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“Each one in his/her corner”: narratives of a territory made vulnerable by a mega-development project

“Cada um no seu canto”: narrativas de um território vulnerabilizado por um megaempreendimento

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Abstract

This article discusses the resonances of the processes of turning vulnerable and the vulnerability produced by the transposition of the São Francisco River project in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic for women living in a Rural Productive Village, in the *Sertão* (Outback) of Pernambuco, northeastern Brazil. We start from a qualitative approach, adopting Hermeneutic Phenomenology in dialogue with the post-colonial proposal, and using narrative interviews and logbooks, analyzed through Meaning Analytics. Here, we will take a look, emphasizing community demobilization and the introduction of individualized ways of life as direct resonances of the river transposition and the way in which the village's territory was engendered. Such phenomena resulted in psychosocial challenges and limitations in the collective confrontation of the pandemic, producing a lonely and exhausting experience for the study's participants.

Keywords: Community support; Pandemic; Psychosocial impact; Rural Areas; Vulnerable population.

Resumo

O presente artigo discute as ressonâncias dos processos de vulnerabilização e vulnerabilidade produzidos pela transposição do rio São Francisco na experiência da pandemia de COVID-19 para mulheres moradoras de uma Vila Produtiva Rural, no Sertão de Pernambuco, nordeste brasileiro. Partimos de uma abordagem qualitativa, adotando a Fenomenologia Hermenêutica em diálogo com a proposta pós-colonial, e utilizando entrevistas narrativas e diários de bordo, analisados através da Analítica do Sentido. Aqui, faremos um recorte, enfatizando a desmobilização comunitária e a introdução de modos de vida individualizados como ressonâncias diretas da transposição e do modo como o território da vila foi engendrado. Tais fenômenos desdobram-se em desafios psicossociais e limitações para o enfrentamento coletivo da pandemia, produzindo uma vivência solitária e exaustiva às participantes do estudo.

Palavras-chave: Suporte comunitário; Pandemia; Impactos psicossociais; Zona rural; Populações vulneráveis.

The *Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento* (PAC, Growth Acceleration Program), launched in 2007 in Brazil, was a set of economic and social measures with an emphasis on the implementation of large energy, extractive and infrastructure projects – social, urban and rural – through the association of public-private capital (Rotta & Reis, 2018). Under a neo-developmental bias, present among progressive Latin American governments in recent decades, such projects would be a way to accelerate sustainable development and overcome regional and social imbalances (Lang, 2016).

Among the major initiatives of the PAC is the *Projeto de Integração do Rio São Francisco* (PISF, São Francisco River Integration Project), headed by the then Ministry of National Integration. The project extended across the northeastern region of Brazil and promised to bring water to 12 million people in 390 municipalities affected by drought (Ministério da Integração e do Desenvolvimento Regional, 2020). However, contradictions have been revealed along the project implementation, such as inequality in water distribution and the compulsory and precarious displacement of populations (Costa & Diniz, 2021; Guimarães et al., 2021; I. N. N. Silva & Gomes, 2021; G. Silva & S. E. B. Santos, 2020).

In this connection, the neoliberal disguise of this neo-developmental agenda is discussed, since such mega-projects promote the expansion of vulnerabilities among the most fragile populations, especially the traditional communities, including peasants (Gonçalves et al., 2018; Lang, 2016; W. Silva & Fialho, 2020). Often, these communities have already been made vulnerable by the Government, having specific difficulties, such as access to public policies, due to the historically “urban-centric” development character of our country (Dantas et al., 2020).

The literature points to a colonial and extractive pattern that causes different socio-environmental injustices, when mega-enterprises are set up in rural lands. This pattern is expressed, above all, in the execution model of these large projects that advance without prior consent or dialogue with the local dwellers, often considering the land as an empty space or “sacrifice zones”, which has to be usurped on behalf of the development (W. Silva & Fialho, 2020).

Hence the set up and operation of large enterprises in traditional communities has been generating several territorial reconfigurations – especially in the form of deterritorializations and reterritorializations, in forced populations displacement (Guimarães et al., 2021), producing changes in ways of life and violations of rights. When we mention these processes of territorial changes, we start from a comprehensive understanding of the territory, which includes, in addition to the physical and technological spaces, the social, affective and political relations and dynamics that are embedded therein (Oliva, 2022).

In this connection, we understand how the territory is a fundamental fabric that constitutes the peasants’ way of life, to the extent that it is essential for the maintenance of their cultural identity and their health. According to the *Política Nacional de Saúde dos Povos do Campo e da Floresta* (PNSPCF, National Health Policy for Rural and Forest Peoples), this relationship with the territory is marked by an intimate connection with the land, which goes beyond simple occupation, involving the cultivation and transmission of knowledge and traditional ways of being (Ministério da Saúde, 2018).

The processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization through compulsory resettlement are nothing new in the Northeastern Outback (Sertão), as Scott (2009) points out when discussing the problems of these processes in the framework of the construction of hydroelectric plants in that region. In addition to this thread, we find the set up of Vilas Produtivas Rurais (VPR, Rural Productive Villages), which are part of the Resettlement Program for Populations of the Transposition of the São Francisco River, one of the 38 socio-environmental programs of the PISF (Ministério da Saúde, 2020).

As a strategy to shelter peasants' families forcibly expropriated in connection with the river transposition mega-project, the villages are parcels of public land, where the "settlers" families have to live. However, studies are accumulating indicating the precariousness of these settlements, in terms of infrastructure and access to fundamental rights. Furthermore, the psychosocial suffering experienced by the people resettled in these new territories due to their forced displacement and the interruption of their ways of life is noteworthy (Domingues, 2016; Nogueira, 2019; G. Silva & S. E. B. Santos, 2020).

The participants-collaborators of this study live in a Rural Productive Village – Salão (VPR-Salão), one of 18 villages spread along the course of the artificial São Francisco River; their village is located in the municipality of Sertânia, in the state of Pernambuco's hinterland. Our contact with the territory originated from the activities of the University Extension Program "*TransVERgente*", associated with the University of Pernambuco, which has addressed the right to health of the peasant families affected by the transposition of the São Francisco River since 2018.

During the period of time of social isolation imposed by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, a time of intense challenges in the area of public health, that Extension Program continued to support remotely, the Village families, developing informative materials and providing, when possible, online psychosocial care. At the same time, discussions emerged about the particularities of people's experience in connection with the pandemic phenomenon that affected especially non-white people, women and people located in peripheral regions of the world (Pan American Health Organization [PAHO]; 2021).

Thus, we understand that, although it was global, the phenomenon was experienced in different ways in different territorial contexts. It is understood that the challenges imposed during this time period, and their resonances, are aligned with a scenario of pre-existing structural inequalities that exposed some social groups to circumstances of greater vulnerability in relation to others. Whether racial, gender, class, or territorial, these markers occur in an articulated and complex way, to the point that they require an analysis from an intersectional perspective (González, 2020; Oliveira et al., 2021).

Thus, there is a need to investigate how this global COVID phenomenon specifically affected a rural territory that had previously been made vulnerable by the Government's developmental agenda. We chose to conduct our investigation in the VPR-Salão, due to the observation of the precariousness processes and denial of rights already denounced by the community through this link. Thus, we wonder how the weaknesses imposed on this population, due to the fact that the Vila is a new territory created by a developmental mega-project, influenced the way the community experienced the health phenomenon in question.

The focus was on investigating the perspective of women in the region, since the literature shows that women were more affected by the psychosocial, economic, political and other effects of the pandemic (PAHO; 2021). Such dissimilarities arise, above all, from the concentration of responsibilities regarding care tasks attributed to women, due to their sociohistorically gender role (Federici, 2017). We also considered specifically the context of rural women, since women in rural contexts face issues such as natural gender oppression, the overload of more arduous tasks and abandonment due to the historical difficulty of having access to the public services in the countryside (Moraes et al., 2020).

In addition it is known that in territories affected by socio-environmental impacts produced by mega-projects, female bodies bear the greatest burden and damage caused by the fragility created by these large-scale projects in the communities involved, especially regarding illness (Furtado & Andriolli, 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021).

Thus, we are interested in knowing the experience's specifics of women living in a territory crossed by a mega-project, in connection with the COVID health phenomenon. In this article, we made an excerpt from the original study, emphasizing the repercussions of deterritorializations and productions of new territorialities in the framework of the river transposition in the community dynamics observed in the VPR-Salão, during the pandemic period.

A Narrative Compass: How to Guide Yourself Along the Path that the Other Points out?

This work is an excerpt from a scientific initiation project, entitled "Resonances of COVID-19 in vulnerable territories: narratives of women in a Rural Productive Village", in connection with the undergraduate course in Psychology. The qualitative method was chosen for its development, since the intention is not to list, measure or correlate quantitatively events or behaviors, but rather to understand the meanings that people attribute to their life experience (Minayo, 2017).

We sought to give priority to the enunciation of the narratives of our investigation's participants, whereas here the narrative is understood from the perspective of Walter Benjamin, for whom the narrative bears within itself the mark of the narrator, of his/her affections, and is not just the mere objective of information or facts transmission (Fernandes, 2019). In this regard, Hermeneutic Phenomenology acts as an epistemological lens that gives priority to the experience and to the unveiling of the ways a story is told, in order to understand human phenomena and their contexts based on a specific perspective (Szymanski et al., 2020).

By giving priority to oral narratives as epistemological sources, we adopt a postcolonial stance in our dialogue with them. Postcolonial thinking is based on a critique of the universalizing foundations of modern science, centered on perspectives from the Global North, and calls for the exercise of alterity in the production of knowledge, based on the validation of the situated experience and knowledge of the subalternized Other (Spivak, 2014). Thus, in an attempt to escape the tutelary and representational stance that Western intellectual discourse commonly imposes on the speech of this Other, we chose to transcribe the narratives faithfully, preserving the marks of orality present and highlighting them at the forefront of the discussion.

The path of insertion into the territory, in turn, was through the method of clinical cartography, a perspective that guides the researcher's gaze, "as a method to 'guide' the path of entry into the field and the intervention in co-participation" (Farias et al., 2023, p. 6). Five (5) women were selected for individual interviews in which to utter their narratives; they all were of legal age, residents of VPR-Salão and formed an intentional sample. Three of them identified themselves as being of white complexion while the other two were considered by the investigator as black, although they identified themselves as dark-skin.

The participants started their narration by answering a trigger question, and evoked memories, with the aim of starting a conversation – about the meanings attributed to the experience that we wanted to investigate. Thus, the respondents were asked: "What was it like for you to experience the pandemic as a woman living in Rural Productive Village – Salão?". The meanings revealed in the initial questioning can take different directions, as the narrative interview valued the free flow of thoughts and also allowed interventions by the investigator along the way.

For Critelli (1996), meaning is not a simple attribution nor it is fixed; it is rather a dynamic process in continuous construction, influenced by existential, cultural and historical contexts. Thus, meaning is revealed through the resumption of experience, through narrative and dialogue, and

becomes our relationship with our discourses, permeated by the desire, identity and the singularities of modes of existence. The interpretation of the meaning of experience, in turn, is always an active and shared activity, where the investigator's affectations in her relationship with the territory and with the participant also come into play.

Additionally, along with the interviews, logbooks were used as support for the investigator to narrate her impressions, affectations and understandings regarding the narratives and the context in which they were inserted. These are accounts of experience expressed as a written narrative, not as a descriptive report (M. L. P. Silva; G. O. Santos & S. E. B. Santos, 2022). In the analytical and discursive stage, in turn, we used the Analytics of Sense method, which proposes the interpretation of reality through five possibilities of showing the "movements of realization".

They are unveiling the time of affectability in which the phenomenon is perceived; revelation, the time of confirmation and conservation through the language of the phenomenon; testimony, the time of communicability, when the unveiled phenomenon can be seen and heard by others; veracity, the recognition of the manifest phenomenon against a reference; and authentication, when in the singularity of each human being, what is manifest has the possibility of becoming real (Critelli, 1996).

This research is part of an umbrella project entitled "Interweaving knowledge with peoples of the land: dialogues among environment, education and the right to health", duly approved by the Plataforma Brasil Research Ethics Committee, under number CAAE: 33753220.600005191 and Opinion: 4287712. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted after the participants signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), and the participants were identified by fictitious names – "Hera", "Águia", "Fênix", "Girassol" and "Francisca" – chosen by them, for the purpose of preserving anonymity. Furthermore, psychological care was offered through the Psychology School Service of the University of Pernambuco, in case participation in the study caused any emotional demand that would require support.

Stop, Look, Listen: Wounds and Their Marks on the Verge of the Transposition

As we traveled through the territory during our investigation, we came across some precarious situations, such as the lack of running water, difficulties in accessing health care, difficulties in exercising community-based family farming, the weakening of community ties, and political demobilization. These aspects have already been demonstrated in previous studies and are mainly associated to the settlements model, which was not previously discussed and with promises that were not kept by the project management (Guimarães et al., 2021; G. Silva & S. E. B. Santos, 2020).

We understand that such precariousness configures a chain of processes of making vulnerable and the vulnerability caused by the mega-project management, in a context that Scott (2009) calls planned neglect. This is a *common modus operandi* in the execution of large projects by managers who understand the damages caused to the populations in the vicinity of their undertakings but choose to maintain them in favor of their goals, in an environment of government policies marked by multiple ambiguities.

Before we move forward with the discussion, we ought to highlight the understanding of two terms mentioned in the paragraph above, as they are very similar to each other, since they originate from the same root – *Vulnus* – which in Latin means "wound". According to the work of Domingues (2016), who researched similar processes in a Rural Productive Village in Ceará, the suffix present in the term "vulnerability" refers to the idea of probability, of the potential for something

to occur or of someone being hurt. While making vulnerable refers to a sense of action in itself, an act already practiced, someone who already was hurt.

In the case of VPR–Salão, we are faced with both processes, while we understand that several wounds have already been produced, such as violence and negligence in the deterritorialization processes, and the lack of guarantees of access to fundamental rights such as health, education and maintenance of traditional ways of life. On the other hand, we understand that these processes unfold in contexts of vulnerability, exposing these populations to greater risks, weakening their autonomy regarding health-disease-care processes (Dantas et al., 2020).

“But One Swallow does not Make a Summer. Does it?”

Francisca: But my dear, during the pandemic, if you got sick, you had to get a car and wait to be able to go to Sertânia, Arcoverde, Monteiro (...) What I think is worst here is that there is no association for us, because if we had an association, we could get... acquire a lot of things, right? I think that if people were all united, there would be water, a doctor would come, a nurse would come, right? (...) People don't want to help each other (...) Together, we know how to do it. But does one swallow alone make a summer? It doesn't, right?”

Hera: Yes, we feel it because if we are in a community, what are we supposed to be? United! There is no unity (...) During the pandemic, ugh... it seemed like no one knew each other. It was everyone by himself. As the saying goes, each man in his corner (...) Each man in his own little house, as it always was. But it wasn't like before. It was worse! People were even afraid to say good morning, because of the pandemic.

Águia: The pandemic changed the way we interact with people... people were already suspicious of each other before... During the pandemic, it became more so.

Excerpt from the Logbook: Organizing oneself politically is a challenge that stands out in Rural Productive Village and antecedes the pandemic (...) An individual and individualizing way of life prevails, where the “community” component seems inhibited. There are several houses that are physically close, but with little socio-affective permeability.

The narratives of Francisca, Águia and Hera point to the weakening of community ties in the village and to an individualized way of life, which was already present in the territory, but which got enhanced during the pandemic, a context in which it was “each one in his/her own corner (...) All in their own little house, as it always had been. But it wasn't like before. It was worse!”

We emphasize that Francisca and Hera understand the need for unity and political articulation in the community during the pandemic. Francisca recognizes this articulation, made possible through the residents' association, as a way to confront the precariousness produced in the territory by the management of the Villages, especially with regard to the issue of access to health, which became a priority during the Pandemic.

The participant expresses the lack of solidarity among the residents in the community – when she says that people do not help each other – and the immobility in which they find themselves due to this, using the metaphor that “one swallow alone does not make a summer”. However, the collective organization of the community is a long-standing challenge (G. Silva & S. E. B. Santos, 2020). In this sense, we pay attention to the potential relationships between the challenge of the existing collective bonds, which help in the management of community life, and the way in which the process of resettlement of populations in the village took place.

For Hera, the sense of community points towards unity, when she tells us that “if we are in a community, what are we supposed to be? United!” However, she describes the absence of this

dimension in her experience of going through the pandemic as a resident of the village, and in this sense, we reflect that the individualization of lifestyles and the introduction of values increasingly based on consumption and individual satisfaction are aspects of the presence of mega-enterprises in the territories. This phenomenon is related to the advance of the neoliberal paradigm of human relations over community relationships (Cabnal, 2010; Furtado & Andriolli, 2021; Gonzalez, 2020).

It is important to emphasize that, as Carvajal (2020) stated, the community is also a place for the expression of individualities. However, we have shown that the processes of individualization, at VPR–Salão, act in the isolation of these individualities, in the weakening of the community and political dimension, individualizing ways of life along capitalist-neoliberal lines.

We argue that the scenario of individualized lifestyles, which causes people to live in their own corner, comes as a resonance of the disorganization and deterritorialization of the social life and collective experiences of the resettled people. In this sense, we see in Costa and Diniz (2021), that the lifestyles of those dispossessed by the river transposition, before the set up of the mega-project, were marked by shared territories and communal modes of production. According to the authors, although some of the families settled in the VPR were not landowners – but rather sharecroppers, who worked on other people’s land in exchange for half of what they produced – they lived in areas of common resource management, especially water, which gives these populations a sense of security. Thus, “this territorial planning is essential for critical moments, especially during periods of drought, given that some social groups are more vulnerable during such periods” (Costa & Diniz, 2021, p. 24).

In this sense, several suburban, peasant, *quilombola* and indigenous populations share vulnerabilities produced in their bodies and territories, by government policies or by the private sector, which expose them to a scenario of growing insecurity, plundering and precariousness of their lives, and attribution of exchange value to what was a common good (Gago, 2020).

Thus, by going back to Scott (2009) in his perception of ambiguous government policies, observing that these, in the complexity of their planned execution goals, always leave gaps of forgetfulness and exclusion of fundamental aspects for ensuring the material and symbolic security of these territories; such insecurity is especially expressed in the water insecurity imposed on a population that was provided for in the past with the sharing and autonomous and collective management of reservoirs in this semi-arid region. The Village residents face the lack of water but have not demonstrated the ability to build collective solutions to this problem, as well as to others that have arisen.

In contrast to the collective and autonomous management of territories, the management of mega-enterprises reproduces a colonial logic of guardianship and transformation of ways of life in favor of capitalist accumulation, which undermines collective expressions. The developmentalist paradigm adhered to the logic of economic development through mega-enterprises corroborates the formation of consumers and not of cooperatively autonomous political subjects in communities (Lang, 2016). In this perspective, it is understood that development under a capitalist bias requires the figure of the individual, the consumer, the client. The figure of the client further fragments the individual, depriving him/her of the exercise as a citizen, transforming him/her into someone who gives priority to the individual’s over the collective advantage (Krenak, 2022).

“A Little “Trust” is Complex”: How Does a Community Territory Come into Being?

Hera: So far, people have gotten to know each other over time, right? Most people are not from the same place. Everyone comes from a different place, so to be able to gain that “little trust” is complex.

Águia: People were already suspicious of each other before (...) It was during the pandemic that this became (...) But always, you're in your little corner and being taken to another place (...) It affects the person, right? They're affected because they were accustomed to their place.

Logbook: Due to the transposition, people from different territories, who did not even know each other before, began to live in the same piece of land forming what was called a community. What is a community? If we understand the territory beyond the geographical aspect, we see how challenging it is to build territorial bonds among people who have different backgrounds and kinship ties, who did not have previous ties, to share collective spaces and adopt common ways of life.

The process of creating the villages brought together, through compulsory resettlement, families of different origins, from different places, who had no previous connection with the new place (Nogueira, 2019). We reflect on the influence of this process on the difficulty of establishing connections and developing a common cultural identity in this new territory. Águia brings us the challenge of being removed from one's place: "you're in your little corner and being removed to another place (...). It affects people, right?" and highlights the distrust that exists among residents, which is enhanced during the pandemic.

In this vein, Guimarães et al. (2021) discuss the psychosocial suffering triggered by compulsory resettlements, as peasant populations are uprooted, losing contact with their territory and their collective expressions. In this sense, when one territorialization is interrupted, another begins, and implies a permanent process of becoming, of a past entity, driven by transformations, continuities, discontinuities, overlaps, hybridizations and material and symbolic ruptures (Coradin & Oliveira, 2024). It is understood, based on Giddens (1990/2002), that due to such processes, the populations displaced by the transposition were exposed to a circumstance of lack of ontological security, characterized by a feeling of trust in people and the environment, allowed by the preservation and continuation of the environments of social and material reproduction where people live.

In this sense, in Hera's narrative, we notice the utterance of the difficulty of building trust bonds with people from different places, previously unknown, when she says that: "each one comes from a different place, so to be able to gain a little 'trust' like that, it's rather complex". It is clear from what she says that this sense of trust is weakened by the process of discontinuation that the resettled people suffered in their ways of living, when they find themselves living with people from different territories.

For Giddens (1990/2002), trust in others develops together with a sense of internal reliability that gives us stability and a feeling of security in relationships. This trust is related to the sharing of experiences, being a recurring psychological need, while its absence produces an emotional crack that involves us within the family and community spheres.

Furthermore, we revisit Goffman's (1963/2008) understanding about the categorization of people and their attributes based on what we consider common and reflect on the existence of greater challenges in establishing bonds between residents who did not know each other beforehand and who now live in the same dwelling space. For the author, the routines of social relationships in already established environments allow us to have relationships with people who are already expected and do not impose any particular reflection on us. However, when a stranger arrives, we deal with normative expectations and make use of demands in a rigorous manner.

Thus, we reflect on how the limitation of trust can be a resonance of the compulsory coexistence among strangers, people who do not share the mutuality of experience, since they had distinct territorialities before the resettlement. Thus, we think about how the absence of this trust reverberates in the fragility of the bonds and the territory; in addition, the way in which compulsory

resettlements are carried out hinders community integration and recognition of the neighborhood as a community in this new territory (G. Silva & S. E. B. Santos).

How Does the Weakening of the Collective Condition Fits in a Woman Pandemic Experience of Dwelling in VPR-Salão?

Hera: Well, it wasn't easy, because right at the beginning of the pandemic, my daughter and I got the disease. And since it was very recent, people were very afraid. Well, if no one spoke to anyone, that's when it got even worse. I think that even over the phone, people got intrigued and didn't want to talk anymore. It was very sad for us, feeling rejected by people (...) They couldn't come to my door, but didn't I have a cell phone? Don't you have my number? "Do you need anything? If you do, let me know and I'll leave it at the gate." (...) I was not able to do anything, I even got fatigued to go to drink water. My daughter couldn't do anything either. I couldn't do it. Because I had to feed the animals, I had to water the plants (...).

Águia: People were afraid here, if someone had the disease, no one could go out, not even through the door, because people would get angry (...) Because we women, all of us, regardless of work, I think that with this pandemic, we suffered more... We suffered more. Because I was practically alone, right? Because I was also alone, right? Yes... when I got sick... then I was alone, right?

Francisca: To this day, I haven't been to those girls' houses, those girls who got sick. I don't even go to anyone's house, right? They got sick, and I didn't even go there... about four or five people got sick around here. When I found out, my dear... I was almost better, they... I stayed home on my own. No, I stayed home, but after the epidemic I always kept to myself more.

Fênix: As women, we have a greater responsibility, right? When someone gets sick and our having to take care of them. On my part, I felt very overwhelmed, in terms of tasks, right? I was taking care of three people in this case.

Dynamics such as individualized lifestyles and mistrust among neighbors had been already identified in the Village. However, the participants describe dimensions introduced by the experience of the Pandemic in the territory, which add to the pre-existing issues. Furthermore, Hera brings up the experience of stigma and rejection from the community for having contracted COVID-19 at an early stage of the pandemic. Thus, she mentions the worsening of the fragility of bonds when she tells us that "if no one spoke to anyone, that's when it got even worse. I think that even over the phone people were intrigued, they didn't want to talk anymore."

In the same vein, Águia mentions signs of hostility and a police-like atmosphere among neighbors during that period: "people were afraid here, and if someone had the disease, no one could even go outside, because people would get angry". In this sense, Borges et al. (2021) comment on the psychosocial repercussions associated with the experience of stigma due to contamination by COVID-19, as this affects social relations, enhancing the experience of isolation typical of that period, associated with rejection by the community.

Due to the fragility of community ties in the Village, the period of social isolation recommended in the early years of the pandemic and the illness experience among these women occurred in an even more solitary and exhausting way. Águia's statements dialogues with the sense of loneliness, which in her case is expressed associated with the experience of illness, when she says: "because I was practically alone, right?". "Yes, when I got sick, I was alone, right?". In this vein, Hera also complains about the lack of support from her neighbors: "They would not come to my door, ok, but didn't I have a cell phone? Did you not have my number? Do you need anything? If you do, let me know, I'll drop it at your gate".

Unlike the experience of other rural women facing the pandemic, marked by support networks, collectivization of resistance strategies and political protagonism (Moraes et al., 2020), the experience of women from the Vila was marked by loneliness and overload. Águia believes that women suffered more during the pandemic and Fênix points out that, as a woman, she had greater responsibilities, while she reports about her overload for caring for three sick people simultaneously, because: “when people get sick, we have to take care of them (...)”.

The lack of community support networks in the village, given the scenario of weakened bonds, seems to increase the fatigue of these women. In this connection, it is clear that the fraying of community ways of life, produced by the colonial-capitalist vectors that accompany the set up of mega-projects, places women in a framework of multiple disadvantages. This is especially evident in the face of health crises, such as the pandemic, to the extent that women are the ones who bear, socio-historically, the burden of the responsibilities for the care and management of life (Federici, 2017; Furtado & Andriolli, 2021; Lugones, 2020).

Furthermore, when we think about the socio-affective and political relationships established or not in the village, we are thinking about the territorialities that are woven in that place. Territorialities are constituted in the territory, as social praxis, which will tell us how the subjects organize themselves, relate to each other and give meaning to the place where they live. These territorialities are made possible by the disputes and investments of desire, power, senses, meanings and the purposes that are articulated in them (Coradin & Oliveira, 2024; Oliva, 2022).

We understand that the advancement of a mega-project such as the river transposition in rural areas, and the interests disputed by these large works, modify territorialities, and produce new ones, through displacements and resettlements (Furtado & Andriolli, 2021; Guimarães et al., 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021). In this sense, the specific territorialities produced in the VPR–Salão – as a territory artificially forged to favor the interests disputed by the transposition – directly intervene in the conditions of reproduction of social life and in the confrontation of the health-disease-care processes that permeate the experience of the women who live there (Dantas et al., 2020).

We are therefore faced with the interconnections between territorial and gender violence, in the face of the advance of capitalist-colonial enterprises, to the extent that the processes of precariousness produced in the territories are also articulated on the bodies of women. In our discussions with ecofeminist and decolonial feminist thinkers, we understand how body and territory have a deep and mutual socioecological relationship. The body is produced in relation to the environment and community sociabilities, to the extent that the territory constitutes the physical and psychosocial organism in which the body is developed (Cabnal, 2010; González, 2020; Lugones, 2020).

Through this relationship, when colonialist neo-extractivist enterprises are established in community territories, they intensify violence and sex-gender inequities, which are associated with the exploitation of the Earth, and directly affect the health of women and their environments (Coradin & Oliveira, 2024). Women's bodies are, therefore, this intersection zone, which (in) incorporates the experience of their territories and their community collectives (Cabnal, 2010). Thus, we understand that the narratives of the women participating in the study about how they lived in their bodies-territories, their experience of becoming ill and caring for others during the pandemic, can be a manifest expression of how the territory, in a broader approach, experiences the fragility that crosses that territory.

The personal experience of these women during the pandemic, manifested in their bodies-territories, brings to light links between them and other sociohistorical and collective

processes. They bring us closer to the intersections of oppression, marked by issues of gender, race, and class, evidenced in the centrality of the processes of deterritorialization and territorialization created by colonial-capitalist expansion (González, 2020).

Thus, moving away from a homogeneous gender perspective, it is important to demarcate these intersectionalities and say that the women who are reporting here have markers in common, but they also have differences between them. They have in common the fact that they are impoverished peasant women, inserted in a territory made vulnerable by a mega-enterprise, but they have age and racial differences, for example. Francisca and Girassol accumulate age issues, as they are elderly women, while Águia and Hera, point out intersections of race, as non-white women.

Although the intersections of race were not addressed by them in the narrative interviews, we understand that their racial profiles need to be highlighted, as they represent structural and transversal oppressions that are linked to gender issues. Furthermore, in a conceptual flexion, based on Cabnal (2010), we integrated the markers “territory” and “health” to the intersection of oppressions that characterizes the mega-undertaking of the river transposition, as we understand that in vulnerable territories, and in the face of health processes such as the pandemic, the oppressions that threaten the daily lives of women in the Vila are enhanced.

In view of such processes, in a community approach, Latin American women impacted by different colonialist enterprises have been taking the lead in collective social struggles in the face of the impacts of these enterprises and also highlight the collective initiatives to confront the pandemic in different territories (Gago, 2020). Community feminism has considered gender issues from the perspective of the community, as it demonstrates itself as a complex fabric of complementarities and reciprocities, in the direction of promoting autonomy (Carvajal, 2020). However, given the scarcity of associative movements and women’s protagonism in the VPR–Salão, we discuss the processes of guardianship and vulnerability, within the Settlement Program, as producers of community disruptions that mitigate the possibilities of confronting the wounds imposed on them.

We understand that the colonial paradigm destroys – or does not build – collective spaces, imposes distrust, disarticulates affections and masks violence, imposing the forced deterioration of the bonds of practical solidarity between subjects subjugated by domination and exploitation (Lugones, 2020). In the framework of the VPR–Salão, we understand that such a scenario mitigates the possibilities of producing agency for women in the territory, limiting the creation of practices and social representations that enable political articulation, collective management of life and social emancipation of their bodies-territories.

Near the End, Other Perspectives: For a Psychology that Collectivizes Life

The colonial-capitalist-patriarchal logic to which neo-developmental mega-enterprises adhere is entering rural territories in the hinterlands, weakening bonds of trust and solidarity networks and producing individualized ways of life. We observed that such processes make these new territorialities vulnerable when facing health-disease-care processes such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Although it imposed isolation, the pandemic also demanded solidarity and community resistance practices, which, however, were absent in the community where the study was conducted.

We understand that the absence of community way of life in the territory, which antecedes the pandemic, has boosted the experience of loneliness and fatigue that was reported by the study participants together with the stigma processes produced by the fear of COVID-19 and the lack

of health communication during that period. We reflect throughout this paper that the lack of community support was significant in the experience of these women facing the pandemic, which increased their burden considering their tasks of care and life management that are socially and historically attributed to them.

In this sense, we emphasize the interconnection between the violence suffered by territories made vulnerable by the neocolonial and developmentalist paradigm, and the bodies of the women who live there, based on the understanding of body-territory, which emerges within the struggles of Latin American women. In response, we aspire to a Psychology that acts whenever possible to foster community experiences, to the extent that a collective perspective emerges as a transversal aspect to all our investigations and psychosocial practices, in opposition to the individualizing psychologisms that hover in our shadow.

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