discussions were taking, but also shared their frustrations, (dis)agreements with statements from other delegations, and motivated each other.

That was when the concept of solidarity was clear to me. While on the front line, one of them was making a statement and interacting with diplomats, in this chat group there were

many of them behind her. This was also a format they used as an organizing basis during the hybrid negotiations. Even if only five CSIPM members were allowed in the negotiation room at a time, they were not alone, as support, affection, and knowledge exchange were shared and were present as well in the Green Room of the FAO building, albeit partly virtually. Therefore, the bodies in the room and in the backstage room in Rome were in a direct dialogue and articulation with the bodies of diverse women and genders in the territories[27].

Due to the limitation of the members of the mechanism in the conference room during the rounds of negotiations, the CFS made available a room for the other CSIPM participants. I call these spaces where we met the backstage room, because they were where the preparation and construction of the role that the Group was willing to perform was collectively articulated. While the backstage hosts the preparation for the public presence, Tchella Maso (2023), drawing on Judith Butler (2015), reminds us that "bodies acquire public meaning when they orchestrate themselves in assembly: a space of normative transgression and the emergence of an alternative politics" (p.397).

CSIPM Working Group

The Working Group of Women and Gender Diversities of the CSIPM is considered a safe space by those who join it. Throughout its meetings and preparation encounters for the negotiations, a lot of personal experiences, emotions, and knowledge are shared. The shared stories and experiences are considered a powerful tool to achieve common goals and objectives that would please its constituency members. The members come from different backgrounds

[27] The CSIPM members refer to grassroots movements, their local experiences and particularities as 'the territory', and I will use the term in this sense here.

and realities. Rural women, Indigenous Women, peasants, members of different movements unite in defense of the women's and genders diversities rights around food sovereignty.

Despite their diversity, these women and LGBTQIA+ individuals have in common the same struggle against the patriarchal, capitalist, and imperial system that oppresses, exploits, and colonizes their bodies and lands. What the group calls diversity can, therefore, be instantly read as resistance. The group is open to anyone directly or indirectly affected by this struggle as well as experts, researchers, and professionals working on the subject, in a manner that both technical aspects and the most genuine requests of the most affected are taken into consideration.

Due to this composition and to accommodate this diversity/resistance, the Mechanism has developed and (co)constructed its own way of functioning and of articulating its politics. When I joined the group, a guide of facilitation was presented to me. It was the first time I came across a critical understanding of the concept, and I was surprised to notice that this guide invites the members to think about methodologies of facilitation in a very specific manner: through self-reflection. This approach embodies what feminist scholars call reflexivity, demonstrating that the mechanism adopts feminist methods in carrying out its activities. The intention of the production of this guide was to document and underpin practices that have been exercised since the creation of the Mechanism.

It is the secret of this space. We bring the priorities of every individual to the table, and we listen. We practice self- reflection, and we listen. The facilitation was not something that we explicitly developed, it was raised implicitly, trying to listen to others. For example, the topic of gender is relatively new in the CSIPM, we included it because we listened and understood that it was important to others. That's why and how it works. (CSIPM Secretariat Coordinator told me in the backstage room).

The need for facilitation also comes from a barrier faced by social movements and people's organizations to engage and participate in these international policy processes. Negotiating in such spaces requires a level of professionalization that would not be possible or desirable by some movements (A Guide to Facilitation, 2020). The support of the facilitation team enables the authentic participation and the expression of legitimate claims of right-holding and historically marginalized groups. It should also be highlighted that a large part of the people who engage in the role of facilitating in the Mechanism are themselves part of affected groups or people who work directly with marginalized constituencies and, therefore, understand deeply the struggles faced by them.

As mentioned in the introduction, civil society, particularly food and agriculture workers and other groups related to food systems, has a history of struggling for participating in decision-making regarding global food systems. What is new in the context of the CSIPM is the recognition of power inequalities and the need to address them also within the mechanism.

The confrontation with the concept of facilitation made me reflect on its difference with the concept of representation. Indeed, the notion of representation is usually addressed when making sense of the functioning of global civil society, commonly understood as the responsibility in the representation of marginalized groups and in advocating for global public debate and deliberation in international spaces (Kaldor, 2003; Baker and Chandler, 2005; de Jong, 2017).

The notion of representation by experts on the international scene takes on a different shape here. The idea that professional and specialized experts are the ones in charge of representing the voices of the marginalized peoples and communities through statements in international organizations is not substantiated in this scenario, because, in most cases, these peoples from the territories are the ones making their own voices heard in the CFS negotiations. Yet even the professionals involved in the mechanism are not merely technocrats; while they

may be experts, they are also committed to a political project and the struggle for food sovereignty.

Drawing on Neera Chandhoke (2005), de Jong argues that both concepts – facilitation and representation – are "inevitably (politically) mediated and constructed" (de Jong, 2017: 118). While facilitation of self-representation avoids many concerns regarding the "fabrication" of interests, the challenge remains in making the struggles of this process visible and in grasping "multiplicity", as "the contextual embeddedness and complex positioning of every person along a range of social axes open a potentially infinite range of situated perspectives that need to be articulated and heard" (de Jong, 2017, p.117).

The definition of facilitation as constructed by the participants of the Mechanism (both the affected groups and people who work directly with them and deeply comprehend their historical struggle) entails but goes beyond the mere notion of representation as commonly seen in other dynamics of civil society participation in international organizations. The "secret" raised by the coordinator reflects a self-positioning method rooted in "an ethic of care" (A Guide to Facilitation, 2020) and is based ultimately on solidarity.

This is the place where I have seen true teamwork between civil society and Indigenous People, and this is rare to have real solidarity like this (Y. during a preparation meeting for the CFS negotiations on gender).

The facilitation concept embraced by the CSIPM places small farmers, Indigenous Peoples, and other grassroots members most impacted by food insecurity at the forefront. It is designed so that experts, as well as other facilitators, should critically and reflexively consider their engagement, ensuring that the priorities of these groups are visible and given due consideration. In this sense, experts and academics are part of the Mechanism and they participate in the meetings and negotiation in the CFS. However, they are not the only ones, grassroot members are also present, and their participation is both prioritized and actively

encouraged in this context. The facilitation of self-representation process in this context goes beyond the recognition of the necessity of its political construction, but it also draws on a situated approach.

The interconnectedness between a reflexive approach, based on situatedness as well as a relationality, and the construction of sustainable solidarity practices have long been highlighted by the transnational feminist literature (Conway, 2013; de Jong 2017, Desai, 2005; Mohanty, 2003), as a "sign of our political maturity" (Caraway, 1992, p.201). It is understood as a way of building foundations for solidarity across differences and unequal power relations through recognizing, in a relational manner, experience, location, history, and cross-cultural aspects. Chandra Mohanty (2003) suggests that this approach combined with a comprehension of specific contexts, rather than a colonized perspective, informs a strategy for a feminist cross-cultural work.

This perspective is valuable in understanding how the facilitation process in the Mechanism bloomed as a result of a historical struggle to overcome the exclusion of right-holding and non-elite constituencies in international decision-making spaces (A Guide to Facilitation, 2020). It was the fruition of the recognition that family farmers, small-scale food producers, Indigenous Peoples, and other concerned groups have the right to determine their own food and agriculture systems, and therefore, that they are actors with agency whose voices should be heard.

A practice of putting the most affected constituencies committed to food sovereignty and agroecological approaches in the center of the work and of recognizing their political protagonism has been the modus operandi of the Mechanism. As highlighted by the Secretariat Coordinator, this was developed through praxis within this mobilized civil society space and has become the identity as well as the purpose of the CSIPM.

Solidarity as part of a political project

We have participated in this workstream with full commitment, bringing together a beautiful mosaic of people and experiences from around the world. We learned what true solidarity is; how to support a diversity of people who experience multiple and intersecting oppressions. We learned how much it means to make visible those who are made invisible, to care for all people (CSIPM statement on behalf of the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group during the endorsement of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment by the CFS Plenary).

As Maria Mies (2014) contends solidarity and good intentions, while important, are not sufficient on their own. The members of the group have a very clear understanding in their strategies of the existence of power dynamics within the group, and of the relevance of admitting that "the way in which [gender], class and race, [as well as] colonialism, are interwoven in our societies is not just an ideological problem which can be solved by good will alone" (Mies, 2014, p.12). The basis for transnational feminist solidarity, in this context, draws on the understanding of the divisions of gender, race, class, and other axes of social relations under capitalist patriarchy and heteronormative system, as these very divisions are foundational of capitalism itself (Mies, 2014; Roberts, 2016). As "the intersecting categories, shaped by structural forms of discrimination, take on their specific meaning within particular locations, institutional settings and times" (de Jong, 2017, p.154), the list of axes is inexhaustible in many ways for the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group.

The self-positioning stance and awareness of the relevance of a facilitation process that looks at the "interlocking nature of oppression" (Hill Collins, 1986, p.19) have enabled the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group to strengthen its tough work throughout the gender negotiations. The intervention of one of the members in a meeting of the evaluation

process of the negotiations and its document product within the Working Group demonstrates the effort of reflexivity exercised by the members in the context of the work of the Mechanism.

Because I also look at this document from my position as a cis, white, straight woman, I am not going through what P. is going through, that is, we are going to see it in a very different way. The reflection I make is what would we do if the CFS guidelines exclude everything that had to do with my constituencies, if my sector did not feel represented at all, if there had been a deliberate attempt to exclude a sector. It's the only way I can try to put myself in the shoes of other genders, which have been deliberately excluded (K. during a meeting of the CSIPM evaluation process of the CFS negotiations and the Voluntary Guidelines)[28].

Such an account of (co)implication and relationality, which recognizes power and structures of domination, was what made the (co)construction of the group's strategy possible as well as its resistance to the patriarchal heteronormative system and to the emergence of anti-gender politics during the negotiations in this workstream.

The project of facilitation, in this sense, represents the way the Mechanism articulates resistance to the dominant structure through its diversity. "Facilitation is political!" (A Guide to Facilitation, 2020, p.14). The dominant structure, in this context, is submitted to critical scrutiny that untangles the interdependence of systems of oppressions which, as suggested by Fellows and Razack (1998), Hill Collins (2000) and de Jong (2017), should be addressed together to allow for structural change.

The solidarity raised within the group is also political because it aims to question power relations and asymmetry both externally (in their struggle to overcome exclusion from the global food system) and internally (within the constituencies, as they recognize that systems of oppression are reproduced in different levels and spaces). "This destabilization [prevents]

[28] The speech was delivered in Spanish; the translation to English is my own.

assumptions of sameness and [underlines] the contextual and shifting effects of interlocking systems of subordination" (de Jong, 2017, p.151).

> By definition, the facilitator is someone who is standing in a position of power. If they weren't, they couldn't support another's participation! That power could be understanding something, when someone else doesn't. Or having time, when someone else hasn't. Or being present somewhere, when someone else isn't. Facilitation therefore requires understanding what power you have access to, and how to use it to support another's participation. This requires self-reflection, and often, self-limitation! (A Guide to Facilitation, 2020, p.10).

As acknowledged by the Mechanism, the self-positioning approach is extremely relevant to "think through difference" and to "work across difference" without leaving out structural inequalities, echoing Janet Conway (2013). Through the label of diversity, the Working Group assumes the relevance of situating "difference" in the context of power structures, by recognizing diverse needs and realities, and by "taking responsibility for their [respective] implication in systems of oppression" (de Jong, 2017, p.132-133). This awareness, nevertheless, does not preclude (dis)agreements or power relations within the group.

I am trigged to speak after that relativization that I felt coming in our [CSIPM Working Group] call meeting. Because yes, I do see the current context and the threats that the CFS is facing, and that we are one of the main actors (not the only one) trying to defend the CFS and to strengthen it. At the same time, I think we have to be very careful with any decision that we take here in order not to let an instrumentalization of our position for the sake of saving the CFS (P. during a meeting of the CSIPM evaluation process of the CFS negotiations and the Voluntary Guidelines).

(Dis)agreement and (dis)appointment can be perceived, for instance, in the above statement made by a member of the Working Group during their meeting on the evaluation of the negotiations on gender in the context of the CFS: an intervention that responds to the perspectives of other participants who see positive outcomes for certain constituencies in the process, and raises questions regarding their concerns about maintaining the Committee as a

valuable platform for civil society despite their challenging experiences in the policy process. The project of facilitating as an act of solidarity is, therefore, also about handling internal contractions and rebalancing power within the group.

In instances like these, as proposed by bell hooks (1986), the key lies in actively addressing conflict to achieve mutual understanding in political struggles. This process can potentially be (self) transformative, through engagement with alternative perspectives. In this context, it is possible to attain a shared vision, but the continuous effort is required to establish commonality or consensus, as noted by Caraway (1992) and Roth (2003).

We have also to recognize that the diversities they can present some complexities. And in these complexities what has been drawn out from our conversations is that we need to facilitate a political convergence but also be able to bring together the differences without cancelling these differences, and I think so far, we have been able to do this among ourselves, but also during the CFS [negotiations] process (D. during a CSIPM meeting for the evaluation of the CFS negotiation process and of the Voluntary Guidelines).

In this statement, a member of the Working Group recognizes the richness that diversity brings with a multitude of perspectives and histories of lived experiences to the CSIPM voice, but at the same time the complexities of articulating such process. Building connectedness and (co)responsibility through "differences" and "commonalities" through the search for "equality attentive to power differences" (Mohanty, 2013: 502) is, therefore, part of the efforts of these social movements in aligning political projects around food sovereignty and food systems. After going to the field in Rome, I realized how solidarity is indeed what unites different projects in a common political project which is holding their struggle together and sustaining the position of resistance performed in the CFS. The political counter-project they construct together to face the common opponent – the patriarchal capitalist system that exercises exploitation and

oppression of women, of gender diversities, land, and nature – is what unites them in the articulation of a common position through solidarity.

Indeed, this approach to cross-border solidarity as part of a political project involves thoughtful reflection on how to confront the shared adversary, the capitalist system, without perpetuating its inherent forms of exploitation and domination. As Mohanty (2003) addresses it:

> How we think of the local in/of the global and vice versa without falling into colonizing or cultural relativist platitudes about difference is crucial in this intellectual and political landscape. And for me, this kind of thinking is tied to a revised race-and-gender-conscious historical materialism. (Mohanty, 2003, p.509).

Not only relationality and positionality, but also historically contextualizing experiences and realities of micropolitics of everyday life, are relevant to situate historical complexities and contradictions and to make sense of the micropolitics of a globalized capitalist system (Mohanty, 2003). This awareness in organizing a counter-project to such a system that exacerbates inequalities and exploitations through its reinventive domination tools – such as financialization, which sustains ongoing forms of capital accumulation and capitalist expansion – is what enables the building of a collective political spirit in the context of the Working Group (WG).

An important part of the process was the regional consultations in 2021, when we were very actively from all the regions. We were able to bring experiences from the territories and diverse experiences. But these diverse experiences also showed a set of priorities that were common to the WG. We could find a common aim and common demands, priorities we wanted to see reflected in the document (U. during the CSIPM Forum of 2023).

Throughout all the evaluation process, we have highlighted our strengths as Working Group and this might be something we might want to keep recalling throughout the CSIPM Forum and the CFS Plenary, while bringing up our lived experiences and our demands for a

transformative pathway, which deconstructs the discriminatory norms that are embedded in today's patriarchal food systems. (D. during the CSIPM Forum 2023).

The connections, developed around the facilitation process, are constructed within the group through the practice of political struggles, an indication that solidarity is not a given, but a process as Caraway (1992) and de Jong (2017) argue. On behalf of a political project, a commitment to rebalance power is part of the process of not only admitting complicity in structures of subordination but a willingness to address them. Such willingness demonstrates that, in the context of the relations within the Women and Gender Diversities Group of the Mechanism, the "secret" mentioned by the CSIPM Secretariat Coordinator transcends the notion of "negotiated solidarity", the political struggle for consensus building, developed by de Jong (2017).

Although not free from power imbalances and disagreements, the self-reflection and self-limitation practiced within the group enables not only inclusion and participation of groups of the most affected in the decision-making processes within the CSIPM, but also some steps in direction of a transformation of the power structures and dynamics they seek to implement and to see reflected in macro-levels. On several occasions the Mechanism has taken into account the demands and revindications of affected constituencies, as well as the structures of subordination they face, to better accommodate their struggles' needs.

The mechanism, initially called Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) at the time of its foundation in 2010, was renamed in 2018 to include Indigenous Peoples in its acronym, representing their specific request and recognition as more than a subcategory of Civil Society. Another crucial moment that reflects listening and attentiveness to the needs of right holders was the establishment of the Women's Working Group per se. Later in April of 2022, the Group renamed itself to Women and Gender Diversities Working Group, to give visibility to the struggle for the rights of all persons outside the binary and heteronormative norm (CSIPM's

evaluation of the Guidelines, 2023). These name updates were the result of an effort by the Mechanism and the Group to better incorporate and integrate the members' experiences, needs, and lived realities. In the case of the Working Group, it has been a decision aimed at reinforcing their active role in advancing gender transversally as well as "strengthening the intersectionality and gender equality perspective for the right to food" (CSIPM's evaluation of the Guidelines, 2023, p.2) throughout the CSIPM and in defending it in the Committee.

Global North versus Global South

K: This is not a point about North and South, [it] is about privileges and oppressed people.
P: The CSIPM goes much beyond North-South dichotomies. We have a global consensus on what we are defending, because we all come from a place of oppression, marginalization, and violation of our rights.
F: Rather I would say that CSIPM takes into account the diversity and realities of South and North.
K: Patriarchal oppressors who want to control our bodies and our rights and our freedoms, and who do not want to give up this privilege. I would say South have greater layers of discrimination, which we want to get reflected in the document.
F: And this is why we need intersectionality there. Removing [the] mention of intersectionality and gender diversity [from the document] denies the realities of women in the South as well.
(Skype chat between members of the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM, during the third round of negotiations).

This conversation between the members of the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM happened in parallel to the third round of negotiations of the Guidelines on gender. It emerged spontaneously in the chat used by the group to communicate during the negotiations, as mentioned before, to assist the ones in the conference room, to support each other as well as to comment on topics being discussed among themselves. The excerpt above is

an example of a discussion thread that followed a mention of the Global South versus Global North in the conference room. It is possible to notice that the Working Group has a shared perception that recognizes a fluid conceptualization of South/ North, rather than a clear dichotomic approach to these categories, although recognizing that people in the Global South may be subordinated to more layers of interlocking systems of power.

The notion of One-Third World and Two-Third World, elaborated by Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash (1998), seems to capture to a certain extent the understanding of the members of the Group regarding the fluidity of these divisions across North and South. The terms designate respectively "social minorities" and "social majorities" and take into consideration as criteria the quality of living conditions as well as modern standards of life, both in the North and in the South. "Social majorities", for instance, by not having regular access to goods are less shaped by the paradigms of modernity, while "social minorities" are usually represented by the upper classes and modern ways of life. These concepts also incorporate power in the analysis by situating people accordingly, and they represent a means of giving visibility to struggles in these societies. The members of the CSIPM Working Group would mostly, in this sense, be situated in the Two-Thirds World in terms of space and vision of their political and economic stands.

Nevertheless, as Mohanty (2003) highlights, despite "addressing continuities and discontinuities" (p.506) within societies and between societies around the world, because it focuses on the quality of living conditions, this categorization does not encompass historical contextualization and, therefore, does not capture a historical colonial axis of exploitation. In this regard, she draws attention to the fact that Global North and Global South are categories that still hold political significance in understanding the functioning of global capitalist colonial system and its imperial power structure, as these terms distinguish privileged imperial states and those marginalized economically and politically. Indeed, Arif Dirlik's (1994)

conceptualization of North-South as also a metaphor understands that they are, rather than purely a geographical differentiation, a specification of capital accumulation versus marginalization.

This is particularly key to take into consideration insofar colonialism is a "persistent structure that shapes North-South relationships" (de Jong, 2017, p.167). A fluid reading, as the one made by the Working Group on the chat, seems to maintain the political relevance of these expressions at the same time that they are deconstructed as homogenous binary categories. This does not mean denying the relevance of using these terms, but a recognition of its complexities and its underlying aspects of unequal distribution of power.

Likewise, these categories are useful when reflecting about and reiterating the autonomy of social movements, women, and non-cis-heteronormative people in the territories in the South. When considering the impact that localities have on global governance, the emphasis is usually on Global North knowledge production as a predominant figure – such as the concept of vernacularization developed by Merry suggests (2006a; 2006b) – in spite of the impact of Global South movements on agenda setting and global discussions. Similarly, in analyzing global civil society, Chandhoke (2005) poses the following question, "are citizens of countries of the South and their needs represented in global civil society, or are citizens as well as their needs constructed by practices of representation?" (p. 362), which although seeming to be a pertinent question, forgets that people from the Global South can resist practices and positions that do not meet their needs, as well as participate actively in the process of collectively constructing representation.

The question raised by Chandhoke evokes the practice of representation as an instrument used to shape the needs and positioning of the Global South. While it may be true that such practices are often employed by actors from the Global North, the assumption of their

unquestionable assimilation – and the immediate construction of the South's needs by external forces – serves to invisibilize the agency and capacity of the South to articulate its own needs.

From a historical materialist perspective, it becomes apparent that the agency of women and diverse genders in the Global South has been constrained by historical circumstances and material forces of power domination, including colonialism. These forces perpetuate Western perspectives that obscure the agency of marginalized groups. In this sense, invoking the notions of the Global South and Global North becomes relevant for challenging such emphasis and for highlighting the agency of women and diverse genders in the Global South, particularly in their historical struggles and resistance, including against attempts to recolonize their practices. It means, therefore, giving visibility to the material reality and, at the same time, to the agency of these bodies. Indeed, as Tchella Maso's reflection on embodiment suggests:

> Bodies are not passive. According to Mari Luz Estevan, bodies are nodes of structure and action, they are not mere receptacles, merely constrained by structures of power, but they have agency. Black feminism brings this very strongly. It is part of empowerment to redefine the meanings of our bodies. Bodies that act daily to contain, to rebel, to transgress these social norms. The body is not an expression of the individual but is a node of collective expressiveness in a body (Maso, podcast audio, 2021).

The use of the terms Global South and Global North is also valuable when questioning the effects and exploitation resulting from the international division of labor under the globalized capitalist system – notably its reinvention and financialization – which lead to the precarization and subordination of large segments of the population in the Global South.

When putting the most marginalized groups of women and diverse genders in the center in an attempt to make sense of social justice and of the systemic power of capitalist society, beginning the analysis from and illuminating Two-Thirds World and Global South lived experiences is crucial. As Mohanty (2003) stresses, this perspective rooted in particularized realities makes it possible to unveil the functioning of power structures and the reproduction of colonial systems from a more inclusive point of view: it enables "to read up the ladder of privilege", as "colonized peoples must know themselves and the colonizer" (Mohanty, 2003,

p.511). This approach allows us to comprehend how everyday life and local gendered, racialized, and colonial realities are linked to a macro neo-imperialist capitalist structure.

The social location of the marginalized matters, therefore, because lives and struggles of women and non-cis-heteronormative persons in these localities reveal the way capital exploits certain bodies from the Two-Thirds World and Global South as well as its interlocking system of oppression. It also matters because such comprehension enhances anti-capitalist feminist critique in envisioning resistance from these marginalized locations (Mohanty, 2003).

To question the binaries raised by these concepts and at the same time recognizing their usefulness in addressing power structures is a challenge that women organizing and resisting transnationally take on, such as demonstrated by the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group discussion above. In this sense, many norm diffusion approaches or limited interpretations of the translation process, as outlined earlier, lack engagement with the destabilization of Global South/North relations and a fluid understanding of these categories. But how can we better develop this engagement?

From bridging to knitting

Transnational feminist engagement has been an organizing forms of resistance to and in a global capitalist system despite spatial distance and North/South cleavages. As Sara Ahmed (2000) puts it “Western feminists are already in relationships with “third world women” given our implication in an international division of labor… what is at stake is how, rather than whether, the encounters take place” (p. 167). De Jong (2017) suggests to critically reflect on manners and strategies women from Global North use to bridge distances with those from the Global South taking into consideration power relations, understanding the role the former plays

in the bridging process. She concludes that partners from the South, often play a role of intermediary between organizations from the Global North and the final beneficiaries from the South, serving not only as a "bridge" but often as a "replacement" for the recipients, which become invisibilized in the process.

To visualize the proposition of bridging distance to make sense of women's transnational organizing, I come the Oxford dictionary, according to it:

> Bridge (noun):
>
> 1. a structure that is built over a road, railway, river, etc. so that people, vehicles, etc. can cross from one side to the Other.
> 2. a thing that provides a connection or contact between two different things.
>
> Bridge (verb):
>
> 1. to build or form a bridge over something.
> 2. to reduce or get rid of the differences that exist between two things or groups of people.

The idea that emerges from thinking of this definition in material terms is that, although it allows us to cross over, the bridge maintains the distances and keeps the polarity. Inspired by the patchwork I first observed in the houses and small farms during my visits to members of the MMTR-NE in Sergipe, I understand transnational feminist connection and articulation in the context of the food systems, particularly in the CSIPM, metaphorically as a patchwork. Rather than bridging distance, I suggest that creating a patchwork, as suggested in the previous chapter, involves taking into consideration a more diverse and inclusive range of views.

In one of the calls of the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group, which focused on evaluating the process of the negotiations and of the final document product, the agenda included the following topic: "1. Opening - Knitting our experiences within this Working Group (WG) together: Write one word that describes or illustrates how you felt in the journey of this WG? How was your experience?" (Communication from the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group on the call agenda, 2023). During the call, one of the facilitators of the group

asked us to think about words that could describe the feelings we had throughout this experience in an intimate sharing practice. The aim was to create a visual expression of our *knitted* experiences.

When knitting, yarn loops are interlaced with the same or other yarns to produce a textile. The art of knitting forms stitches, comprised of yarn loops arranged sequentially, whether in a flat or tubular, round fashion. Commonly, numerous active stitches are concurrently present on the knitting needle. Knitting experiences, by bringing different perspectives, views, and suggestions, makes all experiences visible. By identifying many active stitches at one time, we (metaphorically) recognize the agency of many different participants and members of the Working Group.

The knitting metaphor also comes into play within the weaving process framework. A blend of techniques emerges as grassroots movements expand their interactions to transnational levels. Once again, a confluence occurs in the construction of a common political project. Knitting, weaving, and sewing together patches are all integral to this process. The result may even be a knitted patchwork, composed of many different shapes and shades of lived realities and everyday struggles. In this sense, a mix of fabrics is created, producing a diverse textile: a political project that embraces and includes diversity. This textile is not uniform, but rather intentionally heterogeneous, allowing for the coexistence of different voices, experiences, and forms of knowledge.

As I became part of the group of the CSIPM, I gained access to documents used in preparation for the negotiations, as well as to the rationale behind the proposed modifications to the text – whether insertion, deletions, or changes in language – to accommodate the perspectives of the Working Group members. The group efforts included, for instance, advocating for a more gender inclusive language. Whenever the Voluntary Guidelines reinforced binary logics in opposing or rebounding difference “between women and men”, the

Group would propose “between genders” wording instead. The effort was collective. The members of the group would add their suggestions and reasoning, completing each other’s proposals in a cooperative manner. The knitted, woven, sewn patchwork in this sense was clear to me.

The way we elaborated these amendments… so, the things we wanted to change in the text were elaborated collectively. So, the methodology, or how we did it: we discussed it in the working group meetings and we set a table, a very big table, with each paragraph of the guidelines and every person of the working group was able to reflect on it, and bring suggestions, which then we discussed together and we saw how to strategically make these priorities language [UN language] into the text. It was a very interesting way of working (U. during the CSIPM Forum of 2023).

This video shows the way we worked, a statement that we made collectively, where everyone could bring the main aspects, what they suffered that week. And together it builds a collective position and collective feeling of our working group in that moment. So, we also want to share what we built collectively (P. during the CSIPM Forum of 2023 after a video of the statement they delivered in the 3rd round of negotiation in the CFS was shared).

Seeing their collective construction as a patchwork, including knitting, does not ignore conflict, or power relations. Yarn loops may get tangled in the process, and untangling them in a harmonious, self-reflective manner is necessary to loosen the interlocked loops. In this sense, loosening the loops, and at the same time maintaining them, is what makes them unravel. The illustration of stitches and yarn loops, of how they interlace, tangle, and disentangle, presents a valuable reflection on practicing relationality and positionality.

Knitting a patchwork of feminist solidarity is like weaving together a tapestry of diverse threads, each representing its unique experience. Just as skilled hands blend different colors and textures to form a quilt, women and non-cis-heteronormative persons connecting transnationally through the work of the CSIPM embrace a diversity of perspectives,

backgrounds, and struggles to construct their common political project. Such a metaphor enables us to perceive the materiality of these interactions, to acknowledge difference, and to recognize its existence.

In this sense, the patchwork or the *Fuxico*, described in the previous chapter, allows for a common outcome without eradicating differences: they are not only preserved, but are precisely what makes the work beautiful and celebrated. The notion of *ch'ixi*, evoked by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2010), affirms the viability of coexistence between differences and opposites, without the loss of their essence. It stands in opposition to the logic of assimilation into a singular identity or conformism with a process of domination. According to Cusicanqui, the *ch'ixi* notion enables the simultaneous presence of multiple, often conflicting, cultural elements without erasure.

This approach also aligns with the perspective offered by Marisol de la Cadena (2021), in a discussion with Ailton Krenak at the opening of *Seres-Rios* Festival[29], where she addressed the challenge of building alliances across differences, and how to do so while preserving the possibility of remaining different within those alliances, without erasing particularities. She argued that embracing this possibility may offer a way of bringing together what is different without requiring anyone or anything to become what they are not. I suggest that the metaphor of sewing of a patchwork or *Fuxicos* captures precisely this possibility, by maintaining the diversity of the different patches. Just as remnants of leftover fabric are repurposed, so too are knowledges and practices that refuse to go to waste. This possibility also emphasizes the agency of all those involved in this weaving process, challenging the arguments discussed in the previous section about the pitfalls of the practice of representation as a practice that can be used

[29] The Seres-Rios Festival Fluvial was na event organized by BDMG Cultural to explore the role of rivers in past, present, and future narratives. The opening discussion, featuring Marisol de la Cadena and Ailton Krenak, mediated by Ana Gomes, is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JPWjlZcOoe0

to shape or distort the needs and positions of the Global South, precisely because the essence of the diverse patches is preserved within the patchwork.

Since the CFS Forum on Women's Empowerment, the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group has developed a collective effort to consolidate their vision and to build their internal convergence with a view to prioritize the deconstruction of the patriarchal capitalist system that shapes food system. Indeed, the Working Group (WG) plays a crucial role in promoting a gender perspective transversally across various aspects of the CSIPM. It has been a key contributor to enhancing intersectionality and fostering a gender equality viewpoint concerning the right to food through diverse avenues.

More recently, participants of the WG have expressed how rich was the experience in building a common positioning towards the negotiations of the CFS Guidelines on GEWGE [Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment]. In doing so, solidarity; mutual learning; new ways of interacting with each other; caring for the space; recognizing, accepting, and supporting diversity; and bringing transformative interventions were some of the feelings expressed for the WG's space out of the evaluation process we are carrying out. As WG we have built a feminist thread in the CSIPM's and CFS's memory and this has been recorded extensively through pictures, written and oral statements and videos. As WG we want to celebrate this collective memory and build a mosaic of experiences in participating in the WG's space. We want to share this transformative experience with the CSIPM. But also, with the CFS, because our lived experiences and the ones from our communities were the guiding light for our positioning, and they cannot be erased. Let the CSIPM Women and Gender Diversities WG be the living reminder of this (CSIPM's evaluation of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls Empowerment, 2023, p.2-3).

As a result of the questions raised during the evaluation of the negotiation process and the final document, discussed at the beginning of this section, the coordinators created a mosaic of words that emerged from the members, as shown in Figure 1. As the excerpt above

demonstrates, words like ‘solidarity’ and others expressing care and mutual recognition, such as ‘love’, ‘mutual respect’, and ‘embraced’, were highlighted.

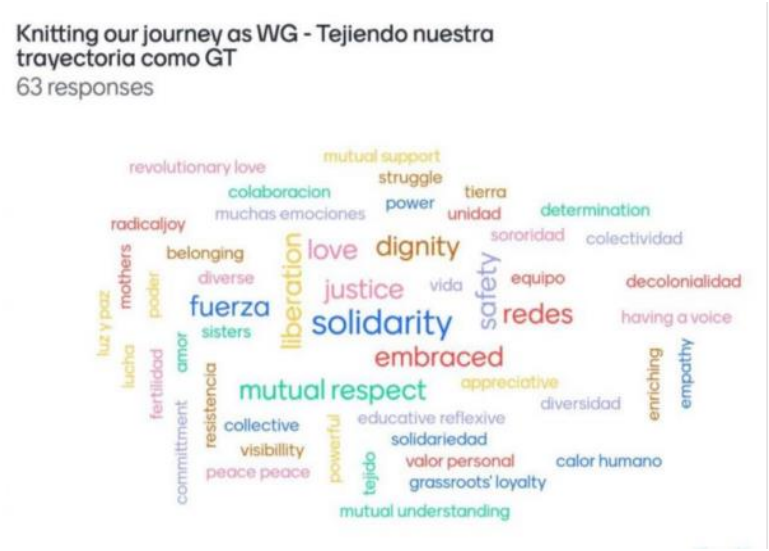

Figure 1: CSIPM’s evaluation of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls Empowerment, 2023, p.3.

When we contemplate the connection between grassroots movements and the international stage, we observe a fluid and (dis)continuous interaction but also characterized by knitting, weaving, and stitching experiences of a patchwork.

I am not following the negotiations anymore, because I had to leave the March, but there is a common political view inside our movement. We had meetings within the March to decide our positions within the Mechanism collectively. C. is still there representing our stance (S. from the World March of Women during the Margaridas’ March 2023).

In each location, the March has autonomy to form partnerships with other movements and organizations. We may not always be aware of these partnerships, but we trust that they align with our political ‘line’, because we have a common understanding of our political stance (Z. from the World March of Women Brazil, during the Latin American and Caribbean Conference for the Integration of Peoples, 2024).

I chose to retain the free translation of ‘line’ in political line, because, in this context, the idea of knitting a patchwork vividly illustrates how their political stance guides the (co)construction of their connectedness. When I asked Z., during the Latin American and Caribbean Conference for the Integration of Peoples, 2024, whether she knew S. and was informed about the discussions in Rome, she reiterated ‘the political stance’, echoing what S. had explained to me during the Margaridas’ March in Brasilia in 2023 regarding the existence of a shared political vision within the movement. Although she was not engaged in the discussions of the Mechanism and did not know S., she believed that such a political stance guided their actions in this context.

G. reached Rome through the CLOC and La Via Campesina, but her involvement in these movements was tied to her role as a coordinator in the Peasant Women’s Movement. She explained to me that a dialogue to embrace this opportunity was constructed from the grassroots, through a process of developing such engagements both regionally and transnationally.

My candidacy [as a coordinator of the Women’s Working Group of the CSIPM] was discussed by the movement’s national direction [Peasant Women’s Movement]. We discussed and decided that it would be important to the movement, as it would represent a new knowledge to us. We understood that it would mean an overture of possibilities, it would give visibility to the movement, and it would be an opportunity to articulate with other organizations and movements, going beyond La Via Campesina. We also understand that it was important to have one of us there in this policy arena, as it would qualify the debate driven by the movement not only at the national level, but also it would qualify our struggle in these policy spaces. Because our everyday struggle involves also resisting a patriarchal system and international corporations, so it is also a resistance to global domination, we can also read our struggle as international in this sense (G. during an interview in 2021).

In this sense, the image of a patchwork or *Fuxicos*, along with the different techniques that emerge throughout the process, aptly reflects the complexity of the politics of (dis)continuities, as well as the manifold alliances, strategies, and forms of engagement of peasant and rural women's movements on the ground in global food governance.

The engagement of these movements occurs through the intersection and crosscutting demands, as well as interaction and intersection of people and their participation in different social movements. Therefore, through the juxtaposition and overlapping of social movements and organizations, the sharing of seeds, ideas, knowledge, and the exchange of (or between) some participants occur. Indeed, some people from the movements on the ground participate also in other social movements with transnational and international reach. With this concomitant engagement, some ideas and knowledge from the ground are shared and spread widely in these international spaces through their multifaceted articulation, multiple connections, and exchanges. Trust and collective responsibility are built in the process: a patchwork continues to be stitched, woven, knitted.

Knowledge construction

> Here is what I've learned from taking these women seriously: if we pay sustained attention to each and all of these unheadlined women, we will become smarter about this world, smarter than a lot of mainstream "experts." (Enloe, 2014, p. xiv)

An important outcome of the process of creating and knitting a patchwork is knowledge sharing and construction. The connections formed in the development of these articulations disseminate and generate knowledge, yielding a significant epistemic bearing. This is because in an approach that does not believe in economic reductionism, social relations are organized

not only by material economic forces of the infrastructure, but also by cultural and social values and knowledge of the superstructure.

Every meeting I attended in person, whether of the CSIPM or grassroots movements, began with the *mística*. The ritual of *mística* opens or closes the activities, and is extremely relevant for rural workers, peasants, the landless, riverside dwellers, Indigenous Peoples, and other related constituencies. It is related to the sacred, the spirituality and religiosity of workers in rural areas, as the land and nature are considered sacred, and peasant traditions are also connected to the sacred. The struggle for land, in this sense, becomes sacred. The *mística* refers to mystery, to an immaterial faith, but it is also materialized through its practice as nourishment and through the bodies of the practitioners (Bogo, 2008).

Always focused on the collective, it is realized through sacred rituals, organized altars, symbols, seeds, chants, poems, verses, danse, theatrical performance; it is artistic, but goes beyond art. According to Bogo (1998), “symbols are the material representations of utopias, they become the most efficient means of communication between people who are part of an organization and guarantee political unity between them” (p.13). Fueling militancy, giving strength to the peasant struggle, the *mística* is realized as an instrument for social and political practice. The *mística* is action and militant practice. It is an educational practice and experience, in its subjectivity it raises awareness of peasant struggles and oppressions, and at the same time it is constructed throughout the struggle. It becomes then synonym for people’s struggles and a political culture.

“Mística is a particular way of sensing the struggle, experiences, stories, and everyday constructions." (Calaça, 2021, p.389). Therefore, the *mística* developed by the militancy expresses historical moments of their struggle, evoking the lived experiences of the people as agents of transformation in their social realities. In Latin America, particularly, it has an

important connection with liberation from lived oppression and historical experiences. The *mística* nourishes social transformation.

Despite the complexity in grasping the concept, important political education also occurs through the *mística*. It brings a profound sense and feeling of solidarity, and it serves as both teaching and knowledge. It holds, therefore, considerable epistemic enrichment, as it became noticeable to me in each meeting of social movements and of the Mechanism that I participated in.

The concept of "body territory", developed by Indigenous Women's movements in Latin America, further underscores the collective experience of the body as a political subject and as an agent of transformation of the world. The existence of the body is characterized by a historical and communal sense belonging. In this regard, the notion of the body as territorial is inherently political, and its holistic ontology entails resistance and the resignification of knowledge. It inspired the choir "neither the body nor the land are territories of conquest" echoed by Indigenous and rural women's movements in the continent (Bautista Segales, 2014; Cruz Hernandez, 2016; Maso, 2023).

As non-elite, right-holders, and affected constituencies hold political protagonism in the scenario of the CSIPM, their knowledge, including ancestral knowledge, and ideas are making their way to international arena and compounding their political project, which includes overcoming historical exclusion from decision-making.

Our participation in these policy spaces also enriches international debate, as we represent autonomous women bringing our accumulated knowledge to contribute to the development of public policies. While we have only recently begun participating in these negotiations, I believe we have much to contribute (G. during an interview in 2021).

The exclusion from decision making also takes the form of historical marginalization from mainstream knowledge production. As de Jong (2017, p.122) argues, "it is clear that the

challenge here runs deeper and addresses hierarchies of knowledge, the dominance of the English language, histories of foreign intervention, and the privilege of traveling as a global expert".

During the third round of negotiations, I had a conversation with the then Secretariat Coordinator regarding the participation of small farmers, rural workers, and Indigenous Peoples, among other right-holders, in the negotiations in a Committee of the UN System, and the potential of these social movement's agents. I told him I was amazed to see their direct engagement in the process, as the Mechanism did not seem to be the place where experts arrived with their status and vision, in a context of imbalance of power, to represent the group.

If you rethink the notion of experts, everyone there [in the context of the CSIPM] is expert. They might not have papers published, but they have experience from their realities on the territories, they are also experts in this sense. And then we exchange knowledge and those who are familiar with the institutional process guide the others to make them comfortable with the [CFS] organization functioning (CSIPM Secretariat Coordinator in a conversation with me during the third round of negotiations, 2022).

The contextual materiality in which each of the members are imbricated comes into play here, but so does subjectivity, as in a feminist historical materialist analysis, materiality and subjectivity go hand in hand and constitute integral aspects of the same state of things. In fact, "Feminists have (…) engaged with space and place in relation to knowledge production, advocating for a 'politics of location', which should explicitly recognize the situatedness and therefore relative subjectivity of all knowledge, (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994).

When I joined the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group, I attended a meeting for feedback on the first round of negotiations. The facilitators were moderating this meeting. *For those present in the last negotiations session, how did we "read the room"?* asked one of them. What does it mean to read the room? Subjectivities are involved. Reading, interpreting:

our eyes guide the process. Our knowledge guides the process. It is a subjective process. Synchronicity occurs as we are many women (in all our diversities) reading the room in a parallel manner.

Indeed, the aim of the Mechanism is the exchange of knowledge, which happens through the interaction of the participants, their movements, and the contributions they bring, sharing their accumulated experiences and insights from struggles on the territory. This is because small-scale food producers, food and agriculture workers, or Indigenous Peoples, or other marginalized groups, when they take a role in the CSIPM, including a facilitator or coordinator role, they contribute with a deep understanding of the issues faced by their constituencies. A collective learning process is, thus, what emerges through this practice and through trial and error when facing challenges (A Guide to Facilitation, 2020). The needlework is sewed in a way that their engagement in the process passes thorough contributing with their own 'expertise'.

In this sense, within the CSIPM, those affected by human rights violations are telling their own stories during the negotiations as well, exchanging directly with the facilitator the role of framing the demands. The power dynamic still exists, but victims and the most affected also become translators or the "people in the middle" as well. Instead of suspicious relationship with the translator, trust is built through the co-construction of an entrusted relationship. Although assuming that professionalization is not required nor desirable as the justification for the development of a facilitation process, the Mechanism recognizes the immeasurable value of the knowledge of rural communities and indigenous peoples and of acquaintance of local contexts for the policy convergence negotiations with the CFS.

The effort of the Mechanism in this scenario is to generate more horizontal relations rather than vertical ones, as a result of the inclusion and participation of the civil society and social movements in the international arena, through the construction of flat interactions within

the CSIPM. The graphics utilized in the CSIPM's Guide to Facilitation (2020) illustrate the typical hierarchical operation of the Human Rights and Food Security Regime, represented by "The 8". This depiction suggests that the interactions sought by the Mechanism are characterized by the figure of the 8 lying down as follows:

Figure 2: A Guide to Facilitation (CSIPM, 2020, p.16).

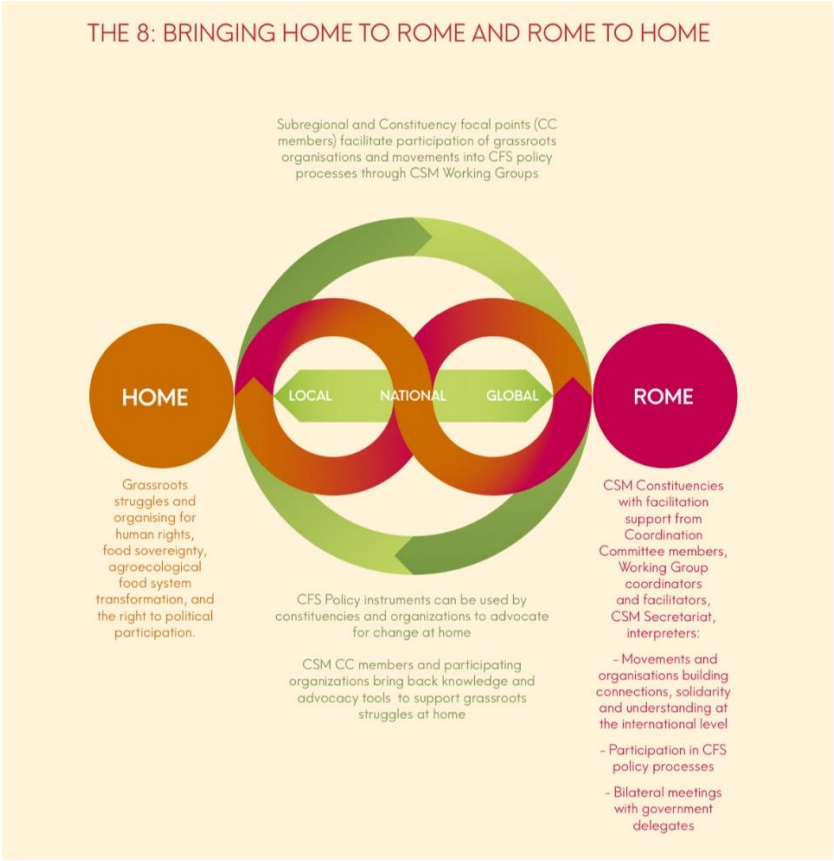

Figure 3: A Guide to Facilitation (CSIPM, 2020, p.17).

With this proposition, my initial idea to begin my analysis from a bottom-up perspective is overturned. The horizontal approach enables a territorial localized knowledge to become visible and evident throughout the entire process of a flatter transnational and international social relations. As in the patchwork lens I suggest, the '8 lying down' approach enables the de-hierarchization of relations, fostering flatter and more reciprocal interactions transnationally. By stitching together different colorful patches or *Fuxicos*, this approach values and incorporates diversity and multiple forms of knowledge as integral to a process that resists hierarchization.

In the context of the CFS, some recognition of this knowledge is reflected in the implementation of the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE). The HLPE was created as part of the CFS reform to strengthen the decision-making, representing both the outcome and an accomplishment of civil society participation in the reform process. It should not only count on

expertise of academics and researchers but also of farmers, indigenous peoples, and practitioners and, thus, it should "help create synergies between world class academic/scientific knowledge, field experience, knowledge from social actors and practical application" (CFS: 2009/2, para. 36; Mckeon, 2015). This feature makes the HLPE a unique scientific body that seeks to incorporate a plurality of knowledge systems, to give visibility to different, marginalized knowledge and practices in order to become a space for knowledge production.

Bring home to Rome. They come with their experiences from the territory, to generate norms to bring back with them when they go home. We have no romantic views on the governments, we know it is difficult, but how to make the CFS responsive? We need you and other governments to be strong on that (CSIPM Coordinator during a bilateral meeting with the EU delegation on the side of the CFS 50 Plenary, in 2022).

This reflection leads us to (re)conceptualizing experts. Participating actively in the negotiations process within the CFS, the subversive engagement of right-holders and the most-affected constituencies in global food governance in defending social justice questions the notion of intermediaries developed by Merry (2006b). The "people in the middle" according to her "may be local activists, human rights lawyers, feminist NGO leaders, academics" (Merry, 2006b, p.42). Indeed, these categories and professionals with high level qualification are involved in this transnational and translation process, but as noted above, not only them.

Rural women are also taking on the responsibility of connecting transnational articulations and fulfilling significant roles in knowledge construction and dissemination. In this sense, Michela Calaça (2021, p.91), a former member of the Peasant Women's Movement in Brazil, argues that the notion behind Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic power'[30] should

[30] Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power refers to the capacity to impose meanings, classifications, and legitimate worldviews – not by coercion or force, but through the recognition and acceptance of others. This form of power is subtle and often invisible, operating through language, culture, norms, and institutions. At its core, symbolic power rests on the authority to define what is considered legitimate – be it knowledge, taste, or social roles—and to have these definitions accepted as natural or self-evident.

be (de)constructed, considering that these women lead a political project based on their political, ancestral, and grassroots knowledge. Drawing on Michael Burawoy (2010), she advocates that moving beyond this conception of 'symbolic power' brings to the analysis the possibility for the exploited and oppressed to conceive political alternatives and to struggle against this subjugation independently, without requiring the guidance of intellectual professionals as Bourdieu has suggested. In other words, peasant women are political subjects with the capacity to mobilize internationally, just like other experts considered to be the "people in the middle." According to her, this perspective aligns with Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'organic intellectuals'[31], those who are directly involved in the struggle.

> When considering all we have learned from countless peasant women, many of whom may have barely known how to sign their names, but whose experience of struggle and life encompassed building social transformation through agroecology and feminism, we can assert that these women are the organic intellectuals of Popular Peasant Feminism (Calaça, 2021, p.92).

María Lugones (2010) argues that this grassroots' knowledge – often cosmological, ecological, economic, and spiritual, understood in capitalist society as premodern – represents a form of social organization to resist the oppressive logic of colonial modernity, its hierarchies and dichotomies. She understands it, in this sense, as non-modern knowledge in opposition to such capitalist modernity, which emphasizes the logic of separable homogeneous categories that reinforce dichotomies, rather than an intersectional approach.

In the instance of the gender workstream, the HLPE was not involved in the process, which means that there was no report provided by the Panel to guide the negotiations, as is typically the case. This precedent, even at this early stage, reflects the politically contentious

[31] The concept of the organic intellectual refers to individuals who emerge from and remain closely tied to a particular social class – most often the working class or other marginalized groups – and who give expression to its lived experiences, values, and aspirations. Unlike traditional intellectuals, such as academics, clergy, or bureaucrats typically aligned with dominant powers, organic intellectuals are not necessarily formally educated. Instead, their intellectual and political recognition stems from their deep roots in the community and their active engagement in social and political struggles. Their political function is to mobilize their class to become aware of its position, articulate its interest, and build a counter-hegemony to dominant ideology.

sensitivities involved in these negotiations, as I will analyze further in the next chapter. Yet, a Technical Task Team was established to elaborate a Terms of Reference document, composed of 'experts' including two members of the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group. Even though the HLPE did not contribute to this workstream, through their participation in the work of the Technical Task Team and the whole negotiation process, the CSIPM group endeavored to make localized knowledge visible. The policy convergence negotiations process on gender have also used reports of the Working Group as essential sources to feed into the elaboration of the document.

While representing the foremost inclusive organization does not necessarily imply comprehensive inclusiveness, the innovative aspects of the reformed CFS allow local knowledge to be recognized as expert knowledge. This is still a contentious aspect, but the possibility to count on the knowledge of women on the ground and on their situated contexts is a manner to make visible localized gender inequalities, which are usually hidden in technical gender expertise accounts. What emerges, in this sense, in the international arena is a marginal way of knowing, a different kind of expertise, from the ground and anchored in local contexts, which asserts itself as a counter-project to the dominant food system and to the hegemonic neoliberal order. Rural women's political participation in a gendered policy space of an international governance arena, characterized by masculinized global processes, is thus a considerable achievement for the project they are developing.

This participation and knowledge sharing occurs through the materiality of their bodies – their physical presence – whether in the negotiating room or offering support virtually. Putting the body at the center of the study changes the way we produce reflections, produce knowledge and animate actions. Tchella Maso (2021) argues that every theory, every analysis, is embodied, because there is a body that produces that theory. The modern capitalist society frequently makes the differentiation between body and mind, body and spirit, as if the act of thinking and

producing theories came from a mind, from an abstract subject. Maso highlights that when we embody this subject and this way of thinking, we reinforce that the body is a body marked by social structures, and in this sense, the power oppressions that intersect this body matter. “We are talking about power devices that give meaning to this body, which acts on these devices and tries to transgress them in some cases” (Maso, 2021). As framed by Patricia Hill Collins (2000), with regard to African American women, “On some level, people who are oppressed usually know it. (…) As an historically oppressed group, U.S. Black women have produced social thought designed to oppose oppression” (p.8-9).

Affection is political

As the CSIPM coordinator had mentioned to me, the secret of the Mechanism is grounded on an “ethics of care”. Solidarity is constructed and patched in a way that ensures everyone’s knowledges are recognized and shared in the development of the Group’s position. As discussed before, historically marginalized constituencies who face intersecting forms of oppression and are subjected to interlocking systems of power are members of the group, and in this sense, diversity is recognized as a vigorous tool to exercise resistance and is celebrated among the members.

The ethics of care entails a profound respect for the other, listening attentively, acknowledging that the other holds knowledge that I do not, and being both open to affect and to being affected. As such, the ethics of care represents a transformation of social relations, where care is conceived not as an individual task but as a mutual and shared responsibility. In this sense, the ethics of care is not synonymous with care work – although the labor involved in care work may also embody an ethics of care – as the notion of ethics here refers to the values

and principles that guide responsive action, including the recognition and valuation of care itself.

We have had not only a commitment towards the CFS, but also a commitment to ourselves. And the commitment to be as inclusive as possible and to really shape our positioning with an intersectional lens. These commitments with intersectional lens have also been advocating for a true transformative change for food systems and to deconstruct the patriarchal nature of these food systems. Within these commitments, however (or luckily, or both together), we were encountered with a broad diversity within this Working Group, diversity of regions, cultures, genders, identities, constituencies, age, all of them bringing multiple perspectives to our Working Group and also to this evaluation process. These diversities bring a richness to the Group and then they are translated to the CFS. (M. during a CSIPM meeting for the evaluation of the CFS negotiation process in 2023).

What is happening in the context of this Working Group of the CSIPM extrapolates the idea of building connectedness through "differences" and "commonalities (Mohanty, 2013) and goes beyond their common political project. In the process, they care for each other and for each other's perspectives. Just as solidarity is not a given and can be recognized as constructed through political struggles in this scenario, affection is a powerful instrument in uniting the group in their efforts to knit common positions. Affection is therefore political. It is a tool in this political project, and it entails an important decolonial practice in collectively developing resistance to coloniality, as Maria Lugones (2010) suggests:

> What I am proposing in working toward a decolonial feminism is to learn about each other as resisters to the coloniality of gender at the colonial difference, without necessarily being an insider to the worlds of meaning from which resistance to the coloniality arises. That is, the decolonial feminist's task begins by her seeing the colonial difference, emphatically resisting her epistemological habit of erasing it. Seeing it, she sees the world anew, and then she requires herself to drop her enchantment with "woman," the universal, and begins to learn about other resisters at the colonial difference (Lugones, 2010, p.753).

Such decolonial perspective problematizes Western and colonial "emotional structures and affective logistics" (Hutchison et al., 2024, p.8) or what Sara Ahmed (2004) calls the "affective economies", and represents a subversion of the reproduction of systems of practices and discourses that are rooted in and reinforce colonial power structures. This "coloniality of affects" (Quijano, 2007) imposes through social and cultural hierarchies specific ways of feeling, desiring, being and knowing.

In a historical context of modernity, emotions have been subjected to a hierarchical validation and classification. The materialization of the circulation of such signs of affect creates the delineation of the surfaces or boundaries of both individual and collective bodies and worlds. Emotions, including bodily affects, such as fear, anger, guilt, anxiety, are subjected to relations of power, which assign values and shape bodies (Ahmed, 2004, 2015).

I am not aspiring here to define emotions, feelings, and affects, but I follow Ahmed (2014) and Hutchison et al. (2024), in understanding them as intertwined. Just as love, in bell hooks' work, is not only understood as a feeling but also as an ethical practice, I suggest that affection, while not the only dimension of love, follows the same vein. For bell hooks, love is not a given but a continuous construction, an action that must be practiced with responsibility. As an action with the potential for social transformation, the practice of love also serves to decolonize Western and Eurocentric oppressive logics of functioning.

In light of this, exercising decolonial feminism implies an ethics and an empathetic practice of understanding active subjectivity in resistance to coloniality of gender from a "coalitional starting point" (Lugones, 2010). This is because decolonization is a perplexing and ongoing process that entails reflection, commitment, and care (Hutchison et al., 2024, p.3).

María Lugones (2010) emphasizes that, as a result of the colonial imposition of gender, making sense of the resistant self requires a multiple reading of this self in relation with other lived experiences of resistance. The coalition is, therefore, an important movement towards

learning about each other, and about histories of resistance, to build from the common fractured locus, “creative ways of thinking, behaving, and relating that are antithetical to the logic of capital” (Lugones, 2010, p.754).

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, the fractured locus, fractured precisely because the colonized inhabits it through active resistance and the interplay of opposing forces, enables us to perceive the world through multiple lenses, refracted through the fracture itself. It reflects these diverse experiences. As Lugones argues, an “ethics of coalition-in-the making”, marked by communal spirit, paves the way to alternative responses. Resisting to gender coloniality and its dichotomous hierarchies involves living in a shared experience in community rather than responding in isolation, it includes affecting and being affected by others. Ontologically, the affection is, therefore, inherently relational.

Maso (2021) also argues that in assembly, the politics of the body is an everyday lived practice in the midst of a circulation of affections that, under the concept of the body territory, problematizes the privatization of emotional experience and the dichotomy between body and emotions, private and public, reason and passion, activity and passivity. This critique is essential in understanding the functioning and constitution of affects.

This feminist perspective of the body offers the possibility of perceiving in a non-binary manner not only the structures of domination that acquire carnal materiality, but also those of transgression. The assembly of these bodies generates sounds and gestures that make up the movement (we can even think of the movement in movement), including multiple memories that inhabit subjectivities. Maso (2023) perceives this process as an opportunity of broadening the contact, the connection, and commitment of those involved in subversion, once a porous ontology to personal and intimate experience is developed. In this sense, resistance is also bodily, involving physical, material, emotional, affective and other dimensions of expressing corporeality.

I argue that this affection is a powerful energy that keeps the (grassroots and social) movements in motion, alive, and dynamic, extending itself to other bodies. A politics of affections emerges and resonates with other bodies. It is a political tool that knits, weaves, and sews together patches and *Fuxicos*. It makes possible the confluence of diverse experiences and perspectives into an alternative political project, constructed from the grassroots and within the CSIPM.

In the same manner that solidarity is understood in this thesis, affection is not a given but a political practice; it is part of a shared construction, cultivated through everyday acts of care, attention, and reciprocity. Affection underpins these interactions and serves as the common thread. This is not a romanticized analysis: relations of difference and power persist, yet by neither annulling nor subordinating others, affection makes space for coexistence and resistance. As such, it is not only a sustaining force and a mode of resistance, but also a method for imagining and enacting alternative worlds. Affection, in this sense, emerges as a powerful decolonial tool.

Chapter 4. Challenging binaries: Feminist Resistance and Counter-Hegemony in Global Food Governance

In this chapter, I examine how the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSIPM) collectively forged a political project grounded in the defense of rural women's rights, the advancement of food sovereignty, and the contestation of gender binaries and the broader systems that sustain them. I focus on their role within the gender workstream negotiations of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), analyzing how they engaged in subversive resistance to challenge the social injustices, exploitation, and exclusions embedded in the global capitalist food system.

Drawing on a Gramscian approach, I argue that this grassroots-driven project constitutes a counter-hegemonic alternative to dominant food governance. By seizing openings created by the contradictions within neoliberal capitalist hegemony, the CSIPM Working Group reclaims space to propose a different model, one rooted in collective rights, care for the land, and knowledge systems emerging from the margins. I demonstrate how this vision is actively articulated and defended within the political space of the CFS negotiations.

The emergence of an anti-gender alliance among certain member states, along with the strategic accommodation of conservative positions by neoliberal states, including those that appear progressive on gender, exposes the disruptive potential of this alternative project. I argue that, on one side, stands the anti-gender group, characterized by its refusal to recognize gender diversity, an expression of its broader conservative political agenda. On the other side there are a number of more progressive states initially willing to engage with gender-related issues and rights, yet still largely situated within and representative of the neoliberal hegemonic order. These latter actors, often dominant global powers, operate through strategies of cooptation, working to preserve the existing hegemony by neutralizing or assimilating oppositional forces.

Throughout the gender negotiations in the context of the CFS, the alternative political project advanced by the CSIPM Working Group confronts both of these antagonistic fronts: the anti-gender alliance, which seeks to delegitimize and ultimately erase their efforts; and the neoliberal elite, which applies pressure through cooptation and the depoliticization of their epistemic and political vision. As these neoliberal states abandoned progressive stances in order to counter resistance and preserve their hegemonic position, the negotiations became a site of intensified political struggle, revealing the contradictions within the system and the extent to which dominant actors are willing to compromise rights-based approaches to maintain control over global food governance.

These reactions, experienced by the group as violence, were attempts to contain the subversive resistance of the CSIPM Working Group. These responses ultimately reinforced the perpetuation of the capitalist system, which continues to rely on the exploitation of certain bodies and nature through an ongoing process of primitive accumulation. At the heart of this confrontation lies a political struggle over knowledge, rights, and power: a battle between collective access and control versus appropriation and enclosure. In the specific case of the gender workstream, this conflict manifests not only in the regulation of access but in efforts to control gendered bodies themselves. I interpret the attacks on the negotiations as forms of epistemic and political violence, echoing the mechanisms of primitive accumulation and body enclosure that have historically underpinned global capitalist expansion.

Resisting these forces, the Working Group engages in a broader political effort to dismantle patriarchal hierarchies and advance a decolonial feminist vision. Their resistance to anti-gender backlash and to a reaction of dominant powers, even in the face of a final document that failed to reflect a truly inclusive and non-binary framework, attests to the strength of their alternative political project. Through sustained engagement and the development of decolonial epistemologies and methodologies, they continue to construct and advance an alternative food

system and world-making project from the ground. Even when threatened with being torn apart, the patchwork weaving holds together: indeed, it is strengthened. Such effort reveals that while the capitalist system functions through oppressive logics to reinvent and sustain itself, it is not beyond contestation and political resistance, demonstrating that alternative worlds are not only imaginable but possible.

June 29th, 2022 – Green Room – FAO building, Rome

"In line with the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31[32], we should include the term 'agri-food system'. As a Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) should be ready to adopt this language as well" (Brazilian delegate, June 2022). Following this statement made by the Brazilian delegation – contradictorily enough, given that Brazil had been one of the Member States advocating for CFS reform – during the second round of negotiations of the gender workstream, the focus of the negotiations shifted immediately, with subsequent interventions centering on the mandate of the CFS. Some delegations supported Brazil and suggested that the chief economist of FAO should come to the negotiations to explain what the CFS is: yet another white man in the room, as noted by members of the CSIPM. These member states argued that since the CFS is a Committee under the FAO, it would be natural for it to adopt the wording employed by the FAO in recent negotiations.

Others highlighted that the Committee was a free-standing organization, independent from the FAO. The Brazilian delegate insisted on her position and went on to read the CFS

[32] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2021). *FAO strategic framework 2022–2031: For a better world.* https://www.fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf

reform document (CFS:2009/2 Rev. 2)[33]: "The CFS is and remains an intergovernmental Committee in FAO", it emphatically reiterated. "*It is 'in', not 'of' FAO"* a fellow of the CSIPM screamed in the backstage room[34], as if the preposition held a meaningful placement in that phrase structure. "*The CSF responds directly to the ECOSOC, therefore, it has autonomy"*, a member of the CSIPM secretariat explained.

Countries bringing to the CFS the language recently discussed at FAO, arguing that CFS is a committee under the FAO, represent retroceding the language achieved so far by the CFS (M., a member of the CSIPM took the floor on behalf of the Mechanism in response to Brazil and other delegations).

The Committee is indeed listed among the Governing and Statutory Bodies established by the FAO. It was created in 1975 as a body to review and to follow-up policies related to food security. However, in 2009, the CFS was reformed in response to the global food crisis and the international financial crisis of 2007-2008, which led to a surge in food prices and to an increase in the number of people at the risk zone of hunger (Borras and Franco 2009; Gaarde 2017). With the reform, the CFS began reporting to the UN General Assembly through the ECOSOC, a shift the elevated the Committee's status, although it still reports to the FAO Conference in addition, according to the organization's constitution document. Interestingly, the initial proposal to reform the CFS was introduced in 2006, driven by the dissatisfaction of some member states, such as Brazil, with its previous monitoring work and management processes (Brem-Wilson, 2011).

At stake in this discussion was the autonomous status of the Committee. The CFS's establishment as a leading inclusive international forum for all stakeholders and its ability to

[33] Committee on World Food Security. (2009). *Reform of the Committee on World Food Security: Final version* (CFS:2009/2 Rev.2). https://www.fao.org/3/k7197e/k7197e00.htm
[34] It will be explained later.

incorporate participation from members other than states, such as the civil society and the private sector representatives, make the CFS a unique body in the UN System. In the years following the reform, this inclusive composition has allowed the CFS to maintain a more progressive stance compared with other organizations, including the FAO. For those advocating for the Committee's autonomy, any regression in this achievement is seen as an attack on the CFS mandate. This is because such controversy could lead to restrictions and limitations on the prerogative of other stakeholders, particularly civil society, to formally participate in the negotiations.

The reform negotiation process itself included contributions from actors beyond member states, including civil society, which was directly represented by La Via Campesina and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC). These organizations facilitated the unprecedented participation of small-scale food producers. At a time when neoliberal economic assumptions were acknowledged as contributing to the global crisis, small-scale producers were given a seat at the table to interact on an equal footing with governments. Their contributions were considered legitimate, as they are the most affected by food insecurity, and crucial to the reform (Brem-Wilson, 2011; McKeon, 2015).

Something different is indeed happening within the context of the CFS. Anyone who has participated in any UN System meeting would notice the broad engagement of various stakeholders beyond member states, particularly civil society, organized and mobilized. The participation of civil society is not a new phenomenon; over the last few decades, multiple forms of engagement have emerged, ranging from demonstrations to observer participants (Badie, 2008), and public-private partnerships. What is remarkable about the CFS is the extent of non-state actor participation and their significant role in decision-making throughout the entire negotiation process. The CFS has become an inclusive space where the voices of the most affected contribute to an international policy convergence process, which explains the effort of

some countries to reattach it to the FAO. Such reattachment would represent a regression in the achievements of the reform, minimizing civil society's participation in policy processes and constraining their involvement, voices, and influence during the negotiations.

The initial rounds of negotiations on gender followed a process that appeared inclusive, with the participation of various civil society groups and organizations. Since the establishment of the gender workstream in 2019 through the Committee's Multi-Year Programme of Work,[35] these groups have been actively engaged in the process, contributing to the drafting of the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender and Women's and Girls' Empowerment, and attending numerous meetings, all leading up to the formal negotiations that began in 2022.

The progressive and committed stance of the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM during this process led to a pioneering and broadly satisfactory document for the civil society and Indigenous Peoples at the start of the third round of negotiations. Throughout the contributions to the elaboration of this initial document, the Mechanism made visible the social transformation in relations of production and social reproduction required to achieve rural women's rights, food sovereignty, and to challenge gender binary orders. The CSIPM and other social movements subversively engaged in contesting the injustices, oppression, and exploitations of the capitalist system.

What is noteworthy is that more than a decade after the reform, the debate about the CFS's relationship with the FAO and its autonomous role continues to dominate the discussions within the framework of the Gender Workstream. The contradictions inherent in fostering social participation and inclusion within an institution that is part of the UN System – and thus inherits its gendered oppressive dynamics – are enhanced when social contestation of gender hierarchies and patriarchy comes into play. While civil society participation has become a reality, it is also

[35] The Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW) is the Committee on World Food Security's (CFS) strategic framework for setting its priorities, guiding workstreams, and outlining expected outcomes over a defined period, typically four years. Available at: https://www.fao.org/3/na703en/NA703EN.pdf

recurrently challenged by those with a vested interest in maintaining vertical power relations. Member States, although not the only actors, are primary those invested in regaining control and in containing contestation.

A conflict “between those who only want to 'add' the 'women's component' to the existing institutions and systems and those who struggle for a radical transformation of patriarchal society” (Mies, 2014, p.9) in such an institution of the established capitalist system becomes, therefore, intensified.

All we really need to do is to go back to the reform document. Because it was a visionary document. It was a space for public governance, a space to include human rights, a space for coordination. And I think that’s where we should try to bring the CFS. Of course, disputes are always going to exist. We need to recognize that it was a body that became the main space for the coordination and inclusive participation of the most affected, and that’s why we were there (É. during the preparation Forum of the CSIPM to the 50th CFS Plenary, in 2022).

This statement, made by a CSIPM member during the Mechanism’s preparatory Forum for the 50th CFS Plenary, demonstrates how the civil society envisions the Committee. It highlights how the participation of these movements in this policy space is not naïve, but conscious of the disputes intrinsic to this space. The gender workstream negotiations, in particular, reveal that the CFS is a political space that not only shelters disputes, but also one in which the very purpose of the Committee itself is contested.

The background

Although rural women movements participated in the negotiations to reform the CFS and achieved relevant representative status in civil society movements such as La Via

Campesina, the topic of gender and women did not receive sufficient attention in the Committee until 2017 (Coordinator of MMC, 2020), when the CFS Forum on Women's Empowerment in the context of Food Security and Nutrition was organized in parallel to the CFS 44. In this context, the CFS plenary recognized the importance of implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), especially its General Recommendation 34 on the rights of rural women, as well as "the need to achieve gender equality and the full realization of women's rights in the context of food security and nutrition" (CFS 2017/44/Report). The CEDAW, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, did not address important issues for diverse women and genders, such as the specific needs of rural women. It was not until 2016 that the General Recommendation 34 was adopted to address the particular concerns of women agricultural workers.

The Forum was regarded as a significant achievement by the peasant women organized and mobilized in the Working Group of the Mechanism, who attended the meeting and participated in its formation. The progress in both the representation of women and the policy focus on women in international food security governance – evidenced by the participation of peasant women, non-cis-heteronormative individuals, and diverse gendered bodies in global policy spaces like the CFS – is indeed an accomplishment, as it would have been unthinkable decades ago. The significance of the Forum and its outcome document lay in bringing the topic of rural women and their demands to the table for discussion with governments, within an institutional space that, as discussed in the theoretical chapter, is characterized by (binary) gendered structures shaped by a capitalist system of exploitation, colonialism, heteronormativity, cisnormativity, and whiteness.

The Forum was thus the first step towards the establishment of a gender workstream in the by the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the CFS in 2019, as mentioned above. Its mandate was to develop Voluntary Guidelines on Gender and Women's and Girls' Empowerment, a

non-binding legal framework document as its output. It represented the beginning of the rounds of negotiations in 2022.

The main purpose of the CSIPM Working Group was the adoption of an ambitious and transformative policy document, one capable of meaningfully impacting people's lives in their communities and territories. The CSIPM strongly promoted a robust human rights-based approach during the rounds of negotiations, emphasizing that the realization of the Right to Food is inherently interconnected with the rights of women and non-cis heteronormative individuals.

The rounds of negotiations: violence

The third round of negotiations, which was intended to be the final round, unveiled the patriarchal structure of international organizations, despite (and partly because of) the focus of the Gender Workstream. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, the culture of negotiations within international arrangements is shaped not only by entrenched gendered power relations and invisible constituencies of hegemonic masculinities, but also by violence. The refusal of some member states to include 'Sexual and Gender Based Violence' in the document reveals the (not so) covered violence in the negotiation room.

As Shrin Rai (2004) argues, global governance, dominated by market-driven approaches and neoliberalism, is not a space where all voices and actors participate equally. Rather, it reproduces and reinforces existing hierarchies, including gendered ones, as its functioning serves the interests of a gendered capitalist system. Women and marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by global economic restructuring, yet, while their knowledge, labor, and perspectives are frequently sidelined in decision-making processes, they remain

central to struggles against these dominant structures and in advancing transformative approaches.

As I will further demonstrate, the emergence of an anti-gender stance adopted by a significant number of member-states as well as the neoliberal pushback aimed at containing resistance reflect a reaction to the contestation coordinated by the CSIPM. It also represented an attempt to defend the patriarchal and gendered structure of the capitalist system, which, through an ongoing process of capital accumulation and the gendered-based division of labor, exploits specific bodies and territories. In response to the political struggles advanced by the CSIPM Working Group, this violence stems from oppressive power exercised by states and the hegemonic order, which reproduce patriarchy, coloniality, racism, cis-heteronormativity, and other forms of domination.

July 25th, 2022 – Green Room – FAO building, Rome

We (and I include myself because I also became part of the CSIPM group) arrived for the negotiations with a substantive document from the point of view of the civil society and Indigenous Peoples. During the internal preparation the day before, the Women and Gender Diversities' Group had recognized that this round would be tough, because even if the document was relatively progressive when compared to previous UN documents on the topic, a list of what the co-chairs referred to as the "controversial issues" was still to be discussed. They used that term in allusion to the topics where contentious discussions were anticipated, due to antagonistic positions held by some actors. The list of "controversial issues" was a matter of controversy itself, as it included terms related to gender that were potentially to be included in a document specifically focused on gender in the context of a gender workstream. Some of

these actors were expected to resist language formulations that acknowledged non-binarity or gender diversity.

Despite being prepared for a struggle and expecting confrontation over these terms – such as "in all their diversity", "multiple and intersecting form of discrimination", "sexual and gender-based violence", "patriarchal systems and structures" – many participants were startled by unexpected developments. In one of the first interventions, a group of states made a statement on behalf of what they called "like minded countries", reiterating their discontent with the gender language in the text and the impossibility to continue the negotiations on these conditions. What followed was even more disturbing (and this is the word I find to describe the feeling in the room, corridors, and online, not only for social movements actors, but also for other member states). Some countries that had not participated in previous meetings started to intervene to block the negotiations. In a demonstration of lack of good-faith – a general principle and, therefore, part of the sources of international law – they would reopen for discussion paragraphs and terms already agreed upon, challenging the gender approach of the document.

The issue of "agreed language" that had emerged in former meetings of this workstream was again raised and questioned. Member states are used to negotiate in the context of the UN system around the language of previous UN documents as a methodological base for discussions. Nevertheless, during the discussions many doubts and concerns were raised about this matter, as different delegations made different points creating an unclear and confusing atmosphere in the room.

What is agreed language? Should it only be documents approved by consensus? Does it refer to documents approved by the UN General Assembly? The Human Rights Council's documents should not be considered agreed language, then, because they are not approved by consensus? They are not clear about which methodology they are using to define agreed language (P. during a debriefing meeting of the CSIPM Working Group).

Even language approved by previous CFS documents were challenged by many interventions (taking up time and space) in the last round of negotiations, which was supposed to create a compromise and to finalize the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender. The gender convergence policy process was attacked and questioned in many aspects by this group of countries that were holding back the negotiations. The lack of good faith was felt in many ways, and I use the term felt, because besides impacting the process negatively, it affected those who were committed to it: "*I am apathetic"*[36] (said M. from de CSIPM Working Group in the second day of the third round of negotiations).

This apathy or lethargy could also be noticed by the Co-chairs' inertia in defining a clear and strategic methodology to bring this round to a conclusion on time and to contain the 'withdrawal' driven by a group of member states, as some would express that even no document could be an accepted outcome for them. The intimidation used as a negotiation method by those who had not attended a single meeting of this process before and yet claimed that dropping the document in the last round of negotiations would be a better option was felt to be an oppressive strategy against those who had been involved in the process since the launch of the Gender Workstream in 2019 – particularly the ones who were mostly and directly affected by the document under discussion.

Do not violate us through all these brackets. The CFS should make an effort to consider diversity, to recognize us (P., a member of CSIPM in reaction to setback on language).

In name of a gender binary system, some Islamic states and the Holy See conducted this withdrawal. The Holy See is not a formal member of the CFS, but an observer. As such, it has not the same status regarding the involvement in the process as other non-states participants,

[36] In the context used by the CSIPM member, apathetic refers to a loss of reaction and energy, resulting in a state of lethargy.

such as the CSIPM and the Private Sector Mechanism. The participants are allowed not only to intervene during sessions but also to contribute to elaborate agendas and documents as well to present formal proposals, while the intervention of observers during the discussions is subject to an invitation of the chair. The very active role played by the Holy See – with its repeated interventions proposing a binary reading of the text – not only during the final round of discussions but throughout the entire Gender Workstream policy convergence process, was largely enabled by the permissive stance of the co-chairs.

As Mohanty warned already more than 20 years ago, the consolidation of these religions "with their deeply masculinist and often racist rhetoric poses a huge challenge for feminist struggles around the world" (Mohanty, 2003, p.508). Not surprisingly, delegates affiliated with these religious groups, namely representatives of Islamic states and the Holy See, supported each other in their interventions and arguments against gender diversities, reinstating and reproducing violence gender binary systems.

We are talking about billions of women and children who every day are subjected to violence, who are denied the right to food. And here we are seated and taking sides, using religion to justify discrimination against us (D., member of the CSIPM during the third round of negotiations).

The violence exacerbated during the final round of negotiations was directed both at those who would be affected by the document in the territories around the globe, and directly at certain bodies present at the meeting. Mainly male white diplomats sought to keep control in the name of states, religion or God, opposing CSIPM constituency and perpetuating violent and gender-oppressive policies that impact women's and diverse gender bodies.

We have to prepare a strong strategy for what is coming next. We need a very strong statement about what happened. The environment was violent, patriarchal. It was a very violent space (D. during the CSIPM meeting after the third round of negotiations).

We need to do something. Institutional violence is one of the dimensions of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (F. during the CSIPM meeting after the third round of negotiations).

Violence was strategically employed by these member states and religious groups as a means to destabilize divergent positions in the room. It reflected the harm, oppression, and injustice inflicted within the context of the gender workstream negotiations. These negotiations thus unfolded as an expression of this violent reaction, aimed at silencing and oppressing the voices of resistance present in the discussions, and at inhibiting the advancement of the subversive forces and the alternative project they represent. It was also bodily violence: the subversive bodies felt it.

The violence was immediately felt by the bodies present in the room and by those following the negotiations from afar, particularly those most affected by the decisions being made by certain states at that moment. These are bodies that have experienced other forms of violence in their territories and in their everyday lives. But they were not the only ones who felt it: and this is how gender-based violence operates. Some diplomats and state representatives, particularly women and non-cis heteronormative individuals, despite their privileges and familiarity with international negotiations, also felt it. They, too, had tears streaming down their faces.

The intention of these religious groups and states, which symbolize an anti-gender backlash, was to destabilize negotiations and to contain progressive political advancements. This stance represents a conservative political project that is exclusionary, aiming to preserve traditional patriarchal systems and suppress discussions on gender diversity, rights, and social

justice. It reveals a systematized political project intended at annihilating diversity and all that it embodies.

Polarization in the Green room

The dispute on the autonomy and role of the CFS reflects the broader tensions that unfolded during the gender workstream negotiations, particularly around the so-called the "controversial issues". The conflict is material because these "controversial concepts" involve bodies and resources. The "controversial concepts" included gender-inclusive and diversity-related terms, referred to by the co-chairs as gender-sensitivity terms, but not exclusively. As noted above, the list featured expressions such as "multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination", "in all their diversity", "sexual and gender-based violence, and sexual orientation and gender identity". It also included issues related to neoliberal "agri-food system" and agri-business as opposed to those centered on food systems and food sovereignty.

The document was getting weakened day by day during the last round, propitiated by the permissiveness of the co-chairs. On the final day, there was still an ongoing blocking strategy by the countries representing anti-gender approaches, leading to a polarization in the room, as some member states supported the advancement of gender inclusive language. Some of the latter held bilateral meetings with the CSIPM – even though their views diverged on other issues, particularly as these states were advancing a neoliberal agenda – and assured its members that they would cooperate in striving to keep the document as inclusive as possible, without waiving important language.

Two oppositional groups emerged from the political struggles within the gender workstream negotiations: on one side, the anti-gender group, marked by its intransigence in

accepting gender diversity as a reflection of its conservative political project; and on the other, a group of more progressive states open to addressing gender-related issues and rights, yet largely representative of the neoliberal hegemonic order. The latter represents mostly dominant powers, acting through cooptation to maintain the hegemony, neutralizing or assimilating oppositional forces.

The alternative political project advanced by the CSIPM Working Group confronted these two hostile forces: the anti-gender group, which threatens delegitimation and annihilation, and the neoliberal dominant elite, which exerts pressure through cooptation and the depoliticization of their epistemic project. The dominant forces, constrained by the counter-hegemony exercised by the civil society through the Working Group and the conservative anti-gender forces, carried out such a depoliticization with a view to diluting resistance.

At the last session of this round, as the clock was ticking, the more progressive countries proposed an agreement stating which gender expressions should be mentioned and how many times each of these terms would appear in the document in an attempt to reach a compromise. This suggestion was condensed in a table, as if their commitment to a progressive document on gender had lost *heat* and *energy*.

This table was very difficult for us, because it showed how much compromise was given, how it was negating gender identities, orientation, diversities. "Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination" were not even included. How it was a bargain, and we were not even taken into account, [even if the discussions affect] our lives. We stepped out of the room to talk about it. We also received pressure from the chair to accept this proposal (M. during the CSIPM meeting after the third round of negotiations).

We didn't even discuss food systems. We needed to be prepared to defend after each intervention, each right of ourselves we needed to negotiate (D. during the CSIPM meeting after the third round of negotiations).

At stake in this conflict there is also a dispute between, on the side of CSIPM, knowledge dissemination, sharing, understanding, access to rights and resources, and on the side of the member states, control, bargain, limitation, and appropriation. This tension concerns how these differing approaches to knowledge impact certain bodies, nature, and resources. Not coincidentally, the Working Group's struggle to include the language "free, prior and informed consent"[37] for access to Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, including their lands, territories, and resources, was severely undermined by member states, even though it appears in the final approved document.

The alternative political project advanced in this context entails a strong epistemic counter-hegemonic dimension, grounded in grassroots knowledge and lived experiences. It challenges dominant paradigms by centering marginalized epistemologies, particularly those shaped by rural, peasant, and Indigenous women, and offers a decolonial vision for restructuring both knowledge production and political engagement. The hegemonic political struggle in this sense represents also a dispute over an epistemic project. What is particular to the gender negotiations is how this dispute over knowledge more deeply impacts certain bodies and how this dispute is, in itself, over bodies.

No wonder bodies are affected. The tears visible on the faces of some CSIPM members at the end of the final day are evidence of this. They reflect the violence directed at women and non-cis-heteronormative bodies throughout the negotiations, their procedures, documents, words, or lack of them. The compromise reached between member states also represented a betrayal: a form of violence experienced by these bodies. Bodies that are diverse, as innumerous times claimed by the CSIPM members during the negotiations. Bodies that are racialized, queer, with disabilities, peasant women, Indigenous women, women from war-torn countries, women

[37] Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is a principle that ensures Indigenous communities have the right to give or withhold consent to projects or policies that may affect their lands, territories, resources, or rights. It was recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007 (A/RES/61/295).

living under occupation, non-cis-heteronormative persons, fisherwomen, landless women, pastoralists, agricultural and food workers, consumers, and urban food insecure women.

As the neoliberal states abandoned progressive stances in order to counter resistance and maintain hegemony, violence against these bodies escalated. This violence is also manifested as epistemic violence, which depoliticizes the alternative project constructed from the grassroots and grounded on the knowledge of these diverse bodies, including ancestral knowledge.

The replication of such a form of violence is systemic as well because the preservation of the patriarchal capitalist system and its social ontology are based on it. The effect of the enactment of violence in these negotiations is the reinforcement and perpetuation of capitalism. Indeed, "capital as it functions now depends on and exacerbates racist, patriarchal, and heterosexist relations of rule." (Mohanty, 2003, p.510). The violence experienced during the negotiations – arising as an outcome and a response to the resistance demonstrated by the CSIPM Working Group – reflects the ongoing aspect of primitive accumulation of capital and of enclosure of gendered bodies, as its violent, disciplinary, and punitive mechanisms continue to be deployed on a global scale. In this sense, preserving the exploitation and (re)colonization of women, nature, and colonies is a precondition for its perpetuation (Roberts, 2017; Mies, 2014). As Adrienne Roberts (2017) argues, the ongoing nature of primitive accumulation becomes a structural condition that enables the reproduction of labor and of capitalism, reinforced through its reinvention under neoliberalism.

What happened during the gender workstream negotiations unveils the ways in which primitive accumulation is still practiced today, through violent mechanisms and the ongoing enclosure of women's and diverse gender's bodies and nature. Throughout the negotiations, these bodies are subjected to violence, while being dispossessed of the means to engage substantively in the process, rendering their very existence invisible. Subversive actions were

met with strict discipline and punishment, all in service of sustaining the imperialist logic of capitalism and its relentless drive for never-ending expansion.

Adrienne Roberts (2017) makes a good point in arguing that "primitive accumulation is a highly gendered process that has helped to create and sustain a gender-based division of labor, to institutionalize a role for capital and the state in controlling women's bodies and to create differences and divisions that undermine collective power" (p.21). Similarly, regarding the state's influence in these dynamics, Françoise Vergès (2022) contends that "as the instance that regulates economic and political domination, the State condenses all forms of imperialist, patriarchal, and capitalist oppression and exploitation" (p.3). The role of the state in reinforcing gendered social relations – and, by extension, the gendered capitalist system and the reproduction of ongoing instances of primitive accumulation – is further emphasized in the statement made by D. on behalf of the CSIPM Working Group during the third round of negotiations:

This is more than language; this is our lives… From Global North to Global South, we come to consensus… We are all coming from a place of oppression and marginalization, and what we see happening here is the patriarchy in action, this is about people and states who still want to control our bodies, our minds, our rights, and our freedoms. This is about people who do not want to give up their privileges (D. during debriefing meeting of the CSIPM).

Through this violent (binary) gendered relations and institutions are both enacted and (re)produced. Indeed, the CSIPM Working Group perceives the CFS, even after the reform, as an institution embedded within the UN system, thereby inheriting male dominance and hierarchal power dynamics, and as a product of the development of capitalism, intrinsically constituted by gendered, class-based relations, heteronormativity, cisnormativity, colonialism, and whiteness.

The gender and international division of labor, still manifested in the bureaucracies and procedures of such male dominated institutions, is also directly questioned in this process in the same way that the separation between productive and social reproductive work is challenged by the CSIPM Group. The divisions between what is work and non-work, production and social reproduction, public and private, economics and politics (Mies, 2014), are artificial hierarchical binary divisions that are put into question not only throughout the document when discussing the role of women in food value chains and the redistribution of unpaid care work and domestic work, but also through their participation itself in this policy convergence process.

María Lugones (2010) emphasizes that the subjectification of the colonized through the internalization of man/woman dichotomy as a normative marker of social civilization is an imposition that is constantly renewed. Yet, this imposition is challenged by alternative resistant societies at the "colonial difference", the hierarchical separation of modern from non-modern. She contends that the logic followed by those who resist is not recognized by the logic of power. Nevertheless, Lugones argues that although coloniality of gender infiltrates every aspect of life – through the circulation of power, the intimate relation with violence, the imposition of property, and the dispossession of land – resistant bodies, attuned to the spirit of the world, respond in movement and in relation. Their resistance unfolds in ways that defy and disrupt power, operating outside logics that are beneficial to capital.

Indeed, the alternative political project advanced by the CSIPM Working Group seeks to overcome the modern hegemonic system and its hierarchical dichotomies. The message a group of countries was trying to deliver with this blockage was that the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM has gone too far in subverting patriarchal institutional and structural settings. Moreover, they had confronted the gendered organization of contemporary capitalism. Yet, "the recent mobilization against gender-based and sexual

violence offers a theoretical and practical opportunity: that of making this violence the very terrain on which to challenge patriarchal capitalism" (Vergès, 2022, p.3).

We stepped out of the room

> Institutions also have a table around which bodies gather. Some more than others are at home in these gatherings. The diversity practitioner can be heard as the obstacle to the conversational space before she even says anything: she too poses a problem because she keeps exposing a problem. Another meeting ruined (Ahmed, 2017: 99).

The way the Women and Gender Diversities Group found to argue that they matter in these negotiations was to materialize their presence in the room by sharing their histories and experiences.

We have to tell our history, our reality. Maybe we cannot change a lot, but we are here also to annoy them. How do we annoy them? Our presence here already annoys them, P.'s and D.'s presence already annoys them as well as our voices, our histories, when we speak and remind them of the reality, of our reality and experience. Even if in the end of the day they want to tell us about our bodies and our land. (K. during a debriefing meeting of the CSIPM)[38].

This strategy of sharing their history reflects a form of doing politics of combining both individual realities (at the local/micro level) and collective experiences of oppression and resistance (at the global/macro systemic level). Methodologically, these "narratives of historical experience" express a political thinking that constructs a "politics of knowledge" not by universalizing the "truth", but by destabilizing the "truths", revealing the complexities of historical life. What seems to be an emotional way of exercising politics – which indeed is, as

[38] The speech was delivered in Spanish; the translation to English is my own.

many histories shared are strong and sensitive – is also a manner of locating the debate in terms of relationality of historical experiences, that are both singular and collective (Mohanty, 2003).

These women and non-cis-heteronormative persons, in developing their strategy to advance the envisioned counter-political project, enacted theoretically and in practice the relevance of intersectionality to these negotiations.

By removing intersectionality, you are erasing us. By removing diversity, you are erasing us. By removing gender transformative, you are erasing us. This is not about being responsive, this is about taking things at the roots, and changing them (D., member of the CSIPM during the third round of negotiations).

By bringing up their historical experiences and how interlocking systems of oppression affect them, the dynamics of mobilization of the Working Group reflect an understanding of reality based on how history impacts our agency on this materiality. It is a manner of political organizing and hegemonic confrontation based on the construction and materialization of politics to face the dominant power, exploitation, and oppression. It reflects the efforts of knitting, weaving, sewing the patchwork and *Fuxico* they have made in constructing this project.

Considering a materialist dialectical approach, as well as a 'non-structuralist historicism' developed by Gramsci, social struggles and contestations are possible once historical change is placed in shifting relations of production but also in shifts in social reproduction. The emergence of new ideas and not only relations of production within capitalist system can lead to contradictions and historical change (Gill 2008; Roberts, 2017). From a Gramscian perspective, such contradictions and transformations may give rise to hegemonic transition. This refers to a profound shift in societal dominance, involving transformations in political power as well as cultural, ideological, and moral dimensions of the prevailing

hegemony. In this process, counter-hegemonic forces gain traction, potentially leading to the displacement of the existing hegemonic order.

The mobilization within the CSIPM Group is to consciously advance their counter political project to question and challenge the hierarchal and patriarchal dominance of power, particularly in the current forms of neoliberal global food systems. Seizing of the opportunities that arise from the contradictions produced within the capitalist system, this political project around food sovereignty encompasses an alternative to the neoliberal dominant food governance. Despite the reaction and attempts by dominant states to maintain the hegemonic system, the gender workstream negotiations within the CFS also exposed the contradictions of the neoliberal order, particularly in the context of food regimes, and the political struggles that arose as a consequence.

The effort of the social movements, organized within the CSIPM in the context of the gender negotiations, represents a potential catalyst for a hegemonic transition. This transition remains in its early stages, as attempts to contain resistance continue to be deployed by the dominant ruling class. Despite the rise of counter-hegemonic forces, the intense political struggle, and the emergence of an alternative project grounded in alternative forms of knowledge production, an organic crisis, understood in Gramscian terms, has not yet fully materialized, as the dominant system maintains its foundations functioning. Organic crisis entails a prolonged period of instability of the existing hegemonic order, epistemically, culturally, politically, and economically, where the ruling class that can no longer maintain authority in legitimacy, leading to a liminal moment in which the dominant system begins to collapse.

It is thus no surprise that member states objected to use the term “gender transformative approaches” in the document, opting instead to substitute it with “gender responsive approaches”. A transformative approach entails tackling the root causes of inequality by

challenging and reshaping the structural norms, values, and power dynamics that sustain them. In contrast, a responsive approach focuses on mitigating the impacts of inequality by delivering targeted solutions and services designed to address specific, immediate needs.

However, the emergence of contradictions – exposed through the disruption of the dominant project by counter-hegemonic marginalized groups such as grassroots movements within the Mechanism – along with their alternative knowledge production and ongoing resistance, illustrates the potential for such a transformation. Through the methodologies of resistance, developed and practiced by grassroots movements that reach the negotiations in the CFS through the CSIPM Working Group, an opportunity emerges to challenge the capitalist and patriarchal normative order of the Committee, and, more broadly, the capitalist system. The same methodological and epistemological approach that weaved together the *Fuxicos*, stitching patchworks within grassroots movements, between them and other social and transnational movements, through threads of affection and care.

Indeed, even if "for within living structures defined by profit, by linear power, by institutional dehumanization, our feelings were not meant to survive" (Lorde, 2007, p.39), the struggle for agency in such structures of power does not come without feelings or emotions.

This is a diplomatic process, but I cannot dissociate it from my feelings. The difference of the CFS process from other processes is that in this process we have our Group constituency, so it is intimate and political at the same time (P. during a CSIPM meeting after the third round).

In the same way that the Group made their presence visible by materializing their existence in the room, despite the attempts to invisibilize them through gendered institutional politics and violence, in due moment their absence was also political.

We stepped out of the room. What seems like a simple step represents an enormous movement of resistance. The violence uncovered by the ongoing process of primitive

accumulation comes along with social contestation. Despite the absence of a committed intention to transform a system that benefits a privileged patriarchal group, the CFS reform opened up the possibility for more inclusive participation through a new form of civil society engagement aimed at legitimizing the process. But the CSIPM refused to provide the legitimation and unveiled the ruse. *They are using our participation to legitimate the process (H. during the CSIPM meeting after the third round of negotiations).*

In this sense, the 2009 CFS reform and the resulting inclusiveness can be interpreted as a cooptation strategy by dominant state – prompted by civil society pressure during a moment of crisis – to prevent a true transformation of the system. "In other words, a fantasy of inclusion is a technique of exclusion." (Ahmed, 2017: p.112). However, this very search for legitimacy makes the Committee a place where social contestation can be materialized. Indeed, the CSIPM Working Group utilized this policy space to advance their alternative political project. This contradiction becomes evident in the tensions surrounding the role of the CFS and its limits to social movement participation, particularly when the Committee's ability to advance progressive gender topics is challenged. Still, the Working Group inhabited what María Lugones (2010) called the "fractured locus", the wound that emerges from it, "where sense is contradictory and from such contradiction new sense is made anew" (p.752). Their resistant response constituted a creative construction from the multiplicity found within the fracture.

It is frustrating but at the same time, if we are experiencing such endurance, it means that we did something right, we are advancing; so that is why they mobilized this way to stop us (*K. during a debriefing meeting of the CSIPM)*[39].

[39] The speech was delivered in Spanish; the translation to English is my own.

The negotiations on the terms mentioned were not concluded during what should have been the last round. When the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group left the room, no further decision was made, and the negotiations came to a halt. Without them, it was not possible to continue, so the discussions were postponed. The counter project developed by women and non-cis-heteronormativity individuals within the context of CSIPM also takes the form of strong resistance to pushback. The struggle ultimately turned out to be about resisting regression. The Working Group's subversive strategy of stepping out of the room during negotiations was instrumental in preventing the approval of a weakened document at that time.

Throughout the course of this political struggle, they continued to create the material, social, institutional, and ideological conditions needed to build an alternative political project. This effort involves affirming their agency as women and non-cis-heteronormative individuals, as well as their (re)construction and recognition as political subjects, reflecting the grassroots movements' struggle for autonomy and political agency.

We changed the name from "Women's Working Group" to "Women and Gender Diversities Working Group", and nothing that happens outside in the green room is going to change what we achieved inside; we should not forget it (M. during debriefing meeting of the CSIPM).

The patchwork-weaving is thereby strengthened and continued.

Resisting anti-gender backlash and neoliberal pushback

When I first started this research, my objective was to follow how ideas, demands, and people translate from local contexts, particularly from Brazil, tracking the path they follow into arenas of global governance. I already suspected that this path would not be a linear one, but a

multiple and very complex process, intertwined with different axes of social movements and other organizations' interactions. I found that this translation is not so easily tracked and that the process of translation is even more intricate than what I thought.

This is not to say that ideas, demands and women from the territories are not reaching international and intergovernmental institutions; some translation and (mis)translation can be observed when closely looking at the propositions of CSIPM in the Gender Workstream and the demands made by the movements on the ground in Brazil. Examples include claims such as the access to rural women's rights and their indivisibility from the right to food, land, water and other resources, access to decent work and autonomy, and protection against 'sexual and gender based violence'. But mostly, what is being translated is a common enemy to confront, along with the contradictions of capitalist social relations as well as the conflicts that arise from them.

The rise of anti-gender politics, expressed as a counter-resistance of a patriarchal capitalist system, is manifested within states, and reflected in international institutions. The domestic position of a country – an expression of its ruling classes and government in power – is manifested in its foreign affairs. Although this is not the topic of this research, this dynamic becomes evident when observing a shift in a country's diplomatic position. The case of Brazil during the government of Bolsonaro is illustrative, when the national backlash on gender topics was soon echoed by the Brazilian delegation's position in the context of the CFS. The country, recognized for its dialogue on diverse topics important for civil society, became, if not hindrance, an expression of indifference and non-commitment with regard to gender issues in this period.

We are currently witnessing a global moment marked by regression and a repressive turn in many states, driven by the rise of the far right and the erosion of human rights for minorities. This backlash is also mirrored in international spaces such as CFS. This also appears with the

intent of dismantling the CFS itself. Similar shifts are occurring across various spaces within the United Nations system. While civil society has succeeded in opening space for participation, this moment is extremely dangerous because institutions that discuss food-related policies have, for some years now, been shifting toward increasing corporate control. In this context, the role of the CSIPM is vital, as it brings forward the voices of people living and struggling in the territories (H. during a meeting of the CSIPM evaluation process of the CFS negotiations and the Voluntary Guidelines).

The patriarchal and neoconservative turn – experienced in Brazil between 2018 and 2022, as in other countries – is intrinsically associated with neoliberal capitalism, the precarization of existence, the undermining of hard-won rights, and the exhaustion of bodies and nature. Its modus operandi is inherently violent (Vergès, 2022). As Françoise Vergès (2022) argues, "this patriarchal and neoconservative turn is all the more violent as it more often than not depends on a racial capitalism." The primary intention of the anti-gender group in the gender workstream negotiations was to enforce a conservative political project centered on an exclusionary strategy; nevertheless, the outcome was the maintenance of the capitalist system's form of oppression.

Both the anti-gender group and the dominant states challenged the subversive resistance of the CSIPM Working Group. In response to the polarization, hegemonic forces launched a pushback to counter the resistance. Some of the more gender progressive countries were representatives of these dominant forces, which were particularly invested in maintaining the neoliberal hegemonic system. Even though they were apparently aligned with the CSIPM and willing to advance gender topics and diversities, most of them were resistant to compromising neoliberal economic premises, focusing on the agri-business sector's interests to the detriment of a real commitment to small farmers and a more holistic approach to food systems. These terms were also part of the "controversial issues", which were not even discussed during the scheduled time.

It is frustrating to see how countries, apparently on our side, how they betrayed us. Like United States and Canada, Argentina saying how gender language was priority for them, but they gave us up. They were seeking for an agreement no matter what it costs (P. during the CSIPM meeting after the third round of negotiations).

It is not surprising that these countries abandoned the progressive language on what was intended to be the final day of the negotiations. The reproduction of the patriarchal and hegemonic gender framings was perpetuated by conservative states and anti-gender politics on one hand, and by neoliberal economic states on the other. The latter conceded progressive language to accommodate anti-gender backlash while simultaneously advancing the interests of agri-business, entrepreneurship, and the financial sector. Indeed, the enormous intransigence of some member states in tackling the gender issue, turning it into a contentious topic – and the impact of the gender negotiations on the very existence of the CFS – demonstrate that questioning the patriarchal system is, in itself, an act of resistance against the capitalist system.

In this sense, the contradictions of the current hegemonic system became evident throughout the negotiations. These inherent contradictions are rendered particularly apparent when neoliberalism is understood as a further stage in the development of capitalism and its ongoing process of capital accumulation, and when gendered, class-based social relations are recognized as integral to the very ontology of capitalism. Despite the efforts of cooptation by dominant powers – for instance, by initially accepting to advance gender and diversities topics – organizations, including the reformed CFS, are designed to produce and reproduce social relations of capitalism and its inextricably gendered, heteronormative, cisnormative, racist, and colonial orders.

Nevertheless, just as contradictions are inherent to the system, so too are political struggles embedded within it. What the gender workstream within the CFS context revealed went far beyond the so-called "controversial" nature of the gender concept as framed by some

delegates in the face of the anti-gender backlash. It also uncovered the political struggles that emerged in this scenario and exposed deliberate attempts to counter resistance and curtail the progress achieved by civil society and Indigenous Peoples in subverting the patriarchal capitalist system.

If the effort to achieve recognition and advance the rights of marginalized groups is blocked because, ultimately, states are the members with the right to vote and approve the document, then resistance to regression becomes actively practiced by these groups. If retroceding is an option, then we are not present in the room. If we are not present, the negotiations are put on hold. The women and diverse gender individuals united in the CSIPM demonstrated in these negotiations that if the goal of achieving gender equality and of empowering women and girls does not include women and genders in all their diversities, it will merely reproduce marginalization and control over bodies and nature: a system of oppression and exploitation. In this case, the political struggle will continue.

The CSIPM Working Group represents a counter-hegemony, with an alternative political project. This counter-hegemony also embodies resistance to the dominant patriarchal order, serving as a strategy to prevent pushback, as seen in the case of the gender workstream within the CFS. This becomes especially crucial when the construction and implementation of an alternative project face opposition from those seeking to maintain the status quo or reverse the gains made by civil society, particularly by women and non-cis-heteronormative individuals.

Through political struggles, this counter-hegemony presents an alternative societal project, one that is also an alternative epistemic project, grounded in grassroots knowledge and ways of inhabiting the world. These experiences reflect the reality of many peasant, rural, and Indigenous women on the ground, where everyday resistance unfolds through material, lived

struggles for community-based autonomy and food sovereignty: sites where other ways of being, knowing, and relating take root and flourish.

Social forces, organized through the CSIPM Working Group, are the driving force behind the construction of this project. They possess a critical awareness of themselves, their struggles, and the contradictions inherent in the hegemonic capitalist colonial system, while also recognizing the opportunities and possibilities for a transformative change that these very contradictions can generate. Through decolonial epistemologies and methodologies, rooted in these everyday experiences, this alternative project is constructed, driven by the confluence of practices – patches and *Fuxicos* woven together – that enables coexistence of differences while fostering coalition-building. Anchored in ancestral knowledge, it actively resists the hegemonic system and conservative projects.

Even when threatened with unraveling, as revealed during the CFS gender workstream negotiations, the patchwork-weaving endures. Indeed, it grows stronger, stitched by affection, practices of care, and solidarity. It demonstrates that although the capitalist system operates through oppressive logics to reinvent and perpetuate itself, it can be contested and politically resisted. It also shows that alternative worlds can be (re)imagined and are indeed possible.

Concluding Remarks

A sense of pessimism dominated the discussions during the first CSIPM Women and Gender Diversities Working Group meeting following the conclusion of the postponed negotiation rounds in the first half of 2023. Held online, the meeting revealed visible expressions of frustration among participants, evident in their demeanor on screen. Nonetheless, even under these circumstances, some members recognized and valued the Group's efforts and achievements throughout the negotiation process. There was a strong sense of belief in the strength they had built within the Working Group, which had emerged as a space to advance the alternative political project that these women and gender-diverse people had long struggled to advocate for: one that was woven together from the grassroots.

The negotiations within the Gender Workstream of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) officially concluded with the approval of the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment by the 51st CFS Plenary Session in October 2023. Following the postponement of the final round of negotiations, a few rounds were hastily conducted with the aim of reaching a consensus on a document acceptable to all Member States, primarily to avoid further blockages. In this final stage, the contributions of the CSIPM Working Group were largely invisibilized and disregarded.

The negotiations were framed as an accomplishment within the CFS after a long and difficult process, but for many of us, they left a deep sense of exclusion and disappointment. The final document was the result of behind-the-scenes bargaining in which the CSIPM Working Group was not included. Language was negotiated without us, and fundamental concepts – such as intersectionality, reproductive rights, and gender diversity – were either watered down, removed, or distorted. What should have been a space for inclusive dialogue turned into a process where compromise was prioritized over justice, and where civil society

was sidelined. This experience set a dangerous precedent: that negotiations in the CFS can move forward without the meaningful participation of those most affected.

The CSIPM Working Group was acutely conscious of this precedent and of the implications of (re)producing the system's underlying binaries and the hierarchical dichotomies of modernity, upheld by powerful states. At the same time, they were aware of their own efforts in challenging these dichotomies and of their ongoing political struggle to contest the hegemonic system.

It is a very binary document. When it addresses the right to food or a healthy diet, trans people – such as trans men who breastfeed – are completely ignored, as are non-binary individuals (P. during a meeting of the CSIPM evaluation process of the CFS negotiations and the Voluntary Guidelines).

What emerged from the last Working Group call is that, due to the diversity of contexts, regions, and cultures, we should avoid falling into a forced dichotomy – one that the CFS and its Member States tend to impose – of simply evaluating this document as either good or bad. What we agreed in the last call is that we need to go beyond this binary choice of endorsing or not endorsing the document. We must recognize that there were some achievements within the guideline process regarding food governance at the UN level, but we cannot celebrate the document as a whole because there are significant shortcomings, especially in how the process disregards the lives of non-cis-heteronormative persons (M. during the CSIPM Forum in October 2023).

I think it was indeed a very difficult process, but also a very valuable one – both because of the time dedicated to it and because, despite the presence of many countries with very regressive positions, they had to listen to us. The document does not reflect what we wanted, but at least they were forced to engage in a dialogue with us. We also always say that we must remember how rarely these institutions reflect what civil society organizations and social movements want to see from governments. Governments are still the ones responsible for enabling capitalist interests to thrive. This, combined with the fact that we started with an amazing draft months

ago – which was heavily attacked – makes the outcome all the more complex. Nevertheless, when I read the final document, I can see that the CSIPM was present throughout the process. (H. during the CSIPM Forum in October 2023).

Indeed, several important elements proposed by the Working Group were incorporated into the final document, as evidenced in the group's evaluation manuscript of the Voluntary Guidelines. The recognition of women's agency in food systems and their autonomy – so central to peasant and rural women's movements in Brazil – is acknowledged in the guiding principles section of the Guidelines, where the notion of 'empowerment' is expressed through the recognition of women as rights-holders, emphasizing their individual and collective agency and autonomy. The sections on social protection and on unpaid, unrecognized care work are substantively addressed; although patriarchal norms shaping the unjust distribution of care work are described, they are not explicitly named. Despite the strong emphasis on partnerships, finance, investment, and entrepreneurship-oriented solutions, the Working Group managed to incorporate into this predominantly neoliberal orientation references to the risks of land appropriation as loan collateral, indebtedness and debt traps associated with loans and microloans, as well as the importance of solidarity funds to mitigate such risks.

The Guidelines also mention the role of women-led organizations, women's rights organizations, and social movements, recognizing the right to self-association and self-organization, and acknowledging the crucial role of women's organizations in addressing climate change, as well as the need for direct funding to support their actions. The section on access to and control over natural resources is substantive, although in some cases it refers only to property rights rather than explicitly addressing land tenure rights. It also includes references to landless women, and the Working Group succeeded in incorporating a reference to CEDAW's Recommendation Number 34, which mentions food sovereignty. A

recommendation acknowledges the role of cooperatives, territorial markets, and producers' organizations. While the term 'patriarchy' is not directly used, multiple inclusions emphasize the necessity of transforming or confronting discriminatory social and cultural norms.

The final document, although it contains some important achievements for women and girls on the ground, did not meet the expectations of the CSIPM Working Group in terms of inclusivity and gender diversity, especially when compared to the first draft discussed in this workstream process. The Working Group consistently emphasized, throughout the evaluation of the negotiations and the Guidelines, the document's insufficiency in providing a human rights-based gender analysis of food systems due to its exclusion of gender diversities. Despite the violence they experienced during what was supposed to be the third and final round of negotiations, they performed subversive resistance.

For the CSIPM Working Group, the negotiation process may have concluded, but the political struggle to advance their counter-hegemonic project – centered on an alternative and sustainable vision for the true transformation of food systems, one that rejects patriarchal dynamics – remains ongoing. The struggle persists, including within the context of the CFS, where they continue to insist that gender be prioritized in the Committee's future work.

The idea of developing alternative Guidelines within the CSIPM, created entirely by social and grassroots movements, and using them as a tool for political advocacy, was a way to continue resisting the systemic oppression and violence encountered by the Working Group during the negotiations. The proposal was to develop their own guidelines, grounded in their vision and priorities, which could result in a stronger document to be used by the Mechanism, grassroots movements in the territories, and social movements at various levels.

We went through some difficult moments, but we also had small victories. Our political horizon goes beyond the CFS Voluntary Guidelines. It is more transcendent, rooted in what we have been able to build and consolidate together. We also see ourselves within the idea of the

alternative Guidelines, shaped by our own frameworks, which include those who have been made invisible, who have been erased, who are no longer with us (Á. during the CSIPM Forum in October 2023)[40].

The idea of the alternative guidelines, therefore, represents a way to continue their political project and to resist the violence and silence imposed on them within a patriarchal, colonial, imperialist, capitalist environment. Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated that this political project is the result of manifold articulations and relations between grassroots movements and other social and transnational movements. These articulations unfold from the ground where lived realities and experiences shape the real needs, claims, and demands of peasant and rural women and non-cis heteronormative individuals.

In dialogue with norms translation literature, I highlighted its utility in connecting feminist International Relations and transnational feminist theory. While maintaining a critical engagement, I also acknowledged its limitations, especially its frequent disregard for power asymmetries and epistemologies emerging from the Global South. This tension underlines the importance of approaching the politics of 'translation' from a decolonial feminist perspective, attuned to the lived experiences and knowledge practices of grassroots women's movements.

The feminist historical materialist approach I adopted, grounded in feminist political economy, was key to understanding Brazilian rural feminist movements as anti-capitalist forces confronting the dominance of agribusiness and industrial agriculture. Gramscian non-structuralist historicism further supported an understanding of resistance as part of broader historical transformations and political struggles, where shifts in social reproduction are inseparable from changes in modes of production.

This lens also enabled an analysis of global food systems and their inherent contradictions. I argued that the crises produced within neoliberal food systems have not only

[40] The speech was delivered in Spanish; the translation to English is my own.

deepened inequalities but have also created openings for mobilization, and opportunities seized by rural and peasant women to propose food sovereignty as a radical alternative. These movements are actively crafting a political and epistemological project that challenges the very foundations of the capitalist food regime.

Through decolonial perspectives, particularly drawing on the work of María Lugones and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, I underscored the transformative potential of imagining alternative worlds grounded in ancestral knowledge and non-Western cosmologies. The counter-hegemonic project I traced is also a decolonial gender project, emerging from the ontological, epistemological, and methodological practices of Latin American grassroots and Indigenous feminist movements. To understand how this project is constructed, I proposed a decolonial framing, drawing on a patchwork-weaving metaphor that foregrounds the knowledge, practices, and resistance of rural women and Indigenous Peoples from Brazil and across Latin America, rejecting the homogenizing tendencies of neoliberalism and its singular narrative of globality. By stitching, weaving, knitting a patchwork, an ethics of care is forged, one that embraces difference and honors the plurality of struggles that stitched together form the fabric of this alternative vision.

To understand transnational engagement of social and grassroots movements in spaces such as the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM), I grounded my analysis in the mobilization of peasant and rural women in Brazil and in their everyday struggles against material inequality, patriarchy, capitalism, and colonial impositions. I argued that the methodologies and epistemologies developed through feminist political education and grassroots organizing within Brazil's peasant and rural women's movements, particularly the MMC and the MMTR-NE, were fundamental in shaping the shared political project around food sovereignty they have developed. These approaches, deeply rooted in ancestral knowledge and lived experience, form the foundation of the connections developed between these

movements – for example, through their engagement in the construction of the Margaridas' March – as well as with other social movements across Latin America and in transnational spaces.

Like sound vibrations, they reverberate across movements in the region, fostering solidarity without erasing difference. This process is captured in the weaving of *Fuxico* or patchworks, a framework metaphor I developed to make sense of these interactions, and that honors the affective, creative, and diverse ways in which these movements assemble their collective political project. By weaving distinct yet interconnected experiences, such movements build a shared commitment to food sovereignty that is decolonial in both form and intent. These practices do not seek uniformity, but rather embrace divergence, contradiction, and continual negotiation – as Ailton Krenak (2022) reminds us, not as convergence, but as confluence.

Ultimately, the weaving of this patchwork across Latin American reveals the deep connections of social movements in the region, largely due to shared colonial histories, common "fractured locus" as María Lugones (2010) suggests, and common experiences of resistance to such imposition. It is this intricate fabric of resistance, care, and ancestral knowledge that sustains their political vision and reclaims space for alternative, life-affirming ways of living and organizing. This vision reaffirms the decolonial nature of the methodologies and epistemologies emerging in the region, which are fundamental to the continuation of the patchwork and to the strengthening of transnational solidarities in other spaces, such as the CSIPM.

I argued in this sense that the CSIPM represents a remarkable effort in decolonizing practices and knowledge. Even as an organization based in the Global North, its structure and actions reflect epistemological foundations rooted in the Global South, particularly in Latin American feminist, peasant, and rural organizing. Within this context, the CSIPM has cultivated

an ethics of care, not as a gendered responsibility, but as a humanizing political commitment grounded in listening, mutual respect, and the formation of affective ties.

I explored how grassroots mobilizations expand beyond local contexts to participate in global food governance through the CSIPM. These transnational connections challenge the false binary between local and global, instead revealing a complex range of interactions. Peasant and rural women, non-cis-heteronormative individuals, and social movements have been central to these articulations within food systems governance, navigating contradictions and forging alliances through multiple layers of engagement, strategies as well as (dis)continuities.

The work of the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM exemplifies this process, embracing a fluid understanding of the North–South divide while recognizing its political weight. Their ability to confront gendered, capitalist, and colonial systemic oppression has enabled them to construct a shared political project rooted in food sovereignty and counter-hegemonic visions of food systems transformation. Through my fieldwork, both within grassroots contexts in Brazil and by following the CSIPM work in Rome, I came to understand that solidarity is not the naïve concept I once perceived it to be. Rather, I suggested in this thesis that solidarity is not a given, but something actively constructed through struggle and grounded in collective resistance.

Drawing on the metaphor of the patchwork and the *Fuxico*, I conceptualize how these diverse movements maintain their unique visions while weaving a common project. As the patchwork expands, it reflects growing diversity and complexity, much like the grassroots movements themselves. The framework I developed in this thesis is like a fabric made from both weaving and knitting, distinct yet complementary textile arts. Weaving brings together multiple threads: diverse, locally grounded, and interlaced through tension and solidarity. It is done on a loom that holds space for different voices to intersect, forming a collective cloth from

many separate strands, patches, or *Fuxicos*. Stitched together by shared commitments to justice, equity, and solidarity, these movements articulate a common project, forming vibrant and interconnected patches and *Fuxicos*. Their materiality makes differences visible and affirms their presence. Knitting, akin to the CSIPM's approach, also comes into play and involves creating joining loops or stitches with a thread of yarn, building interconnection through consistency. Together, these techniques produce a hybrid cloth that is both strong and flexible, rooted and adaptable – even (dis)continuous –much like the political practices I described in the development of a common political project through the transnational engagement of grassroots and social movements. In any case, the patchwork continues.

Affection, understood here as a thread and a political tool rooted in ancestral practices, binds these patches and sustains their shared effort. The CSIPM's work, particularly through the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group, illustrates how transnational solidarity and grassroots epistemologies can reach confluence to resist patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial structures in global food governance. In this way, the patchwork continues to be stitched, woven and knitted by many hands, across territories, and through deep commitments to justice, care, and collective transformation.

I have shown how the common position reached within the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group of the CSIPM reflects the construction of a common alternative political project – one that upholds rural women's rights, defends food sovereignty, and challenges the gender binaries and systemic oppressions sustained by patriarchal, capitalist, racist, and heteronormative structures. By examining the negotiation process within the gender workstream of the CFS, I have traced how this political project engages subversively with the contradictions of the system, carving out a space of resistance within a global governance arena, which is deeply entangled with the interests of capital.

What emerges is a counter-hegemonic project that not only contests the dominant food regime but also exposes the structural entrenchment of gendered and racialized exploitation at its core. The attempt to counter the resistance the CSIPM Working Group enacted, ranging from the formation of anti-gender alliances to the strategic leniency of neoliberal states prioritizing agribusiness and financial interests, signals the disruptive potential of this alternative vision. The backlash is not incidental; it is a manifestation of patriarchal and conservative forces, as well as a reaction by neoliberal hegemonic powers defending themselves and perpetuating the functioning of the capitalist system. At the heart of this confrontation lies a deeper conflict over knowledge, rights, and the control of bodies and territories. The epistemic violence enacted through these negotiations reflects ongoing strategies of primitive accumulation and enclosure, revealing how gendered, racialized, cis-hetero normative, and colonial logics continue to operate as tools of global capitalism.

Despite the limitations of the final negotiated text, which fell short in affirming non-binary understandings and inclusive approaches, the political project advanced by the Women and Gender Diversities Working Group endures. Their insistence on decolonial and feminist epistemologies not only challenges oppressive and exploitative systems but also sustains the political imagination of a radically different food system. Their subversive participation and resistance to backlash remind us that even within constrained spaces, alternative worlds are being woven: thread by thread, patch by patch, *Fuxico* by *Fuxico*.

Further research in the future exploring the developments of this alternative political project, as well as the challenges faced in subverting dominant neoliberal and patriarchal food governance structures, could offer valuable insights into the transformative potential and limitations of grassroots-led resistance within global policy spaces, particularly when analyzed through decolonial approaches that center historically marginalized knowledges, bodies, and territories. Indeed, feminist decolonial approaches offer, as demonstrated in this thesis,

methodologies and epistemologies that not only expose the coloniality embedded in global governance frameworks but also affirm embodied and collective ways of knowing and organizing that are foundational to building just and sustainable alternatives.

This thesis reveals that the violent, patriarchal mechanisms of coloniality and neoliberal capitalism are ongoing processes, continually reinventing forms of exploitation and (re)colonization of specific bodies and nature. Yet at its core, this thesis is about resistance: resistance that takes the form of a counter-hegemonic political project offering an alternative to current neoliberal food regimes. It is a resistance rooted in genuine care and affection, and in the unwavering belief that another reality and society are not only imaginable, but possible.

References

Aguiar, V. V. P. (2017). Mulheres rurais, movimento social e participação: Reflexões a partir da Marcha das Margaridas. *Política & Sociedade*, *15*, 261. https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-7984.2016v15nesp1p261

Ahmed, S. (2000). *Strange encounters: Embodied others in post-coloniality*. Routledge.

Ahmed, S. (2004). Affective Economies. *Social Text*, *22*(2), 117–139. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-22-2_79-117

Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a Feminist Life*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373377

Armstrong, P., & Armstrong, H. (1983). Beyond Sexless Class and Classless Sex: Towards Feminist Marxism. *Studies in Political Economy*, *10*(1), 7–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/19187033.1983.11675670

Arrighi, G. (1994). *The long twentieth century: Money, power, and the origins of our times*. Verso.

Badie, B. (2007). *Le diplomate et l'intrus: L'entrée des sociétés dans l'arène internationale*. Fayard.

Baker, G., & Chandler, D. (2005). Introduction: Global Civil Society and the Future of World Politics. In G. Baker & D. Chandler (Eds.), *Global civil society: Contested futures*. Routledge.

Ballestero, A., & Winthereik, B. R. (Eds.). (2021). *Experimenting with ethnography: A companion to analysis*. Duke University Press.

Bautista S., R. (2014). *La descolonización de la política: Introducción a una política comunitaria* (Primera edición). AGRUCO.

Bogo, A. (1998). A Vez dos Valores. *Caderno de Formação Nº 26 Do Movimento Dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, *MST*.

Bogo, A. (2008). *Identidade E Luta De Classes*. Expressão Popular.

Bordalo, Caroline Araújo. (2006). Sindicatos rurais e movimentos sociais: Duas tradições na luta pela representação política das trabalhadoras rurais. *Simpósio Estadual de Lutas Sociais Na América Latina: "Crise Das Democracias Latino-Americanas: Dilemas e Contradições."* https://www.uel.br/grupo-pesquisa/gepal/segundosimposio/carolinearaujobordalo.pdf

Borras, S. M., & Franco, J. C. (2009). Transnational Agrarian Movements Struggling for Land and Citizenship Rights. *IDS Working Papers*, *2009*(323), 01–44. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2040-0209.2009.00323_2.x

Brem-Wilson, J. (2011). *La Via Campesina and the Committee on World Food Security: A Transnational Public Sphere?* University of Bradfort.

Butler, J. (2015). *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Pilot project. eBook available to selected US libraries only). Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674495548

Calaça, M. (2021). *O Feminismo Camponês e Popular: Resistência e Revolução* [Tese de doutorado]. Universidade Federal de Campina Grande.

Calaça, M., Almeida, I., Cordeiro, M., Silva, E., Sousa, D., Santana, G., & Danta, A. (2018). Organização das camponesas no Nordeste e sudeste: Produção agroecológica, auto-organização e luta por autonomia. In V. Pulga, Calaça, M., Cinelli, C., Seibert, I., & Cime J. (Eds.), *Mulheres camponesas semeando agroecologia, colhendo saúde e autonomia*. Rede Unida.

Caouette, D., Masson, D., & Dufour, P. (Eds.). (2010). *Solidarities beyond borders: Transnationalizing women's movements*. UBC Press.

Cappellin, P. (1990). Trabalhadoras rurais e aspirações feministas: Um diálogo em curso. In E. M. Silva (Ed.), *Camuflagem e transparência: As mulheres no sindicalismo*. Central Única dos Trabalhadores - CUT.

Caraway, N. (1992). *Segregated sisterhood: Racism and the politics of American feminism* (1. ed). Univ. of Tennessee Press.

Carvalho, José Murilo. (1981). Modernização frustrada: A política de terras do Império. *Revista Brasileira de História*, *1*, 39–57.

Carvalho, M. do C. (1998). Participação social no Brasil hoje. *Pólis Papers*.

Castro-Gómez, S., & Grosfoguel, R. (Eds.). (2007). *El giro decolonial: Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Siglo del Hombre Ed. [u.a.].

Chandhoke, N. (2005). How Global is Global Civil Society? *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 355–371. https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2005.388

Cinelli, Catiane. (2016). *O educativo na experiência do movimento de mulheres camponesas: Resistência, enfrentamento e libertação* [Tese de doutorado, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul]. https://lume.ufrgs.br/bitstream/handle/10183/149118/001004835.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Cisne, M. (2014). *Feminismo e consciência de classes*. Cortez.

Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSIPM). (2020). *A Guide to Facilitation: In the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism for Relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security*. https://www.csm4cfs.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CSIPM_English_digital.pdf

Committee on World Food Security. (2009). *Reform of the Committee on World Food Security: Final version (CFS:2009/2 Rev.2)*. https://www.fao.org/3/k7197e/k7197e00.htm

Committee on World Food Security. (2017). *Report of the 44th session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 2017/44/Report)*. http://www.fao.org/3/a-mu215e.pdf

Conway, J. M. (2013). *Edges of global justice: The World Social Forum and its "others."* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203116678

Conway, J. M. (2018). When food becomes a feminist issue: Popular feminism and subaltern agency in the World March of Women. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *20*(2), 188–203. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2017.1419822

Cruz Hernández, T. (2016). Una mirada muy otra a los territorios-Cuerpos femeninos. *SOLAR, Revista de Filosofía Iberoamericana*, *12 (1)*, 35–46.

Dalla Costa, M., & James, S. (1975). *The power of women and the subversion of the community* (3. ed). Falling Wall Press.

De Jong, S. (2017). *Complicit Sisters: Gender and Women's Issues across North-South Divides*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190626563.001.0001

de la Cadena, M. (2021a). *Diálogo de abertura. Políticas Cósmicas*. Seres-Rios Festival fluvial.

de la Cadena, M. (2021b). Not Knowing: In the Presence of... In A. Ballestero & B. R. Winthereik (Eds.), *Experimenting with ethnography: A companion to analysis*. Duke University Press.

Deere, C. D. (2004). Os direitos da mulher à terra e os movimentos sociais rurais na reforma agrária brasileira. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, *12*(1), 175–204. https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-026X2004000100010

Desai, M. (2005). Transnationalism: The face of feminist politics post-Beijing. *International Social Science Journal*, *57*(184), 319–330. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2451.2005.553.x

Desai, M. (2013). Theorizing Transnational Feminisms. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *15*(3), 427–433. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2013.807698

DeWalt, K. M., & Dewalt, B. R. (2002). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers*. Alta Mira Press.

Dirlik, A. (2010). *The postcolonial aura: Third World criticism in the age of global capitalism* (Nachdr.). Westview Press.

Enloe, C. H. (2014). *Bananas, beaches and bases: Making feminist sense of international politics* (Second edition). University of California Press.

Federici, S. (2004). *Caliban and the witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation*. Autonomedia.

Federici, S. (2012). *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, reproduction, and feminist struggle*. PM Press.

Fellows, M. L., & Razack, S. (1998). The Race to Innocence: Confronting Hierarchical Relations among Women. *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice*, 335–352.

Ferguson, S. (1999). Building On the Strengths of the Socialist Feminist Tradition. *Critical Sociology*, *25*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/089692059902500102O1

Fernandes, M., Lupo, L., Benya, A., Dedeoğlu, S., Mezzadri, A., & Prügl, E. (2023). Social reproduction, women's labour and systems of life: A conversation. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, *13*(3), 473–483. https://doi.org/10.1177/20438206231177072

Fernandes, S. (2019). *Sintomas mórbidos: A encruzilhada da esquerda brasileira*. Autonomia Literária.

Fine, G. A. (2003). Towards a Peopled Ethnography: Developing Theory from Group Life.

Ethnography, *4*(1), 41–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138103004001003

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2021). *FAO strategic framework 2022–2031: For a better world.* https://www.fao.org/3/cb7099en/cb7099en.pdf

Freire, P. (2021). *Pedagogia do oprimido*. Editora Paz e Terra.

Friedmann, H., & McMichael, P. (1989). AGRICULTURE AND THE STATE SYSTEM: The rise and decline of national agricultures, 1870 to the present. *Sociologia Ruralis*, *29*(2), 93–117. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.1989.tb00360.x

Friedmann, H. (2005). From Colonialism to Green Capitalism: Social Movements and Emergence of Food Regimes. In F. H. Buttel & P. McMichael (Eds.), *New Directions in the Sociology of Global Development* (Vol. 11, pp. 227–264). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1057-1922(05)11009-9

Friedmann, H., Daviron, B., & Allaire, G. (2016). "Political economists have been blinded by the apparent marginalization of land and food": An interview with Harriet Friedmann. *Revue de La Régulation*, *20*. https://doi.org/10.4000/regulation.12145

Gaarde, I. (2017). *Peasants Negotiating a Global Policy Space: La Vía Campesina in the Committee on World Food Security* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315444963

Gal, S. (2015). Politics of Translation. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *44*(1), 225–240. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102214-013806

Gill, S. (2003). *Power and resistance in the new world order* (1. publ). Palgrave Macmillan.

Gill, S. (2008). *Power and resistance in the new world order* (2nd ed., Fully rev. and updated). Palgrave Macmillan.

Gonzales, Lélia. (2020). A mulher negra na sociedade brasileira: Uma abordagem político-

econômica. In L. Gonzalez, F. Rios, & M. Lima, *Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano: Ensaios, intervenções e diálogos*. Zahar.

Gonzalez, L., Rios, F., & Lima, M. (2020). *Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano: Ensaios, intervenções e diálogos*. Zahar.

Gramsci, A. (2000). *The Gramsci reader: Selected writings 1916 - 1935* (D. A. Forgacs, Ed.; 1. ed). New York Univ. Press.

Grewal, I., & Kaplan, C. (Eds.). (1994). *Scattered hegemonies: Postmodernity and transnational feminist practices*. University of Minnesota Press.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, *14*(3), 575. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066

Hooks, B. (2018). *All about love: New visions* (First William Morrow paperback edition). William Morrow.

Kaldor, M. (2003). *Global civil society: An answer to war*. Polity Press; Distributed in the USA by Blackwell Pub.

Kawulich, B. B. (2005). Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *Vol 6*, Reuse. https://doi.org/10.17169/FQS-6.2.466

Krenak, A., & Carelli, R. (2022). *Futuro ancestral*. Companhia Das Letras.

Leite, A. Z., & Freddi, S. M. (2018). Desafios para a política de implementação de assentamentos e caminhos trilhados pelo serviço de ates. *Revista de Políticas Públicas*, *22*, 1115–1134. https://doi.org/10.18764/2178-2865.v22nEp1115-1134

Lorde, A. (with Clarke, C.). (2012). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Potter/Ten Speed/Harmony/Rodale.

Lugones, M. (2003). *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing coalition against multiple oppressions*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Lugones, M. (2010). Toward a Decolonial Feminism. *Hypatia*, *25*(4), 742–759. JSTOR.

Lugones, Maria. (2008). Colonialidad y Género: Hacia un Feminismo Decolonial. In W. Mignolo, M. Lugones, I. Jiménez Lucena, & M. V. Tlostanova (Eds.), *Género y descolonialidad*. Ediciones del Signo and Globalization and the Humanities Project (Duke University).

Luxemburg, R. (1913). *The accumulation of capital* (2nd ed). Routledge.

Marangoni, Gilberto. (2012). Anos 1980, década perdida ou ganha? *Revista Desafios do Desenvolvimento*, *Ano 9*(72). https://www.ipea.gov.br/desafios/index.php?option=com_content&id=2759:catid=28&Itemid=23

Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *24*(1), 95–117. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (1990). Designing Qualitative Research by Catherine Marshall and Gretchen B. Rossman. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, *1*(2). https://doi.org/10.5070/L412004995

Marx, K. (1909). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Vol. I*. Charles H. Kerr & Company.

Maso, T. (2021). *Feminismo, Corpo e Prazer. Segundas Feministas* (75) [Broadcast]. https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/segundas-feministas/feminismo-corpo-e-prazer-YxHW9ZCFMD5/

Maso, T. (2023). Política dos afetos: Corpos (in) disciplinados em perspectiva feminista. In D. S. do Monte, L. A. L. da Silva, T. M. R. Held, & V. M. B. Guimarães (Eds.), *Direitos e*

fronteiras planetárias: Feminismos emergentes. Appris Editora e Livraria Eireli - ME.

Maso, T. (2024). *El caldero de los deseos: Cuerpo y cambio en Círculos de Mujeres en Brasil* [Tese de doutorado]. Universidad del País Vasco.

Masson, D., Paulos, A., & Beaulieu Bastien, E. (2017). Struggling for food sovereignty in the World March of Women. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *44*(1), 56–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2016.1187137

McKeon, N. (2015). *Food security governance: Empowering communities, regulating corporations*. Routledge.

McMichael, P. (2013). *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions*. Practical Action Publishing. https://doi.org/10.3362/9781780448794

Merry, S. E. (2006a). *Human rights and gender violence: Translating international law into local justice*. The University of Chicago Press.

Merry, S. E. (2006b). Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle. *American Anthropologist*, *108*(1), 38–51. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2006.108.1.38

Mesquita, Benjamin Alvino. (2015). Plantation colonial e agronegócio globalizado: Semelhanças e Mudanças. *Para Além Da Crise Global: Experiencias e Antecipações Concretas*. VII Jornada internacional de politicas publicas, São Luís. https://www.joinpp.ufma.br/jornadas/joinpp2015/pdfs/mesas/expansao-do-agronegocio-e--a-producao-de-alimentos--na-america-latina.pdf

Mies, M. (2014). *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale: Women in the international division of labour*. Zed Books.

Mignolo, W., Lugones, M., Jiménez Lucena, I., & Tlostanova, M. V. (Eds.). (2008). *Género y descolonialidad*. Ediciones del Signo and Globalization and the Humanities Project (Duke University).

Moghadam, V. M. (2013). *Globalization and social movements: Islamism, feminism, and the global justice movement* (2nd ed). Rowman & Littlefield.

Mohanty, C. T. (2003). "Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *28*(2), 499–535. https://doi.org/10.1086/342914

Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas (MMC). (n.d.). *Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas*. https://mmcbrasil.org/

Picchio, A. (1992). *Social reproduction: The political economy of the labour market*. Cambridge university press.

Prügl, E. (2020). Feminist methodology between theory and praxis. *Review of International Studies*, *46*(3), 304–314. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210519000482

Rai, S. (2004). Gendering Global Governance. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *6*(4), 579–601. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674042000283345

Rai, S. (2024). *Depletion: The human costs of caring*. Oxford University Press.

Red LAC. (2007). *Uma História Muito Linda: Perpetuando a Rede Lac*. Rede Lac.

Ribeiro, D. (2017). *O que é lugar de fala?* Editora Letramento.

Ribeiro, K. (2020, November 19). O futuro é ancestral. *Le Monde Diplomatique Brasil*. https://diplomatique.org.br/o-futuro-e-ancestral/

Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2010). *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores*. Retazos: Tinta Limón Ediciones.

Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2018). *Un mundo ch'ixi es posible: Ensayos desde un presente en crisis*. Tinta Limón.

Roberts, A. (2017). *Gendered states of punishment and welfare: Feminist political economy,*

primitive accumulation and the law. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315542362

Roth, S. (2003). *Building movement bridges: The Coalition of Labor Union Women*. Praeger.

Sachs, C., & Patel-Campillo, A. (2014). Feminist Food Justice: Crafting a New Vision. *Feminist Studies*, *40*(2), 396–410. https://doi.org/10.1353/fem.2014.0008

Santos, M. (1994). *Técnica, espaço, tempo: Globalização e meio técnico-cientifico informacional*. Hucitec.

Schensul, S. L., Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte, M. D. (1999). *Essential ethnographic methods: Observations, interviews, and questionnaires*. AltaMira Press.

Seccombe, W., & Livingstone, D. (1996). 'Down to Earth People': Revising a Materialist Understanding of Group Consciousness. In D. Livingstone & J. M. Mangan (Eds.), *Recast Dreams: Class and Gender Consciousness in Steeltown*. Garamond Press.

Seibert, Iridiani Graciele. (2019). *Feminismo Camponês e Popular: Contribuição das Mulheres Camponesas a Luta de Transformação Social* [Dissertação de mestrado]. Universidade de Brasília.

Siliprandi, E. (2011). Mulheres agricultoras no Brasil: Sujetos políticos na luta por soberanía e seguranca alimentar. *Pensamiento Iberoamericano*, *9*, 169–183.

Silva, M. A. B. D. (2015). Lei de Terras de 1850: Lições sobre os efeitos e os resultados de não se condenar "uma quinta parte da atual população agrícola." *Revista Brasileira de História*, *35*(70), 87–107. https://doi.org/10.1590/1806-93472015v35n70014

Sirlei Gaspareto. (2018). *Pedagogia da Semeadura: A construção de saberes pelo Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas no programa de sementes crioulas*. Dialogar.

TAMBE, A., & THAYER, M. (2021). Introduction. In A. TAMBE & M. THAYER (Eds.), *Transnational Feminist Itineraries: Situating Theory and Activist Practice* (pp. 1–10). Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1rnpjvd.4

Pulga, V., Calaça, M, Cinelli, C., Seibert, I., & Cime, J. (2018). *Mulheres camponesas semeando agroecologia, colhendo saúde e autonomia*. Rede Unida.

Vergès, F. (2022). *A feminist theory of violence: A decolonial perspective* (M. Thackway, Trans.; English language edition). Pluto Press.

Wash, Catherine. (2007). Interculturalidad y colonialidad del poder. Un pensamiento y posicionamiento "otro" desde la diferencia colonial. In S. Castro-Gómez & R. Grosfoguel (Eds.), *El giro decolonial: Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Siglo del Hombre Ed. [u.a.].

Xavier, M. (2017). Regiões do agronegócio e urbanização: Implicações do uso do território pelas cooperativas agroindustriais no oeste paranaense. *Confins*, *33*. https://doi.org/10.4000/confins.12623