

## Agroecological peasantry becoming and its approaches to climate change: territorial experiences in Brazil and Colombia

Devir do campesinato agroecológico e suas abordagens às mudanças climáticas: experiências territoriais no Brasil e na Colômbia

Devenir del campesinado agroecológico y sus abordajes al cambio climático: experiencias territoriales en Brasil y Colombia

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### Abstract

Agroecology presents itself as a concrete project for the transformation of the countryside by people who are ontologically antagonistic to the agrarian structure of the capitalist world. Its agricultural principles, based on co-production, allow for particular experiences across countless territories-of-becoming that, in dialogism, form a pluriversal totality. Based on an analysis of reality through Dialectical Logic, the objective was to structure the process of agroecological territorialization with its innate processes of food production and ecological restoration, as well as its possibilities for addressing climate change in two Latin American research areas: the Barra Sustainable Development Project in Brazil mainly coordinated by the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) and the Cabrera Peasant Reserve Zone in Colombia coordinated by the Peace Cradle Corporation (Corcunpaz). The conclusion is that, although a cross-cutting theme of peasant intentionality, climate change mitigation is an integral part of the territorialization of agroecological peasantry.

**Keywords:** Agrarian reform, Latin America, New materialism, Pluriversality.

### Resumo

A Agroecologia apresenta-se como um projeto concreto de transformação do campo pelos povos que são ontologicamente antagônicos à estrutura agrária do mundo do capital. Seus princípios agrícolas, baseados na coprodução, permitem experiências particulares por inúmeros territórios-devir que, em dialogismo, formam uma totalidade pluriversal. A partir de uma análise da realidade pela Lógica Dialética, objetivou-se estruturar o processo de territorialização agroecológica com seus inatos processos de produção de alimentos e restauração ecológica, bem como suas possibilidades de abordagem às mudanças climáticas em duas áreas de pesquisa latino-americanas: o Projeto de Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Barra, no Brasil, majoritariamente coordenado pelo Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) e a Zona de Reserva Camponesa de Cabrera, na Colômbia, coordenada pela *Corporación Cuna de Paz* (Corcunpaz). Conclui-se que, embora seja um tema transversal à intencionalidade camponesa, a mitigação das mudanças climáticas é parte integrante da territorialização do campesinato agroecológico.

**Palavras-chave:** América Latina, Novo materialismo, Pluriversalidade, Reforma agrária.

### Resumen

La Agroecología se presenta como un proyecto concreto de transformación del campo por parte de pueblos que son ontológicamente antagónicos a la estructura agraria del mundo del capital. Sus principios agrícolas, basados en la coproducción, permiten que las experiencias particulares en numerosos territorios-devenir se conviertan en un diálogo que conforma una totalidad pluriversal. A partir de un análisis de la realidad desde la Lógica Dialéctica, el objetivo fue estructurar el proceso de territorialización agroecológica con sus procesos innatos de producción de alimentos y restauración ecológica, así como sus posibilidades para el abordaje del cambio climático en dos áreas de investigación latinoamericanas: el Proyecto de Desarrollo Sostenible de la Barra, en Brasil, coordinado por el Movimiento de los Trabajadores Rurales Sin Tierra (MST) y la Zona de Reserva Campesina de Cabrera, en Colombia, coordinada por la *Corporación Cuna de Paz* (Corcunpaz). Se concluye que, si bien es un tema transversal a la intencionalidad campesina, la mitigación del cambio climático es parte integral de la territorialización del campesinado agroecológico.

**Palabras-clave:** América Latina, Nuevo materialismo, Pluriversalidad, Reforma agraria.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of Agroecology as a transnational movement that aim to guarantee the territorial sovereignty of rural peoples by preserving the traditions and cultures of the communities (Altieri, 2009; Altieri; Nicholls, 2017; Gliessman, 2015, 2018; Patel 2006, 2009, 2012; Rosset; Altieri, 2022; Wezel et al., 2009), numerous studies have examined the territorialization of the peasantry, focusing particularly on the production of situated knowledge systems (Barbosa, 2020; Barbosa; Sollano, 2014; Martínez-Torres; Rosset, 2014; Rosset et al., 2025). These studies reveal how socioterritorial movements create an ontological agrarian counterposition to agribusiness, especially in its contemporary neoliberal form.

The metabolic and historical movements of Agroecology are rooted in the everyday lives of its social base and are best understood through the theoretical framework of Agroecological Peasant Pedagogy, as proposed by Barbosa and Rosset (2017). This framework encompasses various farmer-to-farmer (*campesino-a-campesino*) learning experiences, a grassroots methodology originally conceptualized by Holt-Giménez (2006). While often approached as a teaching and learning method in agroecological contexts (McCune; Sánchez, 2019; Val et al. 2019; Val; Rosset, 2020), it actually transcend the epistemological dimension and extends to the fundamental social fabric capable of structuring other ontologies as autonomous social experiences.

Therefore, Agroecology represents a project with genuine potential to transform agrifood systems (Méndez; Bacon; Cohen, 2013) in view of the fact that it presents an economic, social, cultural, and ecological metabolism that directly challenges the colonial and monologic project of agribusiness (Shiva, 2024; Vandermeer; Perfecto, 2025). Since the publication of Altieri (1987), which theoretically presented the practical principles of Agroecology, these other metabolisms self-identified as agroecological have taken center stage in a dialogue between situated knowledge systems.

In consequence, theorizing peasant becoming requires examining their specific processes of agroecological territorialization through theoretical frameworks formulated

by these experiences themselves. The approach here draws on the studies of Fernandes (2005, 2008, 2017), chosen for his close connection to grassroots rural organizations, particularly the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST), in Brazil, as a socioterritorial movement. It also incorporates Haesbaert's (2021) concept of territory-becoming, which emphasizes territorial structuring based on relationships between human and non-human dimensions.

Based on these assumptions, this research objectives to analyze the process of agroecological territorialization, including its inherent food production and ecological restoration processes, and its potential for addressing climate change in two Latin American research areas: the Barra Sustainable Development Project (PDS) in Ribeirão Preto, São Paulo state, Brazil, and the Cabrera Peasant Reserve Zone (ZRC) in the Department of Cundinamarca, Colombia. Both territories result from profound popular struggles for agrarian reform with significant cutting-edge agroecological experiences. The Barra PDS stands as one of the first initiatives of this settlement model led by the MST, while the Cabrera ZRC represents a pioneering territory within this agrarian reform modality in Colombia's current progress for rural pacification.

## METHODOLOGY

In line with the article's objective, this study analyses the peasantry becoming in both the Barra Sustainable Development Project and the Cabrera Peasant Reserve Zone, focusing on their particular processes of agroecological territorialization. The analysis examines the historical development of these research areas through the Dialectical Logic (Ilyenkov, 2018a, 2018b), which assists understanding these territories as social experiences shaped by their historical worldviews and daily social practices. Furthermore, the enhanced relationship with non-human life, promoted by "agricultures for life" (Mejía Gutiérrez, 1995), significantly influences human historical and social development.

Our study is grounded in the ontology of becoming as a direct result of approaching dialectics not merely as a contrast of external opposites, but as a movement driven by the internal possibilities of the social experience under analysis. Ontology here refers to

the philosophical examination of modes of being and their relationships with other forms of existence manifested by Nature, including non-human entities (Spinoza, 2021). In this way, the concept of becoming connects this ontological analysis to the needs and possibilities of being. It explores how social arrangements are influenced by the non-human dimension in an agroecological metabolism that reveals historical possibilities when confronting contradictory external forces (Lukács, 2010).

Thus, the necessary reconstruction of the historical context of Brazilian and Colombian research fields represents their specific processes of peasant spatialization and territorialization which, in dialogue, form parts of the agroecological totality. Agroecology now extends beyond a transnational agrarian movement; it constitutes another agrarian structure, manifested in a pluriverse form (Escobar, 2020) through experiences that incorporate the non-human as an equally humanizing and social element. Its analytical principles are rooted in the new materialism centered on coproduction, where human actions are shaped by the metabolic responses of the non-human (Pellizzoni, 2024).

In addition to the historical circumstances, this research uses Fals Borda's (2015) feeling-thinking method to collect primary data through cultural immersions in both territories. Beyond semi-structured interviews, we engaged in direct learning with the peasants through what we entitled as *agroecopedagogical walks* in their agroecosystems. This method allowed peasants – the true knowledge holders – to express their perspectives in spaces created by their daily intentioned work. Rather than imposing scientific parameters on these territories, we established slightly informal dialogues where subjects could share their practices and reasoning and most important for this work, their life history. We gathered additional data from the archives of the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) and the Cradle of Peace Corporation (Corcunpaz), supplemented by interviews with local leaders. All data collection took place throughout 2024 and the first quarter of 2025.

## TRANSFORMATION OF THE BARRA FARM INTO A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN BRAZIL

The Barra Sustainable Development Project (PDS) represents an unprecedented achievement for various popular sectors of Brazilian society, particularly because of its location in Ribeirão Preto, a municipality widely known as the “the capital of Brazilian agribusiness.” This PDS can be considered a rural neighborhood due to its proximity to the urban center. Its formation began through legal claims filed by the Ribeirão Preto Land Conflicts and Environmental Prosecutor’s Office (Borelli Filho; Ferrante, 2009; Duval; Ferrante, 2016; Gonçalves, Scopinho, 2010; Lima, 2023).

In 1999, the Federation of Salaried Rural Employees of the State of São Paulo (FERAESP) reported potential environmental irregularities at the former Barra Farm to the Public Prosecutor’s Office (MP). After Environmental Prosecutor Dr. Marcelo Pedroso Goulart requested an investigation from the Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), violations including deforestation of Permanent Preservation Areas (APP) and Legal Reserves (RL) were discovered.

While a total area of 1,549.48 hectares was in the process of legal expropriation, the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) began organizing its regional base to reclaim these lands for agrarian reform. Meanwhile, the farm's owning family, through the Sinhá Junqueira Foundation, continued pursuing plans to develop a luxury subdivision in the region, highlighting their intention for land speculation. Importantly, the farm sits on a recharge area for the Guarani Aquifer – the second largest known aquifer on the planet – requiring significant ecological restoration and soil permeability preservation.

When the MST arrived at Barra Farm in April 2003, several land dispute processes began. Despite the movement efforts, a repossession action expelled the 24 families who had occupied the area. In early 2004, workers reoccupied the former Barra Farm and remained until its definitive approval for popular agrarian reform in 2007. Today, reports indicate the PDS has approximately 4,000 residents.

During the occupation years, workers claiming land ownership engaged in grassroots discussions about a settlement model that would meet their socioeconomic needs while aligning with MST's national guidelines for popular agrarian reform and the agroecological paradigm. The movement had already embraced environmental principles at its fifth national congress in 2000, promoting practices like planting native trees for landscape beautification. This environmental focus intensified at the sixth national congress in 2014, which formally adopted Agroecology as the ideal production model.

Also during the occupation years, discussions about Agroecology and Agroforestry Systems (AS) emerged as an organizational and productive initiative. These grassroots conversations feedbacked the MST's regional coordination, which influenced the Public Prosecutor's Office in structuring the Barra Sustainable Development Project (PDS). This model was already being used by the Sepé Tiaraju Settlement in the municipalities of Serrana and Serra Azul in the Ribeirão Preto region, as the first of its kind in the state of São Paulo.

The settlement model was originally designed for populations in northern Brazil's Amazon region whose economic activities are centered on Sustainable Productive Activities (Gomes et al., 2012). Beyond Indigenous Lands (TI) and Conservation Units (UC) that help curb Amazon Rainforest deforestation, primarily caused by cattle ranching in the region, INCRA offers additional models including Agro-Extractivist Settlement Projects (PAE), Forest Settlement Projects (PAF), and the aforementioned Sustainable Development Projects (PDS) (INCRA, 2025).

These projects were initially created to regularize land for extractive populations such as rubber tappers, chestnut growers, and riverside dwellers, as well as members of remaining *quilombo* communities, migrants from traditional Amazonian populations, and squatters. The PDS model prohibits the individualization of land parcels, instead providing collective land titling with the delivery of an ideal fraction. Additionally, the federal government is responsible for ensuring infrastructure including access roads, water supply, and electricity (INCRA, 2025).

The productive framework of the Barra PDS was therefore shaped by grassroots peasant intentionality, national guidance from the MST, and INCRA's political support. This adaptation of a settlement model originally designed for the Amazon region was further facilitated by access to resources through policies as the National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (PRONAF).

Following the approval of the Barra PDS in 2007, organizational disagreements divided the project into three settlements: the Mario Lago Settlement, coordinated by the MST and occupying over 70% of the former farm's total area; the Santo Dias Settlement, coordinated mainly by the Landless Workers' Liberation Movement (MLST) with a minority by the Luíza Mahin Movement; and the Galdino Indian Settlement, considered a "white flag" settlement as it lacks coordination from any social movement (Lima, 2023).

The Mario Lago Settlement is notable for pioneering a social structure aligned with a Sustainable Development Project. During the occupation phase, workers – most of whom had migrated from urban centers in the Ribeirão Preto region – voted to increase the Barra PDS restoring area by an additional 15%. This raised the reforestation requirement from the legal minimum of 20% to 35%, motivated by interest in collective production through agroforestry systems.

Agroforestry systems became the preferred technique due to these discussions and the small size of individual lots. As one peasant explained: "Agroforestry is a form of vertical agriculture, while the agribusiness' plantations are all horizontal. In fact, the more horizontal, the better for them" (Agroforestry leadership of the Mario Lago Settlement). When the settlement was approved in 2007, each family received a lot averaging 1.5 hectares, which required the new peasant farmers to develop viable agricultural production methods.

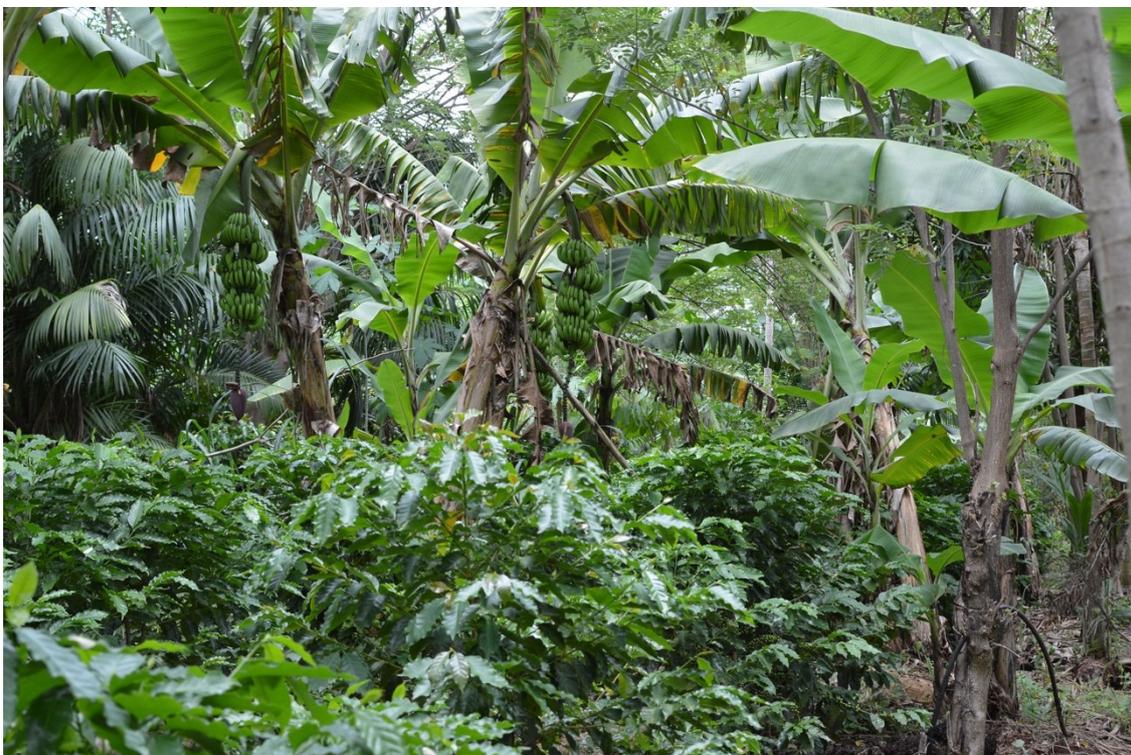
These systems only became effective in the Mario Lago Settlement in 2011, four years after the PDS approval, with the launch of the Agroforestry Project (*Projeto Agroflorestar*). Following a formal invitation from Cooperafloresta – a cooperative of *quilombola* farming families from the Ribeira Valley, specifically from Barra do Turvo

in São Paulo state and Adrianópolis and Bocaíuva do Sul in Parana – both communities established several grassroots and self-organized teaching and learning processes (Zonetti, 2019).

Between 2012 and 2014, 25 family units participated actively in the project, implementing 500-square-meter agroecosystems focused on vegetable production. Following Agroforestry and Syntropic Farming principles, food plots were interspersed with perennial species, including native and exotic fruit trees, along with organic matter incorporation through typical agroforestry pruning planification. Creating a microclimate in an environment previously degraded by sugarcane monoculture was also one of the settlers' goals (Neto et al., 2016).

This Agroforestry Systems have become characteristic of the Mario Lago Rural Settlement, alongside other organic production methods, despite challenges in accessing commercialization policies like the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), which was dismantled by the far-right federal government between 2019 and 2022. Many farmers who participated in the *Projeto Agroflorestar* and complementary initiatives over the past decade now maintain systems in advanced succession stages, growing food in environments dramatically different from those they encountered during the settlement years. Figure 1 shows an agroforestry that evolved from initial vegetable production to now focus on coffee, *açaí*, and banana cultivation, complemented by native and exotic trees that provide fiber, organic matter, and microclimate benefits.

Three cooperatives currently market organic and agroforestry foods. The Commune of the Earth (*Comuna da Terra*) Organic and Agroforestry Cooperative emerged directly from the *Projeto Agroflorestar* to market agroforestry products and, more importantly, to continue developing this situated knowledge system. The Hands of Earth (*Mãos da Terra*) Agroecological Cooperative (Comater), comprised exclusively of women, has expanded beyond organic gardens in members' agroecological backyards to broader operations in Agroforestry Systems. The “Ana Maria Primavesi” Production Brigade, based on a collective lot, functions as both a cooperative distributing food produced throughout the PDS and a training center on agroecology and agroforestry for peasants, militants of MST, and supporters of popular agrarian reform.



**Figure 1.** Agroforestry system in advanced succession stage in the Mario Lago Rural Settlement.  
**Source:** Own record, 2024.

At its 2014 national congress, the MST adopted Agroecology as its model for popular agrarian reform. Since then, its settlements have followed specific guidelines for producing food through agroecologically based agriculture and restoring local ecosystems. In 2020, the movement launched the “Plant Trees, Produce Healthy Food” policy, targeting the planting of 100 million trees by 2030 in its settlements and Brazilian cities (Landless Rural Workers Movement, 2025). Pioneering agroecological initiatives like the Barra PDS have been fundamental to strengthening this sort of national initiative.

## **ENVIRONMENT RESTORATION AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN THE CABRERA PEASANT RESERVE ZONA IN COLOMBIA**

Cabrera, officially known as San José de Cabrera, is a municipality located 144 km from Bogotá in the southernmost part of Department of Cundinamarca, in Colombia.

Spanning 43,300 hectares, it has an estimated population of 5,866 inhabitants which 4,022 live in 16 rural villages and the rest in its urban center. The municipality's history is closely intertwined with the Sumapaz Province, the larger region to which it belongs (Acevedo-Osorio, Chohan, 2019). During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, peasants colonized Sumapaz seeking vacant land as they fled the conflict between conservatives and liberals for national power (Botero, 2011, 2022).

Founded in 1911, Cabrera emerged during a time of significant land concentration and in the aftermath of the War of a Thousand Days (1899-1902). While liberal policies led much of Cundinamarca to focus on coffee plantations, the Sumapaz region became dominated by logging. This practices severely degraded the Andean forests typical of Cabrera territory throughout the 20th century (Ramos-Pérez, 2023).

Between the 1920s and 1950s, the province became the center of a significant peasant insurgency led by Erasmo Valencia and Juan de la Cruz Varela. These leaders elevated collective demands to the national level, transforming the *Sumapaceño* peasantry into the largest peasant social movement in the history of Colombia. Facing violent offensives from both liberals and conservatives on their colonized lands, the local agrarian movement armed self-defense as a response that has stigmatized the movement to this day (Botero, 2011, 2022). A key historical achievement in Sumapaz was the gradual formation of agrarian colonies through community labor. These colonies inspired Law 160 of 1994, which recognized these areas as belonging to the peasants who historically lived and worked there. This law established the Peasant Reserve Zones (ZRC) as a model for Colombian agrarian reform, designed to protect peasant rights and preserve environmentally important areas (Fajardo-Montaña, 2019).

The Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform (INCORA) approved the Cabrera Peasant Reserve Zone in 2000, along with its first ten-year Sustainable Development Plan (PDS). The second plan was approved in 2013 with active community participation while the third one is currently being developed. This document serves as the foundational framework for any Colombian peasant reserve zone, establishing guidelines for economic activities, social organizations, and environmental classifications (SINPEAGRICUN; ILSA; INCODER, 2013).

As a direct result from the PDS, the Cradle of Peace Corporation (*Corporación Cuna de Paz* or *Corcunpaz*) was founded in 2013. This second-tier association unites delegates from the other nine associations and cooperatives established in Cabrera, aiming for collective representation, self-organization, and protection of their leaders. Through this organized structure and the formalization of their Sustainable Development Plan, Cabrera's residents overwhelmingly rejected proposed mining projects and hydroelectric plants in a 2017 plebiscite, with 1,475 votes against and only 23 in favor.

In an environmental context, Cabrera plays a crucial role in preserving the Sumapaz Paramo, the planet's largest paramo ecosystem. This biome is vital for water conservation and supply in this country, with glacial waters originating from regions over 4,500 meters above sea level in the Colombian Eastern Andes (SINPEAGRICUN; ILSA; INCODER, 2013). Local farmers actively work to protect the Sumapaz Paramo by advocating for additional peasant reserve zones, strengthening small-scale agriculture, and preventing agribusiness expansion. Recent successes include the 2024 approval of both the Venecia and Sumapaz Peasant Reserve Zones in municipalities neighboring Cabrera.

Since 2022, Cabrera has hosted environmental and agroecological initiatives coordinated by local associations and supported by the Scaling up Climate Ambition on Land Use and Agriculture through Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans (SCALA) program. This initiative is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as a direct outcome of the Paris Agreement. The agreement was adopted by 196 nations during COP21 in France in 2014 and took effect on November 4, 2016 (FAO; UNDP, 2025).

Following COP21, each participating nation developed its own National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). These documents enable financial support and technology transfer from developed countries to developing and underdeveloped nations.

Colombia launched the latest version of its SCALA-supported national adaptation plan in 2020 in which features collaborative work with the private agricultural sector while supporting peasant initiatives. It targets a maximum emission of 169.55 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2030 – a 51% reduction compared to a standard scenario – with agriculture identified as a key sector for achieving these goals.

SCALA program bridges national policies and local activities by conducting fieldwork with communities and associations in Colombia's three most agriculturally productive regions. In Department of Cundinamarca, support implementation occurs through four Community Climate Action Laboratories, especially in Cabrera Peasant Reserve Zone, where Corcunpaz and other association leaders facilitate dialogue with farmers. In 2024, farmers from *Vereda Santa Marta de Cabrera* launched a SCALA-funded project to protect waterbodies, restore Andean forests, and strengthen food security. The initiative has planted more than 2,600 native tree seedlings near springs and streams across over 30 farms (Figure 2). Additionally, 20,000-liter Australian water tanks have been installed at strategic locations to harvest rainwater.

The Vereda Santa Marta directors played a key role in organizing the project, but the work of Organicampo – an all-women and strictly agroecological association – particularly stands out. This association expanded the project beyond the board's initial scope to include family food sovereignty, securing additional support from the UNDP. As a result, 12 women-led households received significant benefits: renovated organic gardens, new vegetable gardens, vegetable seedlings, compost bins, and Australian tanks with 7,000-liter rainwater retention capacity.



**Figure 2.** Peasant woman and some trees planted in her farm.

**Source:** Own record, 2024.

Furthermore, building on this grassroots experience in Cabrera, delegates from seven Peasant Reserve Zones established a historic declaration for peasant environmentalism in August 2024, as part of COP16 Biodiversity Conference in Cali, Colombia. Representatives from the ZRCs of La Tauna (Cauca), Pato Balsillas (Caquetá), Perla Amazónica (Putumayo), Guavire, Sumapaz, Venecia, and Cabrera (Cundinamarca) signed a commitment to protect local ecosystems, tackle deforestation, mitigate climate change, and create a joint environmental agenda with the Colombian Ministry of the Environment (Colombia, 2024).

### **APPROACHING CLIMATE CHANGE AS PART OF AGROECOLOGICAL PEASANT TERRITORIALIZATION**

The formation of the Barra Sustainable Development Project in Brazil and the Cabrera Peasant Reserve Zone in Colombia exemplifies peasant territorialization within agroecological development. In these contexts, territory encompasses the totality of social relations in spaces occupied by the peasantry (Fernandes, 2005, 2008, 2017; Halvorsen; Fernandes; Torres, 2018; Rosset; Muñoz, 2024). Furthermore, all social

relations are founded on agroecological intentionality at overcoming previous challenges as landlessness in the Brazilian case and imposed violence in the Colombian one.

Both cases show individuals settling in spaces with distinct ecological features. Territorialization begins when peasants occupy land and recognize themselves as collective historical subjects. This process involves claiming both physical and abstract spaces (Lefebvre, 2006) – social, economic, and cultural – creating relationships that challenge previously established societal models.

Lefebvre (2006), later enhanced by Santos (2006) and Fernandes (2005, 2008, 2017), views spaces as comprising systems of objects and actions – either contradictory or supportive – created by the movement of subjects and objects within that space. These systems, based on collective intentionality, form social representations that become essential components of the space itself. The relationship between physical occupation and abstract space production forms the territory's epistemological dimension.

By establishing and claiming spaces, peasants in both the Barra PDS and Cabrera ZRC created distinct internationalities that established new social, cultural, economic, and ecological dynamics. These projections developed through self-organized learning processes, using objective reality as the foundation for knowledge creation. This aligns with Caldart's (2004) concept of projective rooting, where possible futures can only be envisioned based on lived experiences.

Also in peasant economy theory, Ploeg (2008, 2016) updates Chayanov's perspective to show how peasants actively respond to market forms imposed by the hegemonic agrarian structure. Thus, the peasantry should be understood as an active agent creating alternative rural compositions that fundamentally oppose agribusiness models. The historical developments that led to agrarian reform policies – the PDS and the ZRC – both interact with broader social processes, following paths of peasant advancement. Notably, concrete peasant identity emerges during critical moments of intentionality affirmation. The realization of the Sustainable Development Project in Brazil and the insurgent movements of the 1940s-50s leading to Peasant Reserve Zones in Colombia

go beyond merely claiming physical space: they represent moments of genuine territorialization.

Despite the approval of agrarian reform policies in both cases, agricultural initiatives succeed alongside significant challenges. These challenges include the lack of policies to structure peasant markets, limited support for acquiring production goods, and insufficient backing for gender equity initiatives. The collective efforts coordinated by the MST, Corcunpaz, and other local associations are crucial for connecting agroecological knowledge systems through peasant-led educational approaches.

In this context, self-organized agroecological practices have become essential to actual peasant territories. Agroecology principles are embedded in local agroecosystems that serve not only as production systems but also as forms of situated knowledge systems (Haraway, 1988). Therefore, peasant practices, often obscured by the dominant agrarian structure, are vital elements of these territories. Through these practices, peasant communities sustain their existence and maintain autonomy over their future.

The agroforestry systems at the Mario Lago Settlement exemplify this approach. This territory, highlighted by the Barra Sustainable Development Project, has adopted agroforestry as a signature agricultural technique. Under the collective leadership of the *Comuna da Terra* Organic and Agroforestry Cooperative, the “Ana Maria Primavesi” Production Brigade, and Comater, peasants produce food for both consumption and sale. Additionally, they implement local ecosystem restoration practices that collectively establish their identity as an agroecological peasantry (Figure 3).

Similarly, the organic gardens cultivated by peasant women of Organicampo in the Cabrera Peasant Reserve Zone provide income while establishing a foundation for Food Sovereignty (Patel, 2006, 2009, 2012) for farming families. These women consider their production as part of the economy of care (Merçon, 2020), by growing organic food, they are able to express affection for their families, the Cabrera community, and the Andean forests where they live through restoration and clean food (*alimentación sana*) (Figure 4).



**Figure 3.** Agroforestry garden next to a Permanent Preservation Area (APP) in the Barra PDS.  
**Source:** Own record, 2024.



**Figure 4.** Organic garden of a peasant member of Organícampo.  
**Source:** Own record, 2024.

Both cases illustrate how peasant intentionality manifests in agroecosystems, revealing other ontologies living in areas of severe ecological degradation and persistent social conflicts. Also, coproduction (Ploeg, 2008, 2016) deepens as a practice of agroecological peasant territories, spanning from economic necessity to ecological relationships. Agricultural production in both the Barra PDS and the Cabrera ZRC adheres to agroecological principles while being fundamentally rooted in regeneration and care, respectively.

Furthermore, the MST's reforestation efforts in Brazilian settlements and cities through agroforestry initiatives like the Barra PDS, along with several ZRCs' commitment to tackle climate change, show significant progress in coproduction among Brazilian and Colombian peasants. This has become a core element in the intentionality of both the Landless Rural Workers and the Peasant Reserve Zones, who, by establishing their own territories, also territorialize the non-human entities in sharing spaces.

Peasant territorialization gains historical significance through what Haesbaert (2019) calls territories-of-becoming: spaces that discover their identity through daily coproduction emerging from the collective adoption of agroecological principles. Additionally, pluriversality (Escobar, 2020) serves as a fundamental concept for agroecological territorialization, functioning not as an imposing framework but as a dialogical relationship between agroecological territories. Pluriversality reveals how coproduction occurs in specific ways, depending on the particular historical context of each peasant territorialization. This delivers Agroecology's totality the character of *diversity within unity* (Table 1).

Agroecological peasant territorialization is crucial for regenerating local ecosystems and implementing climate change policies. In the Mario Lago Settlement located at the Barra PDS, is notably seen a territory whose agroforestry vision developed through years of collective debate during the occupation of former large estates, resulting in an agroecological settlement that recognizes the importance of the Guarani Aquifer, Permanent Preservation Areas, and Legal Reserves in decision-making. Meanwhile, in the Cabrera ZRC, particularly in Vereda Santa Marta, the peasantry organized through Corcunpaz implemented progressive government climate policies, further advanced by

the women of Organicampo who actively integrated care for the Andean forests into their livelihoods. Both experiences demonstrate how Agroecology is the rural project capable of integrating territorial experiences with concrete actions that address ecosystem degradation and climate change.

**Table 1.** Dialogism of the Brazilian and Colombian agroecological particularities.

	<b>Barra PDS</b>	<b>Cabrera ZRC</b>
Country	Brazil	Colombia
Form of land conquest	Occupation of the former Barra Farm expropriated by environmental impacts	Secular colonization of wastelands and environmental interest
Agrarian Reform Policy	Sustainable Development Project (PDS)	Peasant Reserve Zone (ZRC)
Year of approval of the policy	2007	2000
Grassroot organization	Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST)	Cradle of Peace Organization (Corcunpaz)
Notable agroecological practices	Agroforestry systems in family units and collective areas as APPs, restoration of Legal Reserves and soil permeabilization as protection to the Guarani Aquifer	Organic farming in family units, rainwater harvesting, reforestation of the Andean forests for the protection of water bodies and intentionality of protection of the Sumapaz Paramo
Notable external support	<i>Projeto Agroflorestar</i> and complementary projects	SCALA program supervised by UNDP and FAO

**Source:** Own elaboration, 2025.

## CONCLUSION

The peasant territorialization processes in both the Barra Sustainable Development Project and the Cabrera Peasant Reserve Zone show that as agroecological peasantry establishes itself, it also establishes relationships with non-human elements. Though these processes developed gradually and initially focused on economic survival, the knowledge needed for implementing agroecosystems has expanded to include coproduction as a fundamental practice. This is how peasant materialism in both Brazil and Colombia, guided by agroecological principles, draws from diverse ontologies.

The agrarian reform in these territories not only challenges the dominant agrarian structure through social, economic, and cultural means but also creates new relationships with non-human entities. Peasants increasingly recognize the Guarani Aquifer, Sumapaz Paramo, conservation areas, legal reserves, and Andean forests not merely as resources but as active agents in shaping their territories.

While addressing climate change may not be the primary goal in these peasant territories, it is evident that public policies find practical implementation through agroecological peasantry. Climate change mitigation only becomes effective social practices in territories-of-becoming where coproduction serves as a structural element. The adaptation of Amazonian ecosystem restoration policies in São Paulo's interior through the Barra PDS and the implementation of Paris Agreement commitments in the Cabrera ZRC both progress alongside agroecological peasant development.

Therefore, deeper reflection is needed on how non-human life influences agroecological territorialization beyond its production aspects. It is also clear that agroecological agrarian reform is central to developing and implementing local ecosystem restoration and climate change mitigation policies, areas that still require more theoretical exploration.

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