



Cartography of displacements: Seasonal apple workers in Vacaria¹

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Abstract

The dynamics of capitalist development in the Brazilian field have produced social, economic and environmental consequences. Among them, we highlight in this article, the migratory flows of seasonal workers in the apple harvest. This study aimed to identify the trajectories and the different categories of these workers. Qualitative tools of an ethnographic character were used, with semi-directive interviews and participant observation. The theoretical framework was based on ethnographic studies of rural workers and analysis of foucaultian power relations. As a result, different trajectories were identified as: “to be in the stretch”, “like an ant” and settled. The conclusion demonstrates the set of asymmetries caused by the development process and the continuous and seasonal itinerancy of these workers.

Keywords: Seasonal workers. Migratory flows. Family farming.

Cartografia dos deslocamentos: Trabalhadores sazonais da maçã em Vacaria

Resumo

A dinâmica do desenvolvimento capitalista no campo brasileiro tem produzido consequências sociais, econômicas e ambientais. Entre elas, destacamos neste artigo, os fluxos migratórios dos trabalhadores sazonais na colheita da maçã. Este estudo teve como objetivo identificar as trajetórias e as diferentes categorias destes trabalhadores. Foram utilizadas ferramentas qualitativas de caráter etnográfico, contando com entrevistas semidiretivas e observação participante. O referencial teórico esteve baseado em estudos etnográficos de trabalhadores rurais e análise das relações de poder foucaultianas. Como resultado foram identificadas diferentes trajetórias, identificadas como: “ser e estar no trecho”, “que nem formiga” e assentados. A conclusão demonstra o conjunto de assimetrias provocadas pelo processo de desenvolvimento e a itinerância contínua e sazonal destes trabalhadores.

Palavras-chave: Trabalhadores sazonais. Fluxos migratórios. Agricultura familiar

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Cartografia de los desplazamientos: trabajadores estacionales de manzanas en Vacaria

Resumen

La dinámica del desarrollo capitalista en el campo brasileño ha producido consecuencias sociales, económicas y ambientales. Entre ellas, destacamos en este artículo, los flujos migratorios de trabajadores estacionales en la cosecha de manzana. Este estudio busca identificar las trayectorias y las diferentes categorías de estos trabajadores. Se utilizaron herramientas cualitativas de carácter etnográfico, con entrevistas semidirigidas y observación participante. El marco teórico se funda en estudios etnográficos de trabajadores rurales y análisis de las relaciones de poder foucaultianas. Como resultado, fueron identificadas diferentes trayectorias, reconocidas como: “ser y estar en el trayecto”, “como una hormiga” y asentados. La conclusión demuestra el conjunto de asimetrías provocadas por el proceso de desarrollo y el tránsito continuo y estacional de estos trabajadores.

Palabras clave: Trabajadores estacionales. Flujos migratorios. Agricultura campesina.

1 Introduction

There are several facets of the mosaic involving the transformations brought about by Brazilian agricultural modernization, most notably on seasonal workers, designated as *sazonais*, *safristas* or *temporários*, referring, in the case under analysis, to the seasonal workers of the apple harvest in Vacaria. The change in the agricultural landscape encompassed by the Campos de Cima da Serra region, more specifically in Vacaria, went from an economy traditionally focused on extensive livestock and logging to the production of grains and the consolidation of temperate fruit production, represented by the apple. The main driver of these dynamics were the tax incentives, introduced by the federal government in 1966 through Law 5106/1966, stimulated by the economic crisis that had set in at the time. Through this legal mechanism, supported by a discourse on environmental issues, legal entities came to be able to discount up to 50% of the tax value on afforestation or reforestation with aromatic essences, fruit trees and large size trees. This new economic cycle has boosted the conversion of 40% of the native field area to other uses such as intensive agriculture with the introduction of soybeans and also of fruit production led by the apple in the last decades (LOPES et. al, 2010).

Although mechanization and high technology have been and continue to be used intensively in the apple orchards in Vacaria, the workforce required, not only during the harvest, but also in the various managements necessary throughout the year such as fruit thinning, pruning and conduction of the plants, appears as the main limiting factor to the apple companies, causing an increasingly long kind of saga in the search to find the necessary demand for the labor to be supplied. In this sense, it is estimated that, during the harvest, 1200 workers are needed for every 1,000 hectares, that is, a proportion of 1.2 men by hectare. According to data collected during exploratory research and triangulated with the work of Oliveira (2011), who raises information from the Ministry of Labor of Vacaria, it is estimated that, annually at the time of the apple harvest, 12000 to 15000 workers migrate to the region seeking to meet the demand in the work of the harvest.

The fact that Vacaria invested on what is currently available in the territory, with approximately 4,530 hectares of the Gala variety, corresponds to almost 70% of the total area (ASSOCIAÇÃO GAÚCHA DOS PRODUTORES DE MAÇÃ - AGAPOMI, 2019), which ends up generating a huge demand for labor in a relatively short period. This is because the Gala variety has physiological characteristics whose maturation point occurs quickly, which ends up requiring a huge contingent of workers between 30 and 45 days. Among other consequences, a circulating workforce is created, residing in many places and overcoming long geographical and cultural distances (SILVA, 1998). Temporary work causes a large part of the workers hired for the Gala harvest to be dismissed at the end of the temporary contract, since there is an idle “window” without production, once the harvest of the Fuji variety - later variety - starts approximately two weeks after the end of the Gala and which, from a quantitative point of view, represents just over 25% of the cultivated area, requiring a much smaller number of workers, supplied in part by regular workers.

Within this context, this article aims to characterize the different categories of seasonal workers who are part of these migratory dynamics, their trajectories and strategies involved in the act of crossing states and regions in search of a complementary income or a “*gordurinha*”, as they say, in order to make social reproduction strategies feasible. In this perspective, we start from a macro analysis, tracing the various migratory flows and origins observed, seeking to meet the grouping of these workers in “categories of attention”. With regard to methodological strategies, qualitative methodological tools of an ethnographic character were used, such as semi-directive interviews and participant observation, through the daily work experience of three different orchards during the 2019 harvest. In the final considerations, we try to present the analytical and problematic scenario of these seasonal migrations from a development perspective.

2 In search of migratory flows

*“Por ser de lá
Na certa por isso mesmo
Não gosto de cama mole
Não sei comer sem torresmo
Eu quase não falo
Eu quase não sei de nada
Sou como rês desgarrada
Nessa multidão boiada caminhando a esmo
(Song: “Lamento Sertanejo”
Gilberto Gil / José Domingos).*

Brazilian national music has several expressions that refer to migration processes. In this sense, the compositions deal with the diverse regional and cultural facets of displacement, some showing the contrasts between eating habits, between rural and urban and the massification of this process described by Gil and Domingos as in “*multidão boiada caminhando a esmo*” (in this crowd, cattle walking

² *Gordurinha* is a Portuguese term meaning “a little extra money”.

aimlessly). Brazil is a country of continental dimension and part of the population seeks to circumvent its asymmetries, which reflects the developmental projects implemented, through displacing in search of improvements, as some migrants say: “we came because we needed”. However, these are active processes and are characterized by a series of heterogeneous actors who cross geographical and cultural boundaries and outline resistance and socioeconomic reproduction strategies.

The analysis of these displacements treated here assumes that migrations are beyond the linearity between origin and destination and the isolated facts of attraction and repulsion, but that there is a diversity of processes involving from characteristics of certain production systems in the places of origin to ecological, territorial and cultural aspects. In the case under study, migratory maps were drawn up in order to point out the main regions of origin of these workers and to cover the various strategies underway involved in the journey of these workers. Obviously, in order to be able to deepen the realities related to certain specific regions from which they come, it would be interesting to trace the way back, in an attempt of a “reverse cartography” seeking to meet the actors from an analysis in their places of origin.

We opted to use the database provided by the Civil Police Station of Vacaria, responsible for Operation *Safra*, identifying the origin of these workers according to what appears on their identity card. According to the Civil Police, the Operation was created by the demand of the fruit production sector and the public authorities due to the large number of people who move to the city of Vacaria and its region to harvest the apple and to the fact that there had been some tragedies in orchards in previous years, including several fires and deaths, facts that have been decreasing since the Operation was institutionalized in 2014. Operationally, it consists of a contingent increase in the Civil Police and Military Brigade with actions and inspection of the orchards during the harvest. In return, companies must provide a list of the harvest workers in order to check legal issues. The number of prisoners went from 72 prisoners in 2014 to just 2 in 2019 (*Relatório de Diligências da Polícia Civil de Vacaria*, 2019). Based on this reference, a total of 6,100 workers for the year 2018 were considered for the elaboration of a migratory cartography, which led us to one of the research questions: where do these workers come from?

The first of the migratory maps (Figure 1) concerns the flow of workers according to their origins in large regions - South, Southeast, Midwest, Northeast and North. All regions provide - to a lesser or greater extent - temporary labor during the apple harvest. To a lesser extent, the North region accounts for 0.31% of workers' origins, followed by the Northeast and Southeast with 2.75% and 3.08%, respectively, of the migrant contribution. Although there is no database that allows a comparative analysis over the years, the origin of the total number of workers in these two regions, according to contractors and managers, has increased in the last three to four years, mainly Northeasterners.

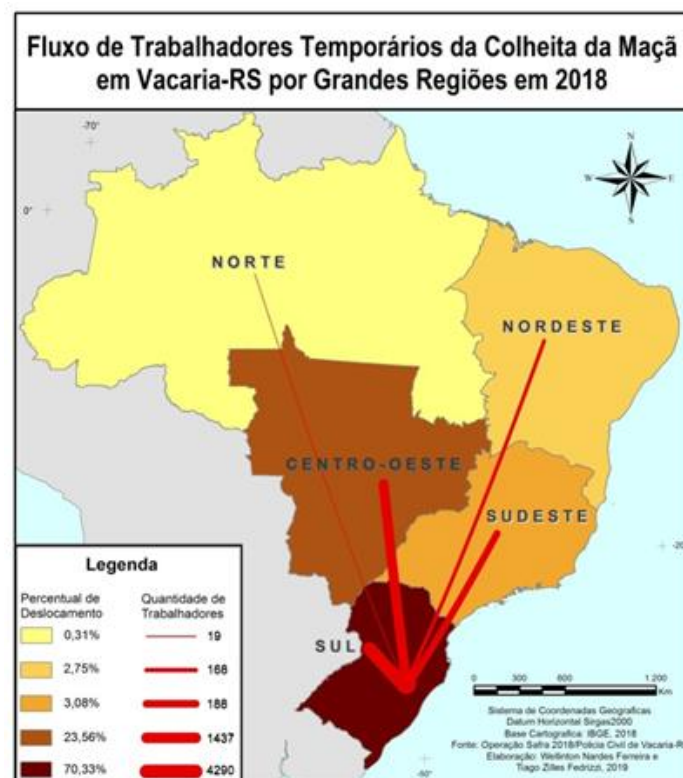
Then, the origin of workers in the Midwest region is extremely significant, with more than 23% of the total number of migrants, greatly influenced by the organization of fronts of indigenous workers, belonging mainly to the *Terena* and *Guarani-Kaiowá* ethnicities, mainly from the state of Mato Grosso do Sul (MS). For the 2019 harvest, approximately 3500 of these indigenous people came to the apple

harvest in Rio Grande do Sul and also in Santa Catarina, the result of a partnership established between public agencies and indigenous entities.

The Mato Grosso do Sul Labor Foundation (FUNTRAB) is the responsible for hiring, acting as intermediary with the companies. The social organization of these workers, as already mentioned, allows legal support from the point of view of claiming rights and in the search for improvements in the work environment. For the company, in the same way, it allows centralizing and dealing with labor and hiring issues directly with the Foundation instead of worker by worker.

Among the five federative regions, the South region is by far the main source of temporary workers in Vacaria with more than 70% of the total, of these, 63% are from the state of Rio Grande do Sul, due to fundamental issues related to the distances covered. According to one of the entrepreneurs who accompanied the implementation of the first orchards in Vacaria, the demand for labor initially used for the harvest came from the region itself, mainly from neighboring municipalities. However, with the increase in the cultivation areas and the intensification of the managements, it was necessary to seek this labor in other regions in order to balance the demand, a fact that continues to occur even today, overcoming increasingly long distances.

Figure 1- Flow of temporary workers in the apple harvest in Vacaria - RS by large regions of origin



Prepared by Ferreira and Fedrizzi (2019) based on data from Operation Safra 2018.

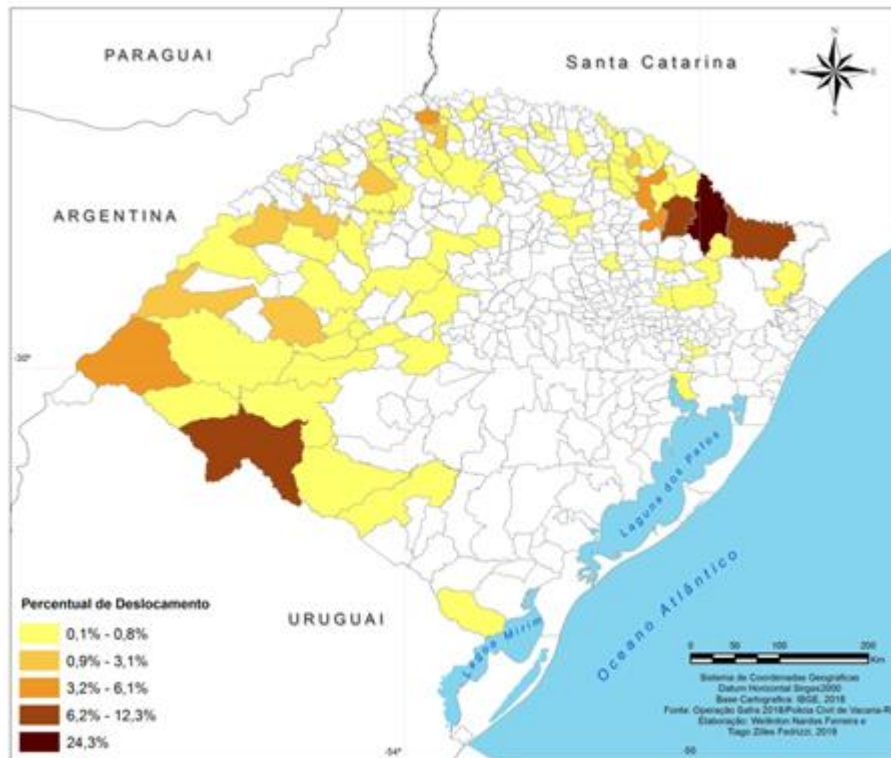
Evidently, the straight lines that represent the origins of these workers do not necessarily imply unidirectional displacements, but on the contrary, in practice what is evident are winding paths that are concentrated and spread in the territory. We sought to illustrate the proportion of workers from each region of the country by the thickness of the lines, where the thicker the greater the representativeness and the narrower the smaller.

Specifically for the state of Rio Grande do Sul, we elaborated a migratory map in order to raise the percentage of workers by municipality (Figure 2). It is noteworthy here that the data used for the preparation are also related to Operation *Safra* 2018 and that the municipality accounted for is found in the identity card of those formally hired and informed. Vacaria and the neighboring municipalities, Bom Jesus and Lagoa Vermelha are referred as the source of most temporary workers. Then, municipalities in the region of Campanha in Rio Grande do Sul, located on the western border of the state, mainly Urugaiana and Santana do Livramento, contribute with a significant origin of migrant workers, corresponding, as previously reported, to the region of expansion of agribusiness, in greater area soy. The Missões region, located in the northern portion of Rio Grande do Sul, was also identified as quite representative with regard to the main origins of the state's temporary workers. The region has a history of dividing properties between family members into smaller portions, hindering production prospects in relation to the land aspect (ANJOS et al., 2006), contributing to the search for jobs outside the properties.

Some interlocutors comment that monocultures of grains, mainly represented by the presence and expansion of soy, have gradually occupied the landscape space, taking away part of the jobs, generating a migration in search of some “outside service”. A gentleman from the municipality of Redentora (RS) who had previously worked for more than ten years in cutting *erva-mate* comments: “herb plantations were crushed by crops, the result of government incentives and trade facilities”, referring to the attractive prices paid for the grain and that has made many producers switch from herbs to soy.

Data collected by Kuplich; Capoane; Costa (2018) demonstrate that from 2000 to 2015 the area planted with soybeans in the state of Rio Grande do Sul increased by 73.7%, where a large part of this expansion occurred in the southern half of the state, more intensely in municipalities in the Campanha region, location of a large part of the temporary workers of the apple harvest in Vacaria. Therefore, it would not be a mere causality that processes such as the “soybean” process reflect on the organizational forms of work of thousands of workers, from the moment when a certain productive system dismisses the need of a large part of the labor.

Figure 2 - Percentage of temporary apple harvest workers in Vacaria - RS by municipality of Rio Grande do Sul



Prepared by Ferreira and Fedrizzi (2019) based on data from Operation *Safra* 2018.

Although we have presented data and maps of a specific selection for the 2018 harvest, the origins heterogeneity of these workers has been maintained over the past few years, according to the discourse of some managers and orchard owners. What is presented in these displacements is often the result of national policies implemented in different parts of the country, directly reflecting on the forms of employment found. Although the South region continues to be the main origin of workers, the central-west region has been establishing itself as a relevant part of them, mainly due to the formal organization for hiring indigenous collectives via FUNTRAB.

3 Displacement Categories

The itinerancy of the subjects consequently leads to a redefinition of identities due to cultural exchanges from a known territory to another unknown. Obviously, without the intention of restricting and delimiting the existing discussion in the literature on categories of migrant workers, we seek, through an intense interaction in the field work, to let out what they carry and who they are, and highlight some patterns that allow them to be grouped in “categories of attention” of workers that present similar characteristics of trajectories, strategies, goals and personal experiences: the workers of the “*trecho*”, the “ants” and the “settlers”.

“Being in the trecho”

Around the 1980s, the term *trecho* started to be used in studies to refer to temporary workers in the context of large developmentalist projects that require large numbers of temporary workers, associated to a peculiar character who is the “*peão do trecho*” (GUEDES, 2013a). According to the author, “*trecheiros*” come to be treated as work wanderers and pilgrims who travel on foot, by bus, by car, by rides, crossing states and highways.

The workers of the “*trecho*” are those who live in a kind of wandering saga, who continually move around the territory and that are already incorporated into their ethos, maintaining themselves through “*bicos*” and “*biscates*”³ to raise money and continue in the *trecho*. Manuel, a Pernambuco worker who lives in the *trecho* explains that:

Being a worker of the *trecho* means to be here and there, to depend on a hostel to stay, to live, to eat. Sometimes you want to work, sometimes you work, sometimes you don't. That's how it is. These people have problems, right, sometimes they are not accepted at home, sometimes they don't want to go either. It's is the person who does not have a destination, right, who is here today, today is there. Even at work, I don't know if you've seen it there, many times people leave every day. Lots indeed, on Monday 8 left, many are leaving. Sometimes they don't make money even to cover the expense and then are gone. They usually have no expense in the *trecho*, you know, they take a bus ticket here and there, take a ride, many come here and don't spend a cent (Worker A, Garauns - PE, 2019).

In certain aspects, “being in the *trecho*” is full of stigmas, appearing as a counterpoint to what would become a traditional conception of family organization, sometimes causing suffering and anguish due to the fact of finding other partners, or even finding disagreements at destination locations. Stigmas are constructed from the perception of the “other” as are prejudices.

However, Guedes (2013a) when studying the mobility generated by the interruption of the mining activity due to the construction of hydroelectric plants in the north of Goiás, portrays through eyes and ethnographic depth the fact that, “being in the *trecho*” or “being in the world” is not seen as necessarily bad or harmful, but it is also capable of producing educational and learning effects. The act of “being in the *trecho*” is even treated as a ritual of passage, permeated with difficulties, but of important maturity when the interlocutors of Guedes (2013a, p. 220) quote:

I know today that the *trecho* hits, that we suffer, that we learn [...] I know better what the world is, I am a better person”. At the same time that ‘*correr trecho*’ is dangerous, a world of possibilities opens up: ‘To know or face the world is to fall into reality, it is to face life; and it means realizing what is contingent and temporary in the home and in the family’ (GUEDES, 2013a, p. 222).

³ *Bicos* and *biscates* are Portuguese terms that refer to odd jobs.

There arises a debate that the “*trecho*” is also a choice, a way of living life, whether this option is for a certain period of time shorter, longer or even a lifetime. “Being in the *trecho*” also carries a positive meaning for workers, such as the fact of having freedom, having no commitments and no long-term responsibilities. When talking to a worker from São Paulo, he is asked what brings him to Vacaria for the harvest and he replies: “I don't come for the need for money, but because it makes me feel good to be on the move. Two years ago I hit the road to feel the reality of living in the *trecho* with little”. The fact of feeling “good” is associated with a set of factors, among them the need for the desired freedom, to seek distance from family members who often “demand”, as well as “movement” either in the sense of physical work or displacement, without staying in a particular place for a long time. In this case, the economic factor is not the main mobilizing goal, even because the same interlocutor raises the following question: “Do you think that, with R\$ 1,200, a boy here crosses Brazil and returns home with money?”.

The subjects of the “*trecho*”, in their wanderings through space can also establish associations with the place by staying longer when there is a job offer. They are called “*fichados*”, the workers who, for reasons of opportunity and for demonstrating dedication at work, establish a fixed-term contract with the company, carrying out various functions throughout the year in the orchard. Usually, this situation arises from family fronts that played a leading role in starting their lives at work with the apple and who, through family ties, get jobs for family members who remained in their places of origin, often settling in the suburbs of the municipality.

In this sense, we consider what Haesbaert (2004) identifies in the process of deterritorialization to a reterritorialization, emphasizing the importance of analyzing the territory from the perspective of the subjects, once it implies identifying and placing in the foreground the subjects of the de-re-territorialization, that is, whom deterritorializes whom or what and with what goals. In the empirical reality, this temporary mobility of workers produces a sociability whose construction of territories occurs from the movement and where the place is based on these differences (BOURDIN, 2001 apud HAESBAERT, 2004).

The contacts of the migrants at the destination place play a fundamental role with regard to migratory propensities, whether at the individual or family level. If there are similar conditions, one usually chooses places where there are known people, or, in other words, references. Sahlins (1997) uses the idea of “enlarging the world”, that is, being able to think about new possibilities - in this case, income. In the perspective of continuity - and not rupture with the place of origin - a translocal population is able to inhabit and maintain relations with the worlds of origin and destination, as an interdependent part of a sociocultural totality (SAHLINS, 1997; RECHENBERG, 2013).

“Like an ant: we work in the summer to hide in the winter”

On the other hand, workers establish an assiduous commitment during the harvest period, moving annually from their regions to Vacaria. These are the “Ants”, who in less favorable times in relation to occupation and provision of services in their cities, find in Vacaria this opportunity for a “*gordurinha*” (a little extra money,

as they say) or even as the main source of income. A farmer from the interior of the state jokes: “In the winter, there is a little work on the land. Then ryegrass grows. You have to work in summer and eat in winter. Like an ant: we work in the summer to hide in the winter”. We can also include in this group the northeastern workers who cross the Brazilian territory: from January to April they are in Vacaria to work on the apple, from May to December they exercise the profession of artisanal fishermen or pick orange in the region of São Paulo, followed by a few days at the end-of-year parties at their places of origin with their families, before returning to Vacaria again. The entrepreneur reports how the bonds with the group were strengthened.

I have been bringing people from Alagoas for 3 years. They (Northeasterners) come to São Paulo to pick orange. When January arrives, the harvest lowers and 70% of the workers are released. Then they found out the apple, we didn't go after it. One appeared, another appeared, warned a friend, warned a neighbor and they started to form a group. So they charter buses with the whole group (Entrepreneur B, Vacaria - RS, 2018).

Informal networks have been constituted as an effective communication space, exchanging information about job vacancies, payment conditions, accommodation and quality of food offered in the orchards (MENEZES, 2002). They usually consist of movements with short displacements, which are repeated, sometimes in cyclicity, and with no intention of constituting permanent changes of residence. These networks provide exchanges of information that reduce the risk of the migration “going wrong”, providing clues to the conditions to be found at the destination.

"Settlers"

Another grouping, so to speak, refers to workers who have a trajectory of work with agriculture, a large part of these are family farmers previously associated with the work fronts of the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and who, even after settling, see in the work with the apple, possibilities in the search for improvements in the structural and productive issues in their lots and in the settlement itself. This process runs through strategic issues of the families, where part remains working on the lot, while, usually the men, migrate to temporary work and send part of the money received monthly to their families (GARCIA JR, 1990).

MST settled families and workers make decisions based, among other factors, on the analysis of the use of time and the costs and benefits that are involved, opting for certain choices over others (LONG, 2007; WOORTMANN, 1990). Not all members migrate, nor does this happen every year. Woortmann (1990) also points out that cyclical and seasonal migrations are not only the result of a difference in work between the various moments of the agricultural cycle, but that two important aspects must be considered: the periodicity of alternation between little and a lot of work in the crop and also the availability of products for consumption or for sale, depending on whether the year was good or weak, having

had good periods of rain or losses due to drought, periods of abundance and “periods of need”.

The seasonal characteristics of the agricultural production systems, both in the place of origin and destination of these farmers, allow a window of opportunity to work in an “idle” period, boosting the migrant potential. The search for a source of complementary income capable of supplying the basic needs of production and reproduction of workers and their families makes them apply their resources and workforce in different ways in the agricultural activity itself and in non-agricultural activities within or outside the property or even in temporary works. This may not necessarily imply the abandonment of agricultural activity, rural property or even work in the urban space. Activities and strategies can be combined in such a way as to provide different income generation possibilities for families. However, when asked about the possibility of living off the land lot alone, the settled farmer of the agrarian reform states:

Certainly, I have not taken a project until now, but if I could make a living only there, it would be much better. To “take off”, because if the guy is going to settle down, he will always stay the same or depending on the government for everything. It is a way for people to stand on their own feet because getting a lot of land and waiting for the government to give you everything, it will never happen. What if a bad year, a flood, or a drought happens, what are you going to do? (Worker Q, São Gabriel - RS, 2019).

These are questions of strategy, both individual and collective, of the MST, with the objective of being less dependent on credits via government projects and trying to stand on “their own feet”, in search of greater autonomy. In view of the logic implemented in many of the agrarian reform settlements, it was an engineering logic that ignored the social actors, their trajectories, their aptitudes. Therefore, these are new bonds that end up being established in extremely unfavorable contexts from the structural point of view for the encamped families and in the process of land regularization of the settlements. Given the particularities, a condition is a settlement located in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre with greater possibility of access to markets. Another, in realities geographically distant from the main commercialization centers, such as, for example, in the countryside of the Campanha region, which is why, according to a contractor, the municipalities of São Gabriel and Santana do Livramento place themselves as the main origins of the settled workers. Regarding the work on the apple, one of the leaders of the MST recalls how the partnership between the largest Brazilian apple company and the Movement took place and how fundamental it was for the structuring of the settlements:

[...] in 94 when we came here we ran in the companies to find a service, but when we said that we were from the Movement, everyone hedged. Some companies didn't even receive us. The only company that received us was *Maçã Ltda* 2, its orchard manager. We had to come clean, we are from the Movement, we are a lot of people, there is no work in the regions, we have to come here. The next week he called: ‘Oh we need 30 people to make an experience. There was a camp there in Júlio de Castilhos, we went there and chose only the good harvesters. We came

here and it didn't take 4-5 days and they said to bring another bus, 40 people. Then we take care of the orchard. We have many settled families who have managed to improve their home structures, thanks to the work fronts, and many have stayed in the camps thanks to work. They said: 'we managed to get to the settlement because of the fronts, I was able to go out to work and keep our family under the canvas'. Today, several families that I know are still coming to work on the apple (Contractor C, Tupanciretã - RS, 2019).

He also highlights three characteristics that make them different from other workers:

Our people from the Movement always stand out, he (owner of the orchard) said: your people have 3 advantages: one for your **organization** that you organize yourselves differently, the work front comes with the right teams, the guys who are responsible; the **discipline** of your people, since the time of the camp we have a different disciplinary system; and work **performance**, your people are much more hardworking than any other (Contractor C, Tupanciretã - RS, 2019, *emphasis added*).

The discussion of the strategies of the farming families runs through migratory processes that seek to circumvent direct conflicts, being characteristic of their productive and reproductive conditions. As stated by Woortmann, these displacements are not “[...] just a consequence of the impossibility of their conditions of existence, but they are an integral part of their own reproductive practices. Migrating, in fact, can be a condition for the permanence [...]” of families (WOORTMANN, 1990, p. 37), and not necessarily being led to proletarianization through insertion in remunerated activities (MENEZES, 2002).

Another factor that currently has changed the dynamics for the settlers is the “partnerships” made for the planting of soy in small areas that increase, in this way, the availability of the labor factor and that tend to increase the migrant potential, since the period of soybean cultivation coincides with that of the apple harvest. It is worth mentioning that the MST faces other dilemmas on how to sustain itself economically and politically, facing issues inherent to the ideology itself, in a certain ambiguity to its objective conditions as the case of the supply of the workforce to a sector seen until then as an explorer, problematized by one of the protagonists since the formation of the fronts in 1994:

We face some restrictions such as: are we going to work for the rich guys in agribusiness? As much as the guy has more than 3500 hectares of apples, 5000 hectares of crops, almost 5000 hectares for cattle, the need is ours. But we had to fight, too, right? The march for the land. So we had to have a great number of people here on the apple, however we could not abandon the fight there, right? And we were always able to manage work with struggles. Until today we have organized the work fronts, of course quite differently from when it started (Contractor C, Tupanciretã - RS, 2019).

There is an interesting element in addition to the availability of labor and food production, which is the struggle for land. The symbolic strength of this metamorphosis is in what Saffioti and Almeida (1995) called as a process of de/re-

construction and the multifacets of the subjects, as in the example of a worker being able to be a farmer, a migrant and a woman at the same time, carrying all the identities, without a hierarchy among them (SILVA, 1998). Therefore, leaving purisms aside, there are complementarities between sectors considered unconnected, agribusiness and family farming.

Although it has been proposed the grouping into three different “categories of attention”, it does not mean that there is no overlap of categories and a hybridism among these different categories, but they allow us, however, to see particularities. For example, a settler may assume indeed a trajectory of “ants”, having a migratory regularity over the years. Temporary migration itself can become permanent and vice versa. The consequences of these displacements can, on the one hand, lead to disruptions, generating an effect contrary to what was previously planned, on the other hand, lead to the achievement of goals that make it possible to implement socioeconomic and life strategies for families (WOORTMANN, 1990).

Galizoni and Ribeiro (2019) exemplify, through the work of Antônio Cândido, mobility and its consequences for *caipira*⁴ farm families in the work “*Os Parceiros do Rio Bonito*”. According to the authors, there are two sides of the same coin with the issue of migration, with situations that assume different meanings: on the one hand, it allows creating the necessary conditions for the reproduction of the family by their wages; on the other hand, it destabilizes relationships due to dispersion, concern and fear of different orders such as betrayal, family instability, the absence of a father in raising children (GALIZONI; RIBEIRO, 2019; GUEDES, 2012b). A case reported by a worker moved me. “Our co-worker, Zé, during the past harvest began to suspect that his wife was having an affair with another man. He left the service here and arrived by surprise. When he saw the woman with the man, he ended up killing the woman”.

On the other hand, young children of farmers who seek financial autonomy in relation to their parents find in temporary work the possibility of accumulating resources, spending the minimum and saving the maximum, which will make it possible to reach the established goals such as the construction of a new house, making the wedding party, buying animals or even a property to work in agriculture. There is a kind of ritual of passage, maturing into adulthood, where migration marks above all a distinction between men and boys (WOORTMANN, 1990).

Galizoni and Ribeiro (2019) also state that in the place of destination of these migrants, the new relationships were reformulated in terms of the community universe and went through adaptation to the new forms of life: the places of destination of migrations and the types of work developed were instruments to understand the migratory history of a given social group, and they could be read as permanencies, opportunities and, in the limit, callable resources.

⁴ *Caipira* is a Portuguese term that refers to an inhabitant of rural or remote areas in the interior of the south-central part of Brazil.

4 Concluding the trecho

Throughout the migratory flows registered here, it is possible to observe peculiar and distinctive aspects of the materialization of agricultural modernization in a specific region and, particularly, with seasonal workers who seek “in the trecho” and, in other displacement strategies, their spaces for social reproduction in the bowels of Brazilian agrarian capitalism. The particular characteristics of this process demonstrate a series of facets that involve local and territorial aspects, but also ambiguities arising from public policies and from historical and productive factors in certain Brazilian regions.

Socioeconomic asymmetries not only produce ambiguities at the local level, they also generate displacements, seasonal or permanent migrations influenced by economic, productive, ecological and seasonal aspects. This brings, on the one hand, the fact that workers are not only passive characters in rural dynamics, but active producers of social reproduction strategies, sometimes migrating to generate income and to continue their productive system in “windows” of opportunities in times of low demand for labor in the places of origin. In the same way, they are pressured by changes in the local productive system, and in Rio Grande do Sul the process of soybean farming that has occupied a great extent over the Pampa Biome (Liter, 2010), leveraged by the international prices of commodities, has developed farming “without farmers” and consequently a surplus of labor. In other cases, the lack of work and income in the places of origin also promotes temporary or permanent displacements as a way to seek “improvements in life” or to face “periods of need”.

One aspect that we can see among the testimonies and with the data collected in the research is that the dichotomous opposition between family farming and agribusiness does not contemplate the complexity of contemporary agrarian processes. Within this large mosaic filled with different realities, the importance of differentiated policies and actions which take into account the diversity of certain existing contexts is emphasized, as well as of seasonal complementarities related to the productive systems, which establish bridges. Related to this, there is a theme that has not been explored in the scope of the analysis, which demonstrates the possible precariousness and lack of assistance in the continuity and establishment of some Agrarian Reform Settlements in the Campanha region in Rio Grande do Sul. According to their “work fronts”, the settlements have demonstrated that they have not established a production system sufficient to generate family income, and the support of families can be further aggravated by the current precariousness of the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) and existing agrarian policies.

The development of fruit production, more specifically of the apple, had an important economic impact in the South region, with Brazil moving from being an importer in the 1960s to being currently an exporter of the fruit. Commercial cultivation was established through large companies attracted by public policy incentives within the South Region, representing today 90% of national production.

The analysis of tax incentives was not the center of the study, but it is possible to perceive that it had a great impact on the economic and productive dynamics of pomiculture in the South Region. The pending reflection is on the

Brazilian tax system and the ways to improve taxation, seeking to generate development dynamics with equity and competitiveness. Tax incentives promote exemption for certain legal entities in favor of encouraging a certain economic objective, and in the case of apples, part of the incentives were used by companies in the metallurgical sector as a means of diversifying income in a period of crisis. These mechanisms make certain companies more competitive than others, creating an artificial market environment and generating negative impacts on other economic sectors. Despite the numerous tax reforms carried out in Brazil, the system remains highly inefficient, where a company within the state must comply with more than 3512 tax rules (SACHSIDA, 2017). Due to the complexity of the necessary reforms, only occasional changes have been made, sometimes due to pressure from economic sectors in search of specific benefits and not always for the population in general. One-off reforms, under pressure and interest, are the ones that have been most recurrent because they are more viable in the political arena, but onus is on the whole society, establishing an association between the tax structure and the extreme inequality rates that are verified in Brazil (VIANNA, 2000).

The previously registered categories also show the coming and going of seasonal workers, some who travel great distances in search of improvements. We realized that Brazil, even though it is a federative unit, has a great diversity of socioeconomic and environmental realities where "being in the *trecho*" can be the space of hope for workers who do not find work and employment opportunities in their place of origin. This itinerancy can be perceived in categories of attention such as: being in the *trecho*, like an ant or settlers. As we pointed out, they are not the only existing categories, but they allow us to analyze specific issues that, at a certain point, come together, opening space for new discussions.

The "being in the *trecho*" highlights a form of continuous itinerancy and as the testimony states "being a worker of the *trecho* means to be here and there" and the motivations for this continuous movement are not just of an economic nature. Family relationships, learning, maturation and other motivations lead to this permanent movement. According to the testimonies, it seems that better working conditions would not be enough for the permanent establishment of these workers, indicating a kind of continuous itinerancy through the country where one of the elements that are part of their way of life is freedom of locomotion. As Martins (1981, p.131) points out "Often, I have heard people discussing the problem of the new regions in strict terms of the land because, in fact, the touchstone is in the land, but there is this other ideological element that marks much the existence and movements of the squatters, which is the problem of their freedom, their freedom from family work, their freedom to work independently, their freedom of locomotion, their freedom of decision".

A great part of the classic literature of the peasantry (SHANIN, 2012) speaks of a peasant rooted in the land, with strong cultural memories built over several generations, but the Brazilian peasant establishes other links due to his history of itineraries and wanderings. These characteristics of Brazilian agrarian history certainly influence the behavior of these seasonal workers with little attachment to places and occupations as previously reported. A sociological analysis of this

process would require a sociology of the movement and the wandering as part of our agrarian history.

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