

Article

Towards a Politics of Recognition: Exploring the Symbolic Contexts of Material Agroecological Transitions

Daniel López-García ^{1,2,*}, Gabriela Vázquez-Macías ², Javier García-Fernández ², Maggie Schmitt ², Paula Ortega-Faura ² and Josep Lluís Espluga-Trenc ³

¹ Institute of Economy, Geography and Demography, Spanish National Research Council, 28006 Madrid, Spain

² Fundación Entretantos, 47014 Valladolid, Spain; gabriela@entretantos.org (G.V.-M.); javier@entretantos.org (J.G.-F.); mschmitt@mailworks.org (M.S.); paula@entretantos.org (P.O.-F.)

³ Institute for Government and Public Policy (IGOP), Autonomous University of Barcelona, Plaça Cívica, 08193 Barcelona, Spain; josepluis.espluga@uab.cat

* Correspondence: daniel.lopez@cchs.csic.es

Abstract: Scientific debates on agroecology highlight the relevance of appropriate narratives as a means to widen and amplify agroecological transitions in the material world. However, it is actually far-right discourses—often linked to populist political proposals—which, though not majoritarian, are reaching broad and growing diffusion among both rural communities and farmers. Research focusing on the symbolic mechanisms around food systems' transitions are scarce. In order to address this gap, an exploratory research project was developed to identify responses to different messages and audiovisual languages favorable to agroecological transitions, through the dissemination of three brief audiovisual pieces among specific socio-professional profiles linked to food systems, together with an online survey. The results obtained (n = 524) show significant differences in the responses to open questions collected, regarding socio-economic diversity expressed in the axes male/female, urban/rural, farmer/not farmer and organic/conventional farming. Responses from conventional farmers express a need for developing a “politics of recognition” and repair that would acknowledge the unfair, subordinated role that farmers and rural communities feel in the current globalized food system. The paper shows the need for further empirical research on the issue, covering different territories and socio-economic and cultural profiles, in order to fully understand the symbolic mechanisms underlying material, agroecological transitions.

Keywords: agroecology; populism; experimental communication; sustainable food systems; Spain



Citation: López-García, D.; Vázquez-Macías, G.; García-Fernández, J.; Schmitt, M.; Ortega-Faura, P.; Espluga-Trenc, J.L. Towards a Politics of Recognition: Exploring the Symbolic Contexts of Material Agroecological Transitions. *Sustainability* **2023**, *15*, 10091. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151310091>

Academic Editor: Grigorios L. Kyriakopoulos

Received: 16 May 2023
Revised: 16 June 2023
Accepted: 19 June 2023
Published: 26 June 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The debate on agroecology scaling (both in scientific and social movement arenas) has raised the implementation of favorable narratives as a key question [1–4]. However, the effectiveness of the narratives activated has been questioned when it comes to promoting the enrollment in agroecological transitions of the majority profiles in the agricultural sector in the Global North. Mamonova and Franquesa [5] argue that food sovereignty discourses have little penetration in European rural communities, especially among conventional farmers, understood here as those family farmers not oriented to local markets or alternative food networks, and whose main farming methods are dependent on inputs external to their farms and “have adopted other elements of the modernization script” [6] (p. 48).

In the mobilizations of the agricultural sector in Europe throughout 2019 and 2020, a significant proportion of family farmers have adopted regressive discourses which support the interests of corporate farming profiles [6]. It would seem that dissatisfaction in the farming sector is being capitalized upon by right-wing populist movements that, while ultimately not majoritarian, occupy the public debate with counter-progressive discourses, in contraposition to other (progressive) discourses calling for gender or class equity, or for a shift to sustainable farming [5,7]. The expansion of far-right-wing discourses in rural areas

is not directly related to the reasons why farmers do or do not decide to undertake changes towards greater sustainability in their production models. However, the polarization between discourses in favor of and against socially and ecologically sustainable practices (represented by food sovereignty, agroecology and organic agriculture) defines a symbolic space of dispute that intersects with political positioning. This polarization has an influence on the decisions farmers make regarding their agrarian management, and with an impact on material territories [1,8].

Our initial assumption here is that it is possible to identify and activate communicative devices that help generate symbolic contexts helpful for engendering critical reflection processes among current conventional farmers' profiles. Through this very generic approach we want to generate new hypotheses based on empirical data, as an exercise in "grounded theory" [8]. Such critical reflection could open possibilities for agroecological transitions at the food system scale. Connecting with such profile subjectivities may require different grammars and forms of communication through an integrative, progressive approach informed by ideas such as "translated food sovereignty", "populist agroecology" and "reparation ecologies" [9,10].

With this aim, we launched an experimental, exploratory research project on communication strategies, called "Green Capsule" (www.pildoraverde.org, accessed on 15 May 2023), aimed at generating novel, empirically-based hypotheses on the symbolic mechanisms underlying material, agroecological transitions. Three different audiovisual pieces ("capsules", or short videos) were produced and disseminated through social media, with the support of rural grassroots networks, together with an online survey designed to collect reactions (n = 541) to the different capsules. These three "green capsules" made use of different audiovisual languages and discursive elements from a perspective of "repair populisms" [10]. The research had the following objectives: (1) to reveal links between different types of messages and communicative styles and their reception by different socio-demographic profiles within the agro-food system; and (2) to obtain some insights on how to improve the effectiveness of communication and cultural efforts to promote critical reflections on food systems sustainability among conventional farmers by more accurately reflecting the symbolic worlds relevant to these socio-economic profiles.

Section 2 unfolds the theoretical framework developed for the research design, including the audiovisual pieces' design, and the analysis of the results obtained. Inspired by "grounded theory" [11], Section 3 (methods) includes a description of the audiovisuals related to the theories used in their design process, and of the methods used for both collecting and analyzing responses to the audiovisuals. After the codification and analysis of the qualitative data collected with an online survey (Section 4—results), in Section 5 (discussion) we have constructed emergent hypotheses through an inductive revision of the data, and offer some suggestions to generate critical reflection on agricultural systems sustainability between conventional, family farmers and other food systems profiles. Finally, Section 6 (conclusions) states the main findings of the exercise performed, and points out some directions for further research.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section, we highlight the importance of the symbolic contexts of agroecological transitions, and analyze the literature on agrarian and food populisms as a theoretical approach useful for understanding the symbolic dimension of food systems change. By comparing far-right and progressive populist approaches, we suggest a set of symbolic elements that could be mobilized to promote critical reflection on food systems through a non-regressive, "populist lens". Finally, we focus on how these symbolic elements might operate through different mechanisms and processes to articulate a critical reflection on both the material and the symbolic dimensions of the transition.

2.1. Agroecology Scaling . . . with Whom? Addressing the Symbolic Dimension of Material, Agroecological Transitions

The cultural dimension of transitions to sustainable food systems is receiving increasing attention in the agroecological literature, especially as the debate over agroecology scaling unfolds [1,3]. However, whether current efforts and mechanisms are effective or not remains an open discussion. For Gliessman [12], the shifting of values is a central element in agroecological transitions at the food system scale. González de Molina et al. [13] speak of “food populism” as a necessary common language in order to build social majorities capable of promoting agroecological transitions at the food system scale. Cadieux et al. [10] highlight the need to develop narratives capable of bringing together different marginalized groups (especially in urban settings) around “reparation ecologies”. For Anderson et al. [4], discourse, knowledge and power have strong ties within the battle over how to signify agroecology, in which it is necessary to address the close interrelations between discourses and culture. For Val et al. [3], there is a twofold construction process of agroecology in its symbolic and material dimensions, and there are some devices capable of articulating the two in such a way as to provoke the emergence of a historical-political subject that might lead agroecological transitions at the food system scale.

Regarding the relation between power, agency and symbolic elements, the self-perceived weakness of farmers, both in individual and collective terms, acts as a major obstacle to them pursuing options that might boost transitions to alternative, more adequate and sustainable farming models, and prevents them from establishing alliances with consumers and urban food movements [8,14]. Low self-esteem, both in individual and collective terms, has been identified as a central element that hinders innovation and thus represents an obstacle to agro-food transitions to sustainability [15–17]. Participatory approaches to agroecological transitions highlight the role of the collective reflection processes for farmers to step up the transitions, and to widen and deepen them [18]. Recognition has been directly related to self-esteem in transitional justice studies, as it is a pre-condition of self-realization through social visibility and community solidarity [19]. Applied to gender equity studies, recognition must be necessarily linked to the redistribution of social damages or wealth [20].

2.2. Farmers, Transitions and Narratives

As social sciences approaches to agroecological transitions at the food system scale develop in theoretical terms, empirical knowledge on the issue is not yet completed [21]. At the same time, agroecology has become an “immaterial territory in dispute” that reflects disputes in material territories, e.g., regarding farmers’ and peasants’ access to land, water, seeds or markets [1]. Different narratives may affect different social profiles in diverse ways, but most research does not address the diversity of profiles present in the agricultural sector, and thus may not contribute as much as would be desirable to scaling agroecological transitions [9]. A strategic question is to determine who are the socio-political subjects to promote and step up such transitions, and how such a social (plural) subject could gain sufficient hegemony to impact the corporate food regime in favor of socio-ecological sustainability [22,23].

Social profiles common in the agricultural sector in the Global North such as (family) conventional farmers are likely to be elusive, fragmented, weakened and penetrated by (and embedded in) the global flows of agro-food capitalism [24–26]. The majority farming sector in the Global North is complicit in (and often the main excuse for) agro-food globalization policies, such as the European CAP [27] and its agro-export orientation in many staple crops, which erodes food sovereignty worldwide especially in the Global South [28]. While farmers and farmers’ organizations committed to agroecology are essential to lead territorialized, wide-scale transitions to sustainability [2], agroecology scaling obviously also needs other profiles of farmers, not yet committed to agroecology, to join such transitions [29]. However, for Mamonova and Franquesa [5], the messages for Global North farmers to step up sustainability transitions, and especially those produced by urban food

or environmentalist movements, are successful in reaching middle class, urban communities, but not rural communities nor conventional farmers. While agroecology in the Global North is not just urban, urban agroecology movements are becoming more and more active and visible. Bilewicz [8] identifies conflicts around the meanings and roles attributed to smallholder farming by urban food activists on the one hand and by farmers themselves on the other, noting that the visions of the former do not fit into the latter's goals and desires. López-García et al. [17] talk about how conventional farmers feel "criminalized" by urban food movements, which both explains and reflects the great distance between urban agroecology movements and the agricultural (conventional) social fabric. While most farmers are unsatisfied with their position in the globalized food system, the ways in which their frustration is expressed may take a range of different directions.

2.3. Rural Populisms and Food Systems Change

Populist approaches are understood here as an analytical category useful to understand the complex processes of construction of massive, wide and heterogeneous socio-political subjects ("the people") throughout the construction and displacement of meanings and signifiers (see e.g., Laclau [30], or Mouffe [31]). Such approaches, while acting as "purposeful simplifications"—as an overstatement of some of the characteristics of the object analyzed, in terms of Shanin [32]—which could be seen as somehow mechanistic, have been stressed as powerful and useful for understanding and even for intervening in very complex processes such as social change. With such an approach, "populism" is not an ideology itself, but rather a political strategy present, in one form or another, within all massive socio-political movements (including ideologies with very different orientations) since the beginning of the twentieth century [30].

Our intuition with the present paper is based on the idea that a progressive approach to populism—not based on authoritarianism, nation nor race [31]—could eventually be used to understand the conditions in which the symbolic contexts favorable to agroecological transitions can impact conventional, middle- and small-scale farmers' subjectivities. In Table 1 we identify populist messages which could be understood as favorable to agroecological transitions, and others that are bound exclusively to regressive uses of populism.

Table 1. An exploratory categorization of symbols used by progressive and regressive food populisms.

Messages and Ideas That Might Enable Progressive Populisms	Messages and Ideas That Only Enable Regressive Populisms
-Superior quality of local food [6,7]	-Regressive identity politics: anti-feminism, nationalism, etc. [8,33]
-The values of work, effort and know-how [6,8]	-Authoritarian visions of order and rejection of democratic regimes [34]
-The value of the agricultural profession and the importance of agriculture as a basic economic sector for our food supply [5]	-Migrants as enemies [7,34]
-The rural territory and the "traditional" agricultural landscape as an element of identity; farmers as protectors of traditional culture [35]	-Against political correctness [35]
-The perceived subordination of the rural to the urban; unequal distribution of power between rural and urban elite away from the rural [6–8,35]	-Symbols of the rural as a redoubt of (past) purity: nostalgia for the rural and desire for purity [35]
-Subordination of the peasantry to (global) markets [6,8,35]	-Charismatic leaders and strong leaderships [34]
-Abandonment and depopulation in rural areas [35]	-Clientelist approaches to rural development [36]
-Rural areas lagging behind in development [6,35]	
-(Progressive) nationalism [8]	
-Soil and food care [10]	
-Local communities (commune) as having superior moral agency [13]	

2.4. Translations of Agroecology

When agroecological research broadened its scope to include food systems' scale and socio-economic and political processes [21], different participatory proposals, especially "Campesino a Campesino" (CaC), emerged as tools to promote agroecological transitions at scales beyond the individual farm [37,38]. CaC focuses on peer-to-peer, horizontal knowledge exchange through practical, material, on-site collective experiments and interactions to spread locally adapted technologies and knowledge. At the same time, CaC generates empowerment and shared identities among peasants and farmers involved in such networks [2,3,39]. However, small- and medium-sized farmers often feel they have neither the capacity nor the desire to participate in alternative food networks, and rural communities do not always feel recognized by proposals from agroecology, which they may identify with urban, alternative food movements (including food sovereignty movements), to which some conventional profiles may feel themselves to be a subaltern social group [8].

Shattuck et al. [11] suggest that food sovereignty, as a political proposal closely linked to agroecology, is becoming outdated in a fast-changing globalized food system, and that it needs to be "translated" into different (territorial, socio-historical and cultural) contexts and profiles. They suggest a relational approach to food sovereignty research, focusing on power relations to enhance the construction of alliances between different actors—including State actors—around specific, shared problems. A "translated" food sovereignty must be a practice embedded in the real world, a common reflection, and an attempt to build relations through specific actions, beyond pre-established discourses and binary approaches [8,11,35]. These authors write about the need to go beyond class-centered approaches towards territorialized, place-based approaches. This would broaden the focus to include social and cultural aspects as a necessary step to re-politicize the economy beyond "capitalocentric" schemes that focus on labor and wages [13,40].

For Rivera-Cusicanqui [41] (p. 20), "audiovisual media reach popular sensitivity better than the written word does", and she focuses on the need to reconstruct in the present a memory of the past that allows us to imagine and build new possible futures. Connecting with "the great problems of the time" through audiovisual media and techniques allows us, according to the author, to extract from everyday life those metaphors that connect our gaze with those of other people and communities, beyond representation, which may allow us to build (collective) political action. To do this, it is necessary to problematize the colonialism/elitism in the context in which one participates or emits messages, remaining always aware of (and recognizing) the position of each actor in the pyramid of social domination.

3. Experimental Design and Methodology

The "Green Capsule" project aims to assess responses to different messages that could enable symbolic contexts favorable to agroecological transitions among different social profiles within food systems. The project has followed the two steps of "grounded theory" as a research method that can enable the researcher to generate systematically a substantive theory grounded in empirical data [11]. The first step is coding and analyzing data to prove a given proposition; and the second is inspecting the data obtained to develop new theoretical ideas. For this purpose, three small audiovisual pieces (the "green capsules") were designed, produced and disseminated through selected (social media) channels, and feedback was collected from different sources. The three video clips tried to deploy and thus contrast different communicative strategies, briefly synthesized in the twofold axis emotional (populist)/professional (Campesino a Campesino, documentary) and confrontative/integrative (see Table 2). Hyperlinks to the videos and their scripts can be found as Supplementary Material for the present article (see files Video S1: Praise; Script of Video S1; Video S2: The Matrix; Script of Video S2; Video S3: Conversations; Script of Video S3).

Table 2. Main features of the three green capsules.

Title	Praise	The Matrix	Conversations
Political communication approach	Populist, integrative	Populist, confrontative	Peasant-to-Peasant
Audiovisual language	Publicity	Thriller film, comedy	Documentary film
Discursive elements ¹	Abandonment, indebtedness, farmers' pride, workers' pride, corporate control of inputs and food prices, community, history	Agri-business, indebtedness, dependency	Dignity, peasantry, labor, farmers' knowledge, autonomy, fair prices, urban–rural alliances
Visual symbols used	Tractors, agricultural landscapes, villages in ruins, stock markets, b/w vs. color	Tractors, real farmers, indoors, dimy light, muted colors	Farms, farmers, livestock, tractors, outdoor, daylight, vivid colors
Length	2' 15''	2' 15''	3' 59''

¹ These discursive elements are extracted from Table 1 contents.

3.1. The Construction of the “Green Capsules” as Target-Oriented Communicative Devices

We wanted to compare how different audiovisual languages and discursive elements affect the subjectivities of certain majority profiles in the Spanish agricultural sector (males; extensive, professional farmers of conventional, rain-fed cereals in inner Spain), in comparison with other socio-professional profiles involved in food systems. Three different capsules (short videos) (the green capsules can be viewed in the following links: “Praise” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtZeZjjbBE>); “The Matrix” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsTooEmwQwI>); “Conversations” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrdbWEc0F7A>), all of them accessed on 18 June 2023) were produced and released, and their main features are described in Table 2. As an exercise based on “grounded theory”, some discursive elements and visual symbols shown in Table 1 as related to progressive visions of food populisms were used to generate and gather responses from different socio-professional profiles. Data collected were coded and analyzed in a second step, as an empirical basis to develop new theories, i.e., new hypotheses. The choice of elements to be tested was based on the analysis of scientific literature synthesized in Table 1, and on the previous experience of the research team in processes of participatory, territorialized agroecological transition including conventional farmers. The scripts were created in a dialogic, iterative co-production process between researchers and filmmakers—a team composed of a scriptwriter and a filmmaker, both with experience in documentary films with rural and agricultural topics. The production process was low-cost and some decisions (such as not including actors in Praise) were conditioned by the small budget available. The recording process included extensive locations in Castilla y León (an inner, rural and highly depopulated region in central Spain) for Praise and Conversations, home-studio recording with amateur actors for The Matrix, and a homemade editing process for all three video clips.

The populist-oriented green capsules both invoke a unified rural identity in crisis, the first based on shared values and a shared history, the second by positing a common threat. Whereas right-wing populist messages focus on national governments, environmentalist groups and the urban population as the villains [14], these green capsules position themselves in opposition to the Corporate Food Regime. The first one (*Praise*), deploys publicity-type visual language, drawing upon symbols and words close to those of conventional, family farmers (tractors, agricultural landscapes). The piece’s argument represents an integrative approach, aligned with notions of “reparation ecologies”. The imagery ap-

peals to positive values (farmers' and workers' pride, community), as opposed to symbols with negative values related to abandonment and corporate control over the food system. The second piece (*The Matrix*) is a spin-off of a well-known sci-fi film scene, reflecting a binary approach to corporate and alternative visions of food systems. This populist script draws a line between a positive "us" (family farmers) and a negative "them" (agri-business as a representation of the Corporate Food Regime). The third green capsule (*Conversations*) adopts a "Campesino a Campesino" approach, showing farmers speaking in the first person about how developing alternative, agroecological approaches (organic farming, regenerative agriculture, short food supply chains, on-farm processing for added value, cooperative entrepreneurships) has improved the economic and social performance of their farms. Using direct testimonial interviews in their own farm settings, the film transmits messages of dignity, pride, autonomy and rural–urban alliances.

3.2. Dissemination of the Green Capsules and Data Collecting

The three videos were spread through different social media (see Section 4), with an interval of two weeks between each piece. The messages sent out included a link to the online platform where the videos were hosted, and to a web site (www.pildoraverde.org accessed on 15 May 2023) with information on the project and on agroecology and organic farming. All messages included a request to fill out a simple online questionnaire oriented to obtain socio-demographic information on the respondents (population of municipalities of residence, gender and profession) and opinions about each green capsule. All three videos were disseminated via the same social media accounts and sent to the same lists of recipients. We called upon a network of activists and groups linked to agroecology, rural social movements and farmers' unions to support us in spreading the green capsules and surveys directly to conventional farmers (mainly through Telegram, WhatsApp and Twitter) in different Spanish regions, and to send back reactions, along with the basic socio-demographic profiles of respondents. Additionally, we used Twitter to tag some rural-activist, progressive networks and food activist organizations to ask for help on disseminating the capsules.

3.3. Data Processing

Data obtained through the online questionnaire were used to perform a qualitative analysis of reactions to the capsules, related to the socio-professional features of respondents (gender, age, territorial context, professional identity). The online survey included an open-response question asking for opinions about "the perceived usefulness" of the videos, in order not to influence responses regarding the political profiles of respondents. A total of 541 answers were collected, 524 of them including valid responses to the question about the utility of the video (see Table 3). Among them, 18 direct valid responses (all of them to the Praise capsule) were collected via WhatsApp, including specific personal data on the main professional activity and eventually linkages to the agroecology movement. The length of these comments ranged from one to eighty-eight words. We conducted a qualitative thematic analysis [42] of these comments ($n = 497$) to observe which types of people (by gender, work activity and place of residence) expressed the different types of arguments and positions detected, in order to identify some relational patterns between them. Data on the size of the respondents' places of residence were reduced to two categories in order to simplify the analysis and clarify the discussion in Sections 4 and 5: mainly rural contexts (municipalities < 20,000 inhabitants) and mainly urban contexts (>20,000 inhabitants).

In the following section, we offer some anonymous quotations from the answers gathered, coded by respondents' self-definitions, according to this structure: first position: name of the capsule commented and number of comments ("P"—Praise; "M"—The Matrix; "C"—Conversations); second position: gender ("F"—Female; "M"—Male; "O"—Others); third position: territorial context of residence ("U"—Urban (>20,000 inhabitants); "R"—Rural (<20,000 inhabitants)); fourth position: work activity ("N"—Not Farmer; "CF"—Conventional Farmer; "OF"—Organic Farmer). Thus, the code P153FROF

makes reference to the comments of the 153rd respondent to the Praise capsule, who is a female, rural dweller and organic farmer. As we did not receive responses to the last category (Work Activity) from all respondents, only some quotations show this last element, and therefore insights regarding this variable should be understood as approximations.

Table 3. Sample and socio-economic profiles of respondents to the online survey with valid open responses.

Population Size	Men	Women	Other	Total	%
Praise	152	189	0	341	100%
0–20.000	90	115		205	60.12%
>20.000	62	74		136	39.88%
The Matrix	11	14	0	25	100%
0–20.000	8	5		13	55.55%
>20.000	3	9		12	44.44%
Conversations	78	79	1	158	100%
0–20.000	49	41		90	56.96%
>20.000	29	38	1	68	43.04%
Total	241	282	1	524	100%

3.4. Research Design Limitations and Possible Biases

The present paper was oriented specifically to understand the reactions of individual, conventional family farmers—contrasted with other social profiles—regarding messages related to both the social and ecological sustainability of food systems in different ways. While this disregards the sphere of collective action and farmers’ organizations, it addresses the long-lasting process of the extensive disaffection of farmers towards farmers’ unions as socio-political actors in Spain [43–45]. The broad diversity of historical, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in the Iberian Peninsula falls beyond the scope of the present research. Finally, the qualitative analysis performed relies on a small, snowball sampling [46] of the universe (respondents who voluntarily agreed to provide extra time and information), and thus responses could be biased towards those who are already ideologically closer to agroecological messages. The way in which data were collected introduces an additional coverage bias related to the ability or predisposition of respondents to participate in online, web surveys [47].

4. Results: Messages and Target Groups’ Responses

In Table 4 we offer the main numbers of views per social-media platform registered in 26 November 2021, obtained from the platforms’ stats services. Extensive data on social-media reach have been added as Supplementary Material of the article. Most of the views occurred in the first two weeks for each capsule, but for some of them (mostly, *Praise*) the views continued slowly growing over months. *Praise*, the populist-integrative video, was the most viewed capsule, and continued circulating over a longer period. However, when considering the watching time (and only in the Facebook platform), *Conversations*, the “CaC” capsule, seemed to have attained a higher engagement. Facebook showed a differential dissemination pattern for *Conversations*, as the capsule had a much wider reach on this social media platform, and a longer mean visualization period (>60 s/view). *The Matrix*, the populist-confrontative video with urban symbolism, was the least spread video altogether.

For an in-depth understanding of the differential responses to the capsules with respect to socio-demographic profiles, Table 3 shows the main quantitative data representing the sample of online survey respondents, regarding population size and gender. The survey included a question on profession, but it was not answered by all respondents. The survey was disseminated alongside the video via the mentioned platforms, but only a portion of the viewers responded (541 responses, 524 applicable).

Table 4. Quantitative data on the capsules' impacts through different social media. Our own elaboration based on data provided by the different media.

Media	Unit	<i>Praise</i>	<i>The Matrix</i>	<i>Conversations</i>
Youtube	Number of views (>30 s)	3303	972	1325
	Impressions ¹	1500	1100	1200
Facebook	Likes	116	49	183
	Shares	76	28	131
	Reach ²	3900	2300	
Twitter	Impressions	9333	4397	5938
	Number of views	1793	604	26
	Overall interactions	452	176	152

¹ Number of times thumbnail is shown to viewers. ² Number of times thumbnail is shown to viewers.

When considering the engagement in the online survey, we see that not only did *Praise* gather more visits (7221 total), it also has the highest percentage of survey engagement (4.35%) followed by *Conversations* (5407 visits, 2.94% participation in the survey) and *The Matrix* (2796 visits, 0.97% participation in the survey). In terms of population size, in all cases around 25% of the respondents lived in highly populated municipalities (more than 100.000 inhabitants). However, *Praise* seems to have had greater reach in lower-sized populations, followed by *Conversations* and then *The Matrix*. If we equate a lower number of inhabitants with rural settings, we can say that *Praise* was the most widely spread capsule among the rural population, both in absolute and relative terms. When considering gender, we see a higher proportion of female respondents to *Praise* than to *Conversations*, especially in rural settings.

4.1. Capsule 1: *Praise (Integrative Populist)*

This survey received a majority of rural respondents, and a higher proportion of women. The vast majority of the comments considered that the video is mainly useful to disseminate or raise awareness about the critical situation that conventional agriculture is going through in a general population that is mostly unfamiliar with the agricultural sector. A significant number of responses were received from farmers (mostly men, and many of them conventional farmers) who expressed "emotion" and recognition when watching the video: "It brings me emotionally closer to the reality of the primary sector and rural people" (P152MR); "I liked a lot. It moved me" (P338MRFCF). Some voices, all rural and some of them conventional farmers, highlighted its potential to make people reflect without judging: "It makes us reflect on the evolution of the farmers without blaming them" (P326MRN); and they affirmed that the capsule makes intimate sense for farmers: "It's a good video for people in the farming sector, but not of interest to others." (P198FRFCF).

A large number of voices, mostly male and rural, highlighted the value attributed to agricultural work and effort, and to people who produce food: "The effort to put faces to the people who feed us" (P35MR). Eight voices perceived that the video is focused on showing the impacts of conventional agriculture, although one conventional farmer (female) stressed how the capsule reveals the situation of dependence of the agricultural sector: "Denouncing the dependence of the countryside on pesticide products and markets that do not value the real price of food, that enrich the rich and impoverish the poor" (P323FRFCF). In addition, there was widespread appreciation of the video's ability to bring different worlds together: "The message can help to bring the agroecological and conventional farming worlds closer" (P110MR).

Although the overwhelming majority of comments on the video were positive (they found it interesting, relevant, clear, powerful, etc.), there were also some negative comments, but for divergent reasons. On the one hand, one respondent said that "it does not seek understanding, but rather society's compassion towards the primary sector" (P142MU). The video was also accused of confusing "living in the countryside" with "being a farmer" (P118MR), an identification that is considered fallacious. The video was also criticized for conveying a

“losers’ nostalgia” (P118MR), as well as for “idealizing the problem of the countryside”, “lacking scientific rigor” (P224MRCF) and containing “half-truths” (P180MRCF). Much of this criticism came from people in the educational sector who live in large cities (first two opinions), or from people who are conventional farmers and live in small municipalities. On the other hand, testimonies were collected from some women, mostly rural but never farmers, who considered that the mood of the capsules is too sad or victimizing, and who expressed that farming is not such a hard job: “It is repeated as “there is no harder job” and that is a negative phrase and for me it is not real. Just because it’s not profitable doesn’t mean it’s “very hard”” (P321FR).

4.2. Capsule 2—The Matrix (Confrontative Populist)

According to the respondents to the questionnaire (far fewer than in the other two capsules), *The Matrix* was perceived as useful for awareness-raising purposes, principally aimed at conventional farmers, although not excluding the general population: “It is very good for introducing the idea that there are other possibilities outside *The Matrix*” (M10MRN). In contrast, the proportion of urban respondents was significantly higher for this video than for the others, and the farmers who responded were very few and mostly organic. However, other respondents considered that, as presented, these messages would only be intelligible to people already familiar with the rural and agrarian world, and it was even said that the piece, due to its visual and linguistic aesthetics (based on the cultural features of the Castilla region and inner Spain), might only have a regional or local reach.

4.3. Capsule 3—Conversations (Campesino a Campesino)

The third video seemed to generate the greatest interpretative consensus and the fewest negative perceptions. Although it received a lower proportion of responses from conventional farmers and, in general, from the rural population, it received significant recognition from organic farmers. It tended to be considered quite “clarifying”, in the words of many of the respondents, as it was perceived as very “didactic” and informative: “The usefulness of clearly explaining concepts that are generally very confusing” (C20MROF); “Informative, practical and clarifying” (C27MRCF). In the words of many informants not involved in professional farming, it was especially commended “to disseminate the differences between organic and conventional production” (C84FUN). It was valued because it contributes to showing alternatives to the agro-industrial model and, above all, because it does so through real testimonies: “the testimonies collected in first person are fundamental” (C40FRN).

Some organic farmers and non-farmers found this style valuable for communicating to conventional farmers: “Explaining to farmers that farming based on (organic) production does not have to be less profitable than (conventional) farming, in addition to all that it entails for the environment” (C37MROF); “(it) makes the real advantages of organic production very natural, especially for producers who are not yet organic” (C152FUN). It was perceived as useful not only for conventional farmers, but also for society as a whole, which needs to “open its eyes” for the change to be viable: “Open society’s eyes; demystify organic as expensive and impracticable except in small farms; encourage producers” (C93FUN). The only criticism from outside the agricultural sector was that the approach falls short, as the change of model is not limited to halting the use of agrochemicals: “Organic farming is not simply cultivating without chemicals, it is promoting biodiversity, improving soils, optimizing the use of water, using traditional landraces, etc. Being a farmer cannot just be a question of economics and subsidies” (C141MRN).

5. Discussion: Addressing Dissonances between Agroecological Messages and Target Social Groups

The results obtained allow us to draw four main hypotheses that could be useful as a framework for further research on the symbolic contexts underlying material transitions to sustainability in agricultural systems in the Global North. These hypotheses emerge from an inductive revision of the data, aimed at generating a basis for further research, as a second

step in the “grounded theory” method. First, we identify the need of conventional (family) farmers for recognition of their subaltern position, in both the food system and the society as a whole. Second, we identify the axes of socio-professional differentiation that could define positions regarding the messages received. Third, there is a possibility of translating agroecology and food sovereignty through symbols embodied in the everyday life of the recipients of the messages. Fourth, the lack of recognition of the (self-perceived) condition of subalternity of rural communities can make messages coming from the urban food movements to be received as alien—and even as impositions—to rural communities. After the description of these hypotheses, the present section ends by opening some insights into how the collective reflection processes on current agri-food systems can unfold symbolic spaces to support material, agroecological transitions.

First, our results show the potential capacity of the different audiovisual languages, messages and symbols deployed to connect with the subjectivities of the target profiles (rural and conventional farming communities), but in different ways. *The Matrix* and *Conversations* are understood both by urban and rural profiles, female and male respondents, to be effective tools to raise awareness towards agroecological transitions among conventional farmers. However, a majority of conventional farmers appeared to feel more connected with the language and messages present in *Praise*, which might address the need of rural populations to be recognized without being blamed by (urban) outsiders. The language and discursive elements used in *Conversations*, invoking a CaC approach, are received as interesting and relevant for all target groups, but the piece may advocate too directly for organic farming and alternative food networks, which are often perceived by conventional farmers as something alien and related to the urban realm [8]. *The Matrix* deploys a direct message, which presents farmers as victims cheated or misled by agri-business, a perspective that may not be well received by conventional farmers [6]. Arguably, its reach was low not just because its message is confrontative and possibly paternalistic, but also because it deploys an audiovisual language and symbols which could be alien to rural communities, and closer to the profiles of urban, culturally differentiated food activists.

Second, the green capsules seem to have different impacts on different profiles. The agroecological literature has extensively analyzed the special role that women may have in agroecological transitions (see, for example, the special issue of *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*) [48]. However, the current literature on the impact of far-right messages in European rural communities has not included a differential gender analysis so far. Some female voices have expressed distance from the messages and imagery deployed within the Green Capsule project, which was explicitly designed to connect with conventional, masculine subjectivities (using the symbols of tractors, hard work, etc.), and have even questioned the characterization of farming work as “hard”. Additionally, the most critical opinions of *Praise* are from rural, non-farmer profiles (as well as two conventional farmers that clearly defend intensive agriculture models), in contrast with a majority of conventional farmers and rural women who feel deeply identified with the capsule. However, the profiles mostly identified with *Conversations* (CaC style) are rural organic farmers (both men and women) and urban women, although a relevant proportion of conventional farmers responded as feeling interested and motivated by this capsule as well. Through some personal communications with agroecology activists, all of them with an origin in urban settings, we gathered some mistrustful responses to the capsules (especially regarding *Praise*), as they were understood to be too close to far-right populist discourses. Hence, we can say that some non-regressive messages appreciated by rural conventional farmers were rejected by urban agroecology activists. While the data collected do not allow us to draw stronger conclusions, it is possible to affirm that there is a rift between the symbolic worlds of the different target profiles, along axes such as men/women, rural/urban dwellers, farmers/not farmers and organic/conventional farmers. Such different reactions to the capsules could correspond to the different roles that each profile occupies within the symbolic order and power relations in the food system, which are determined, among other influences, by the corporate food regime.

Third, all the capsules transmit already existing concepts and symbols present in the local popular culture in inner Iberian Peninsula rural communities, as suggested by Mamonova and Franquesa [5], linked to pride, self-esteem and connection to the land. It is from this focus on place-based experiences, and through symbols embodied in everyday life, that we have tried to translate food sovereignty and agroecology through metaphors that allow us to build a (symbolic) space in which the conventional agricultural sector (and specifically certain specific profiles) can connect with elements of the agroecological approach [9]. *Praise* and *The Matrix* avoid using explicit messages and symbols associated with the food sovereignty or agroecology movements, as rural European populations might not identify with them [5,8]. The capsules focus instead on those messages that could fit into the so-called “silent-food sovereignty” [5] or even on the “reparation ecologies” approach (pride, work, local communities, soil and environmental care) [10], surrounded by symbols associated with hegemonic profiles of professional farming (e.g., tractors, villages, work, cereal crop fields). This appears to be a success when activating positive answers and feelings of recognition from conventional (male) farmers, and also from most other profiles excepting some urban food activists and minority women profiles.

This exploratory exercise undertaken to understand differentiated critical reflection processes in different socio-demographic profiles is not exempt from contradictions, as far as it is sustained on symbols that may conflict with some profiles sensitive to idyllic views of rurality and agricultural sustainability [49]. However, using such symbols appears to be an initial step to opening a symbolic space in which farmers can connect with sustainability messages. It is not demonstrated that this initial step may lead directly to changes in values aligned with agroecological transitions, but it enhances such transitions. This way of framing transitions would connect with that posed by “reparation ecologies” [10], allowing bridges to be built between the symbolic contexts of damaged (rural) communities who are culturally and historically closer to urban and food movements, but are self-perceived as distant from agroecology. The reparation to be done is thus between local communities (and their identities), land and food, and could open a symbolic space in which the reparation of social linkages is at the same time a reparation of the linkages between human communities and (agro)ecosystems.

Messages mobilized by the food sovereignty movement tend to focus on the economic imbalance of the food value chain, and so do many farmers’ protests [5–7]. However, the majoritarian discourses visible in farmers’ mobilizations in Europe are generally not those of food sovereignty, but rather conformist and regressive discourses, setting on the State the responsibility of the current farming sector crisis [6], and not addressing issues of social or environmental sustainability [6,7,46]. The breach between both narratives may stem in part from the push by agroecology for a more radical change in farming methods and power (and profits) redistribution within the food chain, which clearly confronts regressive discourses and ideological positions [6,8]. However, the non-recognition of popular, rural symbolic frameworks has appeared in our research as another reason for this divergence. Framing transitions in more gradual terms—as done by the proto-agroecological farmers portrayed by Ploeg et al. [50]—and linking them to narratives adapted to the symbolic universes of current, differentiated rural identities can be a useful way to build symbolic contexts that are both favorable to agroecological transitions and inclusive of conventional farmers. However, this does not necessarily lead to transformative transitions [4].

Fourth, the single element that can be found only in *Praise* is its emphasis on recognizing the subaltern role of small- and mid-sized farmers and rural communities in the globalized food chain, presented in contrast to the pride of producing food and the culture and knowledge needed to do it. Debates around how to build new narratives to promote the scaling-out and scaling-up of agroecological models increasingly integrate insights around different axes of oppression and different power struggles, but the rural–urban power imbalance is seldom taken into account in both agroecological research and gray literature [4]. This lack of recognition of the (self-perceived) condition of subalternity of rural communities can make messages coming from the agroecology movement—which in

the Global North is perceived to have strong urban roots [8,16]—appear as alien to rural communities, which is actively promoted by far-right movements [15]. In fact, messages related to agroecology and food sovereignty are subscribed and spread by some farmers' unions, mostly linked to La Via Campesina, but they have been portrayed by other conventional farmers as elitist and as a reproduction of certain urban prejudices against rural populations [5,8]. The responses to the CaC capsule from outside the farming sector also reflect the high demands society places on conventional farmers, which go much further than farmers' self-perceived challenges: “*Being a farmer cannot just be a question of economics and subsidies*” (C141MRN). Such a claim might be then perceived by conventional farmers as abusive and unfair, as the (urbanized) society asks (and pays) them to produce cheap food and not good food or ecosystem services [51].

Messages coming from (urban) agroecological movements can be perceived as criminalizing conventional agricultural practices, and therefore as attacking the lifestyle of conventional farmers [17]. This acts as a deterrent for conventional farmers to self-identify with what might otherwise be ideologically closer signifiers such as the power imbalances in global agro-food chains or the impacts of the subsequent environmental damage on their quality of life when these arise from agroecology movements.

Far-right populist movements do recognize and exploit the urban/rural axis of oppression perceived at least by a part of rural dwellers and family farmers [15]. They use it to deactivate environmental and social sustainability discourses, simply by linking them to the social profiles of middle-class, left-wing urban populations who allegedly despise rural communities and their values [5,8]. This is why some rural populations could perceive values such as multiculturalism or feminism as foreign and imposed. The lack of recognition of the urban/rural axis of oppression in urbanized, postindustrial societies, besides stigmatizing conventional family farmers, could be more salient for rural populations, placing it before other inequalities that are highlighted by agroecological and food sovereignty movements—such as gender or race. Rendering the territorial (rural) discrimination invisible thus make the claims for gender and race equality be perceived by rural communities as (rural) discrimination from the (urban) others [7,15].

The responses to the green capsules obtained point out a need to translate urban visions of agroecology and food sovereignty discourses into symbolic universes—codes, expectations, idealizations—that include the (whether real or perceived) rural/urban axis of oppression. They also suggest the need to spread messages that recognize the subaltern condition of farmers and rural communities in the global food system, also in the Global North. There is a need to combine a *mimetization* strategy (connecting with current hegemonic culture) with a *reparation* strategy for the damage historically inflicted by urban capitalism towards rural communities [51,52], in order to open a symbolic space in which such reparation entails both rural/farming communities and identities, and agroecosystems.

If many farmers feel they are in crisis, and agroecology is to be a real alternative for the survival of small- and medium-sized family-farms [50], the discussion on agroecology scaling needs to focus on those farmers who are not yet agroecological [23]. Messages need to demonstrate acceptance of current rural cultures and identities, recognizing their value and suitability in the current world in which they are subsumed to capitalist modes of agriculture, and to put in value the alternative practices that many farmers are already developing, whether they are “(new)peasant”, “proto-agroecological” or “quiet food sovereignty”. Right-wing populisms are acting in a symbolic void because of the destruction of these cultures brought about by neoliberal policies, allowing them to portray features of rurality in ways that are functional to their regressive symbolic framing [34,53]. Agroecological communication efforts may also highlight the portrayals that are functional to their framing and resignify the rest, always using current rural imaginaries as a starting point [35]. However, as we have realized through the Green Capsule project, an initial step to activate conventional farmers' critical reflection is to acknowledge their current culture, needs, challenges and identities, which may be different than those of the current

agroecological movements, whether they are urban (mainly in the Global North) or rural (mainly in the Global South) [15]. Such an effort appears to be a necessary initial step for establishing broader alliances between agroecological farmers and farmers' organizations, urban food movements and small- and medium-sized conventional farmers in the Global North.

6. Conclusions: Towards a Politics of Recognition

The messages transmitted within the Green Capsule project show that all three combinations of language, message and symbols work for affecting the subjectivities of different actors within the food system. However, we have found both qualitative and quantitative differences in their reach, according to the variables analyzed. What we have called the "populist-integrative" capsule seems to connect especially with rural and female profiles, and with professional farmers (both conventional and organic, male and female); while what we have called the "Campesino-a-Campesino" capsule seems to connect especially with organic farmers and urban women—while also with conventional farmers—and, perhaps, with activist networks for rural social-ecological sustainability.

Nevertheless, the experimental design deployed has been useful for exploring responses to certain communicative devices, but cannot deliver definite conclusions. Audiovisual languages combine a great number of variables in their design and their reach, and it is thus difficult to establish single, clear and direct causal relations between their features and their impacts and responses from the public. In any case, our research offers emerging hypotheses useful for further research on the symbolic mechanisms underlying material, agroecological transitions at the food system scale. With the aim of developing symbolic contexts favorable to agroecological transitions with differentiated food system profiles, the devices, messages and languages deployed must take into account the cultural environment present in the daily life of target groups, and also take into account specificities within this profile category, such as those represented along the axes male/female, urban/rural, farmer/non-farmer or organic/conventional farmers. In developing such efforts, an exercise in food sovereignty "translation" [9], based on the so-called "silent food sovereignty" [35] can help to set up symbolic spaces in which to construct alliances between conventional farmers, agroecological organizations and urban food movements. In order to set up such spaces for alliances, it is possible to combine mimetic communication elements of translation with reparation messages, both in social and ecological terms, to open shared transition paths to agroecology.

In order to construct such shared symbolic spaces, a "politics of recognition" can be a preliminary condition when dealing with conventional farmers' profiles, not previously used for agroecology. Rurality has not been widely recognized by urban food movements as a condition of subalternity, beyond rural poverty. Only once conventional farmers feel recognized (and not blamed) within the contradictions of their living and working conditions within the corporate food regime will it be possible to construct common reflections beyond an adherence to corporate farming discourses. Only when collective self-esteem is restored will it be possible for some vulnerable farmers' profiles to step up the transition, and recognition is a powerful move towards the restoration of both individual and collective self-esteem. In any case, we recognize that the construction of such a shared symbolic space not necessarily drives to transitions.

The present project must be understood as an initial, exploratory exercise to open a field of research on the symbolic dimensions of agroecological transition, oriented to the perceptions of single individuals and local communities. To delve deeper into it, systematic research based on empirical data must be conducted, in different rural contexts and with complementary methodologies to deepen and triangulate on the analysis of the different variables that have emerged as relevant in the present study.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/su151310091/s1>, Video S1: Praise; Script of Video S1; Video S2: The

Matrix; Script of Video S2; Video S3: Conversations; Script of Video S3; File S1: Data from social media.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, D.L.-G., J.G.-F., J.L.E.-T. and M.S.; methodology, D.L.-G., G.V.-M., J.G.-F. and P.O.-F.; formal analysis, G.V.-M., P.O.-F., J.L.E.-T. and J.G.-F.; writing—original draft preparation, D.L.-G. and G.V.-M.; writing—review and editing, D.L.-G., G.V.-M., J.G.-F., M.S., J.L.E.-T. and P.O.-F.; project administration, D.L.-G. and G.V.-M.; funding acquisition, D.L.-G. and J.G.-F. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by the Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge (MITERD) under the Third Sector Grants' Calls 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Giraldo, O.F.; Rosset, P.M. Agroecology as a territory in dispute: Between institutionality and social movements. *J. Peasant. Stud.* **2017**, *45*, 545–564. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Mier y Terán Giménez Cacho, M.; Giraldo, O.F.; Aldasoro, M.; Morales, H.; Ferguson, B.G.; Rosset, P.; Khadse, A.; Campos, C. Bringing agroecology to scale: Key drivers and emblematic cases. *Agroecol. Sustain. Food Syst.* **2018**, *42*, 637–665. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Val, V.; Rosset, P.M.; Zamora Lomelí, C.; Giraldo, O.F.; Rocheleau, D. Agroecology and La Via Campesina I. The symbolic and material construction of agroecology through the dispositive of “peasant-to-peasant” processes. *Agroecol. Sustain. Food Syst.* **2019**, *43*, 872–894. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Anderson, C.R.; Bruil, J.; Chappell, M.J.; Kiss, C.; Pimbert, M.P. From Transition to Domains of Transformation: Getting to Sustainable and Just Food Systems through Agroecology. *Sustainability* **2019**, *11*, 5272. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Mamonova, N.; Franquesa, J. Populism, Neoliberalism and Agrarian Movements in Europe. Understanding Rural Support for Right-Wing Politics and Looking for Progressive Solutions. *Sociol. Rural.* **2020**, *60*, 710–731. [[CrossRef](#)]
- van der Ploeg, J.D. Farmers' upheaval, climate crisis and populism. *J. Peasant. Stud.* **2020**, *47*, 589–605. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Iocco, G.; Lo Cascio, M.; Perrotta, D.C. 'Close the Ports to African Migrants and Asian Rice!': The Politics of Agriculture and Migration and the Rise of a 'New' Right-Wing Populism in Italy. *Sociol. Rural.* **2020**, *60*, 732–753. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Bilewicz, A.M. Beyond the Modernisation Paradigm: Elements of a Food Sovereignty Discourse in Farmer Protest Movements and Alternative Food Networks in Poland. *Sociol. Rural.* **2020**, *60*, 754–772. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Shattuck, A.; Schiavoni, C.M.; VanGelder, Z. Translating the Politics of Food Sovereignty: Digging into Contradictions, Uncovering New Dimensions. *Globalizations* **2015**, *12*, 421–433. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Cadieux, K.V.; Carpenter, S.; Liebman, A.; Blumberg, R.; Upadhyay, B. Reparation Ecologies: Regimes of Repair in Populist Agroecology. *Ann. Am. Assoc. Geogr.* **2019**, *109*, 644–660. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Walker, D.; Myrick, F. Grounded theory: An exploration of process and procedure. *Qual. Health Res.* **2006**, *16*, 547–559. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Gliessman, S.R. Transforming food systems with agroecology. *Agroecol. Sustain. Food Syst.* **2016**, *40*, 187–189. [[CrossRef](#)]
- González de Molina, M.; Petersen, P.F.; Garrido Peña, F.; Caporal, F.R. *Political Agroecology: Advancing the Transition to Sustainable Food Systems*; Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 2019.
- Valero, D.E. From Brexit to VOX: Populist Policy Narratives about Rurality in Europe and the Populist Challenges for the Rural-Urban Divide. *Rural. Sociol.* **2021**, *87*, 758–783. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Kindon, S.; Pain, R.; Kesby, M. Participatory action research approaches and methods. In *Participatory Action Research: Origins, Approaches and Methods*; Kindon, S., Pain, R., Kesby, M., Eds.; Routledge: Oxon, UK, 2007; pp. 9–18.
- López-García, D.; Cuéllar-Padilla, M.; Olival, A.D.A.; Laranjeira, N.P.; Méndez, V.E.; Parada, S.P.Y.; Barbosa, C.A.; Salas, C.B.; Caswell, M.; Cohen, R.; et al. Building agroecology with people. Challenges of participatory methods to deepen on the agroecological transition in different contexts. *J. Rural. Stud.* **2021**, *83*, 257–267. [[CrossRef](#)]
- López-García, D.; Calvo, L.B.; Tormo, V.C.; Carucci, P.; Torrijos, I.D.; Garcés, A.H.; Nicolás, M.L.; Sánchez, J.M.P.; Vicente-Amazán, L. Las transiciones hacia la sostenibilidad como procesos de final abierto: Dinamización Local Agroecológica con horticultores convencionales de l'Horta de València. *Boletín Asoc. Geógrafos Esp.* **2021**, *88*. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Méndez, V.E.; Caswell, M.; Gliessman, S.R.; Cohen, R. Integrating Agroecology and Participatory Action Research (PAR): Lessons from Central America. *Sustainability* **2017**, *9*, 705. [[CrossRef](#)]

19. Haldemann, F. Another King of Justice: Transitional Justice as Recognition. *Cornell Int. Law J.* **2008**, *41*, 675–737.
20. Fraser, N. Feminist Politics in the Age of Recognition: A Two-Dimensional Approach to Gender Justice. *Stud. Soc. Justice* **2007**, *1*, 1. [[CrossRef](#)]
21. Mason, R.E.; White, A.; Bucini, G.; Anderzén, J.; Méndez, V.E.; Merrill, S.C. The evolving landscape of agroecological research. *Agroecol. Sustain. Food Syst.* **2020**, *45*, 551–591. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Edelman, M.; Weis, T.; Baviskar, A. Introduction: Critical perspectives on food sovereignty. *J. Peasant. Stud.* **2014**, *41*, 911–931. [[CrossRef](#)]
23. López-García, D. Who is the subject of agroecological transitions? Local Agroecological Dynamization and the plural subject of food systems transformation. *Landbauforsch. J. Sustain. Org. Agric. Syst.* **2020**, *70*, 36–42. [[CrossRef](#)]
24. Reed, M. The rural arena: The diversity of protest in rural England. *J. Rural Stud.* **2008**, *24*, 209–218. [[CrossRef](#)]
25. Bernstein, H. *The Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*; Fernwood: Halifax, UK, 2010.
26. Bernstein, H. Political economy of agrarian change: Some key concepts and questions. *RUDN J. Sociol.* **2017**, *17*, 7–18. [[CrossRef](#)]
27. García-Azcárate, T. Looking in the Rear-View Mirror: Changes in the Common Agricultural Policy in the First Five years of EuroChoices. *EuroChoices* **2021**, *20*, 54–57. [[CrossRef](#)]
28. McMichael, P. *Regímenes Alimentarios y Cuestiones Agrarias*; Icaria: Barcelona, Spain, 2016.
29. López-García, D.; González de Molina, M. An Operational Approach to Agroecology-Based Local Agri-Food Systems. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 8443. [[CrossRef](#)]
30. Laclau, E. *La Razón Populista*; Fondo de Cultura Económica: Mexico City, Mexico, 2013.
31. Mouffe, C. *For a Left Populism*; Verso: London, UK, 2018.
32. Shanin, T. Chayanov's Message: Illuminations, Miscomprehensions, and the Contemporary "Development Theory". In *A.V. Chayanov on The Theory of Peasant Economy*; The University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, WI, USA, 1986; pp. 1–24.
33. Borras, S.N., Jr. Agrarian change and peasant studies: Changes, continuities and challenges—An introduction. *J. Peasant. Stud.* **2009**, *36*, 5–31. [[CrossRef](#)]
34. Scoones, I.; Edelman, M.; Borras, S.M., Jr.; Hall, R.; Wolfor, W.; White, B. Emancipatory rural politics: Confronting authoritarian populism. *J. Peasant. Stud.* **2018**, *45*, 1–20. [[CrossRef](#)]
35. Mamonova, N.; Franquesa, J.; Brooks, S. 'Actually existing' right-wing populism in rural Europe: Insights from eastern Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and Ukraine. *J. Peasant. Stud.* **2020**, *47*, 1497–1525. [[CrossRef](#)]
36. Adaman, F.; Arsel, M.; Akbulut, B. Neoliberal developmentalism, authoritarian populism, and extractivism in the countryside: The Soma mining disaster in Turkey. *J. Peasant. Stud.* **2019**, *46*, 514–536. [[CrossRef](#)]
37. Holt-Giménez, E. *Campesino A Campesino: Voices from Latin America's Farmer to Farmer Movement for Sustainable Agriculture*; Food First Books: Oakland, CA, USA, 2006.
38. Guzmán, G.I.; López, D.; Román, L.; Alonso, A.M. Participatory Action Research in Agroecology: Building Local Organic Food Networks in Spain. *J. Sustain. Agric.* **2013**, *37*, 127–146. [[CrossRef](#)]
39. Rosset, P.M.; Machín Sosa, B.; Roque, A.M.; Ávila Lozano, D.R. The Campesino-to-Campesino agroecology movement of ANAP in Cuba: Social process methodology in the construction of sustainable peasant agriculture and food sovereignty. *J. Peasant. Stud.* **2011**, *38*, 161–191. [[CrossRef](#)]
40. Gibson-Graham, J.K. *A Postcapitalist Politics*; University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN, USA, 2006.
41. Rivera-Cusicanqui, S. *Sociología de la Imagen, Miradas ch'ixi Desde la Historia Andina*; Tinta Limón: Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2015.
42. Braun, C.; Clarke, V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual. Res. Psychol.* **2006**, *3*, 77–101. [[CrossRef](#)]
43. Moyano Estrada, E. Acción colectiva y organizaciones profesionales en la agricultura. In *Agricultura y Sociedad en el Cambio de Siglo*; González-Iturri, J.J., Benito, C.G., Eds.; McGraw-Hill: Madrid, Spain, 2002; pp. 511–532.
44. Ajates, R. An integrated conceptual framework for the study of agricultural cooperatives: From repolitisation to cooperative sustainability. *J. Rural. Stud.* **2020**, *78*, 467–479. [[CrossRef](#)]
45. Vazquez, G.; López-García, D.; Ortega-Faura, P. El Malestar del Campo: Reflexiones Frente a la Ofensiva Ideológica de las Derechas. *CTXT*. 2022. Available online: <https://ctxt.es/es/20220301/Firmas/39185/poblacion-rural-izquierda-ultraderecha-transicion-ecosocial.htm> (accessed on 24 May 2022).
46. Parker, C.; Scott, S.; Geddes, A. Snowball sampling. *SAGE Res. Methods Found.* **2019**. [[CrossRef](#)]
47. Vehovar, V.; Manfreda, K.L. Overview: Online surveys. In *The SAGE Handbook of Online Research Methods*; Fielding, N.G., Lee, R.M., Blank, G., Eds.; SAGE: London, UK, 2017; pp. 143–161.
48. Morales, H. Agroecological feminism. *Agroecol. Sustain. Food Syst.* **2021**, *45*, 955–956. [[CrossRef](#)]
49. Yarwood, R. Beyond the Rural Idyll: Images, countryside change and geography. *Geography* **2005**, *90*, 19–31. [[CrossRef](#)]
50. van der Ploeg, J.D.; Barjolle, D.; Bruil, J.; Brunori, G.; Madureira, L.M.C.; Dessein, J.; Drag, Z.; Fink-Kessler, A.; Gasselin, P.; de Molina, M.G.; et al. The economic potential of agroecology: Empirical evidence from Europe. *J. Rural. Stud.* **2019**, *71*, 46–61. [[CrossRef](#)]
51. Moore, J.W. *El Capitalismo en la Trama de la Vida. Ecología y Acumulación de Capital*; Traficantes de Sueños: Madrid, Spain, 2020.

52. Federici, S. *Calibán y la Bruja. Mujeres, Cuerpo y Acumulación Originaria*; Traficantes de Sueños: Madrid, Spain, 2011.
53. Franquesa, J. The vanishing exception: Republican and reactionary specters of populism in rural Spain. *J. Peasant. Stud.* **2019**, *46*, 537–560. [[CrossRef](#)]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.