



Collegiate management and governance: collective action and collegiate transition in the territories Açu-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi (RN)¹

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Abstract

The objective is to analyze contribution of Collegiate Management, considering governance and the importance of collective action in the promotion and transition processes for the sustainability of rural development in the Açu-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi territories, in Rio Grande do Norte. As a methodology, 77 questionnaires were applied to the plenary of the territorial collegiate, in order to obtain the characteristics that define its identity, and on the management strategies in defining actions and projects that drive territorial development. It is concluded that it is essential to think about a management of the collegiate that strengthens decision-making, with the purpose of transitioning collegiate to sustainability. And this is precisely what constitutes one of the great challenges, in terms of improving governance structures (civil society and municipal, state, and federal governments), for the implementation of inclusion strategies that will integrate organized family farming with small agroindustry and to build and expand local and regional markets.

Keywords: Rural Development. Transition. Governance. Sustainability. Territory.

¹ This work is the result of research carried out in the field of family farming and was supported by CNPq through Notice 005/2009 MDA/SDT/CNPq-Management of Rural Territories.

Gestão dos Colegiados e Governança: ação coletiva e transição do Colegiado nos territórios Açu-Mossoró e Sertão do Apodi (RN)

Resumo

O objetivo é analisar a contribuição da Gestão dos Colegiados territoriais, considerando a governança e a importância da ação coletiva em processos de dinamização e transição para a sustentabilidade dos territórios Açu-Mossoró e Sertão do Apodi, no Rio Grande do Norte. Como metodologia, foram aplicados 77 questionários junto à plenária do colegiado territorial, visando obter características que definem sua identidade, e sobre as estratégias de gestão na definição de ações e projetos que impulsionam o desenvolvimento territorial. Conclui-se, que é imprescindível pensar numa gestão do colegiado que fortaleça a tomada de decisão, com a finalidade da transição dos colegiados para a sustentabilidade. E é justamente o que vem a se constituir um dos grandes desafios, no sentido de melhorar as estruturas de governança (sociedade civil e governos municipal, estadual e federal), para a efetivação de estratégias de inclusão que venham a integrar a agricultura familiar organizada à agroindústria familiar e a construir e ampliar mercados locais e regionais.

Palavras-chaves: Desenvolvimento Rural. Transição. Governança. Sustentabilidade. Território.

Gestión y gobierno colegiados: acción colectiva y transición colegial en los territorios Açu-Mossoró y Sertão do Apodi (RN)

Resumen

El objetivo es analizar la contribución de la Gestión Colegiada, considerando la gobernanza y la importancia de la acción colectiva en los procesos de transición para la sostenibilidad del desarrollo rural en los territorios Açu-Mossoró y Sertão do Apodi, en Rio Grande do Norte. Como metodología, se aplicaron 77 cuestionarios al pleno del colegiado territorial, con el fin de obtener las características que definen su identidad, y sobre estrategias de gestión en la definición de acciones y proyectos que impulsen el desarrollo territorial. Se concluye que es fundamental pensar en una gestión del colegiado que fortalezca la toma de decisiones, con el propósito de hacer la transición del colegiado a la sustentabilidad. Y esto es precisamente lo que constituye uno de los grandes desafíos, en términos de mejorar las estructuras de gobernanza (sociedad civil y gobiernos municipales, estatales y federales), para la implementación de estrategias de inclusión que integren la agricultura familiar organizada con la agroindustria y para construir y expandir locales y mercados regionales.

Palabras Clave: Desarrollo rural. Transición. Gobernanza. La sostenibilidad. Territorio.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in 2003, one of the primary challenges facing the National Policy of Territorial Development has been the establishment of robust knowledge foundations to foster higher levels of competitiveness within cooperative spaces. This challenge is approached with the overarching goal of promoting development with social participation. Addressing this challenge necessitates the exploration of issues related to knowledge generation and the mobilization of institutional actors to facilitate the transition towards sustainability in the dynamization processes of territories, particularly through productive chains. Arrangements as a forum for local actors to define and institute territorial policies.

The rural context poses a significant challenge to territorial policy, requiring a departure from the sectoral nature of family farming towards harnessing its multifunctionality. The concept of rural territoriality involves reinterpreting its geographic scope as a management unit integrating a multisectoral economic dynamic and various political, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. The multifunctional nature of family farming is seen as a key concept signaling agricultural policy mechanisms aligned with sustainable perspectives, steering away from exclusive and degrading global food regime-linked models.

Is noticeable that the unsuccessful facet of policies introduced based on the belief in exogenous and specialized models is due to regional specificities, where the culture and collective capacity of family farmers are often overlooked. This oversight leads to the exacerbation and perpetuation of inequalities, affirming existing ones and creating new ones. This configuration often manifests through the identity of Territorial Collegiate members, becoming a significant element of interest in the arena of conflicts or the space where rules governing the Collegiate are defined. The Collegiate can be defined as a territorial governance environment, characterized by diversity yet united, authorized to represent the territories. It is within the Collegiate environment that decisions about the paths and dynamics of rural areas are made, taking care not to impose "models" at the expense of others that postpone development and result in the inheritance of new problems.

Given this emphasis, the investigative process in this study raises the following question: In what way did the Management of Collegiates, within its scope, contribute to guiding family farmers and their collective organizations towards sustainability? To what extent were specialized and exogenous models, of a sectoral nature and aligned with predominant global food regimes, gradually replaced by territorial dynamics of rural development, with a multifunctional character and diversification of family farming? This transition is oriented towards localized food regimes and sustainability within the territories of Açu-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi in Rio Grande do Norte.

The hypothesis is that, despite the significant coordination effort by Collegiate Management in deliberating projects and guiding family farmers and their collective organizations in a different direction, the expected success in breaking the sectoral nature of family farming has not been achieved. The difficulty of countering the global food regime with the construction of localized food regimes based on food security and sustainability principles has not been fully overcome. Nevertheless, the seed planted by the methodologies introduced with the perspective of the National Policy of Territorial Development has sprouted projects in some territories. These initiatives have occurred, especially through strategies that integrate family farming with small-scale agribusiness and market construction, usually associated and coordinated by family farmer cooperatives. This new scenario contributes to a transition triggered by the action of territorial collegiates, where the influence of territorial policy contributes to the creation of projects essential for economic density and social fabric in sustainable territorial rural development dynamics.

In this context, the objective of this article is to analyze the contribution of Collegiate Management, considering the importance of collective action in the processes of transitioning rural development in the territories of Açu-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi, Rio Grande do Norte. In this perspective, it is necessary to reflect on alternatives for Collegiate Management to adopt increasingly effective strategies to mobilize, establish, and affirm the transition process, facilitating the interface between policies and guiding family farmers towards the dynamization of territorial development.

The structure of this article is divided into sections. Section 2 presents the approach guiding the study, emphasizing territorial governance in the dynamics of regional development, in addition to the constitution and functioning of territorial collegiates. Section 3 introduces the methodology, Section 4 presents the results and discussion, and finally, Section 5 offers brief conclusions on the themes discussed here.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Territorial Governance and Transition to Sustainable Rural Development

Strategic development projects, especially those requiring intensive interaction, such as attempts to integrate development policies from the 1990s (like PRONAF and Agrarian Reform) with a focus on supply, and territorial policies from the 2000s, such as the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), with a focus on demand, involve risks and uncertainties, necessitating what is termed governance. According to Nunes *et al* (2014), governance involves coordinated actions at the macro level and shared responsibilities at the micro level, ensuring that communication is understood, and actions are monitored throughout the execution process. Thus, Peters (2013) emphasizes the importance of governance to ensure that actions are coordinated in accordance with the strategies that translate into development.

For Nunes *et al* (2014) and Magalhães and Favareto (2020), territorial governance is a rule structure used in decision-making from the perspective of social cohesion in diverse, complex, and dynamic environments, such as the Territorial Collegiate. According to Peters (2013), this is a complex management structure that must be entrusted with full confidence, requiring increasingly higher levels of preparation or qualification in leadership skills for those tasked with coordinating actions and sharing results. Territorial governance has been associated with processes of political-administrative decentralization or initiatives for planning and managing territories or regions, especially those involving coalitions of public and civil society actors in democratic and collaborative processes (Magalhães and Favareto, 2020).

In situations involving a large volume of projects, as often encountered by Collegiate Management, understanding competencies within the Collegiate becomes urgent. According to Nunes *et al* (2014), this involves defining which actors will be assigned evaluator roles and which will be responsible for managing the execution and achieving the planned results. Planning, as indicated by Dallabrida (2020), represents a valuable process of coordination for both the public and private spheres, considering a strategic definition of the territory's future.

Nunes *et al* (2014); Silva e Nunes (2021) consider planning as a decisive factor for territorial management strategies, instrumental in overcoming the challenge of generating higher levels of competitiveness and cooperation among territorial actors, making them more prepared for dialogue and social participation.

Dallabrida and Becker (2003); Dallabrida (2015); Magalhães and Favareto (2020) define territorial governance as processes of intense articulation conducted by social, economic, and institutional actors in territorial power structures. For Nunes *et al* (2014) and Diaz-Mendez *et al* (2019), governance should enable a coordinated and shared systemic vision for the future, based on the participation and dialogue of all levels and territorial actors involved. This is to ensure that different territorial groups are represented, and their aspirations in territorial dynamics are more assured and protected than the interests of actors outside the territory. Governance aims to promote territorial development dynamics based on more horizontal relationships, partnerships, collaboration, and cooperation among territorial actors, fostering sustainable territorial development and a more locality- and region-centered development (Dallabrida, 2015).

In this context, Territorial Collegiate Management plays an indispensable role in the systemic, complex, and dynamic process of governance for territorial development. According to Nunes *et al* (2015), governance represents various strategies that territorial actors put in place to initiate their projects, in coordination with the State and in constant awareness of established social and power relations. Although governance ideally involves democracy and participation (Diaz-Mendez and Lozano-Cabedo, 2019), it does not always occur this way.

Concerning specifics, such as the structuring of agri-food systems, governance is positioned as an assignment of the public sphere, especially national governments that establish legal rules and norms to encourage or restrict the actions of actors. Authors like McMichael (2016), Friedmann (2016), and Ploeg (2018) emphasize governance from the perspective of food empires, where large international corporations coordinate global macro-level activities, including long retail chains and commodity exchanges. Another perspective, presented by authors like Maluf and Reis (2013), Gazolla and Schneider (2017), Niederle and Wesz Júnior (2018), Nunes and Gomes Silva (2022), highlights governance as an alternative in discussions about networks and food chains at the micro level. This involves sustainable and localized agri-food systems based on food security and sustainability principles, often linked to agroecology. Governance of alternative food regimes occurs through proximity relations, or short chains, in the commercialization of family farming, according to these authors.

Lang (2010) points out that agri-food systems have various governance types (proximity relations, kinship, or the construction of short chains) due to historical crises. However, poorly skilled, and less participatory governance during crises tends to promote high levels of economic power concentration in a few actors. Additionally, excessive processing of food by large corporations, determining the hegemonic global corporate food regime, is linked to the specialized model of agricultural modernization. Negative consequences, such as uncontrollable foodborne disease outbreaks affecting the economy and health, are associated with this model (McMichael, 2016; Friedmann, 2016). This corporate food regime promotes large food distribution chains with remote regulation, increasing social and environmental costs and generating more exclusion and inequality.

In this context, considerations for rural sustainability, as defined by Marsden (2003), are disregarded. The appeal to sustainability has become a prominent issue in the 2030 Agenda, expressed in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN), with six of these goals having some relation to food, particularly SDG 2, which addresses "Sustainable Agriculture." This goal aims, by 2030, to ensure sustainable food production systems, implement resilient agricultural practices, enhance productivity, maintain ecosystems, strengthen the capacity to adapt to climate change, improve land and soil quality progressively (UN, 2015).

Old problems combined with new problems have influenced the further destabilization of weakened governance practices. The governance policy of the federal government adopted between 2017-2022 (Brasil, 2018) contributed to the dismantling of territorial policies, suppressing instances of societal participation, or granting them little visibility and participation in decisions related to Collegiate Management. This has aimed to guide family farmers towards the transition from exogenous and specialized models aligned with the global hegemonic food regime to territorial dynamics of rural development characterized by diversified family farming and based on the principles of food security and sustainability.

2.2 Dynamics of the Institutional Arrangement of Territorial Collegiates

According to Nunes *et al* (2014) and Gurgel *et al* (2022), the Territorial Collegiate constitutes an instance of collective action that plays a crucial role in institutional coordination, operationalizing the strategy for territorial development through the convergence of forces and interests. Its composition is characterized by the diversity of social actors, institutions, organizations, and economic segments residing and operating within the territory. The Collegiate, through its highest instance, the Plenary, is assigned the role of deliberation and consultation. Additionally, its Steering Core (intermediary decision-making level) is responsible for directing the implementation of projects and policies, with full support from its Technical Core.

The institutional arrangement of the Territorial Collegiate, as described by Moura *et al* (2017), includes guiding and negotiating the implementation of initiatives and public policies for rural development in the territory. These initiatives involve strategies such as integrating family farming with small-scale agro-industry, accessing, and effectively utilizing technical assistance services (ATER), securing credit sources, and coordinating cooperatives, as outlined by Nunes *et al* (2020a; 2020b); Alves da Silva e Nunes (2023). In this context, the Collegiate Management is tasked with promoting the social management of Sustainable Rural Development, deliberating on sustainability-based strategies to transition from unsustainable food systems to sustainable territorial dynamics in rural development.

Another responsibility of the Collegiate arrangement, as highlighted by Moura *et al* (2017), is advocating for more vulnerable segments of the territory, such as the poorest family farmers. It involves coordinating policies to attract public and private, national, and international resources, and creating favorable conditions for endogenous forces to emerge and generate inclusive opportunities. This initiative, according to Nunes *et al* (2019), aims to understand territorial identity and its "identity" activities, forming partnerships that translate into an endogenous

perspective of territorial development, in line with the Territorial Plan for Sustainable Rural Development (PTDRS).

A crucial aspect of Collegiate Management is the coordination and decision-making regarding the selection of economic projects and providing support to institutional arrangements formed by cooperatives, associations, networks, municipalities, etc. These arrangements, within the territory, are responsible for developing, implementing, and continually enhancing project execution. The enhancements or adaptations aim to provide solutions for family farmers and their collective organizations and tend to converge with what Ploeg and Wiskerke (2004); Nunes *et al* (2018; 2020) identify as the need for innovations and the emergence of novelty². This strategy aims, among other things, to stimulate the creation and consolidation of Territorial Networks to meet the need for technical assistance, credit, training, access to markets and information technologies, as well as fostering horizontal cooperation for sustainable rural development. Lastly, according to Nunes *et al* (2014), Collegiate Management seeks collaboration with other collegiates, networks, universities, research institutions, and national and international organizations to build cooperative relationships, production, and knowledge exchange.

2.3 Composition of Territorial Collegiates

Regarding the composition of Collegiates, attention should be given to Resolutions No. 48 and 52 of the National Council for Sustainable Rural Development (CONDRAF)³, as well as documents formulated by the Secretariat of Territorial Development of the now-defunct Ministry of Agrarian Development (SDT/MDA)⁴. The extinction of territorial policies followed the guidelines set by MDA in 2003. It is essential to observe and adhere to the principles of representativeness, diversity, and plurality in the constitution of the Plenary. The goal is to ensure that this instance discusses and forwards actions representing the interests of traditional segments within the territory, namely:

²According to Gazolla and Pellegrini (2011), innovations and novelties have different definitions, trajectories and histories, the former being exogenous and defined as standard, external and universal; the latter being more endogenous and characterized by contextualization, internalization and territorialization.

³ It aims to deliberate on the National Rural Development Plan, which is made up of the guidelines for the National Agrarian Reform Program and the National Program for Strengthening Family Farming (PRONAF). As well as drawing up the Plan, it must - coordinate, articulate and propose the adaptation of federal public policies to the needs of sustainable rural development, especially through agrarian reform, the strengthening of family farming and the diversification of rural economies.

⁴ Decree No. 11.371 of 2023, signed by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, revoked Decree No. 9.759 of April 11, 2019, which extinguishes and establishes guidelines, rules and limitations for federal public administration collegiate bodies, as well as Decree No. 9.812 of May 30, 2019, which redefined the guidelines and functioning of federal collegiate bodies; as well as Decree No. 11.396, of January 21, 2023, approved the Regimental Structure and the Demonstrative Chart of Commissioned Positions and Functions of Trust of the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Farming and reallocates and transforms commissioned positions and functions of trust.

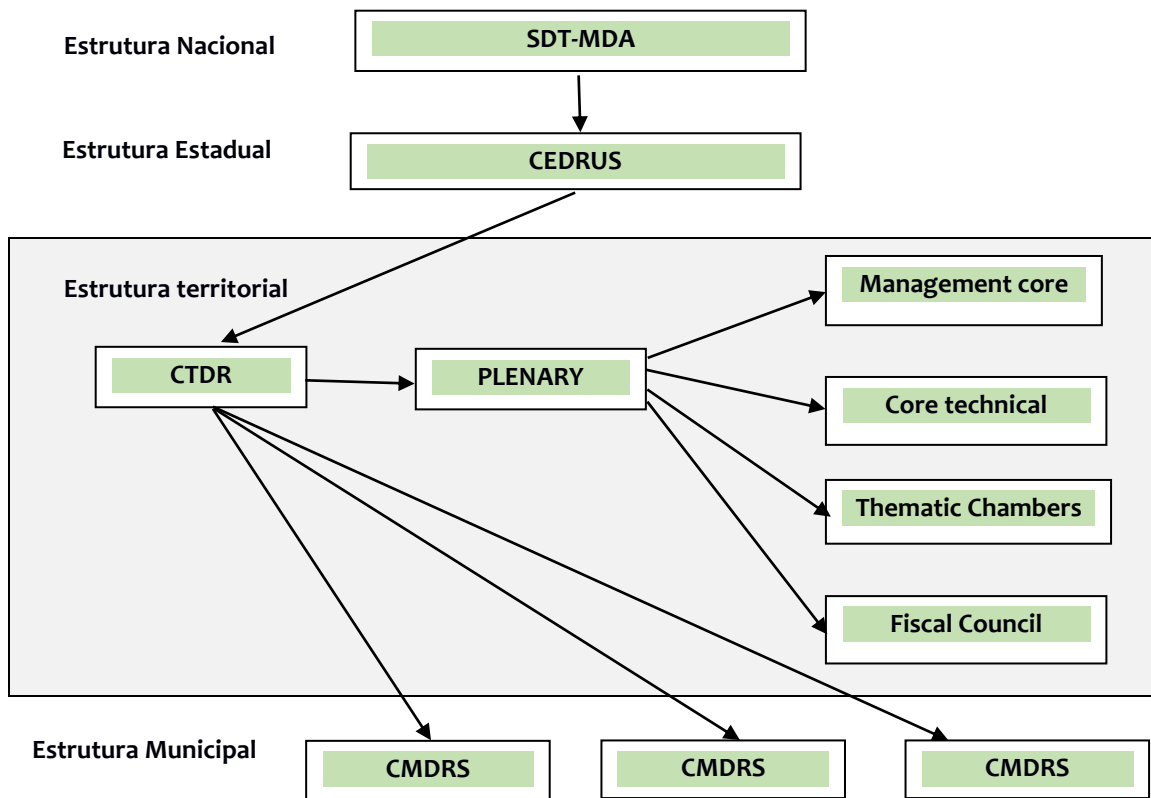
Considering that Collegiates serve as collective spaces for policy definition, it is recommended that their composition includes representatives from civil society and government officials, adhering to the criterion of parity for a balance of forces and possibilities. Regarding the principle of representativeness, CONDRAF Resolution No. 52, dated February 16, 2005, recommends: i) a minimum of 50% of seats to be occupied by representatives of civil society organizations in the territory; and ii) a maximum of 50% of seats to be occupied by government representatives (executive, legislative, or judicial powers) linked to sustainable rural development. Additionally, universities, research institutions, rural extension, education, and Non-Governmental Organizations (municipal associations, SEBRAE, mixed economies, whose presidency is appointed by the government, among others), as well as sectors of organized civil society indirectly linked to family farming, such as entrepreneurs in the services and industry sectors, are part of these entities (CONDRAF, 2005).

Resolutions No. 48 and 52 of CONDRAF guide that Collegiate members be nominated by the organizations to which they are affiliated, attaching the minutes of the meeting or plenary that formalized the nomination for the Collegiate. The Collegiate should be composed of entities headquartered in and belonging to the territories. However, some organizations not based in the territory may participate in accordance with the Collegiate's resolutions. It is essential to consider the diversity of actors to strengthen governance in the social management process. This is a strategy to negotiate the direction of territorial development, especially as there is a shift from the sectorial nature of family farming to the multifunctional aspect, considering the intersectoriality of PTDRS (Territorial Plans for Sustainable Rural Development), requiring social actors to internalize the new dimensions of territorial development.

2.4 - Functioning Structure of the Territorial Collegiate

According to CONDRAF Resolutions No. 48 and 52, for territorial development to occur, Collegiate Management must practice governance at the territorial level by coordinating at the macro level and efficiently sharing at the micro level through the following structures and instances: Plenary; Steering Nucleus; Technical Nucleus; and Thematic Chambers or Sector Chambers, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Governance structure of the National Territorial Development Program



Source. Schiavinato, 2012.

Resolution No. 52 of the National Council for Sustainable Rural Development (CONDRAF), of February 16, 2005, creates territorial institutions with the aim of creating spaces for consultation in which "the social management of territorial development must be carried out through spaces for debate with transparency and participation." In the territories, these spaces are represented by the Territorial Collegiates and are environments for formulating and managing policies and forming social coalitions, according to Magalhães and Favareto (2020), and include disputes over interests, conflicts, social cohesion, and the inclusion of new subjects. In this proposal, subjects are integral parts of the policymaking, management, and decision-making process. The National Network, made up of representatives of civil society and public bodies, works in the territorial collegiate bodies with the aim of expanding and improving the mechanisms for participation and territorial governance from the state, regional, territorial, and municipal collegiate bodies, in order to value and highlight issues related to sustainable rural development, agrarian reform and family farming.

However, sudden changes in the regulations for access to resources and the release of PROINF funds, for example via parliamentary amendments, as well as the lack of regulatory adherence to these amendments, contributed to the hollowing out and weakening of the territorial policy. This phenomenon became even worse after 2016, for example with the 2017 PROINF notice, which drastically reduced the funds made available, completely disregarded the territorial collegiate bodies, and was aimed indiscriminately at all municipalities, regardless of whether or not they were in a priority territory (Santos; Gregolin; Sartorelli, 2018, p.25).

The organization, made up of representatives from the 164 territories, 120 of which are defined as Citizenship Territories and 44 as Rural Territories, aims to discuss sustainable rural development and the promotion of citizenship. Initiatives such as the structuring of the Collegiate Network point to effective popular participation in the implementation of policies, which leads to efficient public spending and the construction of a national project in which the people have a voice. The Collegiate Network has become important in consolidating policies aimed at inclusion, as well as helping to structure governance for the participation of collegiate bodies as public policy formulators. In a structuring way, the Collegiate bodies have been bringing together in the Rural and Citizenship Territories, as shown in box 1, instances of civil society and municipal, state, and federal governments to consolidate family farming.

Description of the Territorial Collegiate Structure⁵

Plenary of the Collegiate: this is the highest body of the Territorial Collegiate, it is the very composition of the Collegiate. Its role is to deliberate and make strategic decisions linked to the territorial development process. Its attributions are: (i) Decide on the composition of the Collegiate observing the principles of representativeness, plurality and diversity of the territory, as well as the creation and functioning of its bodies; (ii) Define guidelines and approve strategic projects for the territory's development process; (iii) Discuss and define strategies for articulating and negotiating public policies, implementing various programs of interest to the territory; (iv) Appreciate and approve monitoring and evaluation reports, as well as other documents of interest to the development process; (v) Proposing and deciding on the Collegiate's internal regulations and setting up mechanisms to support it politically, institutionally and financially; (vi) Providing an environment that enables a relationship of agreement and concertation between the government and civil society on interests aimed at sustainable rural development; and, (vii) Deciding on the results of selection processes for hiring technical and administrative advisors for the Collegiate.

Steering Committee: its function is to coordinate the actions defined by the Plenary of the Territorial Collegiate, to articulate social actors, institutions and public policies for the construction and implementation of territorial development. This body cannot include organizations that are not part of the Plenary of the Territorial Collegiate. Its duties are: (i) Coordinate the actions of the Collegiate, the Technical Nucleus and the Thematic Commissions; (ii) Represent the Collegiate in negotiation, articulation and decision-making spaces related to rural development; (iii) Mobilize social actors, governmental and non-governmental institutions for the process of formulating strategies to support the process of social management of Territorial Development; (iv) Drawing up the proposal for the Internal Regulations and any changes to them that may be necessary, and presenting them for discussion and approval by the Collegiate Plenary; (v) Promoting the integration of the projects and actions of the thematic chambers; (vi) Drawing up documents, defining systems for generating data and information on the Collegiate and the territorial reality and encouraging the systematization of development experiences in the Territory; (vii) Analyzing and approving the various tools for rural

⁵ Model established in structured collegiate bodies.

development planning, defining an agenda of priorities and territorial projects to support the Territorial Plans for Sustainable Rural Development (PTDRS) to be implemented each year; and (viii) Encourage the exchange of inter-territorial, regional and national experiences, supporting a network of cooperation between the Collegiates as a way of giving political and institutional support to the territorial development strategy and strengthening processes for negotiating interests common to the various Territorial Collegiates in the states and regions.

The Steering Group may elect a General Coordination or Executive Secretariat, an operational body subordinate to the Steering Group, with the following functions: (i) Invite, support and participate in meetings of the Territorial Collegiate; (ii) Forward projects approved by the Territorial Collegiate to the competent bodies; (iii) Support the Territorial Collegiate's financial support mechanisms; (iv) Administer, forward and archive documents originating from the Territorial Collegiate; (v) Liaise with institutions and entities with a view to establishing partnerships favorable to the development process; (vi) Monitoring the progress of territorial projects with the proposing entities and financial agents; (vii) Maintaining the flow of information between the various bodies of the Territorial Collegiate and between the latter and other governmental, non-governmental, representative bodies and sectoral councils, and (viii) The Management Center is also responsible for coordinating the work of the Territorial Collegiate's Technical Advisor, the new name adopted for the Territorial Articulator.

Technical Nucleus: this is a support body for the Territorial Collegiate and should be made up of technical representatives from teaching, research and technical assistance organizations and various sectors providing services to the public authorities and civil society. This body may include organizations that are not part of the Plenary of the Territorial Collegiate (BRASIL, 2009).

Its duties are: (i) Prepare and monitor studies, diagnoses, plans and territorial projects; (ii) Develop and propose instruments for monitoring, management and social control, in conjunction with the Steering Group and Thematic Chambers; (iii) Supporting entities and bodies proposing and carrying out territorial projects in drawing up work plans and submitting documentation to funding bodies; (vi) Providing technical support to the Territorial Collegiate in managing projects and resources in the Territory; and (vii) Supporting the process of training territorial development agents and systematizing experiences.

Thematic/Sectoral Committees or Chambers: the Thematic/Technical/Sectoral Committees or Chambers are spaces created by the Collegiate Plenary to subsidize its decisions and have a close relationship with the Steering Group. These spaces have the role of proposing, dialoguing, and articulating specific themes related to sustainable rural development. Like the Technical Nucleus, this body can include organizations that are not part of the Plenary of the Territorial Collegiate. Its attributions are: (i) appoint an Animator to coordinate and coordinate the activities of this body; (ii) collect, classify and group information, prepare and maintain databases; (iii) draw up, follow up and monitor projects for the territory; (iv) propose criteria for selecting and prioritizing projects and issue opinions on them; (v) Maintaining a permanent dialogue with the Leading Nucleus on the performance of their actions; (vi) Proposing and supporting events and activities for planning, training and systematization related to the themes that are pertinent to them; and,

(vii) Presenting a record of their actions to the other Chambers and instances of the Collegiate.

Role of the Territorial Collegiate Technical Advisor: The role of the Territorial Collegiate Technical Advisor is to provide methodological, technical, and operational advice to the Territorial Collegiate. The choice of this professional must comply with the rules of a public selection process, the procedures for which must be discussed and agreed between the Collegiate and the partner entity that will be hiring him/her. It is advisable that this Technical Advisor has experience with participatory methodologies; the ability to facilitate meetings, gatherings and prepare projects; the ability to reflect and be proactive; knowledge of the territorial development process, knowledge of the social, political, historical, productive and environmental reality of the territory, respect for the dynamics of the local actors, experience and full understanding of the importance of establishing dialogues and negotiations with the various social segments and governmental and non-governmental spaces of interest to sustainable rural development.

The Technical Advisor plays a fundamental role in the Collegiate's pedagogical action with regard to changing power relations and civil society's participation in the territory's decision-making spaces. Thus, their relationship with the Territorial Collegiate is one of advising and monitoring the actions defined by the Plenary. In its work, it needs to consider the possibility of changing behavior and political practices, from the perspective of democracy and equity.

The Technical Advisor does not need to sit on the Collegiate's Plenary to carry out their role, which is to take care of the process of awareness-raising and mobilization, support for the articulation of territorial partnerships, the training of development agents, the generation of territorial data and information, the systematization of activities; the process of planning and drafting projects; the implementation of actions and projects, among other technical activities demanded by the Collegiate.

Their duties must be defined in close relationship and dialog with the Steering Core, with the approval of the Territorial Plenary. In some territories, technical advice is provided by an entity that is a partner of the Territorial Collegiate. In this case, there is no person hired specifically to carry out this work (Brasil, 2009).

As for the formalization of the Territorial Collegiate, according to Nunes *et al* (2014), a legal format that considers and contemplates the diversity of organizations that make up its arrangement and allows it to expand its operational capacity, must be made up of representatives of civil society and public authorities with the capacity to operationalize daily actions and their financial security. It should not be forgotten that the Territorial Collegiate is a political body for collective deliberation on the sustainable development of the territory. The collegiate does not replace other institutions, such as town halls, cooperatives, NGOs, trade unions, etc., which also have a role in this process, while at the same time there is a role for government and another for civil society, which cannot be replaced or confused.

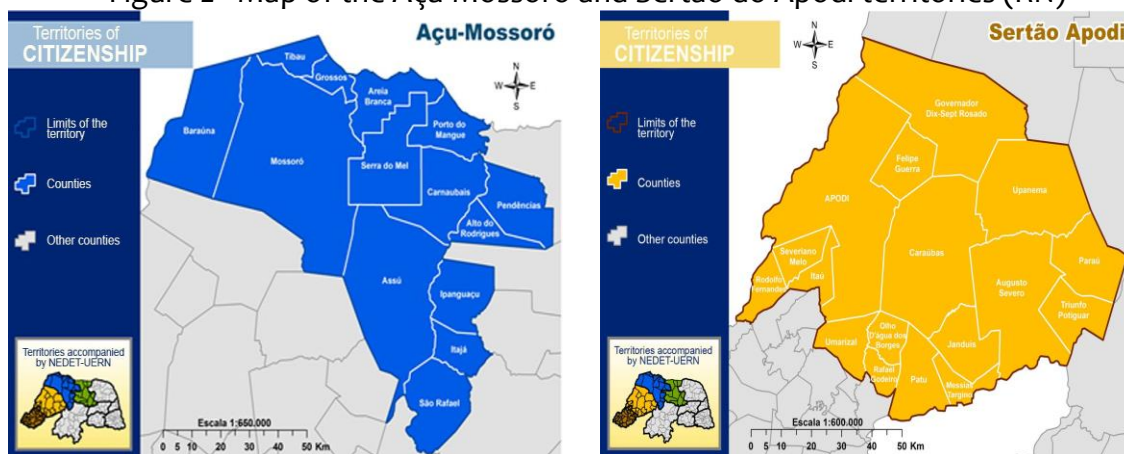
From this perspective, for Nunes *et al* (2015), the Territorial Collegiate creates an environment of agreement between government and civil society, which is why it is the main institutionalization of the Territorial Development strategy. And it is not formalization that guarantees its legitimacy or power in the territory and in other spaces, but legitimacy through the strength of its institutionality as a

representation, through its collective capacity for governance and social management and through the public policy that recognizes it as the supreme body for territorial development. According to Nunes *et al* (2015); Gurgel *et al* (2022), it is important that Territorial Collegiate bodies better understand their role and reflect the need to choose this formalization, which will certainly vary according to the realities and demands of the Territories and each Collegiate body. The emphasis here should be on the Territorial Collegiate being able to ensure its role as an important collective action in the sustainable development dynamics of the territories.

3 METHODOLOGY

The location of the research was the Açú-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territories, which are made up of 14 and 17 municipalities, respectively, as shown in Figure 2. The municipalities that make up the Açú-Mossoró Citizenship Territory are Açú, Itajá, São Rafael, Ipanguaçu, Alto do Rodrigues, Pendências, Porto do Mangue and Carnaubais, Areia Branca, Mossoró, Tibau, Grossos, Baraúna and Serra do Mel. The Sertão do Apodi territory is made up of the municipalities of Governador Dix Sept Rosado, Upanema, Paraú, Trinfo Potiguar, Augusto Severo, Caraúbas, Felipe Guerra, Severiano Melo, Apodi, Itaú, Rodolfo Fernandes, Umarizal, Janduis, Patu, Messias Targino, Rafael Godeiro, Olho Dágua dos Borges, Itaú and Rodolfo Fernandes.

Figure 2 - Map of the Açú-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi territories (RN)



Source . SIT, SDT, MDA., 2016. (Prepared by the authors).

At the national level, the coordination of territorial development policy was assigned to the then Secretariat for Territorial Development of the now defunct Ministry of Agrarian Development (SDT/MDA), which, in order to improve territorial management, developed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluations to help guide investments through public policies. One of these was the Strategic Management System (SGE), a database which, in turn, created instruments for collecting data in order to define development indicators. Questionnaire 3 (Q3), which monitors social management based on the actions of the territorial councils, was used to research the management of the councils.

Based on the Reference Document and the Manual for Assessing Institutional Capacities, these constitute the conditions and resources available to the organizational structures of the Territory of Citizenship (considering its institutional arrangement), and to civil society organizations and those representing public authorities for the social management of public policies, as well as for the implementation of economic structuring projects. Q3, for Social Management, was applied to the members of the Territorial Collegiate representing the municipalities analyzed. It should be noted that Q1 only covers the institutional services provided by the municipal government, which gave institutional support to the Territories of Citizenship Program. Q5 represents the number of manifestations, which contains 6 questions about participation in the projects (Q5).

The Management of Councils was calculated using the formula below, using the simple arithmetic average of the items that make up each area of institutional development, i.e., the Management of Councils, and standardized from 0 to 1 by dividing the sum of the averages of each item by the total number of items, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Areas for calculating the Management of Territorial Collective Organizations

Collegiate management	$\frac{[(Q3_P9)+\Sigma(Q3_P11_Rn)/2+\Sigma(Q3_P12_Rn)/5+(Q3_P14)/5+(Q3_P15)/5+(Q3_P16_R1)/5+(Q3_P16_R2)/5+(Q3_P16_R3)/5+(Q3_P16_R4)/5+(Q3_P16_R5)/5+(Q3_P16_R6)/5+(Q3_P16_R7)/5+(Q3_P16_R8)/5+(Q3_P16_R9)/5+(Q3_P16_R10)/5+\Sigma(Q3_P17_Rn)/8+(Q3_P19_R1)/5+(Q3_P19_R2)/5+(Q3_P19_R3)/5+(Q3_P19_R4)/5+(Q3_P19_R5)/5+(Q3_P19_R6)/5+(Q3_P19_R7)/5+(Q3_P19_R8)/5+(Q3_P19_R9)/5+(Q3_P19_R10)/5+(Q3_P19_R11)/5+(Q3_P19_R12)/5+(Q3_P19_R13)/5+(Q3_P19_R14)/5+(Q3_P19_R15)/5+(Q3_P19_R16)/5+(Q3_P20_R1)/5+(Q3_P20_R2)/5+(Q3_P20_R3)/5+(Q3_P20_R4)/5+(Q3_P20_R5)/5+(Q3_P20_R6)/5+(Q3_P20_R7)/5+\Sigma(Q3_P21_Rn)/4+(Q3_P22)+\Sigma(Q3_P23_Rn)/4+\Sigma(Q3_P24_Rn)/4+\Sigma(Q3_P25_Rn)/5+\Sigma(Q3_P26_Rn)/5+\Sigma(Q3_P27_Rn)/10+\Sigma(Q5_P25_Rn)/6]/48 \text{ (Q5 = papel do colegiado no projeto)}}{48}$
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Source. SGE/MDA, 2014.

So:

Q = Questionnaire

P = Question

R = Response item (related to Collegiate Management)

The results obtained by the Collegiate Management Index for each territory were characterized based on the qualification established by the Strategic Management System (SGE): Index < 0.2 - Very Low; 0.2 < Index < 0.4 - Low; 0.4 < Index < 0.6 - Medium; 0.6 < Index < 0.8 - High; and Index > 0.8 - Very High.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Collective action for the Colegiado's transition and for rural development in the Açu-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi territories

The Collegiate's institutional arrangement was given responsibility for the success of the territorial development policy with participation, especially in terms of breaking away from the sectoral nature of family farming. To this end, it would be up to the Collegiate Management to articulate actions within the territory that would promote the integration of policies and consider the economic, environmental, social, cultural, historical, and political dimensions, and consequently the transition to sustainability in regional rural development dynamics.

As for the Institutional Capacities indicators, which on a scale of 0 to 1 measure the Management of the Collegiate Bodies, the research arrived at an indicator of 0.558 for the Açu-Mossoró Citizenship Territory, and 0.573 for the Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territory, which are still considered average, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 - Collective management: indicators for the Açu-Mossoró territories and Sertão do Apodi (RN)

Institutional capacities	0,485	MEDIUM
Açu-Mossoró	0,558	Medium
Sertão do Apodi	0,573	Medium

Source. SGE/MDA, 2014.

Legend: 0.00 - 0.20= Low

0.20 - 0.40= Medium Low

0.40 - 0.60= Medium

0.60 - 0.80= Medium High

0.80 - 1.00= High

Considering the formation and dynamics of the Collegiate, one of the questions asked in the survey was about the existence of a technical advisor, responsible for providing permanent support to the management of the Collegiate in the Açu-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territories. More than 70% of those interviewed in Açu-Mossoró and around 60% in Sertão do Apodi said they recognized the presence of a technical advisor and his role in the territorial collegiate bodies.

With the role of representing and advising the management of the Collective, as well as helping to draw up agendas, coordinate and animate the Collective's plenary meetings, the technical advisor has always been a professional chosen from the ranks of Civil Society Organizations. One of the characteristics of the technical advisors of the Açu-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territories revealed by the research was that most of the time, they kept the material and documentation of the collegiate bodies and kept them as personal archives. And, with this practice, when there was a change of management everything was lost or not made available, and the records or memory of the actions carried out in previous periods were lost.

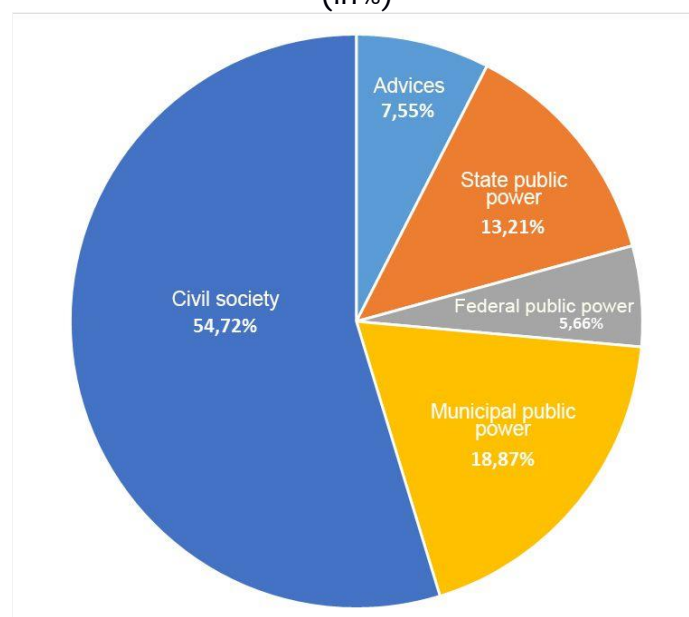
Another point investigated was the way in which the processes of selecting and electing collegiate members took place. The research therefore revealed that in both the Açu-Mossoró Citizenship Territory and the Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territory, direct invitation to the selected organization appears to be the most significant way of carrying out both the selection and election of members of the two collegiate bodies. In second place is the open call for the election of representatives, followed by personal invitation. In these two territories, the form of voluntary request for participants to form the territorial collegiate body does not appear in the analysis.

This strategy was spearheaded by the Civil Society Organizations, where relations were always established in the sense of greater power and control over decisions on the part of the representatives of these organizations. This way of conducting the Colegiado arrangement often made the dynamics of the territories tied to interest groups that became an arena for power struggles, where the representatives of the public authorities were usually at a disadvantage.

The fact that the resources for financing territorial policy and those coming from PRONAT were under the control of the civil society interest groups in the Collegiate, notably translated into greater financial muscle for these groups and was reflected in their influence on the Collegiate's composition process. Despite the recommendation of CONDRAF Resolution 52, which suggested the criterion of parity as a principle of representativeness, aiming for an environment with a greater balance of forces for defining and deliberating public policies, the power of influence of representatives of civil society and less and less of members of the spheres of public power predominated in the Colegiados.

As shown in figure 3, with a total of 53 members, the composition of the Açu-Mossoró Citizenship Territory Collegiate is 54.72% civil society and 45.28% public authorities. And the spheres of public power are made up of 18.87% from the municipal authorities, 13.21% from the state authorities, 7.55% from the councils and 5.66% from the federal authorities.

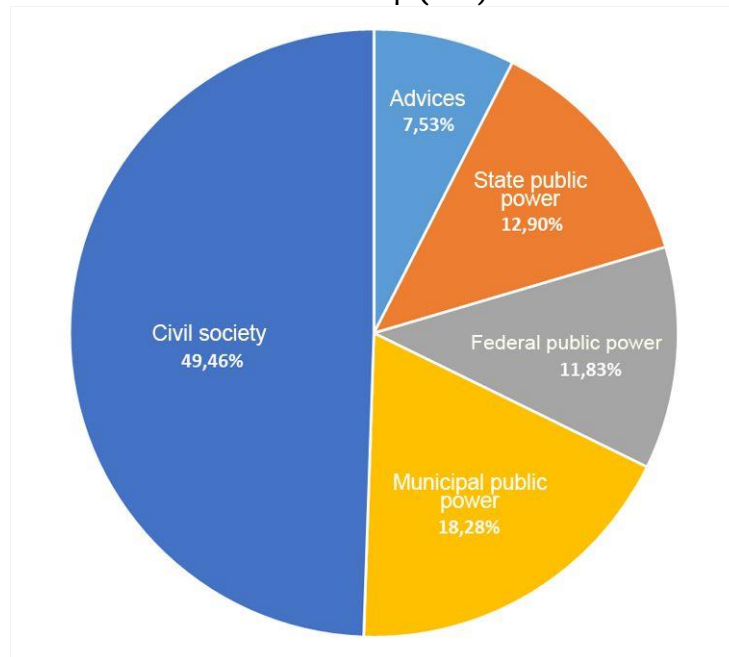
Figure 3 - Composition of the territory's collegiate body da Cidadania Açu-Mossoró (in %)



Source. SDT/MDA, 2014.

As for the Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territory, out of a total of 93 members identified, 49.46% are representatives of civil society, and 50.54% are representatives of public authorities, in a stratification in which 18.28% are from the municipal authorities, 12.90% from the state authorities, 11.83% from the federal authorities and 7.53% are members of councils, as shown in figure 4.

Figure 4 - Composition of the Collegiate Body of the territory of Sertão do Apodi Citizenship (in %)



Source. SDT/MDA, 2014.

Generally speaking, the power struggles that take place in the territorial collegiate environment are the result of the convergence of forces between civil society and public authorities. However, the actions of governments at their various levels are essential, especially as they are the bodies legitimized to build the production structures financed by PROINF, and to operate the governance structures that are essential for management to take place with the best coordination in the implementation of policies and sharing within the territory.

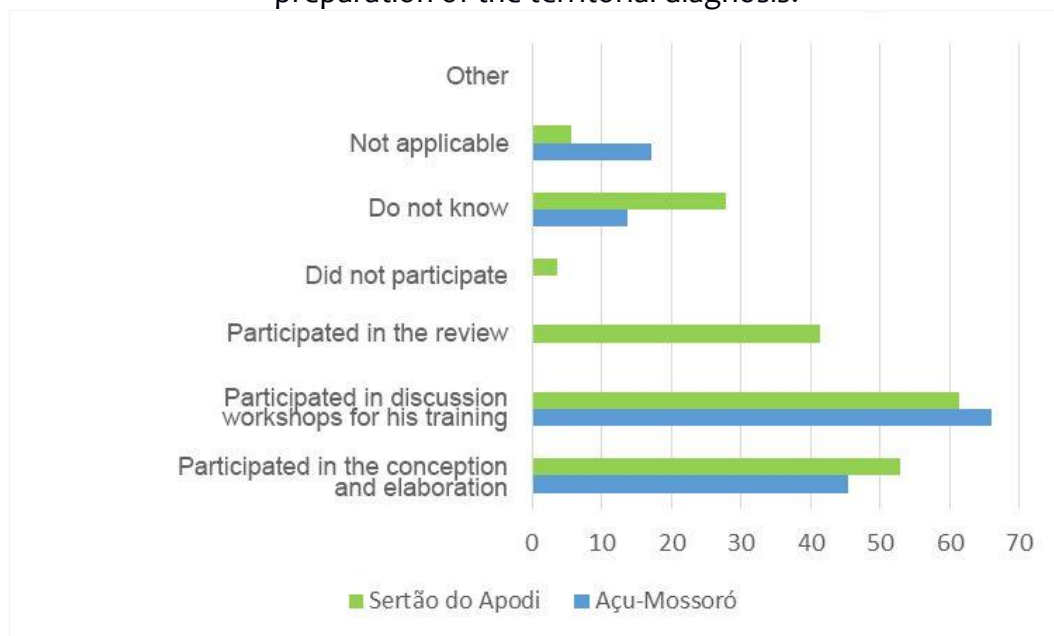
Once the collegiate bodies have been set up, disputes have always taken place in the plenary and are more frequent and intense depending on the agenda of the day, especially those that deliberate on financial resources for economic and infrastructure projects, related to the thematic chamber for productive inclusion and PROINF. According to the survey, 51 formal meetings took place in the Collegiates over the three-year period, 27 of them in the Citizenship territory and 24 in the Sertão do Apodi. When interviewed, 52% of the participants from the Açu-Mossoró territory and 50% of those interviewed from the Sertão do Apodi answered that meetings had taken place more than 20 times since they were set up.

It is worth noting that the Açu-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territories, in their social management process, have interests on the part of the members of the Territorial Collegiate that have internally built up a political division. In the Açu-Mossoró territory, territorial projects are defined and deliberated considering two regions of influence: the Açu Valley with eight municipalities, and the Mossoró region with six municipalities. This division is the result of an internal

political dispute generated by differences in identity between the Vale do Açú and Mossoró regions⁶, which have built up different beliefs and conceptions of development over time. In the Sertão do Apodi territory, the disputes took place considering the presence of the Dom Helder Câmara Project (PDHC)⁷ which at the time was made up of ten of the seventeen municipalities in the territory.

It is at the plenary meetings of the Collegiate that the guidelines for the implementation of territorial policies are defined, and it is necessary to draw up a diagnosis for each territory in order to build the Territorial Plan for Sustainable Rural Development (PTDRS). The PTDRS is the instrument that should integrate the economic, social, political, and environmental dimensions and guide policy mechanisms towards the transition of territories towards sustainability. As can be seen in figure 5, when asked, more than 60% of the members of the two territories said that, in the role played by the Collegiate in drawing up the territorial diagnosis, they had taken part in the discussion workshops for training.

Figure 5 - Graph Q3_P21 - What role does the Collegiate Board play in preparation of the territorial diagnosis?



Source. SDT/MDA, 2014.

Similarly, when interviewed about the role played by the Colegiado in drawing up the territory's vision for the future, more than 50% of the members from both territories said that they had participated intensively in its conception and preparation. The vision of the future is strongly related to the expectation expressed in the perception of the members of the Collegiate regarding the need for a transition to sustainability, in the sense of breaking with the sectoral character

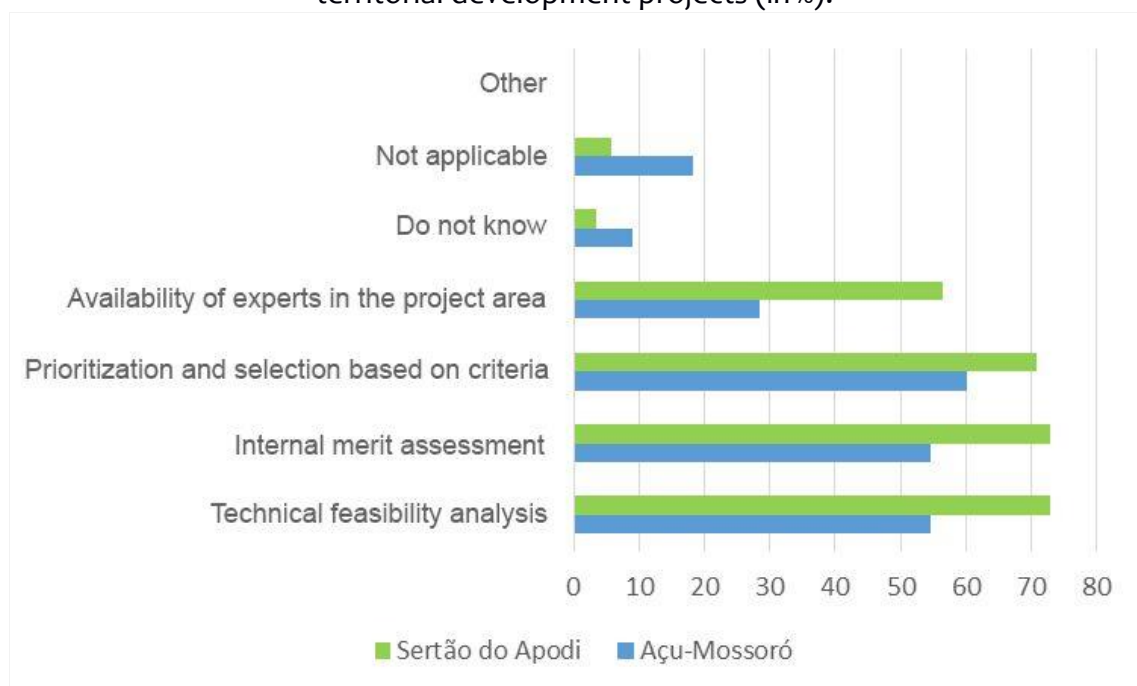
⁶ In the Açú Valley, there is a predominant belief in economic growth based on big business within an export model, while in the Mossoró region, the concept of *rural development* stands out, as family farming is strong and there is a high concentration of agrarian reform settlements and NGO action.

⁷ The PDHC was created in 2001 within the then Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) and began its activities in 2003. It is a government project that is the result of an agreement between the Brazilian government and the Investment Fund for Agrarian Development (IFAD), and its scope includes the territorial and agro-ecological emphasis of the Second National Agrarian Reform Plan (PNRA).

of rural development, generating development with more participation, and building localized food systems (under food security principles) as alternatives to global food regimes. Next, and inverting the result of the answers in the previous figure, around 30% said they had taken part in training discussion workshops.

Regarding the functioning of the territorial governance structures, when asked what actions are taken by the Collective to manage territorial development projects, over 70% of the interviewees from the Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territory said that they prioritize based on criteria, internal merit assessment and technical feasibility analysis. In the Açu-Mossoró Citizenship Territory, less than 60% answered the same points, as shown in figure 6.

Figure 6 - Graph Q3_P26 - What actions does the Collegiate take to manage territorial development projects (in %)?



Source. SDT/MDA, 2014.

Table 2 deals with the management of territorial collegiate bodies, which shows high variables for social movements, family farmers and NGOs, while the low variables show the fragility of the collegiate bodies, where there is little participation by traditional communities and public managers, whether at federal, state, or municipal level. The reduced participation of public managers reduces governance and weakens the process of implementing territorial projects.

Table 2 - High and low variables in collegiate management (decisions) Sertão do Apodi and Açú-Mossoró

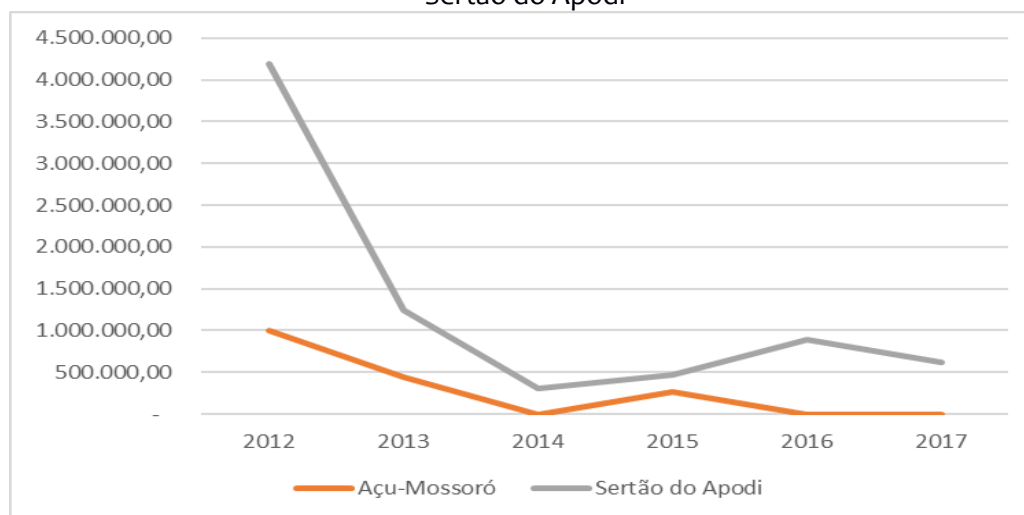
Açú-Mossoró		Sertão do Apodi	
High variable	Low variables	High variable	Low variables
Representation of the social movement	Representation of C. Traditional	Representing family farming	Representation of traditional communities
Representation of family farmers	Municipal government representation	Civil society representation	Representation of collegiate bodies
NGO representation	University representatives	Representation of NGOs	Representatives of the municipal government

Source: SGE/MDA, 2014 (Field Research)

Considering that the collegiate body is a conflicting space, it is necessary to reflect on the role of the representatives of the Açú-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territories in establishing the transition from global food systems aligned with specialized and exogenous models, to localized food systems based on sustainable rural development dynamics.

And one of the great challenges for territorial policy has been to integrate development policies from the 1990s with a focus on supply (PRONAF and Agrarian Reform), with territorial policies from the 2000s with a focus on demand [the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE)]. However, these important mechanisms have not been properly integrated and have been dismantled over the last few years, as shown in figure 7.

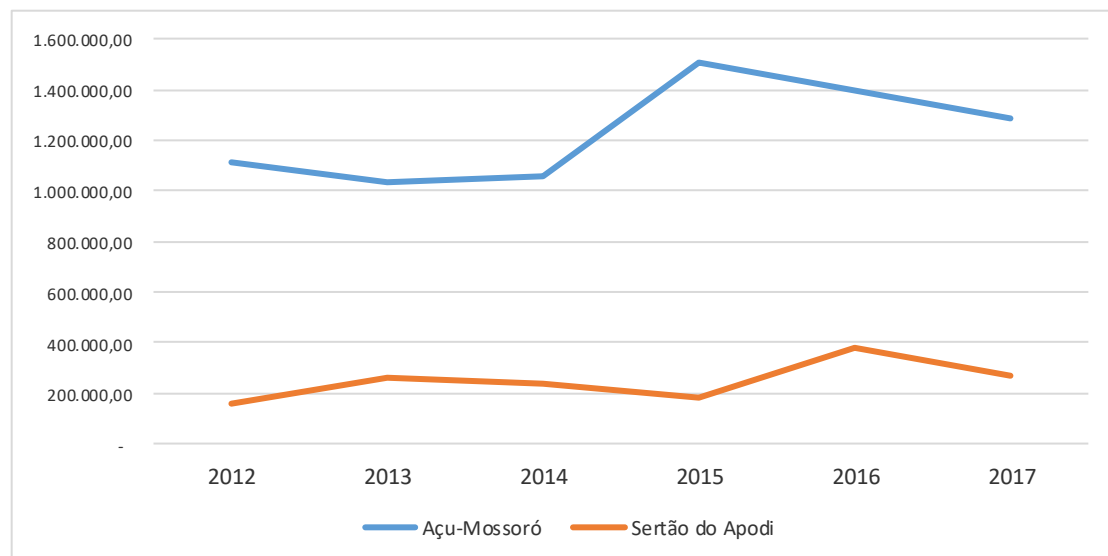
Figure 7 - Graph Values (in R\$) of the PAA territories of the Citizenship Açú-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi



Source: Survey data (values adjusted to December 2018 by the INPC).

The same happened with the PNAE, as shown in figure 8, which, like the PAA, is a policy mechanism that was created based on the principles of food and nutritional security, with an emphasis on structuring sustainable food systems in line with more diversified models and building localized markets based on family farming.

Figure 8 – Graph Values (in R\$) of the PNAE territories of the Citizenship Açú-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi



Source: Survey data (values adjusted to December 2018 by the INPC).

These two policies have the potential to boost the territories and break away from the sectoral nature of rural development. However, within the territories they have reproduced a set of actions which, even under significant difficulties and in a more reduced form, have reproduced embryos or seeds of production and the construction of regional markets, in the sense of the transition of the Collegiates towards sustainability. However, despite Brazil being one of the few countries to have created policies and supported agroecological transition processes on a national scale, the literature has pointed to a process of dismantling these policies, including within the territories.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When analyzing the management of the Açú-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territories, one can see an unequal relationship of coalition forces that involves the domination of space and its appropriation more by members of civil society and less by public authorities. By highlighting the importance of the actors, it is understood that there is a network of policies that make up the complex cycle of strategies, projects, and investments that the institutions that make up the territorial collegiate body have to manage, execute, and evaluate.

Nonetheless, one of the major challenges in the territorial development process is to consolidate the collegiate bodies as a legitimate participatory body for territorial planning, where the transition to sustainable food systems is considered, based on complementarity and integration with the interface of the main policies focused on supply and those focused on demand.

It is worth noting that this effort is sometimes compromised by weak governance structures and the limited participation of public authorities in the dialog spaces. This leads to delicate coordination and sharing, with increasingly reduced social and institutional management capacity, which hinders the Collegiate's transition to sustainability. One observation has been the poor

functioning of the Collegiate's bodies, especially the thematic chambers for productive inclusion, which are not effective in creating an interface between public policies and integrating collectively organized family farming with small agro-industry, generating opportunities, and building markets.

In short, for years these processes have been strengthened by exogenous models aligned with prevailing global food systems, where public policies aimed at rural development have sought to introduce preconceived models. These models did not consider the diversity of family farming or sustainability, nor were they concerned with dialog with local actors in an environment that legitimized the principles of food security and the construction of local markets.

In this sense, the research found that the Colegiados arrangement needs to be adjusted and changed at the territorial level if they want to break away from the sectoral nature of agriculture and introduce actions built on solid knowledge bases to generate more competitiveness and boost the dynamism of the territories. After this, the policy mechanisms aimed at territorial development, such as the PAA, the PNAE, among others, must be integrated and directed based on collective and cooperative action, in order to generate an interface with the transition to sustainability of the Açú-Mossoró and Sertão do Apodi Citizenship Territory Collegiate Groups.

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Submitted on: 20/01/2022

Approved on: 09/01/2024

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FUNDING: This work was supported by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), through Notice 005/2009 MDA/SDT/CNPq-Management of Rural Territories, with 1 (one) master's scholarship from CAPES, and 1 (one) Scientific Initiation (CI) scholarship from the PIBIC/CNPq Program for a period of 1 (one) year.