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COUNTRYSIDE: HISTORIES, RESISTANCES, AND FUTURES

**COMMONING AS AN UNFINISHED PRACTICE: AGROECOLOGY, CARE,
AND THE LIMITS OF INSTITUTIONAL COMMONS IN RURAL TERRITORIES**

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In rural studies, commons have frequently been approached as institutionalized resource regimes, particularly within the tradition inspired by Elinor Ostrom's work on common-pool resource governance and its associated design principles for sustainable collective management. While this approach has been central to challenging the "tragedy of the commons," it tends to conceptualize commons as relatively stable configurations of rules, resources, and institutions. In contrast, critical perspectives associated with authors such as David Harvey, Silvia Federici, Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval emphasize commoning as a relational and processual practice, shifting the analytical focus from institutional design to everyday social organization, collective action, and ongoing negotiation over shared life. The objective of this paper is to contribute to this latter perspective by conceptualizing commoning as an unfinished and contested practice in rural territories shaped by socio-ecological pressures. Rather than treating the commons as a predefined form or governance model, the paper

explores agroecology as a context of collective experimentation in which commoning is tentatively enacted, interrupted, and reworked. Methodologically, the paper draws on ongoing qualitative research and preliminary engagement with agroecological experiences, adopting an exploratory analytical approach attentive to practices of care, shared decision-making, and the temporalities of collective action. The analysis prioritizes everyday processes over institutional outcomes, focusing on how collective arrangements around land, food, and social reproduction remain partial, fragile, and open-ended. The paper argues that commoning should be understood not as a fixed governance form, but as a practice in the making—a process of becoming through which rural actors actively reshape socio-ecological relations. By advancing this process-oriented perspective, the contribution moves beyond institutionalist readings of the commons and offers a relational lens for understanding commoning as a political practice embedded in everyday rural life.

Palavras-chave: commoning; commons theory; agroecology; relational practices; rural sociology.