



Challenges Peasant Production Faced with Environmental Preservation Policy: A Case Study of the Lencois Maranhenses National Park - Brazil

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Abstract: The challenges of peasant production in the Lençóis Maranhenses National Park (PNLM) had their genesis with the effective creation of the park and later its classification as an integral protection unit, which does not allow the use of natural resources. In turn, the managing body imposes several restrictions on traditional communities that reside in the domains of this region, even though they were inhabited there even before its creation. Such restrictions impose limitations to the maintenance of the way of life of these communities, such as subsistence agriculture, as in the case of the Tucuns community, which is a spatial cut-out of the present work. This research aimed to analyze the challenges of peasant production facing the restrictions of the environmental preservation policy, where we are mainly based on the method of historical materialism and on the analysis of participant observation, which supported the analyzes proposed in this paper. During field activities, technical and exploratory visits were carried out to the Tucuns community and to the office of the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation, where dialectically we sought to gather information from both sides. In the end, it was identified that the peasant production in the region has been facing several challenges, facing the environmental preservation policy, which in most cases, does not recognize the right of these traditional populations in relation to territoriality. The research focused on giving time and voice to the peasants, socio-spatial peoples (the peasants), who live with upheavals due to the constant imminence of deterritorialization.

Keywords: Challenges, Peasantry, Conservation Unit, Tucuns, Lençóis Maranhenses

1. Introduction

In a scenario where discussions about the conservation of natural resources and their finitude are increasingly trivial, there are several alternatives that seek to reverse this situation. Brazil, because it has a huge biodiversity, raises a constant concern in the implementation of environmental preservation policies, and one of the main measures taken to ensure the conservation and preservation of these national resources, materialized with the implementation of Conservation Units (CUs).

The policy of implementing these areas in Brazil has its genesis inspired by the praxis of Yellowstone National Park in the USA, since this was the first UC created in the world, thus becoming a model for several countries, especially third world countries, as stated by Diegues [1], without, however, considering the specificities of each territory.

In Brazil, these units are divided into two categories: integral protection and sustainable use. It is part of the problem of Brazilian CUs, the fact that the Integral Protection Units (UPI) restrict the presence of human groups, even though they inhabit the area long before its creation. This policy is justified by the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio), with the premise that the presence of these populations can further degrade these spaces to be preserved.¹

It is precisely in this category that is inserted Lençóis Maranhenses National Park (PNLM), because inside it reside several traditional communities, these called by Queiroz [2] as peasant populations, which according to Arruda [3],

¹ Art. 7 Units from Protection Integral whose goal basic "preserve the nature, Being Admitted only or use indirect Of Your resources Naturalwith exception Of Cases Laid down This Law" and Units from Use Sustainable than has how goal "Match the conservation Of nature with the use sustainable from portion OfYour resources Natural".

present a model of occupation and use of natural resources to ensure their subsistence.

The activities carried out by peasants living in the community of Tucuns are mainly based on agropastoral practices, such as animal husbandry, subsistence agriculture, fishing, and other activities that Carvalho [4] characterizes as traditional peasant practices, and which peasants have developed for centuries as a means of survival, and which are centered on family labor, without any external interference.

Obviously, such practices were strongly impacted with the implementation and implementation of the park, since it is a UPI, which in addition to restricting human presence, vetoes any form of extractivism and/or any form of peasant production, except the indirect use of resources granted by the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC), with the justification of ensuring the preservation of natural resources and ecosystems of great ecological relevance, and scenic beauty IBAMA [5].

In order to remove these populations from these territories, ICMBio, supported by SNUC legislation, imposes several restrictions on the inhabitants of the park that end up hindering the maintenance and reproduction of the peasant way of life that is peculiar to them.

Activities such as extractivism, animal husbandry, plantations, and even the construction of new housing are included in the parks' own management plans, as restricted activities that generate environmental problems, even if these are necessary practices for the subsistence of these populations.

This article results from the reflections carried out within the Study and Research Group on The Agrarian Issue and Social Movements (GEPQAM) linked to the Department of History and Geography (DHG) of the State University of Maranhão (UEMA), Brazil, and is part of the research project

"Contradictions and conflicts between environmental preservation and peasant reproduction in the Lençóis Maranhenses National Park. The analysis present here has as spatial the traditional tucuns community, and aims to analyze to what extent the restrictions imposed by ICMBio hinders the life of peasants, by hindering the continuity of their subsistence activities, as well as explaining the forms of resistance that emerges among peasants, in the struggle for the preservation of their territories and their territorialities.

To this end, where use dialectical historical materialism, through which we seek to understand the historical relationship between the peasants of the Tucuns community and their territory, as well as to understand how the relations of conviviality influenced the current sociospatial organization of the community aiming at its production and reproduction.

In the methodological path, bibliographic surveys were carried out on themes inherent to environmental preservation policy, peasant production, traditional communities and socio-environmental conflicts, in books, articles, theses, reports, and some civil documents prepared by the community itself called pisciotta [6] of gray literature.

In the fieldwork, technical and exploratory visits were made to the Tucuns community, where we focused mainly on participant analysis and observation. Subsequently, recorded and transcribed interviews were conducted with representatives of ICMBio, and mainly with the conditioning actors of this research, the peasants. The PNLM is located in the geographical coordinates: 02°19' S at 02°45' S and 42°44' W at 43°29' W (Figure 1), and is inserted in the marine coastal biome, with mangrove, restinga and dunes ecosystems. It can be accessed by land, by highway MA-02, by sea, through the lazy river and also by means of air taxis.



Figure 1. Geographical Location of lençóis Maranhenses National Park.

The PNLM was created on June 2, 1981, based on a proposal presented by the RADAMBRASIL project in the 1970s, aiming to fill gaps in the then system of Conservation Units IBAMA [4]. Its creation took place during the period of validity of the military governments, whose actions were not conducted in a democratic way, so the populations that lived in the area that was transformed in the park had no participation and so little science of the process. Terra [7] points out that the PNLM suffers from an "original sin", since the policies of its creation were carried out with little or no participation of the population that lived/dwells in it, or who made/makes use of its resources as a means of subsistence, although this right is guaranteed to the populations, as stated in Article 22 of the SNUC. Thus, by the time the communities realized, they were already inserted in a comprehensive protection unit.

2. The Model of Subsistence of Traditional Communities

For a better understanding of the proposed discussions, it is necessary to conduct, even succinctly, a discussion about traditional communities and their way of production and reproduction, since these are essential factors for understanding the proposed analysis. The traditional communities that live in the PNLM and that make use of the resources present therein for their subsistence are defined in Article 3, Item I, of Decree No. 6,040 of February 7, 2007, as:

[...] culturally differentiated groups that recognize themselves as such, which have their own forms of life of social organization that occupy and use territories and their territories and natural resources as a condition for their cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction using knowledge, innovations and practices generated and transmitted by tradition BRASIL [8].

There is a parity between traditional communities and peasant communities, as both have the same characteristics. Arruda [3], emphasizes that traditional communities are those that present a model of space occupation, and use of natural resources focused mainly on subsistence, with weak articulation to the market. Queiroz [2] researched traditional populations composed of besiegers, hillbillies and caíçaras, defining them as farmers, whose production is oriented towards subsistence. According to this author, traditional populations and cultures are generally considered peasants.

Therefore, in an attempt to answer the possible doubts that still revolve around this issue, it is stated that peasant communities and traditional communities are equivalent, and we will use both terms to refer to these populations.

The way of life of traditional communities is mainly based on subsistence agriculture, with which peasants unfold to ensure the survival of their families. As they are inserted in environments with an enormous wealth in natural resources, these communities have learned to sustainably manage the

fauna and flora of the environment on which they live and depend.

Thus, in these communities, agropastoral activities are common practices that are configured as a primary aid for the maintenance of the multiple dimensions of the peasant." Animal husbandry, for example, serves both as food and means of transport, starting from the realization that their livelihood depends only on their own efforts and skills, that is, it has little or no support from public policies that could emanated from the different scales of government. Other activities inherent to their way of life, is the cultivation of agricultural genera, whose productivity and variety depends on the edaphoclimatic characteristics of the place.

In PNLM for example, it is common to observe lush plantations in relatively sandy soils. As observed within the Tucuns community, where there is the production of vegetables (usually in fertilized beds, due to soil salinity), banana plantation, cassava, cashew, buriti and some other genera that are part of agriculture and the diet of the community.

We consider these populations as traditional, because they do not produce on large scales, industrial products or integrating the agribusiness production chain, and also because their form of production is characterized by the dissemination of life strategies, which are passed on from one generation to another. That is, one of the forms of reproduction of peasants, is to ensure that their practices continue to be carried out by their descendants as an inheritance of their ancestors.

We also clarify that traditional communities produce to reproduce their way of life, but are not only linked to this binomial, production-reproduction, but to all practices performed in the peasant territory, which are configured as marks of attachment and affection.

3. Traditional Communities: Peasants as a Requirement for Subsistence, Territory and Conflicts

Aware of the diversity of forms of land use in the field, recognizing the existence of a heterogeneous set of subjects who appropriate it in different ways from similar local contexts, despite the social invisibility that these subjects have achieved in recent years, due to the resizing of anthropological studies that discriminate their variety of forms of occupation and territorialization (LITTLE [9]; PORTO-GONÇALVES [10]; MARQUES [11], among others). However, it is evident the sociocultural plurality of territorialized peoples throughout the country, embodied in a land diversity enhanced, above all, by the Constitution of 1988, which placed them as the focus of the State for the maintenance of its traditional character, as a way of repairing historical processes of expropriation and oppression (MARQUES [11]).

However, to a large extent, these achievements were only

in the "constitutionalist discourse of legal pluralism", because in practice, the "rupture with the situation of social invisibility occurred, in most cases, through conflict" MARQUES [11].

Arruda [3] defines traditional communities as those that present a model of space occupation and use of natural resources aimed primarily at subsistence, with weak market articulation. Queiroz [2] in turn, researched traditional populations composed of besiegers, hillbillies and caícaras, defining them as farmers, whose production is oriented towards subsistence, considered, therefore, peasants.

In a synthetic way, Almeida [12] lists the main characteristics that can be considered to define traditional peoples and communities: a) the common use of land, associated or not with individual ownership, which can complement the mechanisms of social reproduction; b) relationships with specific forms and norms, constituted several generations ago, such as compatrio and reciprocity; c) simple cooperation and family work, very close to discussions on peasantry, given the centrality of the family unit as a production structure; d) solidarity and mutual help ties, expressed in schemes of association of subjects for collective practices, such as task forces or battalions.

Aiming to contribute to the debate that several authors (PORTO-GONÇALVES [10]; ALMEIDA [12]; MARQUES [11]; among others) have been developing and considering that several elements erected to define a traditional community relate to the peasant reality, we will adopt interchangeably, in the context of the PNLM, the concepts: peasant and traditional community. In view of the insertion of these communities in environments which have an enormous wealth of natural resources, it is understood that they use them as a way of satisfying their most pressing needs, such as food and shelter, and that their way of life is mainly based on subsistence agriculture, from which they obtain the means of survival of their members.

Marques [11] emphasizes that the peasant territory, seized as a fraction or as a unit, is the site, the lot, family or community property; as well as the community, the settlement, a municipality where peasant communities predominate. Chayanov [13] attributes to the peasant territory the characteristic of constituting an economic unit, assuming that its organization takes place through family work.

According to Fernandes [14], the territory is the living space where the peasant establishes itself as a family unit, and can often house more than one family, all involved in a predominantly agricultural activity that contributes, even, to the provision of agricultural products requested by urban centers. However, it is not only a socioeconomic space, since it is also constituted of territorialities, formed by principles and values. It is the place, or places, where a huge diversity of peasant cultures builds their existence. In Raffestin's [15] view, by appropriating the territory, the actors (the peasants) begin to transmit these values and principles and end up territorializing them.

Despite all the evidence about the importance of the relationship of traditional communities with their territory,

briefly demonstrated in the contributions of the cited authors, as well as the divergent conceptions of the members of environmental agencies, the progressive interpretations of environmental legislation and the historical struggles of traditional populations envisioning corrections and changes of course in environmental preservation policies, despite some important achievements, such as the creation of innovative legal figures of extractive reserves (RESEX) and The Sustainable Development Reserve (RDS), the legal restrictions on the permanence of peasants in the territories they occupy generate not only enormous challenges to their daily lives and, consequently, to the guarantee of their social reproduction, but also situations conducive to the emergence of conflicts.

According to Terra [16], discussions about conflicts permeate not only geographic science, but are present in several fields of knowledge, such as, among others, those of social psychology, economics and administration. For Simmel [17], the conflict is characterized as a social relationship, revealing convergent and antithetical positions. Analyzing the definition of Simmel, Filho [18] states that these positions are constituted by elements of revulsion and also by "forces of cooperation, affection, mutual help and convergence of interests" FILHO [18].

It should be emphasized that there are many types of conflicts, and that they are defined according to the situation in which they manifest themselves. Socio-spatial conflicts, for example, are marked by antagonism, when two or more social actors tend to appropriate differently from the same space. Socioterritorial conflicts, on the other hand, are caused by the dispute of different groups around different uses of the territory. According to Terra [7], conflicts in the PNLM can be classified as socio-environmental, i.e., those that:

"They arise when the territories appropriated by groups that have different ways of life and relationship with the environment clash with the domination exerted by the capital power. In the spaces where socio-environmental conflicts occur, not only ecosystem goods and services are in dispute, but also the dispute of the different forms of appropriation of territories, as well as the maintenance of culture" TERRA [16].

The very composition of the term that defines the conflict – socio-environmental – refers, as Little [19] states, to social struggles, that is, society is present in it, and involved in environmental issues. Thus, it is understood that the concept of socio-environmental conflict applies to social clashes between groups that maintain a distinct relationship with the natural environment.

Socio-environmental conflict, therefore, has as its main cause, but not only, nature, where territorialization can assume different facets and meanings for different social actors. The use of natural space, for some, may be paramount for its survival and, therefore, defend it; for others, although with the same convictions, this use is conditioned to different visions and management strategies. It is worth remembering, however, that one side does not always have good intentions, since some of these social authors submit their relationship with the environment to capitalist molds, which leads us to

the thought of Fernandes [20], for whom capital only establishes its territorialization, from the destruction of other territories FERNANDES [20].

Some environmentalists and public managers, however, as well as thinkers, such as Dourojeanni [21], Milano [22] and Drummond [23], and other social actors who integrate the debate from the paradigm that certain areas should be maintained only for the contemplation of their natural beauty, without the interference of human actions, do not consider the distinct relationships, the bonds and interests that share the peasants who have lived in them for centuries and have them as part of their history.

Given the above, it is possible, therefore, to identify as socio-environmental conflict the situation that occurs in the PNLM, since the populations living within this UC feel that the presence of the management body threatens their forms of survival.

4. Tucuns Community: Difficulties and Resistances

Peasant practices in traditional communities that live in a UPI are not distinguished from the other in terms of peasant production. The difference is that the environmental preservation policy restricts the actions of this population in the area, compromising its dynamics and ways of establishing its reproduction, all in accordance with and convenience of the Legislation of the SNUC, considering that it considers peasant practices as an initial element for the degradation and scarcity of natural resources, and for this reason it forbids its activities, leaving for the peasants no alternative but resistance as a way to ensure their survival and that of their families.

The Tucuns community (Figure 2), a spatial section of this research, is located within the PNLM, is composed of 17 families, and does not escape the general rule of peasantry, because they guarantee their subsistence through agro-pastoral activities, such as animal husbandry, planting of products such as cassava, small vegetables and fishing. Common activities, which as Carvalho [4] affirms, are practiced, especially in order to ensure their own survival.

Due to the frequent inspections of ICMBio, residents have faced difficulties to carry out their activities, since the management body imposes fines on them with high amounts, when caught performing certain activities that for them are commonplace, but which, however, make up the corollary of activities prohibited by the legislation.

Arruda [3] sentences that the practices inherent in the peasant way of life are discarded and a criminalization of their most common practices occurs.

The subsistence model of traditional communities is mainly based on the use of natural resources, which are carried out with the main objective of satisfying the basic needs of family members, where everything that is extracted is replaced by nature itself, and in many cases by the peasants themselves through replanting and other techniques and

knowledge acquired, assimilated and passed on over time.



Figure 2. Partial view of the Tucuns community located in the PNLM.

Environmental protection policies in CUs, essentially those that are included in the category of integral protection, under the pretext of preservation, usurp the rights of traditional communities.

Since the implementation and implementation of the PNLM in absentia of the populations that have inhabited the area for a long time, according to Castro [24] and Marques [12] the occupation of that territory by peasants dates back to the 19th century, these populations face challenges to ensure their reproduction. Activities such as fishing, hunting and cultivation of products such as cassava, vegetables, fruits and others were prohibited by SNUC legislation. Still, such activities are carried out by the peasants, sometimes clandestinely and to a lesser extent, due to the frequent supervision of ICMBio and its consequent fines.

Due to so many difficulties, tucuns peasants end up opting for some alternatives that are not as advantageous to them, such as the marketing of some of their products, and consequently having to submit to capitalist forms of commercialization, which do not give them a satisfactory return, since their products are purchased with a very low value in relation to what is practiced in the market by the cross-workers.

Activities such as animal husbandry in Tucuns is significant and relevant, mainly because it is intended for food production for families in the community. Despite the restrictions imposed by the park's governing body, which, based on SNUC legislation, tries to derail this type of activity, all 17 families living in the community, perform some kind of breeding in their backyards, whether goats, chickens, pigs, among other animals. This insistence and act of resistance is not due to a deliberate desire to confront the legislation and its guardians, the servants of ICMBio, but because of meeting the most basic needs of the peasants of the community.

One of the most common ways that peasants find to continue to subsist, without, however, suffering too much from the restrictions of ICMBio, is to subordinate themselves to capitalist marketing practices, where the peasant, in an attempt to guarantee the replacement of basic products, sell part of their production to tourists and commercial establishments.

According to Oliveira [25], "in the small peasant estate, a part of agricultural production, enters first and fundamentally in the consumption of the producer, of the peasant, as an immediate means of subsistence, and another part, the surplus, is marketed on the form of goods". However it is necessary to remember that Ploeg [26] states that the peasants labor force, its resources used, do not enter the process of working as goods.

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that there is a clear difference between peasant production and capitalist production, where both have different purposes.

The Tucuns community, due to the high fines imposed on them, also end up subordinate to this marketing process, because some products, such as cassava, banana, cashew and others, are marketed by the peasants, and with the money collected, products such as rice, meat, and some other utensils are bought, which they previously produced, but which were currently restricted.

Historically, fishing within the Tucuns community has always been a very relevant activity in the livelihood of its residents, but after the implementation of sights such as tents and inns, it has become an activity that is difficult to access, mainly because fishing boats decrease the chances of residents being able to collect the basics to support themselves. In addition, ICMBio restrictions are also a way of hindering the access of peasants to places conducive to fishing.

"It's very difficult to catch something here. The big boats come and catch all the fish, including the shrimps. One time or another we can catch something, and when someone wants to, we sell. Things have gotten tough for us here in the community." (Resident of the community of Tucuns).

Traditional communities always maintain a dialectical relationship with nature, even before some theorists linked to environmental science who today consider them degrading in this environment. The peasants learned to manage the fauna and flora, developing strategies that guarantee their reproduction and also the sustainability of natural resources. It is important to clarify that it is not a question of denying the social benefits that Modern Science has provided, but scientific knowledge is not sufficient to guarantee a rational and prudent use of natural resources because it is not a "neutral knowledge" of interests, but the expression of a specific social relationship with nature (PORTO-GONÇALVES [10]).

Thus, the management plans of CUs should include the uses and disuse that traditional communities develop in these areas, which are strategic survival and sustainability, where together with scientific means, they would ensure effectiveness in the process of conservation of natural resources.

Apart from the challenges related to the performance of agropastoral activities, tucuns peasants (Figure 3) still face several difficulties in relation to the absence and/or lack of infrastructure, since the legislation of CUs creates a series of restrictions, thus, the community suffers from public transport, water supply, electricity, and so many other resources that are basic and necessary for human subsistence.



Figure 3. Peasant inside the Lençóis Maranhenses National Park.

The energy system within the community was provided within the Luz Para Todos program of the Federal Government, however the community has not been contemplated, since then, claims this right to the management body, which according to the residents, the leaders of the agency always transfer the responsibility to the Companhia Energética do Maranhão (CEMAR), and this in turn, to the city of Barreirinhas. The legislation requires that any infrastructure work or activity that is carried out on the premises of the park, must be evaluated by the management body, as stated in Article 46 of the SNUC.

"The installation of water, sewage, energy and urban infrastructure in general, in conservation units, where this equipment is admitted, depends on the prior approval of the body responsible for its administration without prejudice to the need to develop environmental impact studies and other legal requirements." CNRBMA [27].

Based on the data presented so far, it is possible to observe that the Tucuns community converges in activities that materialize its traditionality, and that show that they are necessary practices to ensure the reproduction of the peasants who live in it. As Ploeg [26] states, "it is necessary to emphasize that peasant family farmers bear the history of their places of life, work as well as their productive strategies." Thus, it is necessary to recognize that peasant agropastoral activities are not practiced with the objective of destroying the environment, but as a traditional way of ensuring its survival.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussions held here, it can be concluded that peasants live in preservation areas, suffer the consequences imposed by a restrictive model of conservation unit that was imported from the USA by Brazil, without considering the specificities of Brazilian socio-environmental.

Although The ICMBio justifies the restrictions and fines on the premise that the presence of these populations would cause the degradation of this environment, this justification becomes contradictory, since the peasants have always carried out their activities, even before the creation of such environmental preservation policies, dedicate/dedicate a sustainable management of the areas that are their habitats, and on which they fundamentally depend. Then it becomes contradictory to consider that peasants are responsible for the

destruction of these spaces.

The restrictions and fines imposed on the Community end up hindering their activities, which are inherent in their subsistence. Tucuns' peasants face various challenges daily for their reproduction, both due to the absence of assistance by the state and by the restrictions of their activities, which were once carried out in a common way within the park, but which is now a reason for punishment.

As Karl Marx [28] states, "man lives from nature, this means that nature is his body with which he must remain so as not to perish". This is the case with the residents of Tucuns who for centuries have been related to nature, in a dynamic of need and partnership, without compromising the existence of one or the other. Despite all the implications faced, the peasants continue to resist and struggle to guarantee their rights.

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