

# Producing ‘other’ versions of ourselves: NEPBIO and practices of environmental education, permaculture, and bioconstruction

Produzindo *outros* de nós: NEPBIO e práticas de educação ambiental, permacultura e bioconstrução

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## Abstract

In this article, we aim to think about Environmental Education as an aesthetic of existence experienced at NEPBIO - *Núcleo Experimental de Permacultura e Bioconstrução de Cáceres* (Cáceres Experimental Center for Permaculture and Bioconstruction) -, which constitutes the subjects who pass through it and participate in its workshops. The problem is: how do discursive and non-discursive practices move in an institution for the governance of oneself and others, in relation to Environmental Education, and produce aesthetics of ‘other’ existences, which go against the capitalist project of society? Cartography was the methodological inspiration for the research and the analyses were grounded in the archaeo-genealogical studies developed by French philosopher Michel Foucault, especially in relation to governance. The conclusion is that NEPBIO’s Environmental Education practices can be conceived as aesthetics of ‘other’ existences, in relation to those required by the capitalist production model, creating other “ways of being a subject” and other “forms of living”: other aesthetics of existence.

**Keywords:** environmental education; governance; cartography.

## Resumo

Objetiva-se, neste artigo, pensar a Educação Ambiental como estética de existência vivenciada no Núcleo Experimental de Permacultura e Bioconstrução de Cáceres (NEPBIO), que constitui os sujeitos que por ali transitam e participam de suas oficinas. Problematiza-se: como as práticas discursivas e não discursivas se movimentam em uma instituição de *governamento de si e dos outros*, em relação à Educação Ambiental, e produzem *estéticas outras de existência*, que vão na contramão do projeto capitalístico de sociedade? A cartografia foi a inspiração metodológica da pesquisa, e as análises foram ancoradas pelos estudos arqueogenealógicos desenvolvidos pelo filósofo francês Michel Foucault, especialmente em relação à governamentalidade. Conclui-se que as práticas de Educação Ambiental do NEPBIO podem ser concebidas como estéticas de existências *outras*, em relação àquela requerida pelo modelo de produção capitalístico, agenciando outros “modos de ser sujeito” e outras “maneiras de viver”: *estéticas outras de existência*.

**Palavras-chave:** educação ambiental; governamentalidade; cartografia.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Salgamos de la gran ciudad<sup>1</sup>, ven conmigo; levantemos una comunidad cerca del río;  
hagamos algo para que cambie nuestro destino;  
ser libre y proponte encontrar el camino (Zona Ganjah).*

With the aim of thinking of ourselves and others, in the exercise of an “environmental ethics” on/of/with the everyday personal and social practices, this research was developed between 2019 and 2021 in the Master’s degree at the *Programa de Pós-graduação em Educação* (Education Postgraduate Program) at the *Universidade do Estado de Mato Grosso* (State University of Mato Grosso) (UNEMAT), Cáceres (MT) headquarters, thanks to the academic cooperation agreement, a partnership for extension and academic internationalization with the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia* (National university of Colombia) (UNAL).

We availed ourselves for: *meetings* which provoked ‘other’<sup>2</sup> versions of ourselves (becoming), *affections* which forced our bodies and our thoughts to make our discursive and non-discursive practices become ‘others’. We asked ourselves how it would be possible to have “a modifying experience of oneself in the game of truth, and not as a simplifying appropriation of others for communication ends”<sup>3</sup> (Foucault, 1984, p. 13).

In this context, the post-structuralist perspective allowed us to conceive that we are, ourselves and others, permanently and heterogeneously existing in/of/with the environmental multiplicities. We are constituted at the same time we constitute systemic networks in/of/with the spacetimes<sup>4</sup> where, when and how we are existing. We are constituted in forms and ways which are liable to be ‘other’ forms and ways of existing. Configurations and changes. Updates. Potentiated on/with the meetings, we weave aesthetics of existence.

Based on the concept of the aesthetic of existence, created by the philosopher Michel Foucault (2006), in this article, we problematize the subject’s processes of being. He, a french professor, thinks/problematizes the configurations and changes of the “ways of being a subject” and “forms of living”, dealing with ethical and aesthetical fields which produce aesthetics of existence. With this inspiration, we aimed, in the research, to think/problematize Environmental Education (Maldonado, 2001) as an aesthetic of existence experienced in the *Núcleo Experimental de Permacultura e Bioconstrução de Cáceres* (Cáceres Experimental Center for Permaculture and Bioconstruction)- NEPBIO, which constituted the subjects who pass through there and participate in its workshops.

We exercise the practice of thinking/problematizing, carrying out an exercise of cartographical composition. We mapped the practices experienced at NEPBIO, identifying them with the concept of Environmental Education and, afterwards, analyzing how these practices reverberate in the lives of the students who pass through in the workshops there offered.

In this research, we questioned: is it possible to produce an *aesthetic of ‘another’ existence*, which breaks with the patterns required by capitalistic aesthetics (of exacerbated consumption and thoughtless disposal)? We understand that the production of capitalistic subjectivity has the purpose of eliminating the processes of singularization, neutralizing ‘other’ thoughts and actions, for...

Everything which surprises, even if mildly, must be classifiable in some framework, referral zone. Not only the professors, but the means of mass communication [...] are very much endowed for this type of practice.<sup>5</sup> (Guattari; Rolnik, 2013, p. 52).

<sup>1</sup> Santafé de Bogotá Distrito Capital, Colômbia.

<sup>2</sup> We think of the notion of ‘other’ as material and virtual images.

<sup>3</sup> “[...] experiência modificadora de si mesmo no jogo da verdade, e não como apropriação simplificadora de outrem para fins de comunicação”.

<sup>4</sup> Understanding it as an indissociable unit, we used the grammatical form ‘*spacetimes*’, based on the studies on/of/with the everyday, lead by professor Nilda Alves (2000). Thus, we can explode binaries/dichotomies/polarities inherited from modernity.

<sup>5</sup> Tudo o que surpreende, ainda que levemente, deve ser classificável em alguma zona de enquadramento, de referência. Não somente os professores, mas também os meios de comunicação de massa [...] são muito dotados para esse tipo de prática.

We then carried out the exercise of thinking/problematising how NEPBIO's discursive and non-discursive practices take place in an institution for the governance of oneself and others, in relation to Environmental Education, and produce 'another' aesthetic of existence, which goes against the capitalistic project of society.

To reach this objective, we used pieces from the toolkit made available by Michel Foucault. As it pertains to the way in which Foucault operates in the theme of the production of the subject, Fischer identifies two fundamental concepts: aesthetics as the confrontation of the power and critical genealogy as intervention, endorsing the relation knowledge-power, indispensable for the foucauldian studies. The author makes reference

[...] to the ways of handling the theme of production of the subject, to the category of aesthetics as the confrontation of power and the choice for a genealogical and critical history, as a form of intervening in the discursive and knowledge networks.<sup>6</sup> (Fischer, 2012, p. 12).

The discursive and non-discursive practices experienced in NEPBIO's spacetime AND the students of the second semester of UNEMAT's Biology course were the intercessors<sup>7</sup> of this research.

The professors Gilles Deleuze<sup>8</sup> e Felix Guattari<sup>9</sup> state that:

The essential is the intercessors. Creation is the intercessors. Without them there is no work. They may be people – to a philosopher, artists or scientists; for a scientist, philosophers or artists – but also things, plants, even animals, as in Castañeda. Fictional or real, animate or inanimate, it is necessary to fabricate one's own intercessors. It is a series. If we do not form a series, even if completely imaginary, we are lost. I need my intercessors to express myself, and they would never express themselves without me: one always works in several, even when it is not seen. And even more when it is visible: Félix Guattari and I are each other's intercessors.<sup>10</sup> (Deleuze; Guattari, 1992, p. 156).

We carried out this research following two methodological paths: cartography and archeo-genealogy.

**Cartography** was used to compose the meetings of the students of UNEMAT's Biology course with NEPBIO's aesthetic of existence and its discursive and non-discursive practices. According to the philosophical work of the professor Gilles Deleuze (1995), a research which aims to be cartographic requires assemblages. Assembling is "being in the middle" and opening oneself to meetings, affections, becomings<sup>11</sup>.

The second was the conduction of an **archeo-genealogical** exercise, demonstrating how aesthetics of 'other' existences are practiced within that spacetime and how they may be conceived as practices of governance of oneself and others. We present, as follows, the methodology of the research, its main intercessors and the achieved results.

We narrate, describe, analyze the meetings on/of/with NEPBIO's spacetime which, as we defend, construct aesthetics of 'other' existences, that is, constitute themselves in Environmental Education practices which produce subjectivity. We conceive that spacetime as a governance institution, which produces 'other' aesthetics of existences, differentiated from that which is required by the capitalistic subjectivity mode of production.

<sup>6</sup> [...] aos modos de tratar o tema da produção do sujeito, à categoria da estética como enfrentamento do poder e à opção por uma história genealógica e crítica, como forma de intervenção nas redes discursivas e de saber.

<sup>7</sup> Students, permaculturists, professors, etc.

<sup>8</sup> French professor and philosopher. His work composes the field of Philosophy of the Difference, in Brazil.

<sup>9</sup> French Psychoanalyst. He developed philosophical works alongside the philosopher Deleuze.

<sup>10</sup> O essencial são os intercessores. A criação são os intercessores. Sem eles não há obra. Podem ser pessoas – para um filósofo, artistas ou cientistas; para um cientista, filósofos ou artistas – mas também coisas, plantas, até animais, como em Castañeda. Fictícios ou reais, animados ou inanimados, é preciso fabricar seus próprios intercessores. É uma série. Se não formamos uma série, mesmo que completamente imaginária, estamos perdidos. Eu preciso de meus intercessores para me exprimir, e eles jamais se exprimiriam sem mim: sempre se trabalha em vários, mesmo quando isso não se vê. E mais ainda quando é visível: Félix Guattari e eu somos intercessores um do outro.

<sup>11</sup> Happening affections, powers, and forces, possible as ways of being and ways of living.

## Research paths

Inspired by the post-structuralist studies and with the scientific rigor of the researchers participating in a qualitative research, available for affections on/of/with the events, we recuperated fragments of the research results in this article, written in the form of assemblages. We present meetings which reverberated in the aesthetics of our existence, with the intention of potentiating and causing other assemblages in the educational field (Maldonado, 2017).

The cartographical conception allows for the research to be weaved without fixed preestablished rules, for it acts through maps. "Maps which overlap in such a way that each one finds in the following a rearrangement, instead of finding in the preceding ones an origin."<sup>12</sup> Maps permeated by meetings and affections. (Deleuze, 1997, p. 75).

We understand the ways of being and forms of living as aesthetics of existence resulting from other meetings. Circumstances, factors and social, political and economical agents condition us. Discursive and non-discursive practices condition us. However, there is the possibility of escape from the conditionings, as the research at NEPBIO proves.

All these and other forms and/or ways of existence – heterogenous, multiple, different and diverse, systemic, rhizomatic – are approached by professor Foucault as a theme of speeches (Foucault, 1970) and truth, with which he creates the concept of aesthetics of existence (Foucault, 2006). It is possible to understand the aesthetics of existence as configurations and changes of ways of existing, such as "making of oneself another for oneself"<sup>13</sup> (Fischer, 2012, p. 12). Inspired by Foucault, we developed the concept of aesthetics of existence through its conceptual emergence and the relation with the notion of discursive and non-discursive practices and we thought of Environmental Education through NEPBIO.

Thus, thinking with Foucault about a subject's ways of being and forms of living, we analyzed the relations which he considers as the problem between 'subject' and 'truth'. Foucault teaches us that these relations refer to the greek concept *epiméleia heautoû*, characterized, understood as "taking care of oneself".

We travelled historically with language's games. Analyzing what is said and written, Foucault refers to the ancient Greek text, written by Plato and Alcibiades, where he finds the origin of the concept of "taking care of oneself". Describing conditions which allow for that conceptual emergence, Foucault analyzes how that concept is related to the concept *gnôthi seautón*, corresponding to the delphic prescription "knowing oneself".

One thing is "knowing oneself", and another, according to the text by Plato and Socrates, is telling someone that they must know themselves: know yourself! Thus, they show the pretensions of conducting the lives of others. Well, Foucault alludes to Alcibiades' pretensions to govern over others. In this sense, we are attentive to the discursive formations related to the notion of governing.

Thereby, we elaborated another map, thinking/problematising NEPBIO and being constituted and constituent of discursive and non-discursive practices, on/of/with the power relations. NEPBIO is, therefore, thought/problematised as a practice of governance for the constitution of another aesthetic of existence, with views to a beautiful life.

It is about problematising how "an individual, then, accepts certain ways of behaving and certain values because he decides and wants to carry out in his life the beauty which they propose"<sup>14</sup> (Castro, 2009, p. 150). This implies thinking of "ways of 'subjectivating'" and "forms of living" as discursive formations of the statements, events, processes of objectivations and subjectivations.

Accompanying this archeo-genealogical analytics of the foucaultian discursive theory on the relation between subject and truth, after the platonic Greek period, it is possible to analyze how this relation is changed during what he considers a "cartesian moment". There, the notion of "taking care of oneself" became another; went through a radical change. Under a transcendentalist perspective, inherent to this cartesian moment, the subject must become another to "access truth", particularly, so they can be "illuminated by the truth".

<sup>12</sup> "Mapas que se superpõem de tal maneira que cada um encontra no seguinte um remanejamento, em vez de encontrar nos precedentes uma origem".

<sup>13</sup> "[...] fazer de si um outro para si mesmo".

<sup>14</sup> "[...] um indivíduo, então, aceita certas maneiras de comportar-se e determinados valores porque decide e quer realizar em sua vida a beleza que eles propõem".

Continuing the analytics through historical travels of the conceptual displacements of the notion of “taking care of oneself”, of these relations between “subject” and “truth”, we meet with Espinosa and Nietzsche to, fortunately potentiated, understand that truths are of this world; that the truths are in/of/with this planet: Earth. They are immanent. Being immanent *forms and formations of being of a subject and ways and changes of the ways of living*.

In this sense, we problematize, according to the discursive theory by Foucault, NEPBIO's discursive and non-discursive practices of Environmental Education as another aesthetic of existence. From Foucault's 'toolkit', we employed his theory of discursive practices (Fischer, 2012).

But what does a theory of discursive practices want? Only to describe discursive events. And that is not little. It is floating at the limit of things and words, as Foucault writes concerning Deleuze's books — precisely because the event would never be reduced to a state of things, functioning as the reference of something which was said and whose veracity or falsehood we would seek to investigate<sup>15</sup> (Fischer, 2012, p. 25).

Thus, in the research, we sought out to map, problematizing, describing and commenting discursive and non-discursive practices which move the meetings.

Reading studies of a post-structuralist perspective, we found the theoretical-methodological inspirations in Michel Foucault's discursive theory. About this theoretical work, professor Rosa Maria Bueno Fischer (2012, p. 106) says:

For Foucault, describing discursive and non-discursive practices, around an object or theme, has to do with seeing a dedicated and comprehensive work of investigating and exposing these non-obvious spaces, those voids (that is, that which is beyond the obvious, the already said, the already widely known and named) which are located around our objects, that which, at a certain historical time, is virtually put so that such and such objectivations take place<sup>16</sup>.

The objectivations take place as governance processes (foucauldian concepts). It is through them that we are constituted as the “subjects” we are, that is, through the ways of ‘objectivation’, we are subjectivized. We saw, through the studies of Deleuze, that the process of constitution of the subject, mediated by thought, happens with images: with clichés (Guéron, 2011) as the sensory-motor scheme on/of/with the images of thought, crystalizing them and normalizing them, making them “natural”. For this reason, following Deleuze's thought, it is necessary to break with clichés to potentiate thought, the body, ways of being and forms of living.

### **The meeting with the NEPBIO**

Thinking about what to make with some discarded glass bottles we had at home, a friend made the suggestion to take them to Cupim House. As soon as we arrived at the place indicated by her, in the district of Cáceres (MT), we were welcomed by the four permaculturists at NEPBIO: the couple Suely and Sandro, and their son, Diego, with his partner, Josiane.

While we all greeted each other, I saw<sup>17</sup> from afar that, inside, there was a different construction, eye-catching, yellow, beautiful, like a small house. I also observed that, in the place's main gate, there was a sign, like a poster, with a name and logo, which led me to realize it was a formal and institutionalized project.

They told us we could leave all of the material we had brought at one side of the gate, in the external part, alongside a bunch of other materials which were already there, in the open; it was as if it was the bodega for the reception of the materials.

<sup>15</sup> Mas o que quer uma teoria das práticas discursivas? Tão só descrever acontecimentos discursivos. E isso não é pouco. Trata-se de flutuar no limite das coisas e das palavras, como escreve Foucault a respeito dos livros de Deleuze — justamente porque o acontecimento não se reduziria jamais a um estado de coisas, funcionando como o referente de algo que foi dito e cuja veracidade ou falsidade buscaríamos investigar.

<sup>16</sup> Para Foucault, descrever práticas discursivas e não discursivas, em torno de um objeto ou tema, tem a ver com um trabalho dedicado e pormenorizado de investigar e expor aqueles espaços não óbvios, aqueles vazios (ou seja, aquilo que fica para além do óbvio, do já dito, do já sobejamente conhecido e nomeado) que se localizam em torno de nossos objetos, aquilo que, em certa época histórica, está virtualmente posto para que tais e tais objetivacões ocorram.

<sup>17</sup> Narration in first person singular, indicating the meetings of the Colombian researcher with the NEPBIO.

Observing everything attentively, in detail, slowly, I started to relate the concept of Bioconstruction, term and name of the project, thinking that in this place they made some form of (simple) crafts with the recycled material. However, and with the greatest uncertainty, the meaning of another term in the project's name was an incognate: Permaculture. For the permaculturists at NEPBIO, as Sandro aptly expressed when the conversation with us and the presentation of the project began, Permaculture (Mollison; Holmgren, 1983), more than a concept, is a set of principles on which NEPBIO is founded and acts.

On that day of my meeting with NEPBIO, after we introduced ourselves, the permaculturists invited us in. After going through the gate, following the permaculturists, I was observing the house in greater detail, which was in the direction to which we were walking. It made me think on that candy house of the tale I knew, of my childhood, like Hansel and Gretel, but which here in Brazil is known as the tale of João and Maria; it also made me think of the house of the "Picapedra", in Colombia, or "Flinstones", in Brazil.

The house stood out! Each step I took, coming closer to it, I realized it was bigger every time. I think at first I saw it small, for around it, there were some big trees, and the immensity of the sky is noticed without greater obstructions.

The frontal wall of the house had a door, which was seen as small due to the magnitude of the wall. Being already very close to the house, I had the impression of it being far more robust. The form was rectangular, but the walls did not have the symmetry of straight lines. They were not flat. It was as if the house was made of big rocks in different sizes.

The door to the house was already open, but we could not see its inside well, for it was obscured by the radiant illumination from outside. The door also had a different shape from the traditional rectangular doors. Made of several pieces of wood, two of its sides were straight, the one where there were the hinges and the one below, against the floor; the other two had varied shapes. Once I stopped at the door, I started to appreciate each detail with greater attention.

As main intercessor in/of NEPBIO, the permaculturists highlight the work of the Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, referred to as the authors of this fundamental concept which moves their practices: Permaculture. It was based on this text that, through the recommendation and suggestion of the permaculturists, I established conceptual connections of Permaculture.

The narratives on/of/with NEPBIO became colorful, even more so when we observed the drawing of the Permaculture Flower, also illustrated in a poster which the permaculturists hang in a nail, in a tripod made of bamboo in the corner of some bioconstruction, being specifically exposed, be that inside or outside of the house, to the participant visitors. In the drawing of the Flower, a red arrow in a centripetal circular shape stands out, which emerges from the center of the flower, where the petals are connected, which also makes reference to the concept of "cyclical" (Figure 1).

The narratives on/of/with NEPBIO become colorful also when we listen to the managers and permaculturists tell us that each of the seven petals, each one a specific color, is one of the seven Ethical Principles of Permaculture.

### **Environmental Education: NEPBIO's discursive and non-discursive practices**

Thinking about the discursive formations as truth regimes<sup>18</sup>, we complimented<sup>19</sup> discursive events, discursive and non-discursive practices on/of/with NEPBIO's aesthetic of existence, based on our experiences, on our perceptions and affections, on the narratives of the permaculturists and on the other arts which converge on NEPBIO.

The permaculturists at NEPBIO, on the first meeting with the Biology students at UNEMAT, who took part in the workshop, started by telling their story. They told us how they broke with the circle of life at the city, with all the comfort and security which wage labor offers, and went to brave another form of existence, building what is now named *Núcleo Experimental de*

<sup>18</sup>Understood as discursive formations which take place constituting ways of being and forms of living (Foucault, 1914b).

<sup>19</sup>We employ the term "compliment" in the sense of "showing", as pointed out in the book *Elogio da Escola* (Compliment of the School) (Larrosa, 2017).





**Figure 1.** The Permaculture Flower<sup>22</sup>. Source: Author's archive, 2020.

*Permacultura e Bioconstrução de Cáceres* (Cáceres Experimental Center for Permaculture and Bioconstruction) - NEPBIO.

Each detail was produced by the family, having as a source of inspiration the Seven Principles of the Permaculture Flower: taking care of people; taking care of Earth; sharing the surplus; built space; culture and education; tools and technologies; handling of Earth and Nature. These principles are exposed to all visitors who arrive there.

In one of the many workshops observed throughout the research, we heard Mr. Sandro, permaculturist, ask if the participants took care of themselves, the waters which they drank; the trash which they produced; and specifically and emphatically, aiming for the eyes of the visitors, ask: "Do you... Do you take care of your shit?"<sup>23</sup> – a question which usually makes people crack a smile, liable to be read as a nervous laughter, but the important is the interpellative nature of/with this narrative. Also with the challenging tone and posture, the permaculturist directly asks to some and the collective: "Do you... you... you... Do you know where the water you drink comes from?"<sup>24</sup>

All of the participants of the workshops were made aware of the discursive practices which compose NEPBIO's ideology. However, what impacts the visitors are the discursive practices – the environmental education practices experienced, explored daily, on the 365 days of the year. The houses bioconstructed at the Eco-village are environmentally architected. The heat of the city of Cáceres is intense, so it is possible to feel a breeze by entering the bioconstructed houses – Cupim House and Banbuda are examples.

The details of each corner of these houses are worth a pause: it is possible to find all kinds of demolition materials there, but what charms the most are the stained glasses, which illuminate the houses in varied shades. They are glass bottles of several types and colors, which one day brought joy to some with their liquids and were discarded. The artistic eyes of the bioconstructors alters their uses, and mosaics are put together to compose the ambiances.

<sup>22</sup>The writings above the flower read "familiar institution - permaculture". Below the flower, it reads: "permaculture flower". Surrounding it, in different colors, are the seven principles of Permaculture: "built space; culture and education; tools and technologies; handling of Earth and Nature; sharing the surplus; taking care of Earth; taking care of people" (clockwise).

<sup>23</sup>"Você... Você cuida de sua merda?"

<sup>24</sup>"Você, você, você... Vocês sabem de onde vem a água que bebem?"

The Bacia de Evapotranspiração (Evapotranspiration Basin) (BET) and the banana tree circle makes that the visitor, a participant in the workshops, follow the continuous process of conscious consumption and discard. As on system for treating dark waters, NEPBIO applies the technique of Bacia de Evapotranspiração (Evapotranspiration Basin) (BET), which utilizes biological organisms, operating a process of reduction of the biomass and evapotranspiration of the water to the atmosphere in the form of steam, cyclically continuing. Apropos to the dark waters, the manager Sandro asks the participants if they know where the waters that they themselves, the students, use in their everyday, go to...In fact, he questions if each student knows how the waters they themselves drink arrive to them. The participants “go through laughter”.

Grey water, originating mainly from the kitchen, showers/baths and laundry washing, is destined for treatment with the permacultural technique Banana Tree Circle. Differently from BET, although this one also employs Banana Trees, the technique is characterized for being a circular space with plants (cultures) of great hydric demand, which favors water drainage. Thereby, the planted cultures consume a large part of the water, coming to be, in the form of steam, purified water for the atmosphere.

The soap made artisanally through the reuse of discarded kitchen oil; the bricks made of plastic bottles, with materials discarded in the city; the interpretative trail, where several species of plants from Cerrado<sup>25</sup> and how this area was reforested; the magic of the meeting of water channels on the underground using a tree pitchfork; the wall building with a bioconstruction technique workshop. At this moment, the participants at the workshops are invited to “get their hands dirty”. They pick the clay, knead with their feet, shape it, and build a wall to call their own.

The permaculturist Mr. Sandro said he would like to change the world, but did not see another way if not beginning with changes in his own life. Thus, he produced ‘another’ aesthetic of existence, which potentiates the lives of the students who pass through there.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The experience provided by the NEPBIO goes beyond the simple participation in workshops; it transforms the perception of the subjects on their relationship with the environment and with themselves. The viability and possibility of creating bioconstructions, such as the low-cost houses and with minimum environmental impact, not only demonstrates the efficiency of these practices, but also inspires a new life paradigm which values the harnessing of what is at our reach and the deep connection with nature. The diet with organic vegetables and fruits, cultivated in the same place of residence, reinforces the idea of self-sufficiency and sustainability, challenging the ways of living reliant on the capitalist system.

The practices mediated (Tuan, 1980) among NEPBIO and the students who participated in the workshops reveal a subjectivation process which breaks with the norms imposed by the capitalistic project of society. In this context, NEPBIO affirms itself as a space where Environmental Education is manifest through Permaculture, promoting a reconfiguration of “taking care care of oneself”, of the “knowledge of oneself” and of “taking care of others”, all in tune with the environment which surrounds us. It is a movement which goes beyond formal education, by promoting significant changes to the ways of being and living of those who get involved with these practices.

NEPBIO works as a complex device which not only mediates experiences of the self, but also catalyzes the transformation of the subjects who pass through there. By breaking with the established cliches, it allows for the emergence of ‘other’ forms of existence, de-naturalizing the pre-conceived images and promoting new ways of being. Based on this perspective, NEPBIO may be understood as a spacetime for resistance and transformation, where alternative practices of Environmental Education are not only possible, but necessary for the construction of a more sustainable and conscious life.

The experiences reported by the students of UNEMAT’s Biology course, the intercessors of this research, show how these practices may force a profound re-evaluation of the traditional conceptions of subjectivity and existence. The workshops at NEPBIO not only teach techniques,

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<sup>25</sup>Cerrado is a tropical savanna biome which covers a large area in Brazil.



but challenge the participants to reconsider their own lives and the impact of their actions in the world. By promoting 'another' aesthetic of existence, the NEPBIO contributes to the construction of a society which values sustainability, social justice and the respect for the environment.

Ultimately, NEPBIO emerges as a living example of how Environmental Education may be reinvented to answer contemporary challenges, offering not only a criticism of the capitalistic model, but also concrete alternatives which point to a future which is less damaging to the environment. This article, therefore, not only documents these practices, but also invites a critical reflection on the ways of life which we choose to adopt and the possibilities of transformation which are opened when we allow ourselves to think and act differently.

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