ARTICLES

SUBSTANTIVE RATIONALITY IN COMMUNAL ECOVILLAGE MANAGEMENT

Racionalidade substantiva na gestão comunal de ecovilas

Racionalidad sustantiva en la gestión comunal de ecovillas

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ABSTRACT

We approach elements of substantive rationality in administrative practice, in productive organizations, through attributes of communal management in agricultural production activities and care for natural and human life in ecovillages. Inspired by ethnography, we visited four ecovillages for 49 days, following daily life and working relationships. The results show that management routines emphasize social reproduction under principles of self-sufficiency. The sharing of land and the means of production and the orientation to collective care comprise an environment of social and economic security based on voluntary community bonds. Prevail management processes with a bias of substantive rationality that interconnect demands and ecological activism with actions to mitigate ecological degradation and enhance the diversity of life, characterizing traces of human emancipatory administrative practices in the productive sphere in private organizations.

KEYWORDS| Ecovillages, substantive organizations, substantive rationality in administrative practice, agroecology, communal management.

RESUMO

Abordamos elementos de racionalidade substantiva na prática administrativa, em organizações produtivas, via atributos de gestão comunal em atividades de produção agrícola e de cuidado com a vida natural e humana em ecovilas. De inspiração etnográfica, visitamos quatro ecovilas durante 49 dias, acompanhando o cotidiano e relações de trabalho. Os resultados apontam que rotinas de gestão enfatizam a reprodução social sob princípios de autossuficiência. O compartilhamento da terra e dos meios de produção e a orientação ao cuidado coletivo compõem ambiente de segurança social e econômica a partir de laços comunais voluntariamente constituídos. Predominam processos de gestão com viés de racionalidade substantiva que interconectam demandas e militância ecológica a ações de mitigação da degradação ecológica e de valorização da diversidade da vida, caracterizando traços de práticas administrativas emancipatórias do ser humano na esfera produtiva em organizações privadas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE | Ecovilas, organizações substantivas, racionalidade substantiva na prática administrativa, agroecologia, gestão comunal.

RESUMEN

Este artículo investiga los elementos de racionalidad sustantiva en la práctica administrativa, en organizaciones productivas, a partir de atributos de gestión comunal en las actividades de producción agrícola y cuidado de la vida natural y humana en las ecoaldeas. Inspirándonos en la etnografía, visitamos cuatro ecoaldeas durante 49 días, siguiendo la vida cotidiana y las relaciones de trabajo vigentes. Los resultados muestran que las rutinas de gestión enfatizan la reproducción social bajo principios de autosuficiencia. La compartición de la tierra y los medios de producción y la orientación al cuidado colectivo conducen a un ambiente de seguridad social y económica basado en los lazos comunales. Predominan los procesos de gestión con un sesgo de racionalidad sustantiva que interconectan las demandas y la militancia ecológica con acciones para mitigar la degradación ecológica y valorar la diversidad de la vida, con rasgos de prácticas administrativas emancipadoras del hombre en la esfera productiva en organizaciones privadas.

PALABRAS CLAVE | Ecoaldeas, organizaciones sustantivas, racionalidad sustantiva en la práctica administrativa, agroecología, gestión comunal.

INTRODUCTION

Based on ideals for preserving and regenerating the natural environment and on harmony between human beings and nature, we researched organizations – ecovillages – that are currently evolving as a *locus of* experiment in counter-hegemonic life practices, and more specifically, in management. Community life itself is sufficient for characterizing a counter-hegemonic movement when we recognize that contemporaneity is marked by exacerbated narcissism and the atomization of the individual (Han, 2017) in market-centric life dynamics (Ramos, 1981) that degrade life, human beings and the natural environment.

The organizational practices in ecovillages that are discussed in this paper indicate feelings of human emancipation by way of a bias that, in administrative science, finds support in Guerreiro Ramos (1981) and Serva (1997), when they reveal work and production relationships with isonomy/phenomeny characteristics. We report on particular structures and dynamics, and the links between multiple economic possibilities and self-sufficiency-oriented work, which we call communal management.

When Serva (1997) introduced the debate about human emancipation in the field of Organizational Studies in Brazil, he addressed the impasse represented by the absence of evidence of substantive rationality in administrative practices. Ecovillages contribute to the debate and, according to Serva (1997), reveal the impasse in the construction of substantive rationality in administrative practice in private organizations. Productive organizations, in general, adopt administrative processes that, in the terms of Guerreiro Ramos (1981), are based on instrumental rationality. In this way, the overcoming human, economic, and social relations and, therefore, of conventional management techniques will come from another way of interpreting the world and acting on it. Like Serva (1997), we studied private organizations that enable a personal updating that is attuned with self-fulfillment, which makes them self-rewarding social spaces. We also adopted an ethnographic methodological exercise approach based on typical administrative variables.

Our *locus* is private enterprises that establish a connection with ecological practices, with the specificities of rural work and with production that is aimed at social reproduction. In a broad sense, we examine human emancipation in connection with the environmental and social crisis from a non-utilitarian perspective, based on the organizational experiences of community life and work. We start, therefore, with the following question: How do communal management processes in intentional ecological communities provide evidence of the practices of substantive organizations?

Serva (1993) recognized that substantive organizations predominantly adopt a rationality that enables individuals to order their lives ethically, based on actions for establishing a dynamic harmony between personal satisfaction and social satisfaction, and self-fulfillment through the realization of human potential. Unlike the author, who studied enterprises in the service sector, we studied substantive organizational practices that are centered on a group's social reproduction from an ecological perspective.

Studies on substantive rationality have been undertaken in various contexts. Araujo, Paiva, Souza and Momo (2013), together with rural workers of agrarian reform, outlined an isonomic environment in economic-solidarity experiences. Birochi, Vivan and Granzotto (2019), in their study of food plants involved with the slow food movement in the Florianópolis metropolitan region, described the divergent faces of enterprises in agrifood networks based on the substantive approach of organizations. This theoretical perspective, however, goes beyond the productive sector and discovers applications in research into pedagogical projects, as in Silva and Silva (2020), who summarized manifest forms of substantive rationality in the curriculums used in secondary education courses integrated with professional education.

Serva, Caitano, Santos and Siqueira (2015) studied scientific articles that adopted Serva's (1997) pioneering analytical model and, using 38 accounts, pointed out that studies on rationality in organizations have progressed in Brazil. The application includes a diverse range of organizations, such as a psychiatric institution, a health plan operator, community economy companies, cooperative organizations, a monastery, an energy company involved with social responsibility actions, a solidarity economy network, and also an organization in the education sector. The analysis validated the model's contribution to the field of Organizational Studies, thus reinforcing the validity of this line of research and opening up other possibilities based on the thoughts of Guerreiro Ramos.

A vision of collective abundance, work and agricultural production is anchored in an understanding of nature as being part of human life, and not a commodity. With an ecological appeal "that few people realize" in the work of Guerreiro Ramos (Tenório, 2014, p. 45), private organizations in the agricultural production sector reveal their alternative administrative practices, with substantive rationality, making this article relevant within the context of Organizational Studies.

RATIONALITY AND COMMUNAL MANAGEMENT ATTRIBUTES

The concept and movements of ecovillages emphasize a commitment to the diversity in human life, which is in line with ideal values of respect for the natural environment (Cunha, 2012; Santos, 2006). In addition to their environmental appeal, ecovillages, as a specific type of intentional community, incorporate measures of self-sufficiency, and a "return to the rural environment" (Dawson, 2004), alternative cohabitation and education movements. Guided by communal life, they reveal aspects of social exchange that favor human development in its different physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions (Gilman, 1991). These elements are present in a rationality that, in essence, purifies the utilitarian calculation of gain and loss.

Ecovillages stimulate debate and encourage actions that contain the degradation of the natural environment, caused by losses in soil fertility, biodiversity and water quality, in collective health, Food and Nutritional Security and Sovereignty (*SSAN*). Fresh food that is collected from the communities' own gardens or exchanged with neighbors gives meaning to *SSAN*, revealing community well-being that is based on the autonomy to decide what to produce, for whom, and under what conditions.

As the capitalist logic guides behavior not to meet human needs, but to value capital (Antunes, 2018), nature becomes a commodity like any other. Agriculture acquires strictly market aspects (Shiva, 2003), and its natural cycle is appropriated by capital (Altieri, 1998). Ecovillages contest this hegemonic perspective of life, which is based on humans' relationship with the land in exclusively financial terms.

Principles of agroecology, permaculture, organic food production, clean energy, the disposal, reuse and recycling of waste, and a solidarity economy are on the agenda of ecovillages for coping with the environmental crisis (Comunello, 2016). Understanding the mutuality between human beings and the natural environment supports work practices aimed at self-sufficiency and meeting human needs in ecovillages. It is an emancipatory organizational practice anchored in

> suitable scenarios for the personal updating, social relationships and community activities of citizens. Such a society also requires initiatives from citizens, who will be leaving the market society under their own responsibility and at their own risk. (Ramos, 1981, p. 155).

Such scenarios enable the individual to distinguish between good and evil and between false and true knowledge in the order of personal and social life (Ramos, 1981). It is by way of his paraeconomic paradigm that Guerreiro Ramos (1981) synthesizes a multicentric approach to allocating resources in society and outlines social systems. In this paradigm, isonomy is an enclave of mediation between prescription and the absence of community-oriented norms.

Defined as an organizational context in which all members are equal, isonomy contains: 1) a minimal prescribing of norms, which can be established by consensus when necessary,; 2) self-rewarding activities, providing members with a generous kind of social relationship; 3) activities performed by vocation, and not as a practice of efforts that are subordinated to the objective needs that are inherent in the production process itself; 4) a comprehensive decision-making and policy-direction-setting system, free from hierarchical relationships; and 5) primary interpersonal relationships instead of formal relationships. Organizational practices with such qualities are the result of spontaneous initiatives

> [...] around ideals and principles that determine joint actions which, in turn, end up configuring socio-organizational practices that are relatively uncommitted to the essentially systemic status of a bureaucratized society. (Serva, 1993, s/p).

These are, therefore, valid elements for qualifying intentional ecological communities as substantive organizations. Although Serva (1993) found evidence of substantive rationality in productive (service) organizations, but there are few such studies involving ecovillages. Siqueira (2012; 2017) addressed the issue by analyzing tensions between substantive and instrumental rationality, but in a unit that incorporated ecological guidelines in a condominium format, and by way of private agreements. This is an idea of ecovillage that is unlike the one outlined here, because despite the intentions that emerged over time, the studied organization was not oriented towards communal life of sharing the means of production and the results of the work.

Sharing is an attribute that is relevant to the definition of an analytical framework for studying rationality in administrative practices in ecovillages, both by economic (solidarity) and power bias in organizational creativity (Carlsen, Clegg, Pitsis, & Mortensen, 2020). Carlsen et al. (2020) argue that organizational creativity must, above all, enable connections, abundance and collective agency, as opposed to power practices, which are related to assumptions of linearity and singularity in creativity. From the authors' point of view, both power with and power of in ecovillages are perpetrated in the relational and procedural dynamics that integrate human beings and the natural environment. Ideals of power with and power of require interactional framing processes by which people jointly meet organizational demands and achieve new integration and social realities (Carlsen et al, 2020).

Rationality manifests itself through objectives that are ordered in the conscious relationship of meanings and values. Weber (1994) considers formal rationality to be the degree of calculation that is technically possible and actually applied, and material rationality to be the degree to which goods are supplied to certain groups in an economically-oriented action, in the same way that an enterprise is, was or could be judged . It is reasonable to consider that material rationality, in the sense of supplying needs, and formal rationality, in the sense of an end-oriented decision, have different natures and purposes.

The multiplicity of exchanges in ecovillages reveals material rationality connected to purposes of self-sufficiency. It shows plural economy practices with a predominance of domesticity and reciprocity (Polanyi, 2000). Reciprocity appears in voluntary exchanges that materialize in diffuse practices and intersubjective interactions, and not in economic benefits of a financial-monetary nature (Polanyi, 2000). Symmetry is the guiding principle adhering to isonomy. Domesticity, in turn, consists of production for one's own and/or collective use with motivations that are not based on profit or any other market criteria, or on institutions. The act of producing and storing focuses on meeting the needs of the group, family, localities, or political power, as in a manor or a castle (Polanyi, 2000). The guiding principle is autarchy, which is a conception of self-sufficiency.

Centrality in preserving and regenerating ecosystems and in collective well-being is manifested in ecovillages in the forms of natural, multicentric agriculture they adopt, which are in line with substantive administrative practices. In summary, we consider an ecovillage to be like an organization that is oriented to social reproduction, and that has a horizontal, flexible organizational structure, isonomic decision-making processes, social exchanges between human beings, and between human beings and the natural environment, all aimed at self-sufficiency through natural agricultural practices. From the links between these qualities comes what we call communal management. Exhibit 1 below presents the references used in analyzing communal management.

Exhibit 1. **Communal management analysis**

Category	Market-centered organizations	Communal management
Orientation	Capital reproducion	Social reproduction
	Market dependence	Self-sufficiency
Organizational structure	Vertical, hierarchical	Horizontal, flexible
Decision process	Different levels of authority	Isonomic relationships
Economic relations	Monetary exchanges	Social exchanges
Relationship with the ecosystem	Agricultural monoculture	Natural agriculture

THE PATH OF ETHNOGRAPHIC INSPIRATION

Ethnography, which originates from anthropology and was later adopted by other areas of knowledge, proved to be useful for the purpose of exploring management practices in work and production systems that are centered on self-sufficiency with an ecological appeal. Tres and Souza (2019) showed that research in ecovillages makes extensive use of ethnography, such as the studies by Sinisterra (2013), Souza (2016) and Comunello (2016) This is explained by the wish to describe social reality and its production (Flick, 2008) by investigating *in situ* phenomena (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006); when the researcher accesses the natural world, they participate in the daily

life of the researched group and are recognized as an equal (Mariampolski, 1999). This trusting relationship is fundamental to the success of ethnographic research (Barros, 2007).

Data collection took place in four communities using ethnographic resources. One of the authors of this article participated in the daily life of communities as a volunteer. Periods of immersion in the field in ethnography normally last from months to years, and so in the terms of Pinheiro (2019), we assumed an ethnographic-inspired approach.

The criteria defined for choosing the communities were: 1 – self-recognition as a community, or ecovillage; 2 – at least five years of existence; 3 – at least 10 members, or associates; 4 – some degree of shared ownership; and 5 – the practice of natural agriculture. Criterion 1 adopted a conceptual approach, since the term ecovillage allows for different understandings. Criteria 2 and 3 delimited communities that, with a view to achieving self-sufficiency, have a certain degree of complexity in their interpersonal relationships and experiences in managing production systems. Criterion 4 assumes that an ecovillage engenders a sharing of the means of production and property in order to establish isonomic relations, which is an essential criterion for communal management. Criterion 5 connects to life biases that are oriented towards preserving and recovering the natural and working environment for social reproduction.

The selected ecovillages were: Comunidade Campina, Floresta de Iroko, Ecovila Tibá and Source Temple Sanctuary, all of which are rural. Supported by a field diary, data were collected over a 49-day period. Following the guidance of Elliott and Jankel-Elliott (2003) with regard to ethnographic studies, we collected any type of data that would support our analysis, such as documents, local characteristics, the history of regional events, and actions developed by the communities, etc. Architecture, cultivation areas and environmental reserves, fauna, flora and particularities were also registered (through photographs).

Tibá provided us with its statutes, Iroko Forest with its statutes and a document "General coordination", while Source Temple invited us to visit its website https://sourcetemple.one/ (because it has no internal regulations or documents of any kind), as did Campina (www.comunidadecampina.org). Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a representative from each ecovillage and recorded with their consent, which was given by way of an Informed Consent Form (FICF). Data collection include one interview with a member from Campina (20 minutes), one from Ecovila Tibá (30 minutes) and one from Source Temple (43 minutes). An exception occurred with Iroko Forest, where the collection involved all members, because of the reduced number of inhabitants at the time we were collecting information.

In addition to being a source of data triangulation, as suggested by Yin (2015), the interviews provided verification of the alignment between discourse and practice, the recovery of community trajectories, clarification of the available infrastructure, functioning and community values. The interviews took place on the last few days of the stay in each community in order to facilitate understanding and resolve any doubts.

All residents were informed that no real names would be published. Thus, the references we use here are generic – Campinese, Templar, Tibanese, and Forester. After the data organization stage and analysis by the researchers, an informant from each community was invited to validate the systematization.

Table 1 summarizes relevant items for general characterization of the studied units. Campina has its origins in a group of 12 people who decided to live as a community in an integrated way with the natural environment. The group meet once a week for studies on spirituality and ecology, and in doing so they have realized that they need to practice it. Following the purchase of a property by one of the members, everyone gathered together to build the community.

Table 1. **General data of the ecovillages in the research**

Item	Tibá	Campina	Forest of Iroko	Source Temple
Orientation	Ecological	Ecological	Ecological	Religious
Location	São Carlos/SP	Palmares/BA	Itacaré/BA	Cunha/SP
Founded (year)	2006	1991	2013	2010
Number of members	30	19	6	40
Number of residences	9	11	3	29
Collection date	from 8/27/2019 to 9/7/2019	from 7/16/2019 to 7/26/2019	from 7/28/2019 to 8/11/2019	from 8/14/2019 to 8/24/2019
Days of collection	12	11	15	11
Area (hectare)	25	188	35,8	24
Ownership	Collective	Collective	Collective	Collective

Source: prepared by the authors

Iroko Forest also originated from a group of friends who had ecological purposes, and so in 2016 they implemented the project. They bought three neighboring farms, and consolidated them into one. As of the date of the final revision of this article in March 2021, the group is constituted as an informal association. There is, however, a statute with the decision-making processes, general meetings are held, sales are bought and sold, common areas are allocated and property is zoned, with an emphasis on planting and regenerating the ordinary forest and riparian forest areas.

Tibá originated from conversations between friends about environmental problems and how to overcome them. Tyba is a suffix meaning abundance or collective in the Tupi language. It has adopted the motto "growing in diversity", which appropriately expresses the motivations of a heterogeneous group that comprises university professors, students, private sector workers and businessmen. Its legal status is that of a non-profit association. Ownership of the area is in the name of the association, and each partner owns an equal share.

The Source Temple Sanctuary originated in a residence in an urban area in Spain. In 2010, a Templar, who owned rural property in Brazil, suggested a change for the group and donated the area with the legal status of a church. The community is spiritually based and identifies as a non-denominational spiritual center. Members use a variety of symbols to assert that the "mind and consciousness are unique and always fully integrated". The environmental agenda is, therefore, inseparable from the community's spiritual motivation.

COMMUNAL MANAGEMENT IN ECOVILLAGES

The results presented here are in the same order as in Exhibit 1. Although presented separately, the categories are inseparable, so the selected accounts must be perceived as a whole. When necessary, we point out any impasses, tensions, conflicts and overcoming measures that have been adopted. We point out elements, practices

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and evidence that configure communal management on a substantive basis, and not following any strictly fixed criteria or norms. Management is guided by relationships of solidarity, collective learning, intracommunity and intercommunity cooperation, the sharing of land and the means of production, and by ecological activism, environmental education and natural constructions. Ecology and isonomy, the fundamentals that Tenório (2014) highlights in Guerreiro Ramos (1981), anchor the practices of substantive organizations and gather together the requirements needed for what we call communal management.

Social reproduction and self-sufficiency

Management, work and production processes in the four communities move away from market-centric purposes. An ethical orientation and authenticity are clear, and as Serva (1997) points out, are elements of substantive organizations, including the evaluation of adequate means for intertwining environmental demands and agriculture based on regional vocations and agroecological practices for self-sufficiency.

The political orientation towards a shared lifestyle preserves nature's cycles with interconnected routines of work, learning and leisure. A Forester stated: "People nowadays separate work from play. You can't get pleasure from work; the way work is, it turns people off. Here, we feel differently and it has been getting better". Providing evidence of rewarding work to meet collective demands, this Forester expresses an understanding that is listed by Serva (1997) as one of the requirements of substantive rationality in administrative practice.

Sources of work and income come from visits, volunteer programs, offering courses, environmental education, and the sale of surplus production, especially food items. These provide sporadic/occasional income, and are not market strategies. Work is generally four hours a day for five or six days a week. Since the rural activity of caring for crops and animals requires constant work, this imperative is mitigated by shifts.

For Antunes (2018), work in the capitalist logic does not emphasize the supply of human needs, whereas in communities it forms the structure of activities. Tending vegetable gardens, gardening, cooking meals, scheduling events, maintenance work, and taking care of children and the elderly takes up most of the free time. There are professionals, such as teachers, tourist guides, builders, traders, civil servants, artists and other occupations, who carry out external activities that are interspersed with periods dedicated to the community.

A self-sufficiency orientation has been incorporated into Source Temple over time, and this strengthens its ties with its surroundings. A Templar noted that: "In early 2019, we saw that we could no longer invest in the garden (vegetable garden, or crops) for financial reasons, our first idea being to reduce it. I objected and said that we should expand it", which led to tensions about the choice between going to the market, or dedicating more workforce time to meeting the group's needs. We found evidence in this debate that the presence or preponderance of substantive rationality does not presuppose permanent pacification. The decision was taken because:

> If we were to buy everything the garden gives us, it would be very costly to eat with the quality we have; everything without pesticides. It means food for 30-40 people almost every day. We would have to be more dependent on external things, like courses/events. (Templar).

The statement illustrates the fact that conflicts occur around decisions that relate to common benefit, not individual gain. There are also conflicts in Campina, which are mitigated by a particular communication process. A Campinese pondered: "We need to organize ourselves better, and people want to work more and have more

income here, without having to go outside." Once again, the clash appears to be between self-sufficiency and the relationship with the market. This type of tension in Campina is handled by reference to the principles of non-violent communication. Every week someone brings the topic up for discussion based on accounts of events: "It helps us to know more about our feelings and to take better care of ourselves so we can do what we propose here."

In May 2020, when we contacted informants one-by-one to arbitrate the summarized content of each community, that is validation of the data collection results, the health crisis caused by Covid-19 led to significant changes being introduced in the communities. Despite reviewing both communal and individual plans, it was evident that ideals of life and environmental and social activism were being reinforced, both within and around the communities.

We contacted them by phone and the informants pointed out the socioeconomic constraints they were experiencing, but spontaneously claimed that they felt protected, since their subsistence was dependent more on direct work in the field and less on interactions with the outside world. The health crisis thus reaffirmed the values of a life in balance with ecosystems, collective care and satisfaction with the choice previously made. The testimonies corroborate the idea that communities are oriented towards social reproduction, and that working for self-sufficiency, mainly in food and housing, is a determining factor for understanding market dependencies.

Organizational structure and decision-making process

Ecovillages have a horizontal and flexible organizational structure, with a decision-making process that is based on isonomic relationships between members. We address these two categories (Exhibit 1) together, considering them to be the founding categories of communal management that is guided by purposes of self-sufficiency and social reproduction. In the data we collected, there is no manifestation of authority, a hierarchical decision-making structure. Instead, autonomy predominates, showing elements of substantive rationality in administrative practice, which are common traits of the ideal type isonomy, as Serva (1997) points out. Together, they synthesize the first of the five characteristics of isonomy, according to Guerreiro Ramos (1981), self-rewarding activities with members participating in groups that provide a generous type of social relationship.

Each collective space in Campina is assigned to a "focuser", who is responsible for keeping it in order, planning and carrying out the required tasks, and informing others about progress. Tibá also illustrates decentralized decision-making with its horizontal organizational structure. A Tibanese commented that was responsible for making the management spreadsheets, but that the decision was a collective one:

> I developed some management tools and proposed them to the group. After we had accepted the procedure, everyone was free to look after it. It's not that I'm solely responsible; no one comes to me with a purchase receipt and gives it to me to put on the spreadsheet. Everyone has autonomy to do so.

Such an initiative is useful for illustrating the four other characteristics of isonomy (Ramos, 1981): minimum prescription, which is established by consensus when necessary; activity carried out as a vocation – in this case, according to the technical knowledge of a member; and a fully comprehensive decision-making and policy-making system. The passage above reveals that the suggested tools were previously accepted and are now managed collectively; primary relationships between members – as opposed to formal hierarchical relationships – are made possible by a flexible, horizontal organizational structure, and a decision-making process among equals.

Tibá formed a group of five people, the Basal, which is responsible for common areas and daily actions. It is a small-scale collective enterprise, which, in the conception of Guerreiro Ramos (1981), is phenonomy, "a social system initiated and directed by an individual, or a small group, and which allows its members maximum personal choice and a minimum of subordination to formal operational prescriptions" (p. 152). A Tibanese comments on this, as follows:

> We are divided into organizational areas. For the residents [Basal group], we decide the demands that interest us and the projects to develop, such as agriculture, internship and visitor programs, events, courses. So, we form an organization that is separate from non-residents. For the Tibá group [which includes non-resident members], we decide on general functions, such as long-term projects or infrastructure in general. Those who live abroad have no responsibility for daily chores, but for the whole thing; residents have daily tasks and the general workload is shared. Before, one group used to interfere with the other on these points.

Here we find an element of instrumental rationality – the division of labor – with implications for interpersonal relationships and commitment to the natural environment. The Tibanese expression distinguishes between resident and non-resident members. Conflicts were and are present in this differentiation; "before we had more interference from one group over the other". But it is not about individuals diverging with regard to individual interests, but about collective purposes.

If one group were to interfere with the other, dialogue would take place to reduce the damage supported by the principle that decisions, at Tibá, "are taken by consensus and not by vote. It's not the majority that wins; that's our sociocracy". In the decision reported, we identified a predominance – but not an exclusivity – of substantive rationality in conflict resolution, and in the process of labor division. This confirms the scale of the intensities, which is the continuum mentioned by Serva (1997).

Source Temple and Campina have more spontaneous structures and way of functioning, which does not exempt organizational measures. Weekly meetings between residents, volunteers and visitors are held in Campina to distribute routine tasks. A Campinese stated that "in the beginning there were sporadic meetings, almost always to solve problems that were already happening. Now we do it before these problems become real". Reinforcing the orientation towards self-sufficiency in the midst of administrative deliberations is always on the agenda, showing once again, acts of an instrumental nature mediated by an element of substantive rationality, such as ethical judgment and emancipatory values (Serva, 1997).

Monthly meetings, which are exclusively for Campina residents, deal with longer-term issues, including those that are strategic for the community. A Campinese reported that in these meetings "we also talk about coexistence agreements. Some we think about for a long time before reaching a decision. Others cease to exist. It's built up over time". Other issues, such as the acceptance of new residents and conflict mitigation are also dealt with. A conflict resolution process was outlined that was based on this scheme of meetings.

When there is a conflict between residents, direct communication is established between the parties or litigants, the aim being to achieve reconciliation without the intermediation of third parties. When reconciliation is not achieved, however, a mediator becomes involved. Another member from Campina noted that "more than 50% of cases are resolved at the initial stage". If the conflict persists even after the two initial phases, a meeting

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is called for a collective decision. But "we rarely reach this point", states a Campinese. Tenório (2005) uses this dialogical decision process to qualify social management.

Siqueira (2012) identified that there is a more or less formal logic in ecovillages . Forest of Iroko and Tibá have more formal rules, a phenomenon that is explained by similar purposes at their origin, which we attribute to the type of organization, the structure of which involves the acquisition of shares. Despite the rules, the technical and organizational conditions are flexible, and always subject to (re)formulation through collective dialogue. A Forest member pointed out internal adaptations of the members' vocations, which characterizes isonomy (Ramos, 1981), and illustrates flexibility: "Biologists, ecologists and agroforesters arrived; in these areas we have a lot of people. An administrator who is familiar with the more bureaucratic things has not arrived yet."

On the whole, in addition to caring for the ecosystem, the raison d'être of each community comprises the constitution of a social environment of mutual support and relations between equals, which is in line with the concept of isonomy of Guerreiro Ramos (1981). The decision-making process, then, is responsible for linking individual work, which is carried out in an autonomous way, and vocations, thus enabling self-fulfillment and the attribution of the isonomic character of substantive organizations (Serva, 1997).

Plural economic relations and social exchanges

Communal management processes, which are based on work and production activities and carried out as a vocation, reconcile autonomy with professional interests and skills, but not in the form of exclusively technical-economic efforts. They entail horizontal decision-making that, once mediated by elements of substantive rationality and a peculiar way of life that integrates human beings and the natural environment, determine communal management practices. It is, therefore, communal management that makes internally synchronized work situations and individual times possible and, thus, is useful for preserving the autonomy of members, including in terms of economic and financial decisions that are not linked to the community. A Tibanese points out:

> The challenge is to create conditions so that regardless of the form, and whether they are working outside or not, [...] people can enjoy the life in Tibá. We can be happy eating the manioc we planted ourselves, while someone else wants to earn 20 thousand a month. Everyone goes their own way. What's important is appreciating the space and our work to practice our way of life.

The commitment to "appreciating the space and our work to practice our way of life" leads members, internally, to a pattern of autarchy, to the domesticity of Polanyi (2000). It is an economic doing with a view to guaranteeing a given lifestyle. Domesticity is anchored in purposes of ecosystem regeneration and connected to ideas of sustainability, SSAN and collective health. It fosters creative abilities, critical reasoning and autonomy. Autonomy reveals itself not only in collective decision-making, but also in individual economic choices, as the Tibanese stated. This phenomenon confirms the findings of Cunha (2012), who also identified individual and collective initiatives coexisting in ecovillages.

Due to the plot structure of Iroko Forest, independence in individual interests is more evident, since each member enjoys a broad autonomy in their own area. As various individual projects advance, there are demands for harmony to exist between autonomy and cooperation, but without harming communal management, as a Forester commented: "We know that when people settle here, they start producing and we gain in strength. We

already have a lot of plans together. Of course, I have my own, but it all fits." At Source Temple Sanctuary, there is a similar phenomenon between autonomy and cooperation:

> When someone wants to take on something new, like hosting, we support them. We've already had accommodation available; we have several houses here that can be used for this. But after a while the person responsible for it didn't want it anymore and that's fine too. The restaurant was another case. When someone wants and feels they should do it, they're is free to do so. As a group we think about supporting the ideas and the thing is built naturally.

Economic autonomy "is built naturally", and based on productive activities both for supplying collective needs and meeting individual interests. In addition to internal production for families and the collective, which configures domesticity, there are services and the production of surplus that connect the community to the outside world in market relations and social exchanges. All these are under voluntary agreements, which Polanyi (2000) calls reciprocity. A Templar clarifies:

> What we don't produce here we always buy from our neighbors, or trade with them. We have our garden that supplies us with salad and many other things. But we get a lot of fruit and cheese from them. It's a way of helping them. Here in this region, our neighbors produce basically milk and cheese for sale, but they always have an orchard and a vegetable garden for family consumption.

The number of residents in Tibá has grown since 2013 to more than 40, including "floating residents" – those without a commitment to stay. As a result, there was an initiative to attract people to productive activities through insertion via "approximation through work". As Siqueira (2012) pointed out, the tensions between instrumental and substantive rationalities are at stake, as in the case of a person renting a house and a hectare of land who has already been in the community and is in the process of joining it, and who leaves it but returns, approaching it in that way . There was a six-month rent grace period, "the money goes to the common cashier; he knows how to plant and was looking for land, so we talked and reached this agreement", says a Tiba resident, "in good faith (the grace period) because we had to wait for the crops to grow and he's already started putting vegetables on our weekly market stand. It's better for everyone, to strengthen the entire community."

The case above illustrates reciprocity of knowledge and products in a symmetrical pattern (Polanyi, 2000) on the one hand, and a dilemma on the other when it comes to realizing substantive rationality (Serva, 1997), which is driven by an element of instrumental rationality, that is, the need for rent as a source of income. In the highlighted sections, impasses arise from the need to attract people to the collective and to give consent for the return of a former member.

Reciprocity mediated by market relations is also revealed in another rental situation; facilities for a meliponiculture project. In this case, beehives are scattered throughout the community, and beekeepers who have no direct relationship with the community sell their honey, revealing a market relationship. There are benefits, however, due to the increased pollination of the cultivated areas and the residual native forest, revealing a relationship of reciprocity via cooperation in an activity that is ecological and technical-economic, again requiring considerations between substantive rationality and instrumental rationality.

Other evidence of economic plurality via member inclusion processes occurs in Campina. Any visitor so wishing can be included in community life by vocation and self-interest as long as they meet the general

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motivation criteria of the community. To do so, the interested person goes through a 12-month inclusion period as a pre-member. During this period, the pre-member contributes financially to the common fund and begins to receive responsibilities on a daily basis. The financial contribution covers their housing and meals, which are taken collectively. In the words of a Campinese: "while someone is a pre-member, he or she is always assessed in the residents' meetings".

A Campinese resident details the collective learning that occurs between residents and pre-members as a kind of reception: "We want to strengthen the community, so we pay attention to the development of those who are living here and experiencing the day-to-day life." If they are accepted, the person can build a house, which is owned by the community. This aspect is known to everyone from the beginning and, as a community interviewee comments, once a person is accepted, they enter the economic cycle of solidarity and start receiving the income that Campina generates.

Natural agriculture

The concept of the farmer as a person who takes care of the land is revealed in communal management and makes it possible to understand the relationship of the communities with the ecosystem. Unlike the monoculture producer of agricultural goods, cultivation in an agroforestry system, as observed in these communities, brings humans, fauna and flora together in reciprocal care. In addition to providing food, these crops regenerate the life of the soil, thus helping balance the ecosystem and having an influence on environmental activism in the surrounding area. Agroforestry in Campina serves as a fire barrier. In Tibá there is resistance to the monoculture of sugarcane. Forest of Iroko brings together farmers in a network and teaches them that cocoa can be planted in a combination with other plants in the middle of the forest and in the shade. Source Temple has dialogues in the neighborhood about ecology that go beyond its spiritual agenda.

The customization of production is clear, and always based on local vocations. In monoculture, whatever the crop in any part of the world, standardization transforms the act of production into simplified and repetitive routines, removing the condition of being the intellectual mentor of the production process from the farmer (Shiva, 2003). Production processes in ecovillages, however, are constantly encouraging experimenting with crops using techniques that are integrated with nature, and based on internal processes and notions of self-sufficient systems. This breaks away from the hegemonic pattern of agricultural production, which requires increased efforts of communal management for preserving the diversity of life, and a dependence on the market, which is mitigated by communal work that ensures emancipatory traits (Serva, 1997).

In addition to human needs, communal management is oriented towards providing the conditions necessary for preserving and regenerating ecosystems. Food production combines community demands with polyculture and SSAN alternatives that are based on processes, not inputs. Communal management guides work and production accordingly. A Templar comments that "all the dry toilets we have here give us good fertilizer, so we don't have to buy from outside. We need to manage this instead of going to the market to buy fertilizer". In addition to providing food, a Campinese comments that the now-recovered forest satisfies multiple demands:

> We collected wood to build cob houses. We recovered the area and now we have the materials available.
> It's part of the management; it's not harmful to the environment. It's the same with firewood: we collect
> dry wood from the forest, and in addition to reducing the risk of fire, we use it in the kitchen.

In contrast to hegemonic market-dependent practices for supplying raw materials, inputs, equipment and marketing, ecovillages present themselves not only as an ecological movement of resistance to socio-environmental degradation, but also as substantive organizations that focus on the search for self-sufficiency. A Campinese comments: "Our biggest expenditure is on meals and the food we can't produce here". Communal management, therefore, tries to deal with multiple demands to promote self-sufficiency, especially of food and housing, while creating conditions so that, like the principles of agroforestry, communal life progresses through syntropic and non-dependent processes and interactions with the market.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ecovillages are environments that reconfigure the hegemonic notions of private organizations, management, work, economy and social life. Communal management emerges in this context, linking the social reproduction orientation of ecovillages with a flexible horizontal organizational structure, with isonomic decision-making processes, and social exchanges between human beings and the natural environment, aimed at self-sufficiency through natural agricultural practices.

Despite being subject to conflicts, impasses and contradictions, ecovillages give new meaning to the administrative act in private organizations due to their resilience to a utilitarian, market-centric life, although without denying it. Conflicts occur around decisions for the common benefit and not for immediate individual gain. Contradictions are revealed by interactions with the market, such as the sale of any surplus production, the rental of facilities, and monetary collections from visitation programs. As the real intentions of each community are clearly absorbed by ecovillage residents, the impasses tend to lessen. Direct and non-violent communication techniques, as in Campina, well-defined statutes, as in Iroko Forest and Tibá, and even the lack of formal agreements, though with clear communal pacts, as in Source Temple, are propositional actions in this direction.

The purposes, values and commitments of each ecovillage merge into an organizational whole that starts to demand what we call communal management, which is characterized by the predominance of substantive rationality. They make up an ecological movement of resistance via natural agricultural practices and an organizational form that structures work and production for self-sufficiency through economic relations of reciprocity and domesticity interspersed with relations with the market. They enable, therefore, self-fulfillment, understanding, ethical judgment, authenticity, emancipatory values and autonomy (Serva, 1997).

The ecovillages we studied implement ecosystem preservation/regeneration practices in opposition to the market logic. They reject agricultural monoculture in favor of natural agriculture and biodiverse systems. In terms of their management, isonomic decision-making processes predominate, with the active participation of members who are involved with everything from decision-making to execution.

The associated work surpasses exclusively ecological interests, characterizing a given pattern of human socialization that, as Comunello (2016) points out, reacts to the environmental crisis through different principles and a systemic view of the world and the nature/human relationship. Ecovillages also deserve attention as private productive organizations because they reconcile human interests in work and production with plural economic practices that involve concepts of cooperation and mutualism.

At a time of global health crisis as a result of Covid-19, ecovillages build alternative environments for learning and living in society, mainly because of the centrality of their appeal to integrate human beings/the

natural environment. Important responses to everyday problems are in progress, as shown by the results. This fosters new institutions of popular inspiration and the mitigation of environmental liabilities, which also generate subsidies for public administration and government policies. These units have, for example, the potential to function as training and demonstration units of technical assistance and rural extension services (ATER) with an agroecological bias.

As practical examples of substantive organizations that are constituted on the basis of ecological interests, ecovillages make their contributions to Administrative Science that go beyond the conventional approaches of private economic organizations. Via intercommunity interactions, they foster mutualities and plural economic practices that include the market enclave under isonomy/ phenonomy formats (Ramos, 1981).

From the results achieved, we can indicate the gaps that exist and that can be filled by future studies. In this regard, research can be carried out that is related to understanding ecovillages as communities of practice (CoPs) (Wenger, 1998) that adopt a social and interorganizational development approach (Fischer & Melo, 2003), and as economic enterprises that adopt solidarity financial practices.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Guilherme Smaniotto Tres worked on the conceptualization and theoretical-methodological approach. The theoretical review was conducted by Guilherme Smaniotto Tres and Washington José de Souza. Data collection was coordinated by Guilherme Smaniotto Tres. Guilherme Smaniotto Tres and Washington José de Souza worked together in analyzing the data, and writing and revising the manuscript.