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Agroecology and La Via Campesina I. The symbolic and material construction of agroecology through the dispositive of “peasant-to-peasant” processes

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ABSTRACT

In this essay, we look at the symbolic and material territorialization of agroecology in La Via Campesina (LVC) through peasant-to-peasant processes (PtPPs) in the broad sense. The most significant examples of the scaling up of agroecology are clearly tied to organizational processes and in our perspective, PtPPs are the motor of these changes. We contend that agroecology, subjects, and territories are articulated in these processes, making up a powerful *dispositive* or device for agroecological transformation and scaling up. We also introduce a discussion on the emergence of a historical-political subject, the “agroecological peasantry,” within the larger territorial dispute concerning the transformation of the agri-food system and living conditions in the countryside.

KEYWORDS

La Via Campesina; peasant-to-peasant process; dispositive; agroecology; scaling up

Introduction

This is the first of two articles in which we will conceptually address different strategies and *dispositives*,¹ *devices* or *mechanisms* to scale up and “massify” agroecology within La Via Campesina International (LVC). We outline here the initial ideas around the construction of peasant to peasant processes (PtPP) as a dispositive for agroecological scaling up and transformation, the mobilization of a peasant political project and the building of a historical and political subject within the universe of organizations linked to LVC. In this article, we conceptually describe the general PtPP dispositive, while in the second one we focus on the political and pedagogical processes of agroecology within LVC as a more specific dispositive (see Rosset *et al.* in this issue).

This work is fundamentally based on the achievements of the agroecological movement of the Cuban *Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños* (ANAP, National Small Farmers Association), because they are paradigmatic

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in terms of scaling up agroecology and at the same time are a central reference point for the processes being developed in LVC at a continental and global scale (La Vía Campesina 2012, 2016; Machín Sosa et al. 2010; Rosset et al. 2011; Val 2012). To provide perspective, we describe the context in which the PtP methodology arrived in Cuba, and how this social methodology was gradually transformed into a dispositive for the integration of agroecologies, territories, and subjects. The heart of this essay is then devoted to the ways in which this dispositive is configured. In the final part, we discuss the importance of PtPPs in territorializing agroecology, as well as in the emergence of the “agroecological peasantry” as an historical and political subject for the materialization of political project of LVC. We argue that these processes together form a powerful strategy for the scaling up of agroecology.

For us, scaling up refers as much to the more broadly recognized quantitative dimension (integrating ever more people, communities and organizations in agroecology) as to the qualitative dimension of the processes of organizing, transmitting and consolidating agroecology as a way of living in actual territories (Brescia 2017; Gliessman 2018; Gonsalves 2001; Holt-Giménez 2001; Parmentier 2014; Rosset and Altieri 2017). For us, scaling up does not mean linearly reproducing preconceived models nor taking something small and making it big, but rather strengthening and multiplying many small processes (Rosset 2015a).

In our perspective, the key to the scaling up potential of PtPPs is rooted in a balance between organization and spontaneity, the articulation of hierarchical and horizontal structures, as well as in the ability to generate frames of reference and networks without imposing one-size-fits-all models. In other words, a network design that can self-organize itself and create emerging processes of agroecological (re)territorialization. These processes cannot be reproduced in a straightforward fashion. Instead, culturally and environmentally unique and adequate endogenous processes are developed in each territory. These are articulated or connected processes, based on cooperation and solidarity, yet without impositions nor predefined templates (Giraldo 2018; Rosset 2015a).

The most significant examples of the scaling up of agroecology are tied to organizational processes (De Schutter 2010; Rosset and Altieri 2017; Mier y Terán *et al.*, 2018). In particular, processes in which peasants play the role of protagonist are key to fostering the scaling up of agroecology. In order to integrate more people and territories in the agroecological movement, an essential task is working to consolidate peasant organizations in the development of their own social, territorial, and political processes (Rosset 2015a). This is why PtP processes are central in LVC’s agroecology strategy for scaling up peasant agroecology.

The phrase *peasant to peasant* (or *farmer to farmer*) usually brings to mind the “*campesino to campesino*” methodology for the horizontal transmission of technical and productive knowledge (Holt-Giménez 2006). This is a participatory methodology that seeks to break with top down, hierarchical knowledge-power relations and the dependence on outside experts; it is a process in which the subjects are coproducers of knowledge through the exchange of ideas, experiences and innovations in agroecological production (PtP *strict sensu*) (Holt-Giménez 2006; Kohlmans 2006; Rosset et al. 2011). In these teaching-learning forms, the learning occurs “in the furrow,” and on the farm, which is an ideal environment for learning, training and experimentation. Successful innovations and experiments are collectively systematized and used as examples to motivate others and strengthen and expand agroecological production (Machín Sosa et al. 2010; Val 2012; Vásquez Zeledón and Rivas Espinoza 2006).

These processes are typically linked to other areas of training or *formation* such as Peasant Schools (McCune, Reardon, and Rosset 2014; McCune et al. 2016; Barbosa 2013; Barbosa and Rosset, 2017; see also Khadse and Rosset, Rosset *et al.*; and Domené and Herrera. in this issue); spaces of local, national and international political organization and articulation (meetings, events, workshops, etc.); “South-South cooperation”; and “peasant organization to peasant organization” processes (Rosset et al. 2011). In all of these spaces, different articulation and exchange processes are developing what we can globally describe as *peasant to peasant processes* (PtPPs). This latter meaning is the one we will be referring to throughout this article when we talk about peasant to peasant processes.

In an earlier article by our research group (Mier y Terán *et al.*, 2018), 8 key factors were identified as drivers of processes for scaling up agroecology in different contexts: (1) the existence of a crisis that drives the search for alternatives, (2) social organization, (3) constructivist learning processes, (4) effective agroecological practices, (5) mobilizing discourses, (6) external allies, (7) favorable markets, and (8) favorable policies.

In broad terms, PtPPs affect, to a greater or lesser extent, all of the *key drivers* identified by the authors. The very emergence of PtP processes is related to the search for alternatives in the face of the crisis (factor 1); self-organizing to share effective agroecology practices using a horizontal model (factors 2, 3, and 4); generating engaging discourses and articulating alliances (factors 5 and 6); designing and organizing strategies with consumers (factor 7); and outlining and demanding favorable public policies and/or making them effective (factor 8). In this work, we will focus on how these factors are joined, articulated and feed off each other in the PtPPs.

Other experiences or areas in which we consider PtPPs to be important are approached from different angles in this special issue, on agroecology schools and training processes, (Rosset *et al.*, Khadse and Rosset; Domené and

Herrera; Aldasoro *et al.*; Morales and Ferguson), and other organizational processes such as the recovery and strengthening of local seed systems (García *et al.*, in this issue), peasant markets (Pérez and Mier y Terán, in this issue) and public policies (Giraldo and McCune, in this issue).

Peasant to peasant: from methodology to dispositive

The peasant to peasant methodology took its first steps in Guatemala, México and Nicaragua (Boege and Carranza 2009; Holt-Giménez 2006; Ramos 1998). In fact, it was in Nicaragua, in 1996, that a Cuban ANAP leader “discovered” PtP, noted its catalyzing potential and got excited about the possibility of integrating this methodology into the emerging Cuban agroecology process (Machín Sosa *et al.* 2010; Chirino, 2014). The development of agroecology in Cuba was closely tied to the deep crisis of the food and agriculture sector commonly called “the special period in peacetime” at the beginning of the 1990s. The fall of the socialist camp meant for Cuba the sudden loss of 85% of its export markets and an end to its supply of oil, machinery, agricultural inputs, and foodstuffs at subsidized prices (Figueras Matos *et al.*, 2005; González Mastrapa and Susset Pérez, 2010; Doimeadios, 2011).

In the countryside, the conventional “green revolution” model with its high dependence on inputs supplied by the Soviet Union collapsed and large-scale agricultural production came to a halt. Against this background, it became apparent that the productive capacity of one sector of the rural population was *not* severely affected. Thus, the traditional peasantry became the focus of a forced pace reconversion of the conventional agri-food production model (Figueras Matos 2005; Machín Sosa *et al.* 2010). The ANAP, in coordination with universities, research centers, government institutions and NGOs, promoted and drove this transition toward small-scale agriculture,² based on traditional peasant technologies, without external inputs and integrating agroecological production principles (Machín Sosa *et al.* 2010; Val 2012).

In this context ANAP “discovered” the PtP methodology in Nicaragua. In 1997, a small project was launched in the province of Villa Clara, aimed at the agroecological adaptation and transformation of agri-food production.³ Two years later, the project was extended as a program to the country’s entire central region with the inclusion of the provinces of Sancti Spiritus and Cienfuegos (Figueras Matos 2005; Machín Sosa *et al.* 2010). The positive impact of this methodology and the recovery of productivity in participating farms, convinced the ANAP to convert the program into a nationwide mass movement. This is how the *Movimiento Agroecológico de Campesino a Campesino* (MACAC, Peasant to peasant agroecology movement) emerged in, 2001 (Machín Sosa *et al.* 2010; Rosset *et al.* 2011; Val 2012).

The MACAC is based on the emulation of peasants by other peasants; it is a “pedagogy of experience” and a “pedagogy of the example” (Barbosa and Rosset 2017) in which a peasant family visits another family that has found an adequate agroecological solution to a common problem. In such visits, families exchange experiences, learn from each other and both strengthen their knowledge (Machín Sosa et al. 2010; Val 2012; 2017). The core objective is to build territorial processes that support the scaling up of agroecology, by integrating many families in agroecological production together with an expansion of the territory and subjects involved in agroecological praxis (Machín Sosa et al. 2010; Rosset 2015a; Rosset and Altieri 2017; Rosset et al. 2011).

Throughout the agroecological movement’s 20-plus years of existence, its scope and importance have grown within the ANAP, to the point that today this movement is central to its vision of peasant production. From a few more than 200 families in 1999, the movement grew to 110,000 families 10 years later, representing about one third of the peasant sector in Cuba (Machín Sosa et al. 2010). In 2009 the movement already had a solid structure at its different levels (cooperative, municipal, provincial, and national), with approximately 12,000 agroecological promoters, 3,000 facilitators, and 170 coordinators (Machín Sosa et al. 2010; Rosset et al. 2011). Today, we estimate that almost half of the Cuban peasantry participates in the MACAC, while the spillover effect of non-participating families who still have incorporated some agroecological practices means that the full impact is even greater (Rosset and Val 2018).

The organizational experience of Cuba’s MACAC is being promoted among LVC’s organizations as a successful example for the scaling up and massification of agroecology (Machín Sosa et al. 2010; Rosset et al. 2011; Rosset and Val 2018; Val 2012). Through LVC, the ANAP is practicing broad peasant internationalism by collaborating with numerous peasant organizations of Latin America and the world. In addition, LVC organizes regular visits to Cuba for its member organizations, in order to participate in conferences and exchanges and training processes at the “Niceto Pérez García” Integral Training Center which is the ANAP’s training school.⁴ One of the most popular courses for the LVC peasant organizations is the PtP methodology workshop, in which the ANAP shares its methodology, achievements, challenges, and innovations in building the MACAC and scaling up agroecology in Cuba (Machín Sosa et al. 2010; LVC, 2015, 2017).⁵

Agroecology and PtP processes were redefined and given new meaning in the Cuban context in a *sui generis* manner. The PtP methodology was combined with the tactics and organizational forms of a grassroots mass organization, producing in a dynamic movement, with a high level of organization and a specific strategy for the massification of agroecology. A politically articulated movement articulated with Latin-American and

international peasant organizations supporting the transformation of the agri-food system with social and environmental justice as banners of struggle. The emergence of *food sovereignty* and the construction of a global strategy of defending territories, seeds and the commons represent some results of this articulation (Machín Sosa et al. 2010; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2014; Rosset 2013; Rosset et al. 2011; Val 2012, 2017).

The process of innovation initially sparked in Cuba became a reconfiguring of PtP as a multidimensional and complex dispositive for the assembly and integration of agroecologies, territories and subjects. Through the action of this dispositive, heterogeneous concepts of agroecology emerge and undergo (re)configurations, while the dispositive also articulates material and immaterial territorialities at the local level, articulates them with other territories and territorialities, and helps(re)construct both local peasant subjects and an emerging global peasant meta-subject, the “agroecological peasantry.”

We use the term *dispositive* in the sense of an alternative and counter-hegemonic power dispositive developed to counter the technologies of power and the structures of oppression of “disciplinary societies” (Foucault 1992, 2000), today transformed into control societies (Deleuze 2006). It is also a multidimensional mechanism for assembling different interrelated practices, discourses and representations that are put into play for a specific collective action (Svampa 2009; Tilly 1978; Zamora 2014).

We are talking here about PtP as a flexible dispositive or mechanism, a set of concepts/actions/possibilities united by a kind of “gravitational force,” without a unique center of gravity, but rather with the relational dynamics of a polycentric gravity. We will call these different complementary forces that give coherence to the dispositive *vectors*. In what follows and in [Figure 1](#) we present this complex dispositive by focusing on three basic vectors: (1) for assembling agroecologies; (2) for the (re)construction and articulation of territories; and (3) for facilitating the emergence of the peasant as subject. This separation in vectors is a stylized, abstracted representation for analytical purposes; in practice, these dimensions are interrelated and interpenetrate permanently with each other, so much so that it is hard to determine where one ends and the other begins.

Vector 1: dispositive for assembling agroecologies

This vector contains, in general terms, what we might call PtPPs *sensu stricto*, as in the well-known CaC methodologies and processes. That is, a horizontal process of collective training and promotion of agroecology, a space-time of interaction in alternative ontological, epistemic, and philosophical terms, from which emerge, and are (re)signified, knowledges, practices, and discourses that nourish the concept of agroecology.

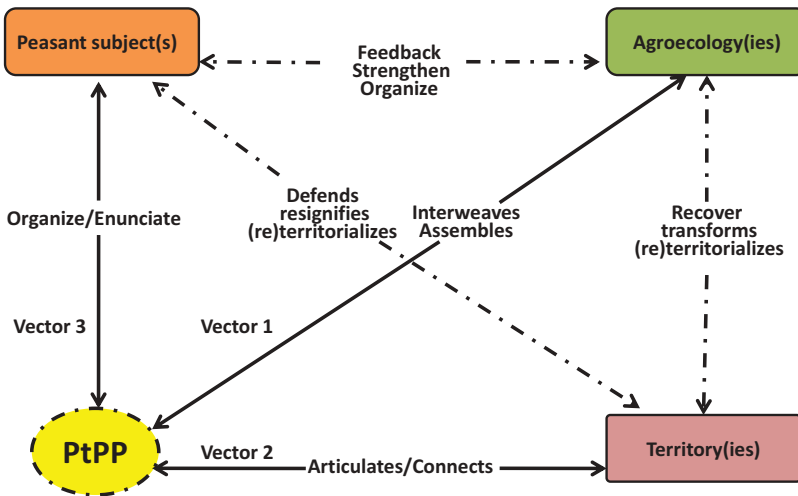


Figure 1. The three vectors in the peasant-to-peasant process (PtPP) dispositive for the construction of agroecology.

We focus here on the PtP process as a mechanism for assembling different dimensions of agroecology that articulates technical-productive, political-ideological, and ontological-epistemic-experiential aspects. This is a process in which agroecology is built and legitimized as a field of existence possibilities for peasant lifestyles, a 21st-century update of “agri-culture” as a form of production and a way of living (Giraldo 2018).

Agroecology is a polysemic term; a disputed concept (Giraldo and Rosset 2018). In specific contexts, agroecology is seen as a series of principles and a guide for agri-food production based on ecological principles without using any inputs from outside the system (Rosset and Altieri 2017). It refers to the shaping, dynamics, transformation, and management of agroecosystems around small-scale peasant, indigenous and family farm production, integrating local knowledge, traditional practices, and technological innovations.⁶

As an analytical proposition, agroecology is related to cultural ecology and its contemporary heir, political ecology. It is fed by heterodox marxism, postmodern debates and decolonial critiques and formulates new perspectives on the conceptualization of relations between human beings and nature (Calle Collado and Y Gallar 2010; Giraldo 2016, 2018; Sevilla Guzmán 2006). Furthermore, many peasant organizations and rural social movements conceive agroecology as more than a set of technical-productive principles, with the integration of social, cultural, and political principles (Calle Collado and Gallar 2010; Machín Sosa et al. 2010; Rosset and Martínez-Torres, 2016).

Therefore, it can be said that agroecology has at least three intimately related and embedded fundamental dimensions:

- (1) A *technical-productive* dimension (agronomic, scientific, and disciplinary: “material agroecology” or “agroecology as farming” [Rosset and Martínez-Torres])
- (2) A *political-organizational* dimension (a mobilization field: “immaterial agroecology” or “agroecology as framing” [Rosset and Martínez-Torres]), and
- (3) An *ontological-epistemic-experiential* dimension (a way of being, knowing, living, and producing [da Silva 2014]).

We are here referring to agroecology in a local but holistic sense, as a specific assembly in a given space-time and concrete reality, in dialogue with global realities. Doing, living, and producing locally are integrated into a broader political discourse with mutual feedback. Agroecology therefore becomes an articulating and legitimizing dispositive of alternatives for the rural worlds. A framework of political action, subjectivities, representations, and practices as alternatives to the hegemonic model of agribusiness and the project of capital (Borras, Edelman, and Kay 2008; Desmarais 2007; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2008, 2010, 2013). It is a semantically updated agriculture; the constitution of a particular peasant emergence in the 21st century that is agroecological, organized, and antihegemonic.

Vector, 2: dispositive for the (re)construction and articulation of territories

The(re)construction of territory/ies here has two meanings: on the one hand, the recovery and/or (re)construction of specific territories based on peasant territoriality and (re)territorialization (Haesbert 2011, 2013); on the other, the invention (*sensu* Porto-Gonçalves 2014) of different immaterial territories for the defense of concrete territory (Fernandes 2009; 2017; Rosset and Martínez-Torres ; Rosset 2013).

The fate of subjects in the rural world develops in particular contexts according to each cultural matrix and temporal-spatial coordinates. This space-time is one of the dimensions of a territory that is (re)constructed, appropriated and given meaning in the specific web of social, humanity-nature, spiritual, and other kinds of relations in which the subjects are immersed. We argue here, following Arturo Escobar (1999, 2005, 2010), that the configurations of peasant space-times are ontologically different from those of hegemonic capitalist modernity – although not totally foreign to them.

According to Giddens (1986), capitalist modernity produced an unmooring effect when it shifted social relations from contexts of local interaction and restructured them through undefined extensions of space-time. He identifies two main mechanisms for this unmooring: that of “symbolic tokens” (such as currency) that circulate without taking into account specific

environments, groups or particular contexts, and that of “experts,” whose specialized knowledge allows them to appropriate countless technologies and services in an exclusive manner.

To a certain extent, PtPPs fight these “unmooring mechanisms.” On the one hand, their central values are cooperation and reciprocity (antagonistic to monetized exchange), and on the other, they contest the mechanism of expert systems, since knowledge-power is dispersed among different players and dynamic, rotational, and contextual roles. Thus, PtP can be understood as a “re-mooring mechanism” that recontextualizes social relations and (re) creates communities based on an alternative space-time that is antagonistic to that of delocalized globalized societies.

Giddens (1986) asserts that the local is being stretched toward the global, while Harvey (1998) posits that the compression of space-time is a condition of postmodernity. These assertions may seem contradictory, but they should be seen as complementary and relational in the process of homogenizing the space-time of human beings. In the sense that we are arguing here, peasants are resignifying and using this stretching of the global in order to stem the compression of modernity and revitalize local space-time through the (re)creation of social and convivial relations, and in this way (re)create community (Illich 2006; Giraldo 2016). Thus, in the process of maintaining their space-times of existence and avoiding being overrun by globalization, they act as antagonistic forces against the homogenizing inertia of capitalist modernity and post-modernity.

A great dispute is raging around territory, displacement and changes in the relations between human beings and nature. Subjects produce their own territories, whose destruction means their demise. Dispossession (Harvey 2004) destroys subjects, identities, and social groups, and this is why territorial struggles and disputes are centered on it. Territory is intimately related to power and control over social processes through the control of space, which is why de-territorialization cannot be separated from re-territorialization (Haesbaert, 2013, 5).

Since the end of WWII, and more aggressively over the last decades, transnational corporations (TNCs) have spread across the globe with a development model based on the appropriation and extraction of common goods, and their transformation into *commodities*. The peasantry, indigenous peoples and rural social movements have resisted this expansion because the territorialization of TNCs directly leads to the deterritorialization of rural peoples (Fernandes , 2009). In turn, the resistance of rural social movements can create multiterritoriality through struggles for the deterritorialization of TNCs. Peasant, afrodescendant and indigenous communities are disputing territories, based on their collective identities, as a *sine qua non* for their survival (Fernandes 2017; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010, 2013; Rosset 2013; Rosset and Martínez-Torres , 2016).

Immaterial territory crosscuts every dimension of physical territory. As power relations, it is also linked to control and domination of knowledge-building and representation processes (Fernandes 2017). In our view, PtP can be a dispositive for the creation and articulation of knowledge, practices and representations. But, paraphrasing Marx, in PtP there is no separation between intellectual work (creation of concepts) and manual work (concrete practices); nor is there a rigid hierarchical structure in which superstructures are conceived and then grounded in a particular praxis. Rather there is a dialogic and dialectic process between conceptualizations and practices.

PtP processes act as dispositive that tie together different knowledges, territories and experiences through local, national and international exchanges, and they contribute to the (re)creation and (re)articulation of local and global peasant space-times. In what is called *diálogo de saberes* (dialogue of knowledges), peasants, activists, leaders, and organic intellectuals (*sensu* Gramsci) name and enunciate concepts that peasants themselves create based on their practices and representations (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2014). In this sense, PtP is one of the most productive “concept kitchens” in the LVC universe.

Thus, PtP acts as a transversal axis that links local territories (plot, farm, cooperative, community, etc.) to spaces of macro-articulation such as international meetings organized by LVC, South-South cooperation processes, and “peasant organization to peasant organization” processes (Rosset et al. 2011). It covers the entire network of micro- and macroarticulations that are woven simultaneously and acquire a certain degree of coherence through *diálogos de saberes* and *intercultural translation* processes (Santos 2010) that occur in different space-times and scales (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2013, 2014; Rosset and Martínez-Torres, 2016). In summary, PtPPs represent a prime space for territorial (re)construction and articulation, and at the same time for (re)assembling the material and immaterial dimensions of territories.

Vector 3: the emergence of the *agroecological peasantry*

The peasantry has a long and complex history of struggle. Today a broad peasant movement exists, and there are many factors that are contributing to the (re)emergence of the peasantry as a historical-political subject. In this section, we will focus on a specific dispositive, PtPPs, and a particular emergent actor, the *agroecological peasantry*, as it takes shape through the articulated organizational processes within LVC. We argue that the PtPPs are catalyzing territorial processes and strengthening the construction of a social and political subject that articulates multiple dimensions of agroecology, as part of struggles, and for the production and reproduction of daily life.⁷

We have before us a subject profoundly impacted by the globalization of capital's logic and its advances in material territories, and by new (mainly information and communications) technologies and that has a very significant degree of supra-local political and territorial organization and articulation. All of this contributes to the configuration of a meta-subject as a dispositive for the creation of a more inclusive collective sense of belonging (Zemelman 2010), where the political is emerging as a facet of “agroecology as framing” for mobilization (La Vía Campesina 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015a, 2016; Rosset and Martínez-Torres , 2016).

We suggest here that PtP processes act as dispositives and *loci* for the collective (re)construction of subjectivities; spaces in which these discourses, representations, and practices are developed and socialized based on the epistemes of the peasantry (Rosset 2015b; Rosset and Martínez-Torres). The dispositive is the *place* – not as a physical space, but rather as a *field* (Bourdieu 1998) – in which a set of meanings around agroecology as an alternative for both production and for life emerge and are shared. A PtP process provides an environment of trust in which these ways of being have a place where they can be expressed, and the transformational potential can advance toward concrete reality. In PtPPs, the agroecological peasantry is shaped in the bodies and minds of those who actively participate in the process, becoming a material force. Of course this is not the only space in which the peasant political subject is (re)emerging, but it is an important one.

The PtPPs work as a transmission belt in the local-global circuit of constructing subjectivities. This is where one can observe how this assembling occurs in two directions: (1) in a “centripetal” movement in which local subjects organize and strengthen themselves; and (2) in a “centrifugal” movement, in the building of a peasant meta-subject that both contains and opens spaces for the existence of local projects. The articulation of different local subjects feeds into the building of the global meta-subject through the conscious use of strategic essentialism (*sensu* Spivak 1987; see also Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010) – designed for the dispute in an arena distinct from local space-times; a global entity that at the same time allows them to “download” defense tools to their territories.

At the same time, the PtPPs provide more flexible and equitable reference models and mobilizing frameworks. Organization from this not totally hierarchical type of structure favors dehierarchizing political practices. The experience and praxis of nondominant groups can help generate nondominant forms of political and social organization (Rocheleau, *personal communication*). Furthermore, PtP strengthens autonomous processes and reduces the dependence on institutions and the state, reducing the risk that agroecology be bureaucratized and coopted by dominant powers (Giraldo and Rosset 2018; see Giraldo and McCune in this same issue).

In the PtPPs, alternative construction networks are being woven. They are spaces in which the solidarity mystique is recreated, common values are reinforced and a collective conscience for social mobilization for transformation is gradually built (La Vía Campesina 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015a, 2016; Rosset and Martínez-Torres, 2016). In addition, they are spaces for the (re) emergence of ancestral cosmovisions and territorialities, that are updated in dialogues with contemporary knowledge (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010, 2013, 2014), in which innovations and existing repertoires are recombined to generate new alternatives in the “art of cultivating and inhabiting the land” (Giraldo 2014, 2018).

If capitalism is a *system of multiple domination* (Valdés Gutiérrez 2009, 2009), the peasant political project can be viewed as a *dispositive of multiple emancipation*: that is, an alternative project for life based on a new relationship between human beings (in terms of gender equity and complementarity, without exploitation, with solidarity, based on community and communality, etc.), and also between humanity and nature (coexistence, coproduction, etc.) (La Vía Campesina 2011; 2012, 2013, 2015a; La Vía Campesina 2016; Desmarais 2007; van der Ploeg, 2008; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010, Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2013; Rosset and Martínez-Torres, Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2016.)

This phenomenon can also be thought of in the terms put forward in dispositive 2, that is, in the construction of a common immaterial territoriality to defend a concrete material territoriality, the space-times of peasant life. The construction of this peasant subject is a dispositive to wage the battle of ideas in immaterial territories, a weapon for the dispute of meanings. The peasant political subject builds a metaphorical wall or enclosure, a dike of contention to protect territories from the advance of capital (Rosset 2009), that permits the existence and *re-existence* of peasant and indigenous diversity, and of biodiversity and the commons (Fernandes 2017; Leff 2014). It is a dispositive for territorial defense in the context of what has been called the *fourth world war*, the war against peoples and for land and territory (SCI Marcos 1997 in ; Rosset 2009).

The importance of PtPPs in La Vía Campesina for the scaling up of agroecology

Humanity is facing an undeniable systemic crisis, particularly the socio-environmental and agri-food crisis (Giraldo 2014, 2018; Hoetmer 2009; Rosset 2009). Agroecology, the struggle for food sovereignty, and the search for sustainability together represent an alternative to the hegemonic model of production. They articulate a political-epistemic community of struggle that disputes the productivist agri-food model, dominated by the logic of financial capital as materialized in *agri-food empires* (van der Ploeg, 2008; 2010).

As contemporary capital penetrates territories that until recently were considered “marginal”, peasants, indigenous peoples and other rural inhabitants represent the main line of resistance against the hydro-agro-extractivism of transnational corporations (Borras, Edelman, and Kay 2008; Desmarais 2007; Giraldo 2015; La Vía Campesina 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015a, 2016; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2008, 2013; Rosset and Martínez-Torres, 2016). Thus, in this context, the peasantry (re)emerges through resistance, renewing its potential as a radical and revolutionary historical-political subject (Barbosa 2013, 2016).⁸

In LVC, the contemporary peasantry is constructing the highest level of supranational articulation.⁹ With extended symbolic territories, a high capacity for organization and mobilization, and their own political and social projects, national, regional and international organizations have created a global peasant movement that is united in its heterogeneity, while their diversity of means, struggles and strategies has been one of their main strengths (Desmarais 2007; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2008, 2010, 2014; Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2016). Agroecology as a defense, resignification and articulation of peasant ways of life, is front and center in the material and symbolic fight for land and territory (Rosset 2013, 2015).

As we have indicated, PtPPs are key in weaving this unity, consolidating the peasant political project and promoting the scaling up of agroecology as an alternative project for both production and for life. In these processes, all of the dimensions described above and the analytically disaggregated vectors are joined and act simultaneously as a single systemic mechanism. In what follows we will briefly review a few concrete examples of how PtP processes work as dispositive in LVC.

Among their varied impacts, PtP processes are important in the implementation of scaling up programs and strategies. In PtPPs, objectives and procedures are analyzed and developed together with the fostering of more fluid exchanges with the different allies of LVC (social movements, universities, NGOs, etc.) and institutions (States, local governments, FAO, etc.) (Altieri and Nicholls 2008; Giraldo and Rosset 2018; Rosset and Altieri 2017).

We fully recognize that different and diverse actors are involved in the scaling up of agroecology processes, but in this paper we focus our analysis on the agroecological peasantry within LVC. In our opinion, the agroecological peasantry is a nonexclusive but central actor in the process of agroecological transformation that demands and encourages the involvement of other actors in each process. Examples include the active role it played in the emergence of important institutional programs such as the “Global Scaling Up Agroecology Initiative” of FAO (FAO 2018a, 2018b), in the demand for and implementation of public policies for the scaling up of agroecology in various countries,¹⁰ as well as in the “Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas” recently adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UN, 2018).

A recent example of this was the *2nd International Symposium on Agroecology: Scaling Up agroecology to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, organized by the FAO.¹¹ LVC succeeded in building a set of strategic alliances (and hegemony) in order for civil society to present a common position and contest meanings before the FAO and member states (Rosset, *participant observation*). In particular LVC and allies created a specific dispositive for a defense of agroecology from cooptation by “green” agribusiness, and in favor of the centrality of the small-scale producer of food as the subject of agroecology.¹² The impact that this dispositive actually had will need to be critically assessed (FAO 2018a, 2018b; Giraldo and Rosset 2018), but just the fact that the peasantry has a place at the table already clearly represents progress achieved through organized struggle (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010).

While LVC recognizes the importance of developing an institutional lobbying and dispute strategy, this is not the main focus of its political project, whose center of gravity is located in local territories and organizational processes (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010). Current thinking in social movements suggests that they need to increase their degree of autonomy (territorial, food, productive, political, etc.) in order to consolidate the peasant political project. The central dispute is *in and from* the territories, positing food sovereignty, popular agrarian reform and agroecology as a means of production and as a way of life (da Silva 2014; Giraldo and Rosset 2018; Rosset 2013).

An example is LVC’s “Global Campaign for Seeds, a Heritage of Peoples in the Service of Humanity,” whose objective is to defend seeds as a *commons*, and to oppose their privatization and corporate control, are essential for agroecological processes (LVC 2010; 2011c). The campaign articulates different territories and struggles, with women playing a leading role in the entire process (LVC, 2011, 2011c; 2018). The fight for the commons is fundamental to the reproduction of the peasantry, and in it, it is possible to see the local-global dialectic that we argue is being built and structured in the PtPPs promoted by LVC.

Another noteworthy example is that of Popular Peasant Feminism. Women from the countryside are carrying out actions and engaging in a series of collective theoretical reflections that critically describe and provide tools for transforming the conditions of oppression in which rural women live (LVC, 2007; Siliprandi and Zuluaga 2014; Seibert 2017a; 2017b). If patriarchy is a generalized phenomenon, the specific conditions of structural violence in the countryside are different from those of urban areas (Rocheleau *et al.*, 1996; Siliprandi and Zuluaga 2014). Rural women are building a dispositive that shows how patriarchy manifests itself in their territories, in order to disarticulate the mechanisms of oppression and move toward more just gender relations. This is a powerful process in which rural women articulate their anti-patriarchal demands within a framework of class struggle and as part of the struggle for land, territory, seeds, and the commons.

Popular peasant feminism has renewed and strengthened the agroecological proposal within LVC, adding a key element for the construction of a new and different social project. Rural women are pushing the peasantry to play a leading role in this historical transformation, in this shift toward postpatriarchal and postcapitalist societies (La Vía Campesina 2007; Seibert 2017a; 2017b).¹³

It is equally important to pay attention to the participation of rural youth. Formation and training processes at the territorial level are already emerging as the main tool for the forming of critical subjects in the countryside, as well as the core strategy in the dispute of meanings (production, culture, identity, etc.) in the rural world (Barbosa 2013; Caldart 2004; Barbosa and Rosset 2017; McCune, Reardon, and Rosset 2014; McCune et al. 2016). The emphasis on generational succession and on strengthening the work with youth represents one of LVC's main political efforts, and it is one of the central topics of our second contribution (see Rosset *et al.*, in this issue).

Finally, within LVC, PtP has transcended its methodological character to become a dispositive for agroecological transformation, the articulation of territories and the creation of a mobilizing historical subject for the peasant political project, for transforming agri-food systems, the various conditions of (class, patriarchal, ethnic, etc.) oppression and, in the long term, the process of realigning global social and environmental relations in a new paradigm for life.

In these cases, as well as in several other processes driven by LVC, the scaling up of agroecology is fundamental. For LVC's sociopolitical project, not only is scaling up agroecology essential for the fight against agribusiness and the capitalist system as the hegemonic organizer of social and environmental relations, but it is also emerging as the main, if not the only path for the socially and environmentally sustainable transformation of the agri-food systems. In summary, scaling up agroecology involves the expansion and territorialization of an alternative project that is being incubated in the international peasant movement; a political project to thoroughly transform the agri-food system, social relations and relations between human beings and nature toward a civilizational paradigm outside of the frameworks of hegemonic modernity and capitalist logic.

Notes

1. Used *sensu* Foucault (1992, 2000) as explained further by Bussolini (2010).
2. In a new stage of the agrarian reform process that is still ongoing today, large farms, and other state-owned properties have been divided up and distributed in usufruct to peasants organized in various types of cooperative associations (Pérez Rojas and Echeverría León, 1998; Merlet 1995; 2011).
3. The *Programa Productivo de Promoción Agroecológica* (PPPA, Productive Program for the Promotion of Agroecology) started in the province of Villa Clara with 13 facilitators (one per municipality), and 27 promoters all of whom were peasants who, from their own farms and based on their own experience, spread and promoted agroecology (Figueras Matos 2005).

4. It is no accident that Cuba has become a reference for peasant (as well as many other) anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist organizations and struggles. It is a model for the effective construction of counterhegemonic alternatives and offers popular social movements that are seeking to transform the reigning social and economic order the potent symbolism and moral legitimacy of the Cuban revolution. The ANAP has historically been a highly important space for the training of activists, cadre, and leaders of peasant organizations from around the world, especially Latin America and Africa.
5. Based on the participatory observations of two of the authors, one of which was a member of the LVC technical team (Rosset) and the other a volunteer supporting various LVC activities and processes (Val), we can assert that in the CLOC (Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations, which is LVC in Latin America), the Cuban experience is being emulated in Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela, among others. In the last few years, its influence has extended to other regions, with various PtP processes initiated in South Asia (India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal) and Asia Pacific (Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Korea); Africa (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe); and Europe (Belgium, Spanish State, France, Norway, and the United Kingdom).
6. For more insight into the origin, development, and different perspectives of agroecology, see: Altieri (2000); Altieri and Toledo (2011), Ferguson (2015); Gliessman (2007; Gliessman 2015), Rosset and Altieri (2017), among others.
7. While there exists an enormous diversity of productive practices, cultural traditions, and ecological particularities, we can delineate some general agroecological characteristics of the emerging agroecological peasantry within LVC. Of course not all exhibit all of these characteristics, but still we can assemble some of the most characteristic traits. Among them we highlight: small-scale family and/or community production; high levels of agrobiodiversity and intercropping of crops and trees, plus livestock; significant use of resources with few purchased inputs; preparation and use of organic fertilizers and mulches; use of homemade natural repellents for pest control; high level of integration and synergy between production systems, as in crops, trees and livestock; high degree of organization and associativity (family, collective, communal, cooperative, etc.); practices of exchange, cooperation, and reciprocity; and organized spaces for training and transmission of knowledge; among many others (Altieri and Koothakan 2009; Altieri and Nicholls 2008; 2012 da Silva 2014; Gliessman 2015, 2018; Holt-Giménez 2001; Machín Sosa et al., 2011; Pachicho and Fujisaka 2004; Perfecto, Vandermeer, and Wright 2009; Rosset and Altieri 2017; Rosset et al. 2011; Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2013; Rosset and Val 2018; Val 2012; Von der Weid, 2000).
8. It is important to emphasize that when we talk about the role of PtPPs in the conformation of a peasant political subject, we do so within the context of LVC processes and we are not suggesting that this extends to the entire peasantry. Furthermore, we do not think of the agroecological peasantry as *the* revolutionary political subject, but rather as a subject with specific demands and its own agenda, yet articulated in a broad front of struggle with other social sectors (feminisms, indigenous peoples' organizations, other rural and urban social movements, workers living under conditions of precarity, trade unions, movements for sexual diversity, among many others).
9. The PtPP dispositive that we refer to articulates a great diversity of sectors (peasants, small-scale farmers, landless workers, rural workers, indigenous Peoples, hunters and gatherers, artisanal fisherfolk, nomadic pastoralist and transhumant peoples, forest dwellers, riverside and coastal peoples, and others) that self-identify with the international peasant movement (LVC, 2009, 2013; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2008, 2010). The PtPPs open this space of

dialogue to form a global peasant movement based on unity in diversity (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2008, 2014; Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2013).

10. Some illustrative recent cases might include: Brazil (Sauer and Mészáro, 2017; Schmitt et al. 2017), Bolivia (Sabourin et al. 2017; Webber 2017), Cuba (Machín Sosa et al. 2010; Vázquez, Marzin, and González 2017), India (Khadse et al. 2017; Khadse and Rosset in this issue; Kumar 2017), Mali (Beauregard 2009), Nicaragua (Freguin-Gresh 2017), Venezuela (Sabourin et al. 2017; Domené and Herrera, in this issue), among others. For a critical analysis of the limits of institutional processes and public policies see Giraldo (2018) and Giraldo and McCune in this issue.
11. <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/second-international-agroecology-symposium/en/>.
12. See “Declaration by organizations of small-scale food producers and civil society organizations at the II international symposium on agroecology convened by FAO,” April 2018, <https://viacampesina.org/en/declaration-at-the-ii-international-symposium-on-agroecology/>.
13. The visibility and demands of sexual diversity in the countryside have recently been added to this major contribution. An important LGBTI movement is emerging (especially in Latin America) that is adding this new issue to the peasant political project. Although it is somewhat recent and is not clearly present in all regions, we believe that it will soon become an important and dynamic element in the construction of alternative ways of life within LVC.

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