



Cultural exchange in creative economy: weak and strong ties in agroecological fair

Intercâmbio cultural na economia criativa: laços fracos e fortes em feira agroecológica

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the results of the analysis on the relationships between strong ties and weak ties in the creative economy, focusing on experience. The objective is to describe the existing influences between these types of ties and their possible simultaneous relationships in the context of the local creative economy. The chosen case study is the “urban-rural exchange” between producers and consumers of an agroecological fair in Várzea - a peripheral neighborhood located in the city of Recife/Pernambuco/Brazil. The methodology used is exploratory and descriptive in nature, based on qualitative analysis. Documentaries produced by the Agroecological Space of Várzea (EAV), images available on the Instagram profile, and descriptive texts that highlight the narratives of the study participants were used. The results indicate that the “urban-rural exchange” establishes strong and solid ties, while also strengthening weak ties, boosting the local creative economy of the agroecological fair.

Keywords: Creative economy. Strong ties. Weak ties. Cultural exchange. Agroecological fair.

RESUMO

Este estudo apresenta os resultados da análise sobre as relações entre laços fortes e laços fracos na economia criativa, com foco na experiência. O objetivo é descrever as influências existentes entre esses tipos de laços e suas possíveis relações simultâneas na conjuntura da economia criativa local. O estudo de caso escolhido é o “intercâmbio urbano-rural” entre produtores e consumidores de uma feira agroecológica na Várzea, bairro periférico localizado na cidade de Recife, Pernambuco, Brasil. A metodologia utilizada é de natureza exploratória descritiva, baseada em análise qualitativa. Foram utilizados documentários produzidos pelo Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea (EAV), imagens disponíveis no perfil do Instagram e textos descritivos que evidenciam as narrativas dos participantes do estudo. Os resultados indicam que o “intercâmbio urbano-rural” estabelece laços fortes sólidos e fortalece os laços fracos, impulsionando a economia criativa local da feira agroecológica.

Palavras-chave: Economia criativa. Laços fortes. Laços fracos. Intercâmbio cultural. Feira agroecológica.

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INTRODUCTION

Economic relationships in supermarkets and fairs are brief and economic in nature (BORGES, 2019). However, due to the pandemic and social distancing, these relationships have become more distant. The *Várzea* agroecological fair, in Recife, Pernambuco, adopts strategies to maintain proximity in commercial transactions.

Agroecological fairs resist agribusiness, which promotes the consumption of food contaminated by pesticides, affecting human and animal health and natural ecosystems (BENINCA; CAMPOS BONATTI, 2020). Thus, agroecology seeks to produce and consume food in a sustainable way, without pesticides, and goes beyond organic or natural agriculture (ALTIERI, 1989; BENINCA; CAMPOS BONATTI, 2020; FEIDEN, 2005).

Creative economy promotes agroecological fairs as commercial spaces aligned with agroecology and sustainability. In addition to meeting the local demand for organic food, these fairs promote interaction between producers and consumers.

The *Várzea* agroecological fair, in Recife, promotes dialogue and connections, in addition to selling agroecological products. The “Urban-Rural Exchange” program strengthens ties through consumer visits to production sites. Fairs are meeting points that allow us to rediscover ways of living in society through this relationship with space (VIGUELES; MARQUES, 2021).

The study investigated whether this exchange strengthens ties between producers and consumers, promoting trust and proximity. This transformation in economic relations is crucial to strengthening local creative economy.

Agroecological fairs go beyond commerce, being spaces for exchanging knowledge, valuing culture, and encouraging sustainable production. Establishing strong ties, these fairs contribute to a conscious community, committed to health, environment, and sustainable economic development.

Through initiatives such as “Urban-Rural Exchange”, these fairs strengthen ties between producers and consumers, creating a relationship of trust and mutual appreciation. This transformation in economic relations contributes to strengthening local creative economy, turning agroecological fairs into spaces for exchanging knowledge and cultural appreciation.

THEORETICAL REFERENCE

Creative economy

The concept of creative economy is based on creative assets to stimulate income generation, job creation, and export of profits/gains, promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity, and human development (UNCTAD, 2010). Initiatives to stimulate creative industries emerged in the 1990s and 2000s, with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, but the roots of this approach go back to actions taken by left-leaning local governments around 15 years earlier, in industrial cities such as Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Sheffield, and Bradford (CORAZZA, 2013).

In the Brazilian context, the concept of creative economy has undergone an evolution and is currently understood as a set of activities in which creativity plays a fundamental role as a production factor, raw material, and final product. This concept is intrinsically related to the use of technology and the appreciation of intellectual property (IPEA, 2013). Furthermore, contemporary economic and territorial dynamics are increasingly influenced by intangible elements, which demands the construction and study of concepts capable of understanding these new territorial and economic interrelations (DA SILVA DINIZ; MENDES, 2017).

Creativity is the driver of innovation in creative economy. It is recognized that creativity and novelty are essential, and both must be cultivated for a deeper understanding of the concept (DORSA, 2019). Although some people have greater creative ability than others, the “lone genius” view is inconsistent because creative work involves multiple people and the social context can both contribute to and limit creativity (PERRY-SMITH; MANNUCCI, 2017).

Creativity is not limited to artists, it extends to scientists, businesspeople, economists, and other professionals capable of creating something original, personal, meaningful, and concrete (HOWKINS, 2013).

Creativity can be managed in an organizational context through people, procedures, rules, and resources. Furthermore, in the organizational environment, creativity is a social phenomenon built by interactions between individuals, leadership, and culture, all interrelated to promote creative development (MUZZIO, 2017).

Creativity is associated with the generation of ideas, while innovation refers to the commercial application of these ideas (MUZZIO, 2017). Creativity is assessed by originality, appropriateness, usefulness, and value of the answer or solution to a task, especially in heuristic tasks that do not follow rigid algorithms (AMABILE, 1996).

Strong ties and weak ties

In 1973, sociologist Mark Granovetter introduced a new paradigm in the understanding of social relations with his article *The Strength of Weak Ties*. When studying the job market, Granovetter observed that weak ties offer greater opportunities to get a job than strong ones, as weak ties provide new contacts and information (GRANOVETTER, 1973). Although these ties have less frequent contact, they provide access to resources and information beyond those available in nearby social networks.

The analysis of connections between individuals, such as cohesion of networks and flow of resources between them — money, affection, and information —, reveals that individuals make more solid decisions when their social ties are stronger (GRANOVETTER, 1973). During this period, “weak ties” received great attention as they were considered relevant to the dissemination of innovations. However, it was not completely accepted that “weak ties” were directly linked to innovation, since the adoption of innovations required feelings of identification and trust among community members, which was associated with the idea of “strong ties” (GRANOVETTER, 1973).

Weak ties are known as “bridges” between individuals who do not belong to the same social group and are associated with greater reach and exposure to different people (SHALLEY *et al.*, 2015). According to the authors, an important factor that differentiates weak ties from strong ties is that they require more connection time between individuals when seeking advice and generate a need for future reciprocation on the part of those offering advice.

On the other hand, strong ties have an intrinsic motivation for the development of creativity, as individuals are more inclined to help each other in the search for problem solving (TORTORIELLO; KRACKHARDT, 2010). In general terms, strong ties are characterized by closer and more frequent relationships between actors, while weak ties represent more distant relationships and, therefore, result in less frequent interactions (GRANOVETTER, 1985).

The sharing of unique ideas and complex knowledge, which requires trust, is facilitated by positive affect between individuals. These positive affective states are associated with broad mental categorization, which can promote associations and, in turn, induce creativity (SHALLEY *et al.*, 2015).

Collins (2009), for example, demonstrates that many prominent intellectuals in the fields of art and science were often embedded in networks strongly connected to other scientists, researchers and artists, who not only shared ideas, but also competed and collaborated. On the other hand, those who were integrated into weakly connected networks ended up weakening themselves, despite their talent, according to Collins (2009).

Given the complexity of social relationships, the existence of ties makes it possible to build connections between actors, forming the basis for more robust social relationships. In the context of creativity, ties play an important role in helping to understand how actors build a reality based on creativity and close relationships. They offer a pertinent perspective for understanding how social interactions influence creativity and how individuals can benefit from the diversity of social ties (SHALLEY *et al.*, 2015; TORTORIELLO; KRACKHARDT, 2010).

Agroecology — social contexto

The term “agroecology” has been widespread, often associated with ecological, organic, and clean products, as well as a new form of socially fair agriculture that promotes healthier lives. However, it is important to highlight that these reductionist conceptions do not fully encompass the scope of agroecology as a science (CAPORAL; COSTABEBER, 2004).

The mechanistic and reductionist approach adopted in agriculture, in which parts are manipulated and understood in isolation, has brought scientific advances and increased agricultural productivity through technology. However, this approach has also resulted in soil degradation, waste, and excessive use of water, environmental pollution and dependence on external inputs (FEIDEN, 2005).

The agricultural perspectives that emerged after the Second World War sought more sustainable agriculture. However, it is necessary to distinguish that the

mere absence of pesticides or other chemical products does not guarantee the sustainability of agriculture and even the inadequate use of organic inputs can cause imbalances in cultivation (CAPORAL; COSTABEBER, 2004). In that regard:

Agroecology constitutes a theoretical and methodological approach that, drawing on various scientific disciplines, aims to study agricultural activity from an ecological perspective. Thus, agroecology adopts, from a systemic approach, the agroecosystem as a unit of analysis, with the ultimate purpose of providing scientific foundations (principles, concepts, and methodologies) to support the transition process from the current conventional agriculture model to sustainable agricultural models (CAPORAL; COSTABEBER, 2004, p. 11).

Within the scientific disciplines related to agriculture, multidisciplinary approaches have emerged to deal with the challenges faced by traditional agriculture. These approaches included multidisciplinary, in which researchers from different areas sought a comprehensive understanding of the object of study; interdisciplinarity, in which researchers from different disciplines selected the same object of study and established common parameters and analysis methodologies; and transdisciplinarity, which involved the integration of new knowledge beyond existing disciplines (FEIDEN, 2005).

Thus, when seeking to understand the definition under construction of agroecology, one can attribute importance to “agroecological zoning”, which consists of the territorial delimitation of exploration areas suitable for different crops, taking into account the climatic characteristics necessary for their development (FEIDEN, 2005).

The emergence of agroecology as a science encompasses disciplines such as agronomy, ecology, economics, and sociology (ALTIERI, 1989). It has been disseminated in Latin America, including Brazil, as a technical-agronomic model capable of guiding sustainable rural development strategies, evaluating the potential of agricultural systems through a social, economic, and ecological perspective (ALTIERI, 1998).

Agroecology emerges as a sustainable form of production, being an alternative to the traditional model. It is considered a healthier and more sustainable way of life for both consumers and producers, both in the countryside and in the city (BENINCA; CAMPOS BONATTI, 2020). Furthermore, it is also a social movement based on principles, concepts, and theories to strengthen these practices in rural areas (PAULINO; GOMES, 2020).

In addition to the development of sustainable agricultural products and agroecological fairs, movements are also taking place in defense of women’s rights, promoting gender emancipation and encouraging female leadership as an agent of social transformation (FRANCO CÂMARA *et al.*, 2020). However, the reality of some women is still being considered substitutes for their partners in agroecology and in the field. In other words, when men are not present on the property or cannot manage the business, women take on these roles (ANDERSSON *et al.*, 2017).

Besides the aspect of product marketing, agroecological fairs transcend local limits due to the current context of digital media. Therefore, by going beyond the boundaries of the community, greater coordination between those involved in the search for joint solutions and the construction of innovations is possible (FERNANDES *et al.*, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this research was to carry out a descriptive exploratory investigation to understand the dynamics of weak ties and strong ties through the economic strategy used by the organizers of *Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea* (EAV) in the “urban-rural exchange.”

To do so, an analysis of secondary data was carried out, using the documentary videos produced by the event organizers. We opted for a qualitative approach, which allows for a more in-depth analysis of the information collected, aiming to understand the nuances and particularities of the phenomenon studied (STRAUSS, 1987; SUNDLER, 2019).

The simple case study was chosen to carry out a detailed and in-depth analysis of a single case, EAV, considered exemplary for representing a successful initiative to bring producers and consumers closer together through urban-rural exchange.

The Atlas.ti software was used to analyze the collected data, which is widely known in qualitative data analysis. This software made it possible to organize the data into categories, to identify patterns, and to make comparisons between different aspects of the reality studied.

The study was conducted focusing on the Várzea Agroecological Fair, located at Praça Damázio Pinto, Várzea District, in Recife, Pernambuco, from 2018 to 2019. The objective was to analyze the rapprochement between consumers and traders/producers in the context of this relationship of consumption. For this, a qualitative approach was used based on the analysis of secondary data published by EAV on its YouTube channel and Instagram.

The analysis was based on audiovisual records from the “agroeco varzea” channel on YouTube, which document the tours promoted by EAV so that consumers can learn about the cultivation sites. Images and texts on Instagram were also analyzed, exploring the theory of strong ties and weak ties. The qualitative analysis revealed the importance of social ties in bringing consumers and traders/producers together at the Várzea Agroecological Fair. This approach to secondary data has brought significant results in research on innovation in administration (FERNANDES *et al.*, 2022).

In addition to analyzing the narratives, it was decided to include photographic images of the environment in which the subjects were inserted, in order to complement the understanding of the context of weak ties and strong ties. The images were analyzed through codings that were grouped and divided into codes and their descriptions were found in the data analysis. This allowed a more complete and detailed analysis of the studied context.

The results of the coding used in the analysis of the images were presented in Table 1, highlighting the categories of gestures, attitudes, and actions of the subjects identified in the photographs. Furthermore, the results of the image analysis were cross-referenced with the subjects' narratives, providing a more complete understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions regarding weak ties and strong ties. The approach using images complemented the analysis of the narratives, providing a richer and more detailed view of the context of these relationships.

Table 1. Codings for the inauguration of *Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea* and the Urban-Rural Exchange.

Type	Locus of analysis		
Images	People gathered, buying and selling, feminist movement, and culture	Image/context, people gathered and buying and selling	People gathered, buying and selling, feminist movement
Narrative of the subjects	Feminist movement, agroecology and consumer/visitor	Interpersonal relationship, historical context, external incentive to the family, internal incentive to the family and feminist movement	Interpersonal relationship, buying and selling, feminist movement, agroecology, consumer/visitor

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Table 1 presents the coding used in the analysis of data collected during the inauguration of EAV and the urban-rural exchange (AGROECOVÁRZEA, 2018a). The subjects' images, photographs, and narratives were analyzed to identify gestures, attitudes, and actions related to the theory. Furthermore, the analysis of the Instagram profile @agroecovarzea was also considered when preparing the table. The encodings were grouped and divided into codes and descriptions to better understand the different moments in which they occurred.

The images and narratives reveal significant aspects of the studied context. The presence of people gathered, the dynamics of buying and selling, the feminist movement, and cultural expression stand out. The feminist movement, agroecology, consumer profile, and interpersonal relationships are covered. These insights enrich the research, highlighting the importance of social ties and agroecological practices.

RESULTS

EAV was inaugurated on March 3rd, 2018. On social media, their Instagram profile (@agroecovarzea) had 924 publications and 5,594 followers, while the YouTube channel (agroeco varzea) had 116 subscribers and 14 videos published. On Facebook/Meta (*Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea*), there were 813 followers. The EAV website (<https://agroecovarzea.wixsite.com/>) was also analyzed, highlighting the relationships between farmer associations.

The first exchange, entitled "Knowledge and Flavors about Agroecology from the Várzea Agroecological Space", was held on November 16th, 2018. The

event included visits to the site of farmers/traders Maisa and Elivelton from the Mocotó Association, in Vitória de Santo Antão, Pernambuco (AGROECOVÁRZEA, 2019). There was also a horticulture workshop, pick up and pay and a conversation circle between participants. Participation in the meeting required advance registration and payment of R\$ 50.00, which included transfer, welcome coffee, lunch, and workshop.

Three more urban-rural exchanges were then carried out. The second took place on February 17th, 2019, heading to the municipality of Belo Jardim, in Pernambuco, where the site linked to the Agroflor Association is located. The investment to participate was also R\$ 50.00, covering transfers, breakfast at the association's headquarters, visits to producer sites, and lunch with local products.

The third urban-rural exchange took place on May 5th, 2019, in the municipality of Igarassu, in Sítio Sete Estrelas. The event included workshops on gluten-free cooking, vegetable juices and milks, herbal medicine for pets and sacred herbs, all interconnected with the family experience of farmers Camila and Felipe. Registration was made by bank transfer, with a value of R\$ 50.00 for access to the workshops, lunch, welcome coffee, and transfer.

The fourth urban-rural exchange took place on June 2nd, 2019, in the municipality of Glória de Goitá, on sites linked to *Associação das Amoras*. During the event, workshops on natural pesticides were offered, and participants had the opportunity to visit the family farms of Marluce, Nino, Chico, Nindinaldo, and Walter. Investment and payment method for this exchange were the same as for previous events.

These urban-rural exchanges promoted by EAV provided a closer relationship between consumers, producers, and traders. Participants had the opportunity to get to know production sites up close, to exchange knowledge and experiences about agroecology, and to establish meaningful connections in the context of the fair.

The exchanges also highlighted the importance of partnerships and farmer associations in promoting agroecology and valuing local products. Visiting family farms and participating in workshops provided practical experience of the principles of agroecology, enabling a better understanding of the origin and production of the food at the fair.

In the analysis of the EAV inauguration video (AGROECOVÁRZEA, 2018a), different categories were identified in coding (Table 2). The images reveal moments such as people gathered in stretching activities, talking on chairs arranged in a circle and celebrating the event. The purchase and sale of products was also observed, as well as the presence of the feminist movement, portrayed in group photographs and in the sale of shirts with the slogan "Without feminism there is no agroecology" during the opening fair.

The code "people gathered" shows a stretching activity in a circle in the center of the square, promoting health and well-being, values related to agroecology (RIGOTTO, 2012). The participation of men, women, and children involves different segments of the community in promoting healthy practices.

Table 2. Coded images of the inauguration of *Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea*.

Codes	Description
People gathered	Stretching activity in a circle with men, women, and children.
	Conversations on white circle-shaped chairs.
	Hugs in the center of the square celebrating and applauding.
	Clapping and shouting "Fora Temer".
Buying and selling	Group photography together.
	Woman buying and placing products in an ecological tote bag.
Feminist movement	Book stall called PF - Paulo Freire.
	Shirts with the slogan "Without feminism there is no agroecology" being sold.
Culture	Shirts with the slogan "Without feminism there is no agroecology" being sold.
	Presentation by youth from the Lar Fabiano de Cristo project playing percussion while people watch.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

The "Buying and selling" code highlights a woman purchasing ecological products and using an ecological bag, encouraging conscious consumption and sustainable production (ROMEIRO; GUIMARÃES, 2022). The presence of the book stand named after Paulo Freire indicates the promotion of education and culture, values related to sustainable agriculture.

The sale of shirts with the slogan "Without feminism there is no agroecology" (Figure 1) aimed to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality in sustainable agriculture. The female genetic symbol coined with a clenched fist on the figure represents the empowerment of women in agriculture and society in general.



Source: Agroecovárzea (2018b).

Figure 1. "Without feminism there is no agroecology" logo.

The cultural presentations *carried out* by young people from the Lar Fabiano de Cristo project value local culture and promote cultural diversity associated with agroecology. Specific uniforms identify participants with the project, valuing the work carried out by the organization. The presence of people watching the presentations involves the community in the project activities.

Table 3 presents the coding and descriptions of images from the exchanges held during the inauguration of EAV in 2018. Different groups and movements, such as the Feminist Movement, Yoga, and Agroecology, were present, indicating strong ties and shared values. The message on the t-shirt “Without feminism there is no agroecology” and the discussion about the patriarchal and sexist character of certain agricultural systems emphasize the concern with gender equality and the empowerment of women in agriculture and society. These actions aim to build a fairer and more sustainable agricultural production system.

In this context, it is possible to identify the presence of weak ties in the event. The buying and selling of products in “stalls” indicate a more superficial commercial relationship between sellers and consumers. However, EAV seeks to strengthen ties

Table 3. Images and descriptive texts of the inauguration of *Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea* and the urban-rural exchange on Instagram.

Codes	Inauguration (<i>Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea</i> , 2018)	
	Image	Descriptive text
People gathered	Features an image with the logo of Yoga representative Clarissa Mendonça	With the participation of a yoga teacher, the text promotes “sharing with those present an energizing practice that will open the activities this coming Saturday”.
	Practice yoga in a large circle	
	Photograph with several people occupying space in Pinto Dâmaso square (EAV location)	
	Cultural presentation of young people (women)	
Buying and selling	A man and a woman hold a basket with products, both smiling	“ <i>Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea</i> aims to be more than just a place to buy and sell.”
	All tents have the same pattern, with green and white striped awnings	
Feminist movement	Banner with information about the inauguration and the symbol of the feminist movement (see Figure 1)	“This month we will bring the debate on Feminism and Agroecology and some cultural activities.” “Without Feminism there is no Agroecology!”
	A woman performs sublimation* on a t-shirt	“Agroecology is based on indigenous culture and peasantry. We know that, historically, these have both been patriarchal and sexist systems.”
	Shirts hanging on a clothesline with the movement’s logo (see Figure 1)	“As long as there is inequality in the distribution of resources, in the division of labor and in the recognition of female contributions, there will be a fight to be fought!”
Agroecology	Farmer harvesting a vegetable	“agroecological fair with lots of good things and no poison”
		“Agroecology is not limited to the production system, this thought of change reaches the social, pedagogical and cultural levels.”

Continue...

Table 3. Continuation.

Codes	Urban-rural Exchange (Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea, 2018)	
	Image	Descriptive text
People gathered	Watch a lecture held by Agroflor	"We had a very useful dialogue circle that helped us understand more about the reality of this family from Sítio Sete Estrelas."
	Sitting listening to a female farmer	
	Go on a trail	
	"Work" at the plow	"Still in the morning, we took a walk to see Marluce and Nino's plantations. After lunch we went to Chico and Lindinaldo's farm, and after a walk through the plantations, we had a Natural Defensives Workshop."
	A joint photograph at the end of the exchange with everyone together.	
	Hear from farmers about their life stories and the place they visit.	
Feminist movement	--x--	"We wanted to highlight the group of women warriors who made a difference in making this visit happen."
Interpersonal relationship	People pose for a photo next to the driver, before the trip	"Get to know a little about the history of Elivelton and Maísa's family that makes up our little corner."
		"We took a walk through the plantations, lunch was wonderful, and there was even a river bath for those who came prepared."
	Farmer welcomes EAV attendee with a smile	"It was a day of great exchange of knowledge, new friendships and adventure."
	EAV attendees hug for the photo Farmer and EAV attendee hug	"We had a delicious breakfast, lots of hugs and smiles."
Agroecology	Women photographed with plantations in the background	"We had a very useful round of dialogue that allowed us to better understand the reality of this family from Sítio '7 Estrelas' and also find out more about the organizational issues of the bodies that oversee organic and/or agroecological production."

*It is an easy-to-use fabric printing technique capable of supporting a wide variety of colors; EAV: *Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea*.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

between producers and consumers, promoting a connection between consumers and nature. The presence of family farming and vegetable harvesting reinforces the idea of a sustainable system by strengthening these ties between participants and disseminating these practices to society.

Table 4 presents the narratives coded during the inauguration of EAV, reflecting the voices and perspectives of different actors, such as the feminist movement, agroecology, and consumers/visitors. These narratives highlight the importance of bringing women into this space, recognizing their contribution and struggle in agroecology. EAV strengthens cultural activities in the neighborhood and goes beyond

the absence of pesticides in agricultural production. Consumers and visitors express their collective engagement in the construction of this space as resistance, the fight for a better world, food security, and agroecology.

Table 4. Coded narratives of the inauguration of Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea.

Codes	Description
Feminist movement	A woman, without describing her identification, highlights: “for us women and us feminist women this is extremely important, to create, to bring women to this place, a place of contribution, a place of great value that women have, a place of rebellion too, a place of a lot of struggle, because without feminism, there is no agroecology” (AGROECOVARZEA, 2018).
Agroecology	“EAV is very important for the agroecological process and the fight for agroecology” highlights that agroecology is not just the absence of pesticides in the means of production, as it has an important role in “strengthening cultural activities here in the neighborhood”
Consumer/Visitor	A man highlights that he is a resident of the Várzea district and that he and other residents took the initiative to organize themselves “in solidarity, collectively to build a space for aggregation”; he highlights the importance of “social groups engaging in collective causes to reverse this process of disbelief and lack of utopia.” In the same speech, he concludes that “it is possible to be organized based on activism and individual engagement to build a democratic and participatory process to change reality as we are changing the reality of this square” (AGROECOVARZEA, 2018).
	A woman highlights that the agroecological space is more than a fair, “it is a space of resistance and also marking a fight, for a better world, for another production, for food security, for agroecology” (AGROECOVARZEA, 2018).

EAV: Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Analysis of the participants’ statements reveals the presence of strong bonds in all interactions. Those involved demonstrate a deep commitment and identification with their respective causes, whether in the context of the feminist movement, agroecology or community organization. Agroecology goes beyond pesticide-free production, being a resistance movement and fight for a better world. Women’s knowledge and the role of feminism in promoting agroecology are valued.

Figure 2 depicts the “Urban-Rural Exchange” logo, symbolizing the connection between urban and rural environments. The importance of establishing ties between urban and rural communities is highlighted, promoting the exchange of knowledge and connections between producers and consumers.

Figure 2 reveals symbolic elements that represent weak ties and strong ties between urban and rural environments. The presence of the bridge suggests the connection between these two scenarios, emphasizing the need for exchange and interaction between communities. Strong ties are symbolized by the activities and people involved in food production, valuing those behind what is consumed. On the other hand, weak ties are represented by buildings in the metropolitan city, indicating a more distant and superficial relationship with the rural environment.



Source: Agroecovárzea (2018b).

Figure 2. Logo of the animation produced about urban-rural exchange.

This representation is an invitation to reflect on the importance of strengthening ties between urban and rural environments, recognizing the interdependence between them. Through the exchange and appreciation of knowledge from both spaces, it is possible to promote sustainable and conscious agriculture, respecting the environment and contributing to a fairer and more balanced society.

On the other hand, in the context of urban-rural exchange in agroecology, there are strong bonds between the people visited and the visitors, expressed by hugs and sharing of their life stories. However, there are also weak ties, such as interactions during travel. Purchasing products at EAV fairs generates both strong ties and weak ties.

Table 5 presents the coded narratives of the subjects involved, highlighting the diversity of reports, the role of the historical context, external and internal incentives, and the feminist perspective. The narratives reveal the complexity and richness of the exchanges, highlighting the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and established relationships.

The stories in Table 5 reveal interpersonal relationships based on strong bonds in exchange. These bonds are characterized by emotional closeness, trust, and communication. Participants share common values and goals, committing to help each other. These solid relationships promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

Knowledge sharing is essential, as indicated by participants. Farmers learn from each other by sharing farming techniques. This improves product quality and operational efficiency. EAV fair visitors also benefit by better understanding the agroecological process and the products purchased. This exchange strengthens trust between producers and consumers.

The founding stories of the sites and associations with Agroflor show external incentives for organic agriculture. However, internal family encouragement often drives the venture. Women play an important role in this process, initiating organic production and agroforestry practices. This highlights their role as agents of change and innovation.

Table 5. Coded narratives of the subjects of urban-rural exchanges.

Version and location		Codes				
		Interpersonal relationship	Historical context	External encouragement to the family	Internal family encouragement	Feminist movement
1 st	Sítio Mocotó – Vitória de Santo Antão, Pernambuco	Camila (EAV) highlights the importance of personal interactions.	Aldenice (farmer) talks about the difficulty of acquiring land by her parents and that she was born and raised in the place.	Erivaldo (a farmer) was encouraged by a friend to have his own "fair". Afterwards, he encouraged the whole family to plant organically.	-x-	-x-
2 nd	Sítios Barrancos e Camará – Bom Jardim	Agroflor representative highlights the acquisition of knowledge through exchanges.	Maria (farmer) started working with organic products 2 years ago. Before it was just her and her husband, but later her sons and daughter-in-law also participated.	Maria (a farmer) was encouraged to join Agroflor by an acquaintance.	Beatriz (a farmer) encouraged her husband Renato to join Agroflor.	-x-
3 rd	Sítio 7 Estrelas – Igarassu, Pernambuco	Filipe (farmer) highlights the importance of interactions and exchanges of experiences.	Osidalva (EAV attendee) highlights that the exchange has a nostalgic connotation as she is also the daughter of farmers.	Amadeu (a farmer) discovered the idea of agroforestry through a neighbor.	-x-	Cristina (farmer) highlights the financial autonomy of female farmers and control over money.
4 th	Sítio Goitazinho – Glória do Goitá, Pernambuco	Jorge (EAV attendee) highlights learning at the EAV fair and the agroecological process.	José Laurindo (farmer) inherited the farm from his father.	-x-	Marluce (farmer) decided to sell okra in Carpina and expanded her products.	-x-

EAV: Espaço Agroecológico da Várzea.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Cristina's feminist perspective highlights the importance of female farmers' financial autonomy. It emphasizes control over finances and independence, as well as recognizing the contribution of women in organic farming. This promotes gender equity and female empowerment.

Results analysis

Agroecology has been used to build local food systems based on local knowledge and food production and consumption practices (GLIESSMAN *et al.*, 2019). EAV, for example, goes beyond a place of purchase and sale, seeking to promote transformations in the social, pedagogical, and cultural spheres (ESPAÇO AGROECOLÓGICO DA VÁRZEA, 2018).

Community, family, and religious ties are important for the security of local social capital. Trust and reciprocity are fundamental to group balance (DE LIMA, 2005). EAV was designed as a space that operates beyond the traditional system, interconnecting different social groups through weak ties, which are the connections between the nodes of the social network (GRANOVETTER, 1973, 1985).

During the inauguration of EAV, the feminist movement had a significant presence, represented by engaged women and speeches that emphasized female protagonism in agriculture (code "feminist movement" in Tables 2 to 5). Studies point to the relationship between agroecology and the feminist movement, highlighting the participation of women in the production of agroecological businesses and family farming (FERREIRA; MATTOS, 2017; PRÉVOST *et al.*, 2014).

Female participation in agroecology seeks to resist the oppressions of heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism (TREVILLA ESPINAL, 2021). Women like Beatriz, Cristina, Marluce, and others play important roles in conceiving, defending and implementing ideas in family farming.

EAV brings together people with different purposes, such as consumers, producers, cultural artists, and yoga instructors. These groups build bridges between themselves, connecting strong ties and weak ties (code "people gathered" in Tables 2 and 3).

The list of weak ties that encouraged farmers Erivaldo, Maria, Amadeu, and Cristina to invest in agroecology was evident in their speeches (see code "incentive external to the family" in Table 5). For example, Erivaldo received encouragement from a friend to start his own business and later encouraged his family to do the same. Maria was encouraged to join Agroflor, which led her to start selling. Amadeu and Cristina were introduced to the idea of "agroforestry" by a neighbor.

Weak ties allowed an interpersonal relationship between producers and consumers/attendants of EAV, demonstrating a two-way teaching and learning process (see code "interpersonal relationship" in Tables 3 and 5). This perspective highlights the importance of the connection between the protagonists of weak ties, which connect different groups, promoting personal integration that breaks with the configuration of "isolated islands" and assumes a logic of synergy through social networks (DE LIMA, 2005).

The inauguration of the event took place in a historical political context in which the federal executive branch implemented administrative measures considered unpopular, directly affecting rural workers in terms of social protection and pensions (LEITE, 2018). In this sense, the inauguration of EAV also represented a space of struggle and resistance (see code “feminist movement” in Tables 2 to 5, and “consumer/visitor” in Table 4).

During urban-rural exchanges, the stories of overcoming shared by farmers awaken empathy in listeners, especially with regard to the socioeconomic difficulties faced in the context of family farming. These reports unite participants, both EAV attendees and external family farmers (code “historical context” in Table 5), suggesting that strong ties motivate mutual help and involvement with specific problems (SOSA, 2011).

During exchanges, displays of affection, such as hugs, highlight the interpersonal closeness between producers-producers, consumers-producers, and consumers-consumers (codes “people gathered” in Tables 2 and 3, and “interpersonal relationship” in Tables 3 and 5). Strong ties are related to closeness and positive affection between people involved in these interrelationship projects, promoting a feeling of closeness (MADJAR *et al.*, 2002).

Family relationships play an important role in strong ties (GRANOVETTER, 1973) and demonstrate to visitors that there is a connection beyond the commercial transaction, as expressed in the descriptive text on Instagram: “it was a day of a lot of exchange of knowledge, new friendships, and adventure” (code “interpersonal relationship”).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

The present study aimed to understand the context of weak ties and strong ties through the economic strategy adopted by EAV in urban-rural exchange. Unlike previous studies, this study demonstrated that the exchange not only built strong ties, but also strengthened the business, making it long-lasting and sustainable.

The Várzea Agroecological Fair was identified as a space for resistance and political discussions, in which dialogue circles and cultural exchanges promote debates on social issues, such as gender-based violence and public policies. In the creative economy environment, creativity is preserved and reinvented in the relationships between traders, producers, artists, sellers and farmers, whether they are weak ties or strong ties.

EAV’s innovation lies in bringing producers and consumers together, allowing the strengthening of both weak and strong ties, between producers and consumers. Creative economy strengthens weak ties and strong ties, promoting social resistance beyond the commercial limits of the Várzea Agroecological Fair.

Family farming in conjunction with agroecology boosts creative economy and strengthens local economy, especially in the post-pandemic scenario. Agroecology offers an opportunity to rebuild a more sustainable food system and avoid widespread disruptions to the food supply in the future.

It is recommended that future work be carried out to delve deeper into the dynamics of agroecological fairs through expanded ethnography, seeking to understand the relationships between subjects and their impacts on local creative economy.

Further investigations have the opportunity to improve the present research, which was restricted to the analysis of advertising broadcast in documentaries and in publications on EAV's Instagram profile, resulting in a limitation in understanding the complexities underlying this phenomenon. This restriction arises from the fact that the selected research sources are subject to an editorial filter, which, in turn, may restrict the complete representation of the issues involved in this process.

Agroecological fairs play a fundamental role in promoting agroecology, by connecting local producers and consumers and encouraging the production of healthy and sustainable food. Understanding the internal dynamics of these fairs and their impact on the community is essential for developing more effective public policies.

EAV and the Várzea Agroecological Fair demonstrate how creative economy can be a strategy to bring producers and consumers closer by strengthening weak ties and strong ties and promoting the production and consumption of sustainable food. Agroecology emerges as a viable alternative to rebuild a fairer and more sustainable food system, while preserving biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems.

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