LUMEN ET VIRTUS

Peasant territory in perspective: The case of the hinterlands of Crateús and Inhamuns (CE)

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the concept of territory as a portion of the space delimited by the agroecological-based peasantry. To do so, we will resort to some works considered indispensable for the discussion and construction of the understanding of the concept of territory, as a portion of the space in which relations are mediated by power, manifested from social relations and (re)production. In addition to this concept, so dear to Geography, it will also be necessary to go through, in order to better understand, what is meant by peasantry in Brazil, since, although there is a broad and historical debate about this category of social subject, the number of authors who question its existence is still significant. From the perspective of building a solid conceptual base, this work aims to embark on the debate around agroecology, since this science has gained space and relevance not only in the academic environment, but above all, in the Brazilian rural space. In the course of this work, we will present cases of agroecological-based peasant practices that have been reproduced in the semi-arid region of Ceará for more than two decades. These practices provide, at the same time, the permanence of the peasantry as a way of life, at the same time that they evidence, from social and production relations, the resignification of the concept of territory.

Keywords: Territory, Peasantry, Agroecology.

INTRODUCTION

The present work aims to discuss the concept of territory as a dimension of space, delimited by peasant relations and agroecological practices in the geographic micro-region Sertões de Crateús and Inhamuns, Ceará. To do so, we will resort to some works considered indispensable for the discussion and construction of the understanding of the concept of territory in which social relations

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and (re)production are mediated and conceived by power (Raffestin, 1993). In addition, this research approaches the territory from the point of view of the peasantry, in which agroecology is an important element for social and production relations. The subjects involved in this research found in peasant and agroecological practices the way in which they (re)learned to live with the adversities of the semi-arid region.

The peasantry, in the Brazilian context, thus assumes a front of resistance to the advance of agrarian capital. However, we need to make it clear that when we deal with peasantry, we are agreeing with the definition presented by Fernandes (2016, p. 310) when he states that "we are referring to family-based agriculture, whose total income is predominantly produced by the work of family members". Treating the peasantry in this perspective also requires accepting that this social class has a production project that opposes the neoliberal agricultural model that has in the production of *commodities* the segment of generation of its surplus value.

In the course of this research, agroecology is placed as a category of analysis and at the same time as an important element in the weaving of this web that has been (re)constructed in the Brazilian Northeast since the end of the twentieth century, as a strategy for the "reconstruction" of peasant agriculture and as a way to materialize the paradigm shift, then underway, from combating drought to coexistence with the semi-arid region.

In this way, territory, peasantry and agroecology intersect in this work, seeking to account for a part of the reality experienced by the subjects of the semi-arid region of Ceará, in particular, in the hinterlands of Crateús/Inhamuns. We try here to demonstrate, from an already established conceptual basis, that the territory is a dimension of space marked by the action of subjects who in their daily work learn, (re)signify and (re)produce their way of life. This dialectical movement helps in understanding the social relations of production as the motor and at the same time as the result of its own action. By practicing peasant agriculture, these subjects are not only redefining their identity, but also their territory.

The subjects involved in this research found in peasant and agroecological practices the way in which they learned to live with the adversities of the Sertão of Ceará at the same time that they (re)signified the territory they lived.

> In this way, Coexistence, by resignifying the elements of the people of the hinterland, brings another/new look at the Semi-arid region, representing its peculiar characteristics, delimited by its physical-anthroposocial complexity. A symbolic-cultural territory emerges, dimensioned by the material and immaterial elements present in the production and reproduction of the lives of men and women who have lived for centuries, the semi-arid mundaneity. A way of being that is incorporated as something valid and necessary to the identity project that is presented in the contemporary proposal of Coexistence. (Carvalho, 2012, p. 145)

It is, therefore, in this scenario that living together and resignifying each other complement each other as a peasant and agroecological practice, giving meaning and transforming landscapes in the hinterland so punished by poor land use and long periods of drought. The modern proposal of coexistence, according to the author, made it possible for thousands of peasants to have their realities altered, resulting in a process of (re)appropriation of the territory in its symbolic and cultural aspects at the same time that it recreates new social and production relations.

According to Carvalho (2012), this territory has been occupied by men and women for a long time, but for centuries it has been marked by misery and inequality. Today, these same subjects have rediscovered the semi-arid region based on new experiences that seek to combine social technologies with traditional wisdom that have been, over time, forgotten and/or abandoned by the imposition of a neoliberal economy that has transformed not only social and production relations in urban environments, but also in rural Brazil.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological path of this research initially involves the discovery of the work of the Pastoral Land Commission of Ceará (CPT-CE) and the Archdiocesan Caritas of Crateús in favor of the Ceará hinterland. The proposal for coexistence with the Brazilian semi-arid region gained strength, body and voice in the early 2000s, from the Brazilian Semi-arid Articulation (Asa Brasil) which, among other actions, initiated a project to build 1 million plate cisterns in the homes of peasants in the semi-arid region. Asa Brasil is a network of entities that together "embraced" the proposal of coexistence based on the dissemination and propagation of social technologies.

That said, we reach the micro-regions of Sertões de Crateús and Inhamuns, western portion of the territory of Ceará, being composed of 18 municipalities in total. The spatial cut of this research is limited to the area of activity of the Archdiocesan Caritas of Crateús, which is currently one of the entities that stands out in the propagation of social technologies for coexistence with the semi-arid region and that has been operating for approximately 20 years in this territory with this line of action.

Thus, in order to guarantee the objectives proposed for this research, we adopted specific technical and methodological standards. Initially, we will take as a basis an interpretative approach based on dialectics, because it:

> [...] sees subject/object reciprocity eminently as a social interaction that is formed over historical time. For these thinkers, knowledge cannot be understood in isolation in relation to the political practice of men, that is, it is never only a matter of knowledge, but also of power. Hence they prioritize human praxis, historical and social action, guided by an intentionality that gives it meaning, a purpose closely related to the transformation of the conditions of existence of human society. (Severino, 2017, p. 138).

Thus, it is in this sense that this approach serves the interest of this research, since, for the apprehension of reality, it cannot be forgotten that part of the analysis of the social relations of production and, mainly, of the class conflict, are the founding elements of historical and dialectical materialism. Real life is therefore the *locus* of our research, the place where social and production relations materialize.

For this study, we will also use the qualitative research method, as we understand that it is the one that best meets the objectives. Minayo reminds us that qualitative research "[...] works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes, which corresponds to a deeper space of relationships, processes and phenomena that cannot be reduced to the operationalization of variables" (Minayo, 2001, p. 21-22).

In this sense, we also agree that this work is part of the quality of field research which, according to Severino (2017) is the one in which:

> [...] The object/source is approached in its own environment. Data collection is done in the natural conditions in which the phenomena occur, thus being directly observed, without intervention and handling by the researcher. It ranges from surveys, which are more descriptive, to more analytical studies. (Serverino, 2017. p. 148)

This, however, does not define this research as a whole, since there are situations in which it was possible to interact with the respondents beyond interviews and/or photographic records. Moments in which it was allowed to meet, dialogue, listen and propose, resembling, to a certain extent, the characteristics of participant research which, according to the same author, understands it as one in which the researcher, when observing the phenomena, participates, shares the experiences of the researched at the moment he is in the field. (Severino, 2017)

Also meeting the methodological demands of scientific work, we highlight that a broad bibliographic review was carried out on core themes of this work such as peasantry, agroecology and territory, in addition to documentary research with the Archdiocesan Caritas of Crateús, as it has a wide collection of its own publications, printed and digital, as well as annual internal reports that account for all the actions carried out.

Fieldwork has been the main strategy by which information about peasant actions and agroecological practices in the research territory is obtained. For this, the support, practically unrestricted of the Archdiocesan Caritas of Crateús, has been of fundamental importance to be able to reach the peasant communities that are almost always far from urban centers. By the time this article was completed, it was possible to reach half of the municipalities in the territory in two years of research. The support of Caritas greatly facilitates the work of the researcher, since he arrives in these locations with a field agent from this institution. This opens doors and facilitates communication, more easily overcoming that distrust of the stranger who arrives full of questions and a lot of curiosity.

At this time, some research techniques have been used, such as photographic records, non-directive interviews and observations. These interviews are defined by Severino as the one in which "The interviewer remains attentive listening, recording all the information and only intervening discreetly to eventually stimulate the deponent." (Severino, 2017, p. 150). This technique proves to be very interesting because the interviewee speaks freely, allowing the researcher to obtain more details in relation to what is intended to be learned without having to resort to boring forms.

UNDERSTANDING THE TERRITORY

In the field of geographical studies, there is a broad epistemological debate that permeates the entire history of this science, especially since it was systematized and became a chair. Not infrequently, there were periods in which his object of study was placed at the center of the discussions. Geographical space, the result of the relationship between society and nature, thus assumes this position of object, whose face or form subjectively and at the same time objectively assumes multiple dimensions. Territory, one of these dimensions, is in essence an expensive and at the same time complex concept (Saquet, 2015), whose definition requires, first of all, that we return to its origins, to the classics.

Raffestin (1993) argues that the existence of territory is preceded by space and that, therefore, it is itself the "result of an action conducted by a syntagmatic actor". The territory only exists because there is an appropriation, in fact, that is effected both materially and symbolically over the space. It is from this relationship with space, from the set of representations that are formed there, that we can arrive at the definition of territory. This is because the basis that represents this dimension of space is based on the social and production relations inherent to each mode of production. In other words, we mean that the power relations, which mediate the social and production relations, constitute the fundamental element for the fabric of the territory, without which it would not exist.

It is necessary to point out that in this fabric are also represented the points, lines and surface where the territory materializes. Not least, cartography quickly became, according to Raffestin,

> [...] an instrument of power and of "Power". This cartography privileged a Euclidean "syntax" (emphasis added) that certainly contributed to shaping the behaviors of power. This syntax is very effective, because it only mobilizes three fundamental elements: the surface or the plane, the line or the straight line, and the point or moment of the plane." (Raffestin, 1993, p. 145)

This statement converges with the idea that the appropriation of the territory also permeates the control over the different elements that compose it, such as highways (lines), points and cities. However, control over the territory is based on what can be mapped, put on a plane, giving an image that the mapped surface is the controlled surface. But that's not all. Raffestin admits that the

represented image of space, the territory, is thus a perception from the point of view of the social actors involved and that, therefore, this representation does not match the totality, the real. It will always be a representation with "intentional objectives", therefore capable of being represented by "as many different intentional objectives as there are".

In this context, we cannot forget that the communication between the different points of this fabric constitutes the network system, that is, the relationships between the different subjects, whether physical or not. In this way, they develop a weave or mesh, since, for the same author, "every spatial practice, even embryonic, induced by a system of actions or behaviors is translated into a 'territorial production' that makes the weave, knot and network intervene." (Raffestin, 1993, p. 150). And he concludes this reasoning by saying that "The territorial system is, therefore, a product and a means of production". Now, if the development of social practices and relations takes place within a territory with the consequence of the weave, knot and network and, being these products and, at the same time, materiality, consequently they assume this double function.

Men, by relating to nature and at the same time to each other, produce geographical space. However, for the concept of territory, it presupposes that beyond these relations there is also a symbolic appropriation of the different elements that compose it, distinguishing them from other portions of space. Also according to Raffestin (1993), we understand that the way in which these relations occur helps to understand the development of a territoriality that can be understood as "a set of relations that originate in a three-dimensional society-space-time system in the process of achieving the greatest possible autonomy, compatible with the resources of the system" (Raffestin, 1993, p. 160).

That is, the subjects (H) maintain relationships with each other (r) and with the environment (E) and that these elements are fully feasible for changes over time. Still for the same author:

> This territoriality summarizes, in a way, the way in which societies satisfy, at a given moment, for a place, a demographic load and a set of instruments that are also determined, their needs in energy and information. (Raffestin, 1993, p. 161)

Some conclusions emerge from this. The first is that these relationships can be symmetrical and asymmetrical, that is, they do not necessarily have common, fixed and only stable elements. Another conclusion is that the level of development of one territoriality defines the limits that will distinguish them from another. Territoriality, then, presupposes relations with those inside (internal) and also with those outside (external), other territorialities, being mediated, symmetrical or dissymmetrical with this exteriority.

As we advance in the epistemological debate around the concept of territory, we realize how polysemic this expression is. There is a good diversity of approaches that move from the natural

sciences to the humanities. Haesbaert (2006) retraces the path through which some authors presented a debate on this term from the point of view of some sciences.

> Despite being a central concept for Geography, territory and territoriality, as they concern human spatiality, have a certain tradition in other areas as well, each with a focus centered on a certain perspective. (Haesbaert, 2006, p.37).

Thus, we understand that the focus we bring here is not closed or conclusive. Even among geographers, there is a broad and valuable debate that contributes to broadening our understanding of territory and territoriality. According to the quote above, we observe that these expressions are directly linked to the form of spatial distribution and at the same time to the way in which men relate to each other and to the nature around them. The author makes it clear that each focus seeks a perspective, a point of view, which, as we have stated, is not closed, but complements.

Thus, the understanding of the territory, the object of discussion in this article, presupposes an approach that, to a certain extent, it is possible to say transits in the field of interdisciplinarity, given that such a perspective is increasingly evident with the diversity of authors and areas of knowledge involved in this debate. "A clear idea of the breadth with which the concept of territory has been worked on in our days can be given from this reading, which goes from the ethological perspective (that is, linked to animal behavior) to the psychological" (Haesbaert, 2006, p. 38).

Following this path, we will highlight the debate around the scope and new contours that the concept of territory gained from the 1970s onwards with the works of Deleuze (1976) and Guattari (1972), as recorded by Saquet (2015).

> These are new territorialities constituted in reterritorialization. Territorialities are cultural (folkloric), political (state, parties and neighborhoods) and economic (centered on the creation and reproduction of capitalism) and are present in this reterritorialization. They have a multiple posture towards the concept of territory, apprehending (im)material aspects of its constitution of the real. The emphasis is on capital rotation (Saquet, 2015 p. 56)

Here, the author presents us with an approach to the territory that is based on a critical reading of reality. It puts the different perspectives under which the territory can be approached: cultural, political and economic. In the latter, it is understood as a social construction and, therefore, presents itself with a picture of inequalities, which are inherent to the capitalist mode of production. What can be seen is that as different societies become complex in their social and production relations, the concepts that explain them, as well as their limits and scopes, also become complex. Thinking about the territory from a Marxist reading requires thinking not only about socio-spatial inequalities, but mainly about the groups and/or social classes that make up the mass that inhabits it, taking into account the game of interests and at the same time the way they appropriate the space. Such a reading or approach presupposes, especially from the 1970s onwards, a rethinking within

Geography, its method and its procedures. More than that, it also brings a perspective of minorities, understood today not only as a mass of maneuver, but mainly as subjects of their own existence.

It is worth emphasizing that, for this work, we understand the constitution of the territory from its material and symbolic basis. It is necessary to make this justification so that we do not fall into error or be led to the mistake of making people think that we are dealing here only with the lived space, often associated only with the concept of place. Although the symbolic elements constituted from the relationship between the subject and the ground he inhabits, important for this study, we need to highlight this. Agreeing with Haesbaert, we understand that "in this way we elaborate a broader conception of territoriality that also implies the recognition of the strength of the symbolic field in the construction of territories, without these, however, losing their material basis. (Haesbaert, 2016, p. 29)

Obviously, agreeing with the author, we will try to follow a path where there is also no mistake of treating the territory exclusively in its material base. The epistemological effort that is intended to be followed is in an attempt to apprehend the reality studied with as many nuances as possible within the geographical field and the possibilities that the methodological scope allows us.

The study that follows, discussing peasantry and agroecology, will seek the elements that can serve as a basis for the understanding and at the same time the constitution of a territory without, however, treating them in isolation, without context, or even incurring in unnecessary tautology. Thinking about the peasant and agroecological territory requires an effort to deal with three categories of analysis whose connections, within Geographical science, can present divergent points, depending on the epistemological paths to be followed.

THE PEASANTRY IN BRAZIL

The peasantry is characterized as a way of life, identified in time, space and in the way in which work in the field is carried out by families (Wanderley, 2009). In addition, it is also marked by the way its members relate to each other, regardless of the degree of kinship. Costa and Carvalho (2016) define it as "the set of peasant families in a territory." In this way, we can present the peasantry as being this group of families and the way they use the available natural resources, how they relate to each other and how they share the territory they live.

Martins (1983), however, presents the origins at the same time that he recreates the historical processes in which the Brazilian peasant is inserted. The author points out that, in Brazil, this subject has many names, unlike what happens in Europe or in much of Latin America. Here, depending on the region, the peasant can be called caipira, caiçara, tabaréu and caboclo. The latter, according to the author, presents a derogatory aspect in its designation. This is because it is related to those who are

outside, far away, rustic, backward and even naïve. It is also related to those who are "lazy", who do not like work (Martins, 1983).

In this aspect, the Brazilian peasantry today can be understood as struggle and resistance. In this sense, peasant resistance also becomes a necessary *praxis* in their daily lives. The peasant in Brazil learns from an early age that it is in his daily work that his struggle intensifies and his identity is maintained. For Silva and Gonçalves (2014, p.8), "the peasantry has been seeking throughout its existence strategies of resistance for the right to maintain its way of life, its class and for the valorization of traditional know-how".

And as Fernandes (2016, p. 312) states, "recognizing the peasantry as a strategic model for the development of agriculture is necessary to overcome the myth of *commodities* as a condition for ending hunger". This becomes imperative for the strategy of peasant struggle and resistance today because the peasantry:

> [...] It is more than a historical category or social subject, a way of managing natural resources linked to local and specific agroecosystems of each zone, using knowledge about such an environment conditioned by the technological level of each historical moment and the degree of appropriation of such technology. (Molina and Guzmán, 2013, p. 76).

In this way, this category finds in agroecological practices the strategy of resistance without necessarily being disconnected from the historical moment in which it is inserted. More than that, it also implies understanding that peasantry differs from family farming, while the latter can develop a capitalist model agriculture, the former not. "Peasantry and family farming are the same subject understood by different concepts, tendencies and paradigms, represented by the readings that are made of non-capitalist agriculture and its relations with capitalist agriculture. (Fernandes, 2016, p. 324)

However, it is a category that, first and foremost, is resistant. It was already here well before the development of capitalism and, contrary to all the paradigms that predicted its end, it has remained contemporaneous. Its permanence indicates that there has been an evolution based on the techniques and also on its relationship with the market.

> Peasant autonomy is realized on the creation and development of a self-controlled and self-managed resource base by the family that provides, at the same time, a process of co-evolution in the way natural resources are used and an interaction with markets, overcoming the dominant technological pattern and reducing, within the limits established by the correlation of economic and political forces, its historical dependencies, both on capital and on the government. (Carvalho, 2016, p. 214)

The author reveals, at this point, the survival strategy of the peasantry in the face of the increasingly overwhelming advance of capitalism over the rural. This strategy is based on the search for autonomy while seeking to reduce its dependence on the market, especially the financial system. More than that, there is also an attempt to regain control over seeds, the basis of production and

essential for agroecology. In the economic field, there are a series of actions that different peasant groups, in Brazil and in the world, use to achieve this independence, and a well-known practice is the creation of solidarity revolving funds. It is a community savings managed collectively for the strengthening of groups of workers (it can be peasants or other categories organized in associations and/or cooperatives). The fund is formed from the voluntary donation of resources by each participating member or can be constituted from external actions and resources intended for the community. It is not uncommon to find situations in which we find such a practice in different groups, associations and/or cooperatives.

Bringing a look at the ground of this research, it is necessary to minimally mention who are the subjects about whom we are theorizing. There is a diversity of actions that are carried out by these workers that are beyond growing food directly on the land, as one can imagine at first glance. In our context, we find allied to the cultivation of food, the raising of small and medium-sized animals, which predominates over the raising of large animals. Along with the production of agriculture, properly speaking, there are peasants who also develop the activity of fishing in an artisanal way, artisans, boleiros and confectioners, among others. Also included in this list are livestock farmers, horticulturists and workers who process some raw materials and then market them.

The diversity of subjects and actions makes the peasantry a multiple category rich in wisdom. And this makes their production differentiated compared to capitalist agriculture, which allows them a positive insertion in the market, even being able to face, in some cases, this competition. (Carvalho, 2016)

AGROECOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SEMI-ARID REGION

Agroecology is an important part of this work because as the research developed in the debate on territory and peasantry, it was realized that there was a set of practices that were being developed and/or rescued that helped to resignify and (re)define the peasant *ethos*. A series of practices were resumed and others improved as a response to the construction of the new paradigm, of coexistence with the semi-arid region. As a result of the struggle of social movements for permanence in the territory, the various experiences that already existed added to the social technologies developed until then and, together, pointed out the paths where public policies towards the Northeast should follow (Caravalho, 2012)

Thus, agroecology is understood in this work as one of the elements that collaborates in the fabric of the peasant territory. For, as we understand that social and production relations are crucial for the definition and delimitation of the territory, so too is the agroecological practice, which gives meaning and serves as a basis for understanding what it means to be a peasant in the semi-arid region.

The epistemological path through which agroecology is going has been going on for a long time. In Brazil, there are many studies published in books and academic articles that address and discuss its evolution, not only in the country, but also throughout Latin America. One of these approaches is presented to us by Altieri (1998; 1999; 2012) who, for a little more than two decades, has been discussing this theme.

When dealing with its definition and objectives, the author highlights that, among others, agroecology:

> It is a new approach that integrates agronomic, ecological and socioeconomic principles into the understanding and evaluation of the effect of technologies on agricultural systems and society as a whole. It uses agroecosystems as a unit of study, going beyond the one-dimensional vision – genetics, agronomy, edaphology – including ecological, social and cultural dimensions. (ALTIERI, 1998, p. 23)

As we can see, for the author, agroecology comprises the different dimensions that are present in the space studied, not being limited to the visible and measurable elements, typical of a positivist approach, but also with everything that involves it, from a perspective, we can thus say that, to a certain extent, it is also holistic, as it seeks an understanding in its totality.

Agroecology is also inserted in the context of peasant resistance against the overwhelming advance of neoliberal capitalism over rural areas under the pseudonym of agribusiness or, as is becoming more common in recent times, simply Agro. Such resistance is necessary when it comes to the maintenance of biodiversity, supported by polyculture, and also in the preservation of traditional knowledge and practices, as it is necessary to understand that "in order to properly understand traditional knowledge, it is necessary to understand the nature of local wisdom, on which the complex interrelationship between beliefs, knowledge and practices is based" (Barrera-Bassols; Toledo, 2015, p. 138)

In this scenario, the agroecological peasantry defends not only its practices, when it opposes the capitalist model, but also the generation of jobs in the countryside, the production of real food and not *commodities* that only help in the concentration of wealth. But what is this, agroecology is a project that repudiates the use of pesticides and aerial spraying. It respects the edaphic particularities in addition to the vocations of each region.

In this context, agroecology in the Brazilian Northeast collaborates not only with the rescue of traditional practices, but also with the maintenance of local culture, essential for the formation and consolidation of a people's identity. It values the symbolic, material and (im)material elements inherent to the territorial fabric. As a cultural element, the knowledge that has been (re)appropriated and, sometimes, almost lost, becomes rites of the daily life of these workers. The harvest festivals, the agroecological fairs, the solidarity economy fairs, the meetings for sharing and exchanging ancestral knowledge permeate this entire network of territories that begins to develop as each peasant

understands his or her role as a subject of this reality. It is precisely in the (re)production of this daily life that the peasant and agroecological identity is solidified, and that little by little they come to understand that these same subjects not only (re)signify the territory, but are also products of it. It is a dialectical movement in which the subject and space-time reproduce each other.

> And this means that there is a feeling of belonging to the place and territory of daily life, with personal and social ties – territorial – that go beyond the relationship with the land and the rural establishment through different cultivations of different techniques and technologies. Relationships emanate from the family as the central institution of social life (also biological and spiritual), simultaneously involving associations, churches, chapels, NGOs, schools, unions, recreational games, etc. (Saquet, 2017, p. 133)

It is possible to say that all these actors act together and mixed, synchronized and, sometimes, not. This part is important. We cannot miss the enormous contribution that many NGOs, churches and social movements have made to this change in reality, because they were the ones who were at the forefront of the movements that demanded a paradigm shift. They were the ones who pointed the way while building it, bringing theories and practices that often aroused the distrust of the people. They were: the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), the Brazilian and regional Caritas, the Federation of Rural Workers, the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), Rural Unions, the Pastoral Commission of Fishermen and so many other NGOs that forged and engendered this movement.

In the midst of all this, agroecology emerged as a movement and as wisdom. Of course, it was not the easiest job to explain and demonstrate its effectiveness to a people who observed everything suspiciously and where, many times, predatory practices and the lack of good guidance were common among these subjects. In addition, it was necessary to confront some lies that were disseminated about agroecology. Machado and Machado Filho 2017, p. 40-41) list a few: (1) Agroecological production is more expensive; (2) It was intended to return to the cave, with the practice of the hoe; (3) Agroecology is less productive; and (4) It does not produce for humanity.

The initial mistrust, it turns out, soon fell to the ground. Over time, it was realized that that set of practices worked and gave good results. So, agroecology was disseminated with this double aspect: resistance and confrontation. Agroecological practices are also supported by Altieri (2012, p. 37) when he states that "agroecology, as we know it, has the knowledge to overcome monoculture and the breakdown of biodiversity, inexorable consequences of agribusiness".

Duarte (2009) and Batista (2014) discuss in their works the experience of agroecological transition in the semi-arid region of Ceará, bringing examples of projects and programs that were implemented and successful. The first author presents, in general terms, the path taken by agroecology in Ceará still in the context of the paradigm shift at the beginning of the last decade, while the second author discusses the importance of agroecological fairs as a strategy of peasant

resistance, but also as a way to build an environment for the search for food and nutritional sovereignty (FNS).

Batista (2014) also recalls that:

> The main role of agroecological fairs is to eliminate dependence on middlemen, making producers realize a greater financial return on the fruits of their labor. These fairs are also an alternative for consumers who seek pesticide-free products without having to pay the abusive prices of organic products, which obey the logic of Agribusiness production. (Batista, 2014, p. 69)

Therefore, agroecology, which brings together a broad scientific base allied to traditional knowledge, proposes not only a rupture, as already presented, with the neoliberal model of agriculture, but also seeks to rescue the traditional culture in consolidation with a new life project for peasants and traditional peoples. One step at a time, the movement was resilient, even in our dark recent past, where public policies aimed at agrarian reform, for traditional peoples, peasants, fishermen, indigenous peoples, quilombolas, etc., suffered a major setback.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation so far has tried to present the three categories of analysis that are at the heart of this research: territory, peasantry and agroecology. In an attempt to construct a research object, we arrived, from the field work, to the various experiences of coexistence with the semi-arid region of Ceará. On this route, we passed through institutions such as the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) and Cáritas Archdiocese of Crateús, pioneers in the dissemination of technologies for coexistence with the semi-arid Northeast. It was discovered that these act in the diffusion and expansion of agroecology, as a method and as a practice, in the way of producing food by small farmers. This "new" way of working the land and dealing with all its adversities has been producing knowledge that is gradually being reproduced and expanded, positively impacting agriculture in small rural communities.

From these incipient experiences, we realized that the expansion of agroecology was part of the set of actions that guided the paradigm shift that occurred in the Brazilian Northeast, at the turn of the twentieth century to the twenty-first century, which resulted in a new way of understanding the causes and, mainly, how to live with the long periods of drought, unique characteristic of this territory (Carvalho, 2012). Such a change resulted in a new attitude towards the phenomenon of droughts, which plagues the man of the countryside from time to time. The paradigm of combating drought gave way to the paradigm of coexistence with the semi-arid region and, thus, a new perspective was created for thousands of men and women who began to relearn how to live in their territories, seeking to produce food, obtain income and remain on their land.

Thus, we arrive at the micro-regions of Ceará of Sertões de Crateús and Inhamuns, which contains about 18 municipalities. In most of them there are projects and actions that were initiated by Cáritas de Crateús, a strong and striking presence when it comes to coexistence with the semi-arid region and agroecology. Many peasants, when questioned, remember the beginning of the actions, when Caritas agents arrived with projects and programs that aimed to improve the various experiences of management and production techniques. Many were suspicious, they confess.

The initial step of this work was the implementation of Social Technologies (ST) for coexistence with the semi-arid region, which began to guide the new directions of peasant agriculture production, under the guidance of these institutions. In the beginning, the action consisted of making an overview of the many pieces of knowledge learned until then and, then, developing new techniques, in a systematized way, implementing them on a local and later regional scale (Gnadingler, 2006).

The work in the field has proved to be promising and fruitful. With the support of the institutions involved, we have increasingly arrived at the incredible experiences that are in full execution. In a preliminary way, we will point out here three activities recently visited and that are relevant to the objectives of this work.

In Ipaporanga (CE), one of the municipalities involved in the actions of Caritas, we are faced with two interesting situations. The first concerns the joint use of plate cisterns, biodigester and Biowater System on the same property. This entire set provides the family with water storage during the dry season, biogas that is used as energy for a stove, where food is prepared, and water reused in the production of vegetables. The family involved produces a good part of what it consumes in its backyard and, what it does not produce, it acquires by selling a part of the production. Concomitant with this, there are government programs for the acquisition of food, which also receive a part of the production of vegetables and fruit trees. Experiences like this have been increasingly common in the semi-arid region, representing for many families the main source of food and income, because combined with these production systems, they develop small and medium-sized animal husbandry, such as chickens, pigs, goats and goats.

Still in the same municipality of Ipaporanga, another fact draws our attention with regard to the coexistence with the semi-arid region, since it was in this city that, in 2015, the city hall implemented through Law No. 353/2015 the basic guidelines of the municipal policy of contextualized education and rural education. The commitment to care for agricultural production begins at an early age, in municipal schools. Since then, and with the support of Cáritas de Crateús, the training of teachers (from all areas) has also gone through this dimension of coexistence in the context of the semi-arid and the caatinga. This is revealing, of such magnitude and importance that it is even difficult to imagine the size of the impact that this action will have on the next generations.

Another case that we will bring, in the form of a clipping, is the artisanal fishing developed by fishermen from the municipality of Novo Oriente (CE), in the Flor do Campo community on the banks of a homonymous dam. There, men and women who had long developed activities related to fishing inside the dam, over time began to have less and less production. With the process of damming and construction of dams within private properties, the fish ended, becoming dependent on replacement through an action of the city hall. Entire generations grew up developing this activity, but they were not organized as well as the fishermen on the coast. With the support of Caritas and the Pastoral Council of Fishermen (CPP), these subjects began to organize themselves in colonies, seeking the same rights that the other fishermen already had. More than that, the advisory work developed together managed to get the women who, until then, saw themselves as an assistant to their fishermen husbands, since they also participated in the production process, to recognize themselves as fishermen, therefore, acquiring the same labor rights as their husbands.

What do we learn from this? Sometimes, certain social groups need monitoring and training so that their category has access to resources that are guaranteed by law, but denied due to lack of information. Another thing that is important in this context is the recognition of this woman as a fisherwoman, bearer of equal rights to her peers. From this experience emerged an identity that was built from the social relations that began to develop since then. New territorialities also emerged, the territory of artisanal fishermen of dams in the semi-arid region.

The brief exposition of these cases does not account for the diversity of peasant activities that are developed within the micro-regions of planning Sertões de Crateús and Inhamuns. There are many others that should be visited and known to expand the list of peasant activities that have agroecological principles at their core. This demonstration has the function of presenting some elements that support the hypothesis that there is a territory in the process of redefinition and (re)appropriation, at the same time that multiple territorialities overlap, involving distinct subjects and different forms of appropriation of space. This is real. It is how the community articulates itself in its daily life. Borders and limits serve to control the State, but the people daily dismantle and rebuild their own territorialities.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This exhibition takes us down two paths. First, the certainty that there is a lot to be investigated in these spaces of the semi-arid region with these experiences that dialogue with the territory, the peasantry and agroecology. Of course, not everything is "seas of flowers". There is tension, risks, clashes with powerful forces and groups. Big capital does not watch all this peacefully, accepting the construction of a new world from a new perspective, with abundance, quality of life and dignity. There is a set of forces engaged in these territories that involves, for example, the

increasing advance of mining activity in the backlands of Ceará. Mining, which is already present in this state, advances on traditional territories, threatening the lives of populations that are extremely weakened by the absence and consent of the State, which insists on the neoliberal fallacy of generating employment and income.

The second path is the one that fills us with hope. It is the discovery of projects implemented from a Bill that, like the municipality of Ipaporanga (and in 17 others), believe and defend contextualized education as a strategy to confront big capital, which bets on future generations as defenders of a new life project, where one respects and learns from the nature around us. Bearing in mind that our existence is only possible from this relationship (society-nature), we must know how to respect in order to preserve, not only the environment, but also ourselves.

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