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Land Access and territorial development in Medio São Francisco, Bahia

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English Translation of the Executive Summary of the full study by

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LAND ACCESS AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT IN MÉDIO SÃO FRANCISCO, BAHIA

English Translation of the Executive Study of the full study

1. Introduction

This study is part of a larger research project, “Land access and territorial development in the semi-dry area of the North-East” involving, besides Bahia, the states of Ceará and Pernambuco. This publication presents the main results obtained for the semi-arid region of Bahia, specifically the Médio São Francisco. This allowed the reading and the mapping of the different forms of land access, which made it possible to identify and understand the continued presence of traditional communities and that of those established by state intervention resulting from resistance and struggles for land, and how these actors are linked with the public policy. It focuses especially on those policies related to the territorial development led, by the Secretary of Territorial Development (SDT), Minister of Agrarian Development, (MDA) in process of implantation.

In most of the rural territories in Brazil, the democratization of power relations is directly related to land access, because land concentration is one of the main factors, responsible for centralization of power and social exclusion. The Médio São Francisco region (MSF), the subject of this study, provides a clear example, where the economic and political power is directly associated to the land concentration. However, in recent years a variety of governmental programs and actions by social movements are promoting a series of initiatives that widened the land access for the landless farmers. Besides legal recognition of community access rights to natural resources, for example for the *Fundos e Feche de Pasto*, black rural *Quilombola* communities, Indigenous groups, and the riverine communities, policies are needed, that promote sustainable territorial development by the *empowerment* of these actors and by strengthening their integration into the development process.

The contribution of this research is to characterize the diversity of the forms of land occupation and access, including those deriving directly from governmental intervention and those, that resulted from recognition and legalization of land and natural resource use systems threatened by increases in land market values in MSF, and to understand the

relationship between these actors and territorial development process, initiated by SDT/MDA. In addition we aim to understand how this diversity in land occupation and in Agrarian Reform can contribute in practice to territorial development.

2. Methodology

The area to be covered by the study was defined by starting from the classification of the Economic regions, established by the State Government's *Superintendência* for Economic and Social Studies in Bahia (SEI) superimposed on the territorial division defined by SDT for the Medio São Francisco, now known as the *Territorio de Velho Chico*. The common set of municipalities for these two overlapping regions includes: Barra, Bom Jesus da Lapa, Brejolândia, Carinhanha, Feira da Mata, Ibotirama, Malhada, Matina, Morpará, Muquém do São Francisco, Paratinga, Riacho de Santana, Serra do Ramalho and Sítio do Mato – which all fall into the SEI-defined Economic Region - and Brotas de Macaúbas, Oliveira dos Brejinhos and Igaporã, which are only part of the territory of *Velho Chico*. This study considers all of the municipalities referred to above as the Region of the Medio São Francisco, as illustrated on Map 1.

The understanding of regional dynamics was based initially on bibliographic material collected from secondary sources. This information enabled the preparation of a series of cartograms, which reflect the spatially the different forms of land access and occupation observed, which are detailed in the full study. For purposes of this summary discussion of this summary we summarise the different types of land access with reference to the cartograms of the whole study area, and the Gini Index for land distribution.

The study proceeded by way of thematic seminars with the contributions from development practitioners and representatives of organizations, that have worked or work in the region. The objectives of these seminars were to recompose the history through different readings of the region of the Medio São Francisco, preceding field visits to different communities in the territory though which specific studies were undertaken focusing on: Fundo de Pasto, Rural Black Rural *Quilombolas* Communities, Amerindians, Agrarian Reform projects, Irrigation Projects and Land purchase Credit programs (*Project Cédula da Terra – PCT e Projeto de Crédito Fundiário – PCF*).

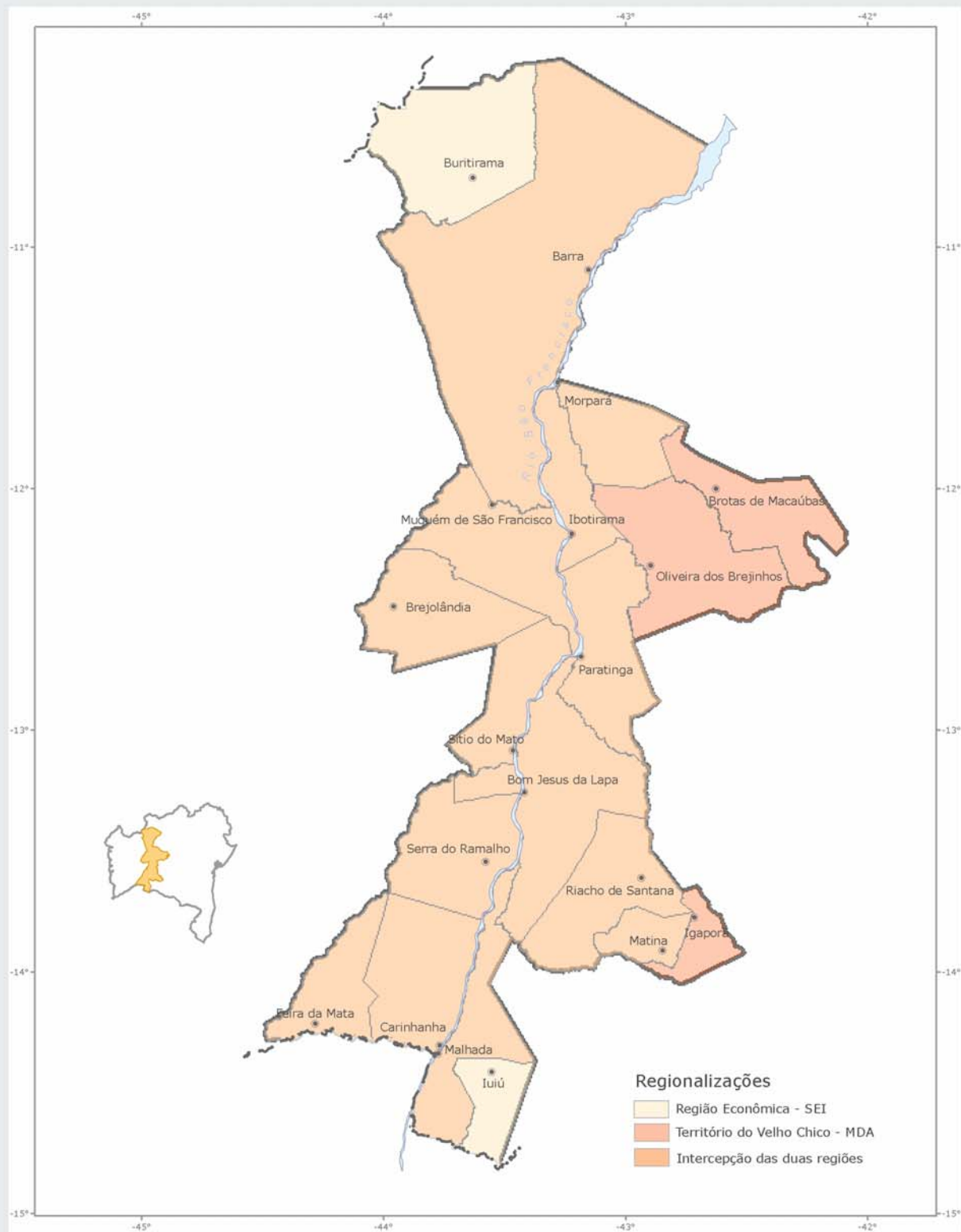
A reconstruction made of the histories of the [regional development agency], the Foundation for the Integrated Development of the São Francisco (FUNDIFRAN), as a body recognized in work in supporting local communities, and Coordination of settled and

landless rural worker, and *Quilombolas* for the State of Bahia (CETA), as the principal social movement mobilizing and coordinating around land related struggles and questions in the region.

In this way, the study has a broad focus, in which public policies, especially those related to territorial development provide an overarching framework for discussions which focus directly to the roles of social movements, civil society organizations and governmental institutions.

Map 1 – Medio São Francisco Region - Bahia, 2005

MÉDIO SÃO FRANCISCO - BAHIA
ÁREA DE ESTUDO
2005



Fonte da base cartográfica: CONDER-SEI (adaptada)
Fontes dos dados: SEI, MDA
Elaboração: Projeto GeografAR (2006)

0 10 20 40 60 80 km
1:2.500.000

3. Occupation process of the Medio São Francisco

The São Francisco Valley started to be explored in 1553, when the “entradas” towards the interior of the colony of Brazil, began, seeking to obtain slave labor for the sugar cane plantations and sugar plants, reinforced by the exploitation of recently discovered mineral resources. The impact of pioneer fronts that reached the São Francisco valley was to transform it into a colonization area, based on extensive cattle rearing, for a market driven by the discovery of the mines in the Alto São Francisco, which also brought about the emergence of various settlements based on extensive cattle rearing through out the whole valley centering on “corrals” established along the river.

The São Francisco River, the “river of national integration”, connected the gold mining region to the colonial capital, Salvador. However, with the move of the capital to Rio de Janeiro (1763) and to the exhaustion gold production, the initial colonization process stagnated and trade from Minas Gerais¹ became directed towards the sea’ commerce was turned over to the ocean.

The political linkage between the Portuguese authorities and its delegates generated and reinforced the phenomena of authoritarianism local control “*mandonismo*” and “*coronelismo*”, power relations which were was maintained by the isolation of the region, together with its production systems of extensive cattle-rearing and extraction of vegetable products (SOUZA, 1997).

Agriculture, initially for subsistence purposes was introduced in the valley in parallel with the settlement process. Generally, the small producers, whether land owners or not, had settled ebb tide or flood recession areas or some of the islands scattered throughout on the river bed, subject to disappearance with the floods. As the flood receded, temporary crops such as corn, beans, manioc and rice were planted, and the production obtained from these ‘*lameiros*’ or mud beds was practically all devoted to the internal supply of the region. Other cultures were sugar cane and cotton, although sugar did not reach the same level of importance as production in the forest zone “*Zona da Mata*” while cotton predominated. River valley areas represent the timber reserves of the region, nowadays practically extinguished. Fishing was and still is an important important economic resources for the region and the populations most important food source for the population, mainly practiced in swamps and lagoons of the Sao Francisco floodplain.

¹ Dthe state of Minas Gerais, to the South of Bahia, where the Sao Francisco river rises, was a major gold mining centre, supported by proviusion of labour and cattle from the river valley to the north..

In general terms the stagnation in the MSF lasted up to the 1970's, when it was still regarded as "a deeply archaic region, weakened by the poverty, drained by migrations, with a long political violence tradition practiced by gun men *"jagunços"* and *"coroneis"* (CEAS, 1973). The regional isolation led to an economic and social organization that survived over time and still maintains some of its distinctive characteristics today. In cultural terms, it allowed the survival of traditionalism and the folklore. Catholicism became mixed with legends and beliefs of African and indigenous origin.

MSF was a zone of strong *"coroneis"* and one of the places, where this phenomenon resisted for longest.. Besides the isolation and form of colonization, the phenomena of the *"mandonismo"* and violence are directly associated with the concentration of land ownership. A region which closed in on itself, developing a local culture with characteristic social types, such as the *"cabra"* or *"goat"*, the bandit *"cangaceiro"*, the cow-boy *"vaqueiro"*, the boat owner, fisherman, and others.

Despite the colonels and landowners' dominant power, popular organization developed strong features in this region. FUNDIFRAN stands out, created in 1971, as a formal body linked to the Catholic Church, through the Diocese of Barra, and included 26 municipalities. IN this way, the Catholic Church adopted a crucial role in awareness raising and organization of the poorest, in line with the new perspectives of Latin American theology. The mission of this body was to support the Dioceses' development activities, seeking to strengthen the community initiatives. In the first phase the priority was work in preventive medicine work, professional training and women's participation. Agrarian reform was also promoted on land within the Diocese.

Although the interventions of the state began in earlier periods, it is only from the end of the 70's that greater governmental intervention became evident in the MSF, through road constructions and the implementation of irrigation projects. Thus in 1972, through SUVALE (Superintendency of the São Francisco Valley) PROVALE was created, (Legal Decree No. 1,20, of 02.07.1972) with the objectives of modernizing and dynamizing the region. This project prioritized: river banks protection and improving the navigability of the São Francisco River; urbanization works, social infrastructure and sanitation, reforestation and irrigation projects; national park creation and road building. The construction of three bridges on the São Francisco River in Juazeiro, Ibotirama and Bom Jesus da Lapa, was another important development feature, enabling the connection between Salvador and Brasília.

Today in the MSF, there are certain poles of economic activity, for example the irrigation schemes located in the municipality of Bom Jesus da Lapa, especially, those introduced with the support of the São Francisco Valley Development Company (CODEVASF). These interventions resulted in a productive reorganization and as a consequence, as increase in land values and new regional economic arrangement.

In this process, Barra, formerly the “queen” of the region, was increasingly displaced as a regional centre, while Bom Jesus da Lapa stood out the only municipality with irrigation in the MSF region, where the greatest volume of investment and the best urban infrastructure were concentrated. Located in a strategic cross roads linking Salvador to Barreiras and Brasília, the municipality became still more dynamic with the construction of one of the three bridges across the São Francisco River, in addition of its role as an important centre for religious tourism, which contributing to its lendowment of hotels and commercial establishments. In the decades of 1980 and 1990, the region’s urbanization process was consolidated as occurred in other regions of the country. But it was the process of productive restructuring, discussed later on which, ensured that lands, previously little utilized by those who claimed ownership, passed though processes of increases in value and contestation.

4 Socio-Economic characterization of the Medio São Francisco

The MSF region follows the course of the São Francisco River, which crosses it and divides it from south to north. It borders the Western Region to the west, to the north the state of Piauí and the Baixo-Médio São Francisco or lower middle river valley, to the East with the regions of Irecê, Chapada Diamantina and Serra Geral and to the south, its borders the state of Minas Gerais. With a climate varying from dry to sub-humid, the whole of its territory is inserted in the semi-arid North-Eastern Region.

This region, 9.51% of the total area of the state of Bahia is spread across 51.533,30 km². Its demographic density at 7.25 /km², is below the average for the state (23.1 hab/km²), in the year 2000, exhibiting the low level of settlement of the region. In this same year, the level of urbanization was 42,25%, noticeably lower than average level for the state (67.1%), having only one urban center with more than 30´000 inhabitants, namely Bom Jesus da Lapa. It is an eminently rural region, although it experienced growing urbanization from 35.4% to 42.2% in the 1991 – 2000 period (PNUD, 2003).

In the periods 1980 to 1991, and 1991 to 2000 the rate of total, rural and urban population growth rates for MSF, followed the overall tendencies for Bahia. For MSF, between 1980 and 1991, the population's growth rate was 2.04% per annum, very near to the state of Bahia's average (2.09% p.a.). In the period 1991 – 2000 the population's growth rate of MSF was 0.89% p.a. below the average of 1.08% p.a. In 1980, the MSF had a population of almost 250,000 inhabitants, corresponding to 2.64% of Bahia's population. Already in 2000, its population was 373,734 inhabitants, corresponding to 2.85% of the state's population, with 215,820 inhabitants in the rural zone (57.75%) and 157,914 inhabitants in urban areas (42.25%), (SEI, 2003).

In this context, the level of land concentration is an important indicator for understanding the situation and processes in MSF's since questions of land appropriation appears to be a common denominator in the region's conflicts. Land concentration can be measured, with some its limitations, by the Gini Index, calculated using data from the IBGE Agricultural Census from 1920 until 1995/96.

The Gini Index can present values between 0 and 1, from the lowest to the highest concentration. In the state of Bahia a high level of inequality in land distribution can be observed with 63% of municipalities having of “strong to very strong” (0.701 to 0.900) concentration of land ownership similar that of MSF, with 63,16%. But it can be observed that the percentage of municipalities (15.79%) with concentration degree from “very strong to absolute” in MSF is significantly greater than for Bahia as a whole (3.61%). While the municipalities with “medium to strong” land concentration (0.501 to 0.700) are 32.05% in Bahia and correspondingly 15.79% in MSF. These data reveal greater land concentration in the study region..

When the indicator is analyzed chronologically for MSF's municipalities it can be seen to have changed in practically all cases, but without maintaining a clear tendency. After all, in 1996, the spatial distribution of land concentration is very marked. The Increase in land values in the MSF region for the year 1996 can be visualized in Map 2.

By way of this information it is possible to understand why land conflicts, especially involving grileiros (land “owners” who have forged property deeds) and posseiros (squatters who establish land rights by occupation) are a constant feature of this region. As a result the recognition and legalization of and (occupied by traditional peasant

communities has become come an imperative, without which public poliicies make little sense including those for environmental protection.

5. Forms of land access in the MSF

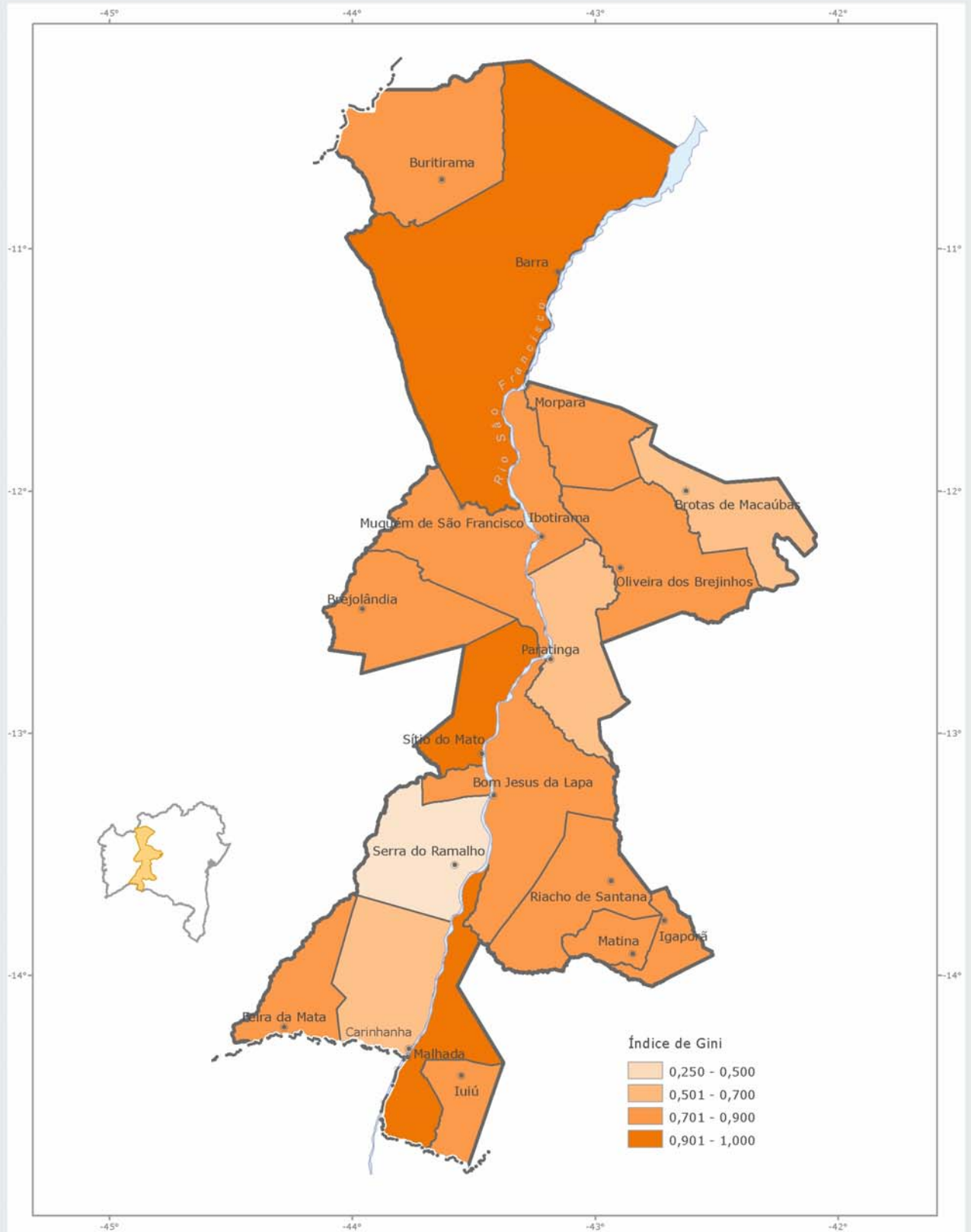
In the region of MSF, as in the entire course of the São Francisco River, ways of life strictly tied to the use of the river develop over time. As is characteristic of land occupation patterns in the semi-arid region the population in this case concentrates at the river margins. The river, during floods, deposits fertile material on its margins, where cultivation takes place, thereby overcoming the difficulties imposed by the semi-arid climate and by periods of drought. This river-centred way of life was complemented with the occasional cattle raising work in the big farms. Flood recession agriculture combined with rainfed farming, fishing and livestock raising was the traditional livelihood system in the region, and it has gone through four centuries of colonization without major changes.

In the MSF region, during the 70's, it was still common to encounter the figure of the farm dweller living under the "agregacia" regime, with his family at the farm of the master, on a small piece of land cleared and planted for their own survival, living alongside *posseiros* or squatters.² Some family members worked for the master, with or without daily wages, and in their "free" time they would work for themselves³. In addition, sharecropping systems with fields rented out in return for a certain amount or for the half, or third and even fifth share of the produce.

² Under Brazilian law long term squatters, known as *posseiros* are entitled to land rights as a result of beneficial occupation, "squatters rights" although their tenure is rarely regularized in practice.

³ The *agregacia* regime where farm dwellers are required to provide labour services to the landlord in exchange for rights of occupation is roughly equivalent to systems of labour tenancy as practiced in South Africa.

MÉDIO SÃO FRANCISCO - BAHIA
ESPACIALIZAÇÃO DA CONCENTRAÇÃO DE TERRAS
1995-1996



Fonte da base cartográfica: CONDER-SEI (adaptada)
Fonte dos dados: IBGE (1995-1996)
Elaboração: Projeto GeografAR (2006)

0 10 20 40 60 80 Km
1:2.500.000

Sharecropping was common among the small farmers, who could not afford to buy seed or other inputs. All of these agreements always took place orally, with no further guarantee other than the promise of the owner. As for fishing, the majority of people worked for themselves, even though cases of payments with half- or third-shares of production are mentioned, where fishing was practiced in lagoons located on large estates. Another typical character is that of the “trucker” who plays the role of the transporter and of the middleman (CEAS, 1973).

Today precarious labour relations based on limited land access has been prevalent in MSF. The broad mass of people depend for survival (cash income?) on work provided by land owners. Any attempt to promote development and democratization in the MSF must go through the increase of land access to the poorer population, and this will be the main reason for the organization of popular struggles for agrarian reform.

The land settlement project –Projeto Especial de Colonização (PEC) Serra do Ramalho – and the irrigation projects developed by CODEVASF preceded the establishment of agrarian reform programmes. The rural credit and fiscal incentive system put in place, notably by SUDENE, allocated huge volumes of subsidized resources to big landowners, and transforming entrepreneurs and economic interests from outside the region into large proprietors. These actions marked a new phase, a historical watershed in the way of life in the São Francisco valley and the utilization of its water resources. With the introduction of new techniques for water access through irrigation, production systems were redefined and, as a consequence, the production relationships and the structure of the local power were also redefined, and thus in some cases the *latifundio* or large land owners became the “entrepreneur”.

All of this contributed to a growing rise in land values in MSF, especially for land near the river. Lands where landowners once permitted farm dwellers and their families to stay - as described earlier, with their crops and cattle and where the land itself was a reserve of value - now presented new possibilities for investment, largely with state subsidies for their owners or buyers. Such investments no longer supported the old farm dwellers and their families, river dwellers and cattle keepers. Land with growing value became the motive for greed and conflict.

This is the context in which the struggle for land in the region finds in the Agrarian Reform a possibility of guaranteed land access not only to those who do not have it, but also the continuity of those with insecure tenure. It is also within this context that a mosaic of

forms of land access, both contemporary and historical, shape a rich environment for the study of struggles to resist displacement from the land.. The diversity of the forms of land access identified can be seen in map 3, including land reform occupations, a strategy of contemporary social movements.

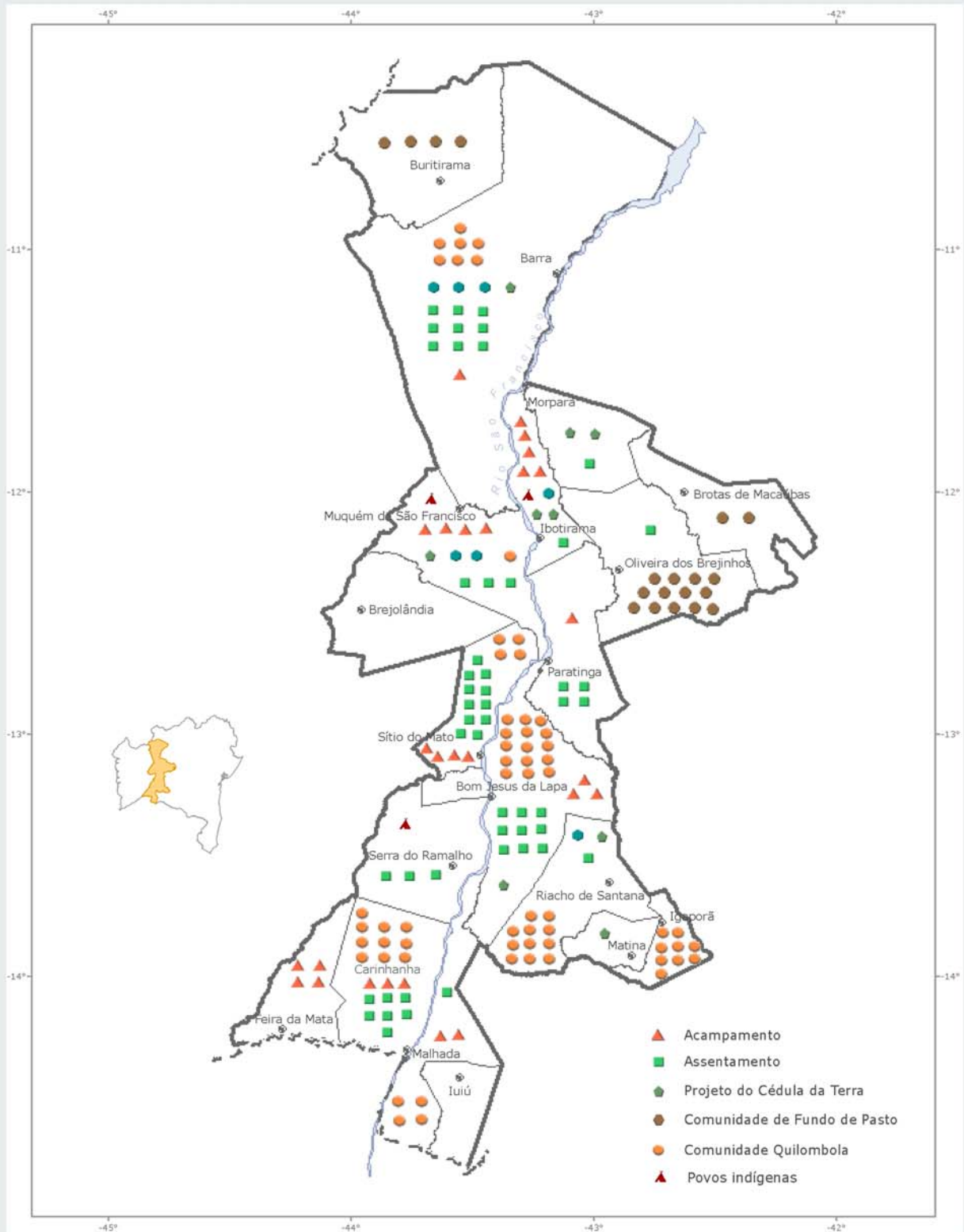
The Serra do Ramalho colonization project, mentioned above, was put in place in 1975 to accommodate the population affected by the construction of the Sobradinho hydroelectric power plant. At that time Sobradinho was located in the municipalities of Carinhanha and Bom Jesus da Lapa, which became a municipality in its own right in 1989. This was the last colonization project by the State of Bahia, extending across a 258,483.39 ha area, organized in 23 farm settlements, with residential lots and rural land parcels; In 1985, 5,180 families were registered. Initially it was known as “PEC de Sobradinho”, but many families resisted relocation, , choosing to settle instead at the lakeshore rather than 700 km away from their place of origin. As a result the lots were being offered to whoever was interested and prepared to submit to adapt to the spatial organization and context, and the project was renamed “PEC Serra do Ramalho” (GERMANI, 1993/2001; ESTRELA, 2004). The project follows the same logic in terms of spatial planning of the other projects carried out at that time: a large project in a continuous area, divided into individual parcels, linearly and symmetrically organized. The size of the parcels is determined by the rural property module for the region⁴, which is repeated, side by side, on desk top plans, until the whole area is filled. On the planners’ desk, the space is treated as if it were homogeneous, an “ideal model” is established according to soil and topographical features, and realities in the field have to adapt to the model rather than vice versa.

The technical presuppositions reproduce and reflect in spatial form the social content of that historical period, and the authoritarianism and compulsion practiced by the military regime. Nevertheless, it is significant that, after sixteen years, it was able to put in place political forces which led to the project’s emancipation from its municipalities of origin. It is also significant that the population originally occupying the area, before the Colonization Project was put in place, did not fit in with it, and, after a long resistance struggle, retained their original land occupations in area now identified as reserves located in reserve destined areas, consisting today of the *Projeto de Assentamento Reserva*

Extrativista São Francisco, (São Francisco Extractive Reserve Settlement Project) *Reserva Oeste*, (Western Reserve) and the old estate of the Southwest Bahia Company (CSB), now constituting three Settlement Projects.

⁴ Rural property modules are a standardized indication of the minimum land area required to support a family according to the agroecological conditions encountered in different regions. Modules are defined for each municipality in Brazil.

MÉDIO SÃO FRANCISCO - BAHIA
 MODALIDADES DE ACESSO À TERRA IDENTIFICADAS
 2005



Fonte da base cartográfica: CONDER-SEI (adaptada)
 Fontes dos dados: ANAI, DSEI e FUNASA (2002)
 Elaboração: Projeto GeografAR (2006)



Even though the occupation was established in equal individual parcels for each family – which should correspond to an equitable distribution and to a “null to poor” rating according to the Gini Index, ten years after its emancipation we can observe that it has become more concentrated at “poor to medium”, 5.26.

The settlement projects that succeeded PEC Serra do Ramalho were carried out under the aegis of the I Plano Nacional de Reforma Agrária (PNRA - st National Agrarian Reform Plan) . This was a different political moment was different, with a different correlation of forces, establishing new processes and also offering the possibility, of less rigid forms of spatial organization. The first land reform settlement of the MSF was established in the municipality of Barra, in 1988, and today there is a total of 51 Agrarian Reform Projects (PRA) in 334,.129.60 ha, with 8,026 families settled.

These settlements are present in almost all municipalities, with Sítio do Mato standing out, with 11. The establishment of these projects has a periodicity and associated with this some characteristics still under study, but which show that the settlements implemented during the first phase are characterized by tenure agrarian regularization, achieved through pressure of social organizations that active in the region. The next phase of reforms resulted from pressure of land invasions, especially of areas belonging to agricultural and cattle raising companies which were established with the support of SUDENE but had abandoned their land. The analysis of 43 land reform expropriation processes identified 20 that related to legal constituted bodies or companies, On the other hand, 8 processes originated were motivated by prior occupation of the same land by the land reform claimants, and were in fact cases of tenure regularization or restitution. In 9 cases claimants had occupied the land, while in other 25 cases there are no records of how the expropriation process came about. At the time of writing there were there 27 land occupation camps in the MSF with approximately 1.334 landless rural worker families, the municipality of Ibotirama stands out with 5 camps; and Feira da Mata, Muquém do São Francisco and Sítio do Mato, with 4 camps each, showing that the pressure for land rights continues to rise.

The location of the great majority of the land reform settlements is near the river, but nevertheless, there is no water access for production The strategy has been, whenever possible, to continue the traditional association of flood plain cultivation and rainfed farming. The alternative income generating activity open to a large number of these projects is charcoal extraction from the *Caatinga*. This activity has been organized and financed by economic interests from outside the region.

Notwithstanding the resistance of the main social movements and organizations to the the so-called free market Agrarian Reform introduced by the World Bank - Programa Cédula da Terra / Crédito Fundiário (Land Currency/Agrarian Credit Program) - this program has been implemented in Bahia very quickly. There are 16 projects in the MSF, with 532 families in 14.998,10 ha, nine of them through the pilot *Cédula da Terra* programme, and seven through *Crédito Fundiário*. The main obstacle to its growth is the difficulty in verifying the historical chain of ownership, since a great portion of the lands in the region is public land which has not been formally allocated and without title or corroborative documentation.

Among the analyses carried out in the settlements which resulted from state intervention,, the average area allocated to each family is significant. It was found that the areas available to the families in both in land reform projects and the land purchase credit programmes do not fulfill the criteria suggested by the fiscal module system (created in the Land Statute of 1964 and reaffirmed in the Agrarian Law of 1993 which reaffirms the principle of the social function of land. The fiscal module is based on the soil, geography, access and other conditions and corresponds to 65 ha in the MSF. It is noted that the families settled in agrarian reform programs have obtained, on the average, a 41.63 ha area, that is, 73% of a fiscal module, while the families participating in the so-called free market agrarian reform have obtained, on average 27.9ha, an even more critical situation as it represents only 43% of the requirement, according to the fiscal module system. These data reveal the disregard by the state of its own principles, compromising the sustainability of social reproduction.

One question which should be highlighted is that many traditional communities – such as the *Quilombolas Fundo e Feche de Pasto*, the riverine communities and the “beradeiros”⁵ – besides being from the benefits of state led development, were in many cases forced out of the lands they occupied. They find themselves threatened with by rising land values and subsequent enclosure of the common land and disappearance of many communities. With the support of the popular organizations acting in the region, specially the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT or Pastoral Land Commission – “pastoral” in the religious sense), those that survived recognized their distinctive identities and little by little, established a resistance movement and struggle to remain on the land.

⁵ Riverains are those who live at the river bank and “beradero” is that who live at and from the activities developed at the river margin, having its culture marked by the connection with the river, (ESTRELA, 2004).

This organized resistance, at the level of the state scale and, in the case of the *Quilombola* Rural Black Communities, at the national scale, is what has guaranteed the continued presence of 61 *Quilombolas* and 19 *Fundo de Pasto* in MSF. This struggle has enabled to gain visibility and join the 386 *Quilombola* communities so far identified communities and 340 *Fundo e Feche de Pasto* in Bahia.

Among the *Quilombolas* Rural Black Communities, e Rio das Rãs stands out. Its conflict and resistance signified a milestone; it became the first *Quilombola* area recognised in Brazil. This provided an incentive for the affirmation of a distinctive legal identity and the struggle for recognition of community land rights for *Quilombola* communities.

An increasing process of conversion of land under common property into the individualized forms of tenure tradable on the market can be observed all across the region. In other words, growing land speculation induced by the presence of irrigation projects in the region promoted by Federal Government. According to a SEPLANTEC report, the gradual destruction of arable areas in favor of pasture, is not directly linked to land utilization by their new owners, but to land speculation. The report confirms the tendencies to return to large rural estates and to the deepening of land conflict.

It is in this context which the struggle of the *Fundo e Feche de Pasto* Communities is prominent. These communities are social and economic formations involving distinctive forms of use and land tenure, which has a social dimensions go beyond its viability as productive system. On common property, occupied by a community of common familial origin, the predominant activity is communal grazing of small stock (goats and sheep) and secondarily, precarious subsistence involving primarily cultivation maize beans and cassava..

The common properties are open, without fences to distinguish more specific sets of rights or even the overall limits. In the Médio São Francisco, the greatest part (80%) of the communities are located in the municipality of Oliveira dos Brejinhos where there is a *Fundo de Pasto* Centre formed by goat producing associations (corresponding to specific kin groups and common land areas) with the aim of preserving their way of life and at getting legal recognition for their lands.

The *Fundo e Feche de Pasto* communities have built, historically, a particular way of life in the Bahian semi-arid where the custom, based on kinship relationships, has created consensual rules and guides the use of common lands for small stock raising, alongside individual utilization of land parcels where household dwell and plant their

crops. In this context, in April, 2003, and as result of its organization consolidation, a document was organized for the State *Fundos e Fechas de Pasto* network “*O Fundo de Pasto que queremos. Política fundiária, agrícola e ambiental para os Fundos de Pasto baianos*” (“The Fundo de Pasto we want: agrarian, agricultural and environmental Policy for the Bahian Fundos de Pasto”). The communities seek economic alternatives outside of cattle raising, such as honey production and the use of wild fruit, such as *umbu* and tamarind, but, at the same time, are under pressure to give way to outside groups interested in their lands and in exploiting their mineral resources.

The quest for recognition and the struggle for the tenure regularization involves the organizations created by the community, which start from an affirmation of their production systems and go on to seek alternative forms and take acquire modern production techniques to survive in the semi-arid without, however, breaking with their distinctive form of peasant livelihood.

It is also necessary to mention the presence of indigenous inhabitants in the MSF and that they are represented by the *Pankarus* (Serra do Ramalho and Muquém do São Francisco), *Tuxá* (Ibotirama) and *Kiriris* (Muquém do São Francisco).

Certain hubs of economic activity are also found in the MSF, like the case of the irrigated perimeters located, mainly, in the municipalities of Bom Jesus da Lapa and Barra. In particular the development by CODEVASF of the Formoso A Project, with 10,408 ha where 392 small scale irrigators and 54 entrepreneurs were settled, and of the Formoso H Project with 6,310 ha serving 216 small scale irrigators and 43 entrepreneurs. These interventions signified a reorganization of production and as a consequence, reassigned agricultural land values and new regional economic arrangements.

6. The Velho Chico: construction of a territory

Just as the emergence of the notion of “family agriculture” was a striking feature in the 1990’s, both in the academic debate and in the field public policies field, the same thing is happening at the present decade with the so-called “territorial approach” to rural development.

In 2003, SDT (Secretariat for Territorial Development) was created, part of MDA, whose purpose is to develop action aiming at promoting the development of the rural territories in Brasil, prioritizing the family agriculture and other rural groups traditionally overlooked. It seeks specifically, to reduce regional inequalities, poverty, social exclusion,

environmental degradation and economic stagnation still present in many regions of the country.

Territory, according to the concept used by SDT, is understood as a physical space, not necessarily continuous, but geographically defined by multidimensional criteria, such as environment, economy, society, culture, politics and institutions, and a population, with relatively distinct social groups, that relate to each other both internally and externally through specific processes in which elements of social, cultural and territorial identity and cohesion can be distinguished.

The strategy to promote the territorial development envisages strengthening of local institutions, the active participation of communities, the construction of the social capital, sustainable territorial planning, the articulation of public policies with available and developing markets and with financial support for productive, social, environmental and cultural projects.

This territorial development program is currently active in 109 territories directly supported by the SDT, encompassing 1,713 municipalities, with a total of 37.4 million inhabitants and 32% of the national area.

The level of social organization of the territory is related to the capability of the social groups and organizations of a given place to establish contacts that will culminate in the cooperation and in the planning of collective actions for general well being.

Institutional coordination for territorial development takes place at two levels: the macro institutional – through the *Coordenação Estadual dos Territórios* (Territories State Coordination - CET) and the intermediate technical level – through the *Coordenação Técnica Geral* (General Technical Coordination) (CGT).

With the perspective of getting involved as a development territory, distinct groups with common interests from across the different municipalities of Médio São Francisco work together, in the quest for sustainable development and identified themselves collectively as the *Territorio de Velho Chico*.

So as to comply with the structure determined by the SDT, the *Conselho de Desenvolvimento Territorial* (Territorial Development Board) was created, composed of 42 representatives. Of these, 15 are public and financial institutions: Municipal Council Chambers, CODEVASF, CMDRS (Municipal Development Councils) IBAMA, INCRA, UNEB, EBDA (State Agricultural Extension Company), BNB and the Municipal Governments of Bom Jesus da Lapa, Feira da Mata, Carinhanha, Ibotirama, Malhada and Muquém do São Francisco. In addition, there are 27 members of civil society: the NGOs,

FUNDIFRAN, RODA/ASA, CESAB-SF, ACARI; the social movements, MST, CETA, OTL, PCF; the rural workers federations, FETAG, FETRAF; the indigenous tribes, Kiriri, Tuxá and Pankaru; the cooperatives, ASCONTEC, ECOSOL; the Family Agriculture Schools Association (AECOFABA); the Fisherman's Centre, the *Quilombolas* organization, the Fundos de Pasto organization CEAPRI; and the Rural Workers Union of the municipalities of Barra, Oliveira dos Brejinhos, Ibotirama, Brotas de Macaúbas, Malhada, Morpará and Serra do Ramalho.

The participants of the Management Committee and of the Technical coordinating group are drawn from this broad commission, maintaining a balance of representation between public institutions and the civil society.

Monitoring the activities to establish the territory of *Velho Chico*, through regular participation in workshops and discussions with community leaders, enabled the study to grasp its perspectives and potentialities.

7. Closing Remarks

The restructuring of production in the MSF region has changed productive relations in agriculture and given growing economic value to land. This process took place after the decade of 1970, and just as it endangered the fragile forms of land tenure of traditional communities, such as the *Fundo e Feche de Pasto*, the Quilombolas, riverine communities and “Beraderos”, it has generated new capitalist forms of land ownership, such as the irrigation projects. But the social groups historically excluded from this process have reacted through organization to achieve recognition and legalization of their forms of land access in that territory, as well as new forms of land access through land reform projects, contributing to the consolidation of a varied mosaic of organized productive activities.

The great diversity of forms of land access in the MSF complies with environmental, economic and historical/cultural factors. This diversity needs to be addressed by the logic of public policies, to set aside the risk of standardized intervention. In this sense, an evolution can be observed, from more authoritarian forms of intervention, such as the creation of the Serra do Ramalho Colonization Project in the 70's, to more participative ways, that attempt to respect the local specificities. During this evolution, an essential role was played by farmers themselves and their support organizations, such as the cases of FUNDIFRAN and CETA discussed in detail in the full report. These have contributed to advancing forms of organization, that were traditionally were restricted to community

matters, into more political organizations, capable of demanding and proposing solutions, as illustrated by the case of the *Fundos de Pasto*.

In this way, the understanding of the dynamics of land occupation is highly relevant factor to the construction and dynamic development of rural territories, so that the territorial development policy by the SDT needs to be articulated with agrarian reform land purchase credit schemes and and tenure regularization. We have seen that in this region there are 8,026 families were settled by the agrarian reform and 532 through land purchase credit, totaling 8558 families who had access to the land through these governmental programs, a significant proportion of the total number of family farmers in the region, composed of 43.778 families, represents what the MDA defines as the “social demand” for territorial development policies, comprising family farmers, land reform settlers, and land claimants.

This diversified social demand should be able to be coordinated through a territorial forum that enables manifestation of the demands of specific communities and social groups and the identification of common demands and projects. In MSF, 70 entities whose level of participation has increased were identified, and the forum arrangement itself is changeable, as is the spatial delimitation of the territory. The factors identified for redefining the set of municipalities that are part of the territory are diverse. In this case, the economic activities, urban centres of reference and links with the “*articulador*” or coordinating body (a role played in this case by FUNDIFRAN) stand out. In practice we could observe, the adjustment in the use of multidimensional criteria for demarcating territories and the social construction of the territory itself.

From the work performed in the last two years (2005/2006), the current stage of the process is in the preparation of the Territorial Development Plan. In developing the planm the following main axes have been defined: rural education, family agriculture, land reform, agricultural marketing, value chains revitalization of the São Francisco river and water resources.

A positive feature of the territorial policy may lie in the capability of actors to mobilize and articulate. However, it can be observed that this process presents a marked sectoral biasy, favoring the investments in productive agrarian infrastructure. Other issues, do not receive the same level of attention.

In the agricultural aspect, PRONAF has signed over 10 thousand credit contracts annually, a volume of resources over R\$ 30 million during the last few years. Very likely,

the majority of the family farmers in the region did not historically have access to rural credit, and so broad access to PRONAF represents an advance. The average value of the loans is small, related to the low income levels of the farmers. Nevertheless, it becomes important to evaluate whether the projects carried out had proper technical guidance, specifically the adaptation of technologies to the semi-arid, environment and if the beneficiaries are able to develop their production and improve their life conditions. Therefore, it is about improving intervention to avoid excessive indebtedness and ineffective use of public resources. In this sense, the territorial development process could be a key factor for the effective implementation of the ecological-economic zoning, with the formulation of technically and economically feasible projects appropriate to regional conditions. A first but still insufficient step in this direction, would be the proposal for the implementation of the Territorial Harvest Plan.

A controversial aspect regarding the productive projects that could be analyzed in the territorial forum is the nature of irrigation projects. They represent significant change in productive systems and income generation, but require high investments, have a localized economic reach, but with considerable environmental impact, and apparently limited social impacts. This can be illustrated by a study carried out in the Formoso A and H irrigation schemes, in Bom Jesus da Lapa. Social exclusion processes have been verified in these schemes, both through the beneficiary selection process used by public bodies, and the so-called “natural selection” and informal sales of the lots. The objectives of these policies need to be made explicit and to be discussed with the organized civil society, if a more participative development is proposed. Irrigation policy is also related to the project for transposition of the São Francisco River, presently being debated at the present moment, as well as the need for reinvigoration of the economy and environment of the river valley.

If, besides the agricultural and agrarian policies, we consider the social policies, we see that during the last decades, an growth in governmental transfers has occurred. In the decade of 1990, as result of the universalization of the social insurance and, more recentl social programs, notably *Bolsa Família* R\$4 million has been transferred to the municipalities of MSF benefiting 54 thousand families.

It is useful to bear in mind that, in the logic of family farming, it does not make sense to differentiate the resources obtained through the production programs from those deriving from income transfers as both sources meet the production and family reproduction needs. The question is how to use scarce resources to improve the living conditions of the rural population and to create opportunities for small businesses

development (agricultural and non-agricultural) to enable economic growth, employment creation and income generation in the territory.

The pluriactivity and the non-agricultural livelihoods are relevant to the development of the territory as these have been historically important strategies used by the rural families, especially in semi-arid areas, due to restriction on the development of agriculture. It would be necessary to broaden increase the range of the actors participating in the territorial network to debate these issues. Local trade, service sectors and other activities, can become important alternatives for employment and income generation. Policies such as the micro-credit for non-agricultural activities, among others, could also be discussed in the territorial forums.

One other relevant aspect is the integration of youth into economic activity with the possible effect of limiting the migration process, especially for those who are professionally qualified. Debating these topics, for example, implies engagement of ministries such as the Education and Labor in the territorial development process.

For that reason it is necessary to understand the current processes of economic development of the territory so as to identify opportunities for integrating the family farming sector, and traditional and land reform communities into the dynamics of regional economic development. Particular aspects which should be considered include: the modernization trends in the commercial agricultural sector, the influence of the Agrarian Reform settlements over the local and regional dynamics; the non-agrarian economic development and the impact of large scale investment projects.

Undoubtedly, poverty and social exclusion still prevail in the MSF, so how to encourage regional economic dynamics, the social inclusion and the conservation of natural resources? This implies planning, not with the conventional technocratic bias, but participative planning. The territorial policy still presents, important challenges, as is argued below.

The State needs to articulates its policies, at the federal level, across the various ministries (MDA, Agriculture, National Integration, Environment, Education, Health, Labor and Culture, among others). This articulation has been insufficient within MDA itself, where the actions of the different secretariats are not yet sufficiently coordinated.

It is the case that coordination is even weaker across the different levels of government (federal, state and municipal), where, besides the inertia of institutional routines, the overlap and superimposition of programs and intervention logics follows party-political lines and disputes. There are difficulties to put the investments into effect, because of

problems such as debt default by municipal governments and / or lack of interest in implementing territorial projects. This causes delays in execution that might lead to the demobilization of actors and loss of faith in policy. At the State level, for example, there are other territorial policies, like the Program *Nossa Região (Our Region)* of the Bahia State Government.

Another critical point is the need for technical support in developing projects. There is also the challenge of social management of investments, mainly because many of them are agro-industrial in character and family farmers have to compete in demanding and competitive markets.

In summary there appears to be a poor fit the complexity of the proposed model of territorial development and the short term feasibility of putting it into practice

In this sense, the model must be seen as a medium and long term policy. However, it is appropriate to raise questions regarding its continuity, since there is no guarantee that the proposal of a shared management of responsibilities between the State and the organized civil society will be maintained, in other words the social pact being established could be broken.

The rupture might occur due to changes in the political orientation of the government, but also as a result of questioning by social movements, since, as actors in this process, they see themselves to be compromised, in some cases, diverted from their strategies of contestation, and becoming co-responsible for the execution of public policies. It can also be that the social groups engaged have the State as the sole interlocutor and articulate little amongst themselves, especially when the logic of territorial development is aligned exclusively with the use of the limited public resources made available for that exclusive purpose. Currently, the practice in the MSF does not bear out these risks, as it can be observed that, although resources have not yet been released, and concrete productive projects are not yet underway, there is an increasing interest on the part of the groups involved in the territorial forum.

An advance in coordination and alignment of activities in Bahia, has been the establishment of the Territory State Committee, because it goes beyond what is proposed by SDT and creates its own dynamic which could give greater autonomy to social organization.

Territorial development policy presupposes the existence of mechanisms for strengthening community organization. For the time being representation takes place through leaders community and does not always involve genuine grass roots engagement. .

On the other hand, despite the efforts made, the fora for territorial organization lack the participation of certain social groups within the territory.

Finally, the debate on the territorial issue should not divert focus from the importance that the agricultural and agrarian policies still have. Access to land and water, rural credit, technical assistance and marketing are key factors for the territorial development of the region studied.

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