

The disengagement of artisan work and the paths of the new generation in the community of Alto do Moura-PE

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Abstract

This study analyzed the life conditions and the disengagement of the new generation of inhabitants of the community of Alto do Moura, in the Brazilian state of Pernambuco. Based on Bourdieusian sociology, the research examines the elements that influence a younger generation in that community to take a different course from the traditional artisan work. In addition, we observe the disposition demands that lead these youngsters to seek changes in the inherited condition of 'artisan'. The main influential elements identified were the difficulty of generational transmission, the decline in symbolic value, the lack of incentives from the public authorities, the desire for stability in other professions through formal education, and the difficulty of generating income through craftsmanship. As for the new paths observed among the new generation, the study revealed the transition from the condition of 'artisan' to owning a business in the community, to a formal specialized technical-professional activity, formal non-specialized, or an informal intermittent professional activity. The article concludes with a reflection on the work outside the condition of 'artisan'.

Keywords: Disengagement. Artisan Work. Alto do Moura. Bourdieusian sociology. Generational change.

O desengajamento do trabalho artesão e os rumos da nova geração na comunidade do Alto do Moura-PE

Resumo

Este trabalho teve como principal objetivo analisar as condições e os modos de desengajamento da nova geração da comunidade artesã do Alto do Moura, em Pernambuco. Apoiando-se na sociologia bourdieusiana, propusemo-nos a investigar quais gatilhos estimulam os indivíduos a tomar um ou outro rumo diferente do ofício de artesão, bem como quais as principais demandas disposicionais para mudanças na herança incorporada em sua condição artesã. Os principais gatilhos contextuais identificados como pertinentes ao desengajamento foram referentes à dificuldade de transmissão geracional, ao declínio do valor simbólico e à carência de incentivos do poder público, ao anseio por estabilidade em outras profissões por meio do estudo formal e à dificuldade de geração de renda por meio do artesanato. Os principais rumos analisados foram relativos à transição da condição artesã para um negócio próprio na comunidade, para uma atividade técnico-profissional formal especializada, formal não especializada ou, ainda, para atividade informal intermitente. Por fim, expomos um olhar para o trabalho fora da condição artesã nas considerações finais.

Palavras-chave: Desengajamento. Trabalho artesão. Alto do Moura. Sociologia bourdieusiana. Mudança geracional.

La desvinculación del trabajo artesanal y los rumbos de la nueva generación en la comunidad de Alto do Moura, PE

Resumen

Este trabajo tuvo como objetivo principal analizar las condiciones y los modos de desvinculación de la nueva generación de la comunidad artesanal de Alto do Moura, en Pernambuco. Apoyándonos en la sociología bourdieusiana, nos propusimos investigar qué factores desencadenantes estimulan a los individuos a tomar un u otro rumbo diferente del oficio de artesano, así como cuáles son las principales demandas disposicionales para los cambios en la herencia incorporada a su condición artesanal. Los principales factores desencadenantes contextuales identificados como pertinentes a la desvinculación se relacionaron con la dificultad de la transmisión generacional, la disminución del valor simbólico, la falta de incentivos del poder público, el deseo de estabilidad en otras profesiones a través del estudio formal y la dificultad de generación de ingresos mediante la artesanía. Los principales rumbos analizados están relacionados con la transición de la condición artesanal a un negocio propio en la comunidad, a una actividad técnico-profesional formal especializada, formal no especializada o, aún, a una actividad informal intermitente. Por último, exponemos una observación del trabajo fuera de la condición artesanal en las consideraciones finales.

Palabras clave: Desvinculación. Trabajo artesanal. Alto do Moura. Sociología bourdieusiana. Cambio generacional.

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INTRODUCTION

Artisan activity is usually passed on from generation to generation and reproduced in the way of life, knowledge and actions of a given society. It is considered a social activity due to the way it is organized - the younger generations are started in childhood as a way to supplement family's livelihood (ARAÚJO, 2006; LOPEZ and BIZUET, 2019). In the middle of the 21st century, it is still possible to find communities in Brazil and all around the world that have been constituted or developed due to a craft activity that gave them identity (sense of belonging) and sustenance (CANCLINI, 1983; ARAÚJO, 2006; BEZERRA, 2007; ALVARADO, CUENTAS and FERNÁNDEZ, 2016; SÁ, SOUSA, SOUZA et al., 2018).

According to a study developed by the Ministry of Development, Industry and Commerce (MDIT), in 2010 alone, the activity generated an average of R \$ 28 billion, which represented about 3% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). At the beginning of this decade, the country had approximately 8.5 million artisans (BRASIL, 2013).

The Brazilian Handicraft Program (PAB) understands handicraft as work resulting from the use of raw materials, done manually by a person who has techniques, creativity, skill and cultural value, and seeks to strengthen it as a way of generating income and making feasible. access to new markets, based on the training of artisans (BRASIL, 2010b).

In international literature scope, handicrafts are still considered a relevant source of occupation. In European Union, it is considered essential for people's prosperity and well-being (DRAGIN, KRUSMETRA, JEROSCENKOVA et al., 2015); in South Africa, its importance for reducing poverty is confirmed (MAKHITHA, 2016); and in Latin America it is part of the daily lives for many people as livelihood integrated with its cultural relevance (ALVARADO, CUENTAS and FERNÁNDEZ, 2016), which contributes to regional development (SÁNCHEZ-MEDINA, 2018).

At national level, previous research already indicates evidence capable of leading and justifying a problematization and concern with the continuity of artisan activity in contemporary times, given their similarities to "pre-capitalist" productive models (FIGUEIREDO and MARQUESAN, 2014; FIGUEIREDO, MELO, MATOS et al., 2015), or even to pay attention to the implications and the meaning of governmental or third sector interventions in promoting that activity (BEZERRA, 2007; MARQUESAN and FIGUEIREDO, 2014; KELLER, 2015).

In Caruaru, specifically in Pernambuco's agreste microregion, the production and trade of clay crafts from Alto do Moura represent the main source of income for community members who share the craft generation after generation (IPHAN, 2006). Located 7 km from the city's center, the neighborhood gained national recognition due to the figurative production that used to represent scenes from the northeastern countryside's daily life (the retreatants, the cowboy, etc.), following the trail opened by Mestre Vitalino (1909-1963) (SILVA, 2007). Due to its close relationship with the Feira de Caruaru and cultural relevance, the place was inserted as one of the National Inventory of Cultural References (NICR) locations associated to the referred fair (IPHAN, 2006), having recently been specifically proposed for its registration as Brazilian immaterial cultural heritage.

The first generation of artisan-followers of Vitalino, whom today lives with more than 70 years, managed to transmit the craft to a significant part of his sons and daughters. The same is not apparent in the current generation. In summary, our problematization turns to one of the transformations that the community has been experiencing in the 21st century, in particular to the directions taken by the generation that has been disengaged from the artisan trade. In more specific terms, it turns to the dispositional demands that they need or desire to meet when they distance themselves from that occupation and take other work directions.

Inspired by aspects of Pierre Bourdieu (1989, 2007) and Bernard Lahire's sociology (2006, 2010, 2015), and understanding that the notion of habitus (dispositions) serves as a pertinent theoretical instrument to support analyzes about localized socio-cultural and economic practices (VANDENBERGHE, 2016; WACQUANT, 2017), this work is raised based on the following questions: how has it been possible to disengage this new generation of artisan work in the Alto do Moura community in the 21st century? What directions does it point to?

In the intention to achieve the objective of analyzing the main conditions and disengagement modes of the new generation from Alto do Moura's artisan community, after this introduction, Bourdieusian sociology, in particular the notion of habitus (provisions), is recovered as a theoretical contribution and its critical update by Bernard Lahire. In the third section, the strategy

and methodological procedures that we used were presented. In the fourth section, the empirical material was ordered and analyzed. And, in the final remarks, we expose a look at work outside the artisan condition.

THE SEARCH FOR THE MEANING OF ACTIONS IN ARTISAN CONTEXT

Bourdiesian sociology has proved to be useful as a theoretical tool for investigations involving people, work and business in the Pernambuco countryside in recent years (SÁ, 2018, 2019; FREIRE, 2016, 2019). Such theoretical current and the critical updating of Bernard Lahire provide an advance in the elaboration of interpretations about the meanings of human actions. The conceptual element that most unites the main works of Bourdieu (2007) and Lahire (2006) is the notion of habitus. We believe that “for Bourdieu the notion is, first and foremost, a shorthand way of designating an investigative posture” (WACQUANT, 2017, p. 216).

Although in recent years the contextual dimension has been emphasized in Lahire’s work (2010, 2015), this approach was initially called the dispositionalist sociology of action (LAHIRE, 2003), since it highlights the dispositional nucleus of habitus’ notion as heritage or set of dispositions (in general, ways of thinking, acting and feeling that govern human action under the various social constraints). For Vandenberghe (2016, p. 29), Lahire’s dispositional sociology “is so Bourdieusian from top to bottom that he could well be considered the master’s heterodox successor (with Loïc Wacquant being the official successor)”. Despite such differences, it is possible to approximate the conceptions of Bourdieu-Wacquant and Lahire when we pay attention to the limitations of the notion of habitus.

Wacquant (2017, p. 215-216) clarifies that “the habitus is not necessarily coherent and unified but reveals varying degrees of integration and tension depending on the compatibility and character of social situations”, and also that “it operates as a spring that needs an external trigger and cannot, therefore, be considered in isolation from the particular social worlds”. For him, there are tensions, inconsistencies and incompatibilities between habitus, situations and localisms that offer “external triggers” that constrain certain dispositions and stimulate others (the ability to concentrate or the ability to relax, for example).

From our eyes, it is through such tensions that changes in the dispositional heritage inherited and shared by members of the new generation of a community, such as Alto do Moura, can be observed, which are projected for occupational paths other than handicrafts. That is, there are new demands for incorporation or disembodiment of provisions, and members of the new generation have presented different responses.

Within the scope of national organizational studies, Faria and Silva (2017, p. 128) carried out a survey in which it was pointed out that the “reduced number of articles in ten years in Brazil reinforces the potential of the handicraft theme in offering different fruits to the field”. Although there are studies that highlight issues inherent to business dynamics and their demands on the artisan class, which deal with issues of gender, entrepreneurship, professionalization, new forms of organization of artisanal work, among other themes and approaches (VERGARA and SILVA, 2007; MARQUESAN and FIGUEIREDO, 2014; FIGUEIREDO, MELO, MATOS et al., 2015), we do not find in such literature a craftsman context problematized in terms of the socio-cultural and economic transformations that shape their new generations, affect their occupational paths and even put in risk the continuity of the activity.

It would still be valid to point out that Lahire (2015, p. 1393) advocates a methodology capable of “contextualizing the present and the past of those investigated”, and makes warnings that point to the strong weight of family socialization and the social origin in several other behaviors. Aware of that, the author has progressively assimilated the contextual dimension to his original dispositionalist project (NOGUEIRA, 2016).

In the case of the artisan community in this study, on the one hand, as childhood in most artisan families is lived in the midst of activities common to a home-workshop, it is not difficult to imagine that it is in this hybrid daily life that the primary socialization of children takes place of such families, and how such dispositional inheritances are shared with subsequent generations. On the other hand, the projection of the new generation towards other contexts of action, associated with motivations related to work, imposes an adaptation challenge (to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the difference or similarity of such a new context in relation to the context of the home-workshop) to each one who makes such a trajectory.

From our eyes, we are faced with a situation of tension between inherited heritage and new contexts of action for which individuals who disengage themselves from handicrafts project themselves. Throughout the theoretical-empirical investigation we were able to identify two decisive tensions related to the phenomenon of disengagement: first, aspects that function as “external triggers” to desire, propensity, self-determination to seek another occupation or profession; second, the glimpse and access to alternative directions, which may have their roots in “dispositions to believe” (LAHIRE, 2006), that is, horizons of the future that were not so present or proved to be little viable for previous generations.

METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

This is a qualitative, descriptive-exploratory research. Descriptive because it focuses on the discovery and analysis of phenomena seeking to describe and interpret them in a detailed and exploratory way because it aims to provide greater familiarity with the problem and make it more explicit (RICHARDSON, 1989; FLICK, 2008). It is part of a larger study in which a series of fronts was opened to explore issues related mainly to handicrafts, to the artisan community and to Alto do Moura.

To deepen the topic of disengagement, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the new generation (which group we called NGE) who work in another activity, part of which was linked to the different types of local artisanal production. In contrast, a focus group was held with six members of the community who were part of the new generation and continued in handicraft. Both the interviewed subjects and the participants in the focus group were selected according to a declaration of belonging to the community, due to differences and similarities (typicality), as well as due to accessibility and not belonging to the same family.

In addition, we searched for excerpts that dealt with the issue of disengagement of the new generation in the direct observations recorded in field notes, interviews and focus groups carried out within the scope of larger research, and which also served as support for the analysis in this work, namely: interviews with twenty artisans-owners of shop-workshops (which group we called ART), eleven owners of other businesses in the community (which group we called PRO) and five opinion makers (which group we called FOR). And two more focus groups: one with the board of the Auto do Moura Artisans in Barro and Residents’ Association (AMABRA) and another with the Flor do Barro Group, formed only by women artisans.

Semi-structured scripts were developed for both interviews and focus groups. The interview script with the new generation was divided into three axes: 1) the interviewee’s previous and current activities; 2) reasons for not engaging; and 3) horizons for the future.

The people we call the new generation here in this study are part of the third generation of artisans from Alto do Moura, that is, they are the grandchildren of the first generation formed by Mestre Vitalino and his contemporaries, and are between 26 and 40 years old.

Thematic analysis of the content of the interviews, focus groups and field notes was adopted as an analysis technique. The most significant excerpts of speech related to the disengagement of the new generation were selected, associated with codes attributed to the themes of the structure and, having this selection, we turn to the discussion of the content.

DISENGAGEMENT UNDER ANALYSIS

Next, the argument articulated in this section was guided by three notions: a) contextual triggers (aspects present in the contemporary world that provoked or made possible that the new generation wished to effectively leave or make the artisan activity secondary); b) new directions (other occupations or professions sought by members of the new generation); and, passing through the analysis of both previous elements, c) the dispositional demands (needs to change the ways of being, thinking and acting, incorporated by those who projected themselves into another work environment more or less different from artisan work).

Contextual Triggers

The difficulty of generational transmission and its context in the 21st century

Although Alto do Moura is closely linked to clay crafts, it is possible to observe that, when we talk about figurative crafts, today we would be facing a generation for which a lack of interest or identification with this work begins to be observed: “today many they are ... not losing their love for clay, but they are looking for other things, I have a cousin who studied, is a teacher and already works teaching, others are in factories, others went to the trade, and we are losing it” (PRO), “young people no longer have this incentive to learn, they look for other areas” (NGE).

Situations in which the youngest would be more likely to admire and seek occupations or professions associated with the idea of “modern”, the worldview with which they wish to identify, have been evident in the community: “even if young people do it, crafts are considered an old thing. So, there are these two things, at the same time that they have this difficulty in training new people to go on playing it further” (FOR).

The artisan activity can symbolize a kind of “counterculture” (REES, 1997, p. 130 apud FIGUEIREDO and MARQUESAN, 2014), especially when the production or search for handcrafted items is a conscious and somewhat dissident movement from capitalist standards (FIGUEIREDO and MARQUESAN, 2014). After all, handicrafts tend to oppose generalizations, require time, disconnect from the lightness of the industrial model (BEZERRA, 2007) and, by extension, one could say, the post-modern lifestyle and the globalized world. In this context, the proximity to technology was pointed out by the interviewees as fundamental to disengagement. The community realizes that children have more access every day and are more interested and attracted by their artifacts: “you don’t see any young people wanting to learn [handicrafts] no ... I have a nephew there who I help him, he doesn’t work ten minutes, he just wants internet” (NGE focus group).

In the midst of technological advances in the 21st century, it is important to point out that families still have a fundamental role in the development of the activity. Generational transmission in the family context is essential to understand how, around the world, there are still community nuclei responsible for safeguarding the legacy of handicrafts (ALVARADO, CUENTAS and FERNÁNDEZ, 2016), based on a type of learning that begins with socialization primary and that involves the development of responsibility, cooperation and participation (LOPEZ and BIZUET, 2019).

In the case of Alto do Moura, due to the difficulty of continuing the activity, some resistance efforts have emerged from outside the family scope, such as those carried out by the group “Flor do Barro”, which has, among other objectives, the desire to keep the tradition of handicrafts in the community alive: “the group wants it to continue, not to stop, because most of the artisans’ children do not want it anymore and we wanted, at least, to reconcile [with another activity]”.

The symbolic value (recognition) decline of handicrafts and insufficient incentives (support from public authorities and development agencies)

Other factors have made the tendency not to consider crafts as a valid alternative for occupation and source of income to be strengthened in the new generation. Although both punctual and systematic initiatives on the part of municipal and state public power authorities can be observed, for many “Alto do Moura is unfortunately not valued for having a name known in Brazil and outside Brazil, nor is it valued by the Caruaru’s citizen, nor by the city hall, there are no resources, nothing to help” (NGE).

This devaluation can also be associated, to such extent, with a certain conceptual crossroads inherent to the activity itself, now linked to a type of material production exposed to public recognition and liable to commercialization (durable objects, endowed with intrinsic utility and meaning), now referred to as experiential knowledge, collected in the private domain of the individual, focusing on the value of tradition. The fact is that, keeping a close resemblance to a type of “pre-capitalist” production, with little or no technological mechanization, the activity has a low degree of importance in the current economic configuration, which is expressed in the fact that the developmental proposals do not attribute to manufacturing a strong impact on the development of national economies (FIGUEIREDO, MELO, MATOS et al., 2015).

Both in Bezerra (2007) and in Keller (2015) there are examples of how public authorities and development agencies (such as the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service - Sebrae) can intervene in order to foster cooperative articulations,

promote a certain modernization of artisanal making, if we can say so, and, therefore, improve its profitability for artisan communities. It should be noted, however, that even with a view to preserving and valuing handicrafts, many of these government interventions fail to recognize and provide for the needs of workers and local knowledge when they reproduce top-down policies or establish support for some and abandonment for others (SCRASE, 2003). As such inequality is established in the eyes of the public authorities, disinterest emerges, as justified by an interviewee: “I saw that there was only a future for those who buy and resell to other people, because here it is not as valued as it was supposed to be, nor the children Vitalino, who was the founder of Alto do Moura, are receiving value in this work, which was to be much more valued” (NGE).

For Marquesan and Figueiredo (2014), interventions carried out by development agencies such as Sebrae aim to transform Brazilian artisanal production into a major generator of employment and income, linked to international consumption circuits or tourism. However, in proposals that support interventions of this type, the discourse of re-signification of handicrafts and the identity of the craftsman is notorious through the praise of entrepreneurial action and the emphasis on management, which usually imply the pressing need to impose standards on handicraft work. competitiveness inherent to the capitalist economy. Since the new entrepreneur-artisans have, in this reframing of their activity, the appearance of a social insertion that does not actually materialize.

As for the support of the government and development agencies, our argument about disengagement comes, therefore, to complement the findings of this research: for artisans who have not yet fully disengaged and who remain inserted (mostly informally) in the productive world of the artisan work, there are strong aspects inherent to a typically peripheral business.

The seek for security or stability through another profession and / or studies

Respondents also reported that the craft business, being an activity in which they often operate on their own, has significant financial instability. In this regard, it is important to mention the high informality in the sector. While there are millions of artisans in activity in the country, the Cadastral Information System of Brazilian Handicrafts (Sicab) has a much lower number of registered artisans and manual workers (LORÊTO, DOURADO and SILVA, 2015).

As described below, the interviewees feel divided between the freedom and tranquility provided by artisanal work and the persistent desire for financial stability that they believe can be provided by formalized occupations: “Sales in the last ten years have been falling, so we need to some incentive to bring the younger ones, because older people are getting older, young people are looking for jobs, security, right, but we want them to learn how to do it too (ART)”; The best thing about the craft activity is the calm ... and the worst thing is the financial instability, you have today, but you don’t know if you have it tomorrow” (NGE).

Another way of seeking greater security and stability is through studies, because in the region access to education has become more viable in this century: “today there is a lot of courses, everything is more accessible, to have a better job, to study better, there is the IFPE [Federal Institute of Pernambuco], which is very close here, there is a lot that helps you to have a good life in the future, all of that takes the focus away from crafts” (NGE).

The stimulus coming from family members is added to the recent facilities for access to technical or higher education in the municipality, not enjoyed by previous generations¹. The latter is perceived as a striking element so that the new generation is, in part, directing their motivation to formal study as a means to achieve qualified jobs. Thus, it is common to hear reports such as: “if the person has a child, try to invest in his study, for him to grow, because in clay it is very difficult now to maintain himself” (Grupo Focal NGE); “I want them to learn how to make the piece that their father does, but they are not artisans, I want something better for my children ... I want them to study, go to college and choose what they want to do, do you understand? (ART)”.

¹ The constitutional provision indicating the need for the interiorization of universities and technical and professional institutes, mentioned in the 1988 Charter, disappeared in 1997, in the same neoliberal parliamentary maneuver that prohibited the expansion of federal technical courses. The legal prohibition for the creation of vocational and technological schools collapsed, however, in the following years (BRASIL, 2010a). The expansion of opportunities for access to higher education was mainly due to the policy of the Ministry of Education (MEC) for the interiorization of higher education, starting in 2003, and the program to support Federal University Restructuring and Expansion Plans (REUNI), in force since 2007. The installation of the campus of the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE), in 2006, in Caruaru, is the result of this process. In addition, the installation of campuses at the University of Pernambuco (UPE), in 2007, and the IFPE, in 2010, have fostered such a framework for the inclusion of younger and younger people in technical and higher education, in the municipality and in the surrounding cities. Not to mention the expansion of supply, price reduction and financing possibilities for the private technical and higher education market.

It is interesting to note that, in other contexts, artisans who go on with their studies are able to stand out and remain in the craft activity. In Mexico, for example, the level of education is an aspect that influences the craft business. Graduated or professional craftsmen use more sophisticated designs and techniques, sell their work at higher prices in designer stores or chic galleries and have achieved a better standard of living; while artisans with basic education level sell their pieces at low prices in craft stores or to intermediaries (SÁNCHEZ-MEDINA, 2018). In the case of Alto do Moura, however, those who obtain more schooling tend to leave the artisanal activity and follow new directions.

The difficulty in income generating

This is one of the triggers that have most strongly contributed to the disengagement of the new generation in the activity of handicrafts: “you can sell a little something, but you can’t supply much; for example, you always sell, but you don’t sell as much as you can keep in a month ... it’s in that sense”(NGE). In addition to the difficulty of obtaining higher sales revenues, the predatory price competition in Alto do Moura contributes to the fact that the new generation is unable to obtain the minimum necessary to maintain quality of life. “As it is, I don’t think anyone wants to start working with handicraft anymore, because, see, I have my customers, if I had a quantity, today I have half of them, and I am old in handicraft, imagine for who start now”(ART).

It has been evaluated that such that situation is not a specificity of the studied community, but recurrent in other peripheral contexts. In South Africa, handicrafts have limited growth due to the low purchasing power of end consumers - most businesses are of a survivalist and seasonal nature, being closely linked to tourism (MAKHITHA, 2016). In Colombia, many artisans find it difficult to access sources of finance and low negotiation skills with intermediate traders, even selling their products for amounts that do not even pay for their workday (ALVARADO, CUENTAS and FERNÁNDEZ, 2016). In Mexico, others face a shortage in marketing and falling prices, mainly due to competition with Chinese products and new requirements imposed by the government (SÁNCHEZ-MEDINA, 2018). Such problems explain why many artisans manufacture in series to survive (VERGARA and SILVA, 2007). Alto do Moura is no different.

New directions and dispositional demands

The following directions do not have a linear character, but only register an outline of specific trajectories. However, it is possible to point out through the analysis that, for each of them, the need to meet more or less different dispositional demands is perceived.

From artisan status to own business in the community

It is due to the decline in symbolic value and the difficulty of generating income in handicrafts that various types of businesses have appeared in Alto do Moura, such as a snack bar, grocery store, beauty salon, etc. In part, such businesses are, above all, developed by members of the new generation: “My cousin himself took a course and set up this business there, because he finished his studies, he didn’t want to work with clay because he had no future, he had this idea and today thank god it worked for him”(PRO).

Once designed for their own business, some members of this new generation still remain in the craft industry, but as a complementary activity, often due to affectionate attachment to the craft, or due to familiarity with this type of occupation. However, they claim that another type of business “gives less work and is better financially” (NGE).

Some testimonies also brought up the difficulties faced by those who, in some way, “risk” not becoming an artisan in a community like Alto do Moura:

Vitalino’s grandson today, a guy with a [sur]name like that, he set up a market, and his studio is a little table back there, and that made me really sad, and now it will even close the market, it didn’t work, I think it really saturated. The facility, you know, the mall and all, we know, regular buses, all of which makes it easier for them to get to the city (FOR).

In general terms, exchanging handicrafts for a different kind of business in the community tends to demand the incorporation of a world and business vision closer to conventional market practices, resilience to develop more activities that do not require affective or even emotional ties. individual concentration (as in handicrafts), and to acquire or reactivate (for those who previously had such an experience) skills in managing a peripheral business other than the home-store-workshop.

Although those who move from the artisan condition to the owner of another business in the community continue to work in the same social space, it is possible to indicate changes associated with the disincorporation of provisions associated with the artisan habitus to incorporate other characteristics into the commercial habitus. Despite being close in terms of the practices and worldviews they engender, such displacement tends to imply changes in moral qualities, feelings, desires, in short, in the conduct of individuals (WACQUANT, 2017).

From the artisan condition to the non-specialized formal activity

Handicrafts can be understood as a genuine expression of a local culture, an expression that marks, by means of specific technique, the act of doing, the tacit knowledge accumulated by generations, the original demarcation of a territoriality (CASTILHO, DORSA, SANTOS et al., 2017). The migration to work in the city center or in other places denotes, in itself, a departure from the territorial but also social context of the community, contributing to the disengagement process.

The path towards formal non-specialized activities leads the new generation to work with a formal contract in companies in the city, in the Industrial District (located in the geographical perimeter of Alto do Moura), or even in the housing nucleus of the neighborhood. The main trigger associated with these cases is the search for financial stability, especially because “young people feel insecure in crafts and find jobs better” (PRO), or because “not everyone who works with clay can survive well, they have a good house, a car, a motorbike, not all of them, so many saw the opportunity to have a fixed salary and went away from crafts”(NGE).

It is recurrent the mention, by some interviewees, to the fact that the migration to work in a non-specialized formal activity has shown a tendency even for the new generation of more traditional families, because “there will come a time when children and grandchildren of traditional families will start to go to factories and firms; in fact, this is already happening - not that it is wrong, but I shouldn’t stop doing that very important job that started in the beginning, this is very serious”(ART).

The same respondent, while also mentioning that one of Mestre Vitalino’s grandchildren “chose another way of living and went to work in the Industrial District”, points out another shift (of the artisan habitus) perceived among the members of the community itself: “another Alto do Moura has been created without us realizing it, there is another routine, because whoever works in the Industrial District also leaves early, so they create a culture, although the place is small, but they create cultures”(FOR).

Among the dispositional demands necessary to follow this path, we can infer that the new generation is led to develop hierarchical obedience to formal authority (to accept decisions by a superior); adapting to commuting and working in spaces other than the workshop house; and the fulfillment of a schedule determined by someone else, unlike handicrafts, where generally the craftsman himself makes his own schedule.

In relation to the previous course, here it is possible to conjecture a more significant change in the dispositions of those who follow it, since the daily work, in the vast majority of cases, becomes another territory. Such changes here would point to meeting the demands associated with a type of working (non-specialized) habitus, molded in a business-industrial context, to the detriment of the dispositional patrimony received as community inheritance.

From artisan status to technical-professional activity (with a technical or university degree)

In general terms, having greater possibilities of access to post-school education than the previous generation, many members of the new generation have sought, through the study, insertion in more qualified fractions of the labor market. One of our interviewees, who was the first in her family to complete a higher education course (in pedagogy), said that in doing so, she

“broke a paradigm, a script that had been followed” (NGE). When he compared his current profession to his parents’ artisan work, he commented: “Sometimes I miss it, you know, because it is therapy. I keep comparing my work with mammy’s and daddy’s ones and see the calm that it is [...] it makes me a bit jealous ”(NGE).

A second interviewee, in addition to already having a technical nursing course, was studying law at the time. As soon as she finished his technical course, she got a job in a hospital, but she said about her future: “I like it, I love what I do, but it is not something I want for the rest of my life” (NGE). Thus, she projected that when she will have finished her college course she would study for a competition and continue in her job until she reaches something better, more or less repeating as she did when she worked in crafts, because that was how she managed to pay for her first training.

As triggers associated with such that course, it is possible to point out: the symbolic devaluation of artisan activity, the little incentive of public power perceived by the community and, mainly, the encouragement of parents to, through study, and seek for a profession, whose course has been seen as a better road than following in handicrafts.

As noted by Martins (2019), there are signs of na education low level in Alto do Moura community. A large number of artisans from previous generations are illiterate or have not completed elementary school. However, contrary to what was observed by the same author, in the findings of our research, it appears that, as new generations have access to educational opportunities, in higher or technical education, formal knowledge starts to be configured, at least for these young people, as a valued moral element.

The reports collected indicated specific demands, such as working at a faster pace than artisanal work, and practicing savings to invest in new training stages. Furthermore, we can infer that, in order to move forward in the direction of the specialized profession, young people like our interviewees had to attend to dispositional demands such as the incorporation of study discipline, the capacity for critical-reflexive abstraction and the fulfillment of academic routines.

Acquiring the academic spirit required by engaging in technical or university training requires a dispositional conversion that can have repercussions both on the individual’s socio-cultural practices and on the future horizons. At the same time, such displacement allows for the “acquisition of the dispositions of conduct that enable agents to operate in a capitalist economy” (PETERS, 2017, p. 283) as a professional, for example.

From the artisan condition to informal work (precarious or intermittent)

Ultimately, there are also those who engage in sporadic informal work. In many of these cases, we observe that such members of the new generation go on in parallel to other work activities making clay pieces. However, the need for improvement in income or even the best return obtained with other activities makes them show themselves susceptible to such a course:

I worked with other varied styles [...] but at the moment what is coming out for me is this and the trade is not very good, do you understand? The truth is so great that I try to do other activities, I work with electricity, I work at the fair too, sometimes I work as a waiter, barbecue, these things, you know? We have to do what is going on for the person at the moment, because if you wait, you can’t survive [from crafts], the right word is this! To remain alone in the clay nowadays, it is very difficult, [...] most want to go out, get a permanent job (Focal Group NGE).

The desire for stability through formal employment is once again present. The fact of getting a formal job, however, is not available to everyone, especially when observing the national-regional-local economic situation. For those who, like our deponent, need to resort to other non-formalized and intermittent occupations, it is necessary to adjust to meet the dispositional demands that such a course may engender. In other words, to develop skills and competences to survive in a context of financial insecurity, to increase physical resistance for manual labor or, to a large extent, to be versatile to incorporate and disincorporate the specific demands related to each context of action and activity to be performed on it. After all, such demands can vary significantly if, for example, in one month you are working as a servant (on construction sites), in another as a waiter (in popular bars or restaurants), or even as a day laborer at the fair.

Towards greater risk, if he is unable to develop the ability to survive on odd jobs, or even in unfavorable contextual situations (which are beyond the reach of his competences), the individual here can approach the condition of the “Brazilian rabble”, that is, “Unable to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive market [...]. As [the individual] does not find employment in the productive sector, which presupposes a relatively high incorporation of technical knowledge or ‘cultural capital’, [...] he can only be [employed] as a mere ‘body’, that is, as a mere expenditure of muscular energy” (SOUZA, 2009, p. 23-24).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: A LOOK AT WORK OUTSIDE THE ARTISAN CONDITION

The trigger “income generation difficulty” is evident for all the directions analyzed. As if the financial issue were not enough, the search for job stability highlights the weight of the “formal contract”, which so differentiates formalized activities from handicrafts. The decline in symbolic value and the difficulty of generational transmission appear, in turn, as mitigating factors in changes in course, the first being more localized and perceived more clearly by the community itself, and the second as a non-exclusive aspect of that place.

From our eyes, the most visible face of the directions taken by the new generation is the community’s own business. After all, in addition to the disengagement itself, such businesses are being responsible for creating a new local urban landscape (today full of signs and calls for the most diverse types of consumption) and their own logic of offering products and services to the largest contingent of people who have come to inhabit the neighborhood and its surroundings in recent years.

The confrontation of the empirical material with the contribution offered by the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu and Bernard Lahire makes it possible in particular to infer that, in general, in addition to the propensity for negotiation, those who project themselves towards self-employed business will increasingly lack to develop skills for decision-making and other skills related to running a business other than the typical houses-stores-workshops of those who produce and sell clay pieces.

However, stop being an artisan to become a merchant also presupposes dispositional demands inherent to the conformation of a new working condition: how can one be a child of the Alto do Moura artisan community, have a business there, but not be an artisan? For those who consider themselves members of the artisan community, how to act as a business owner of another nature? Questions such as these could be answered with elements referring, for example, to the impersonalization of working conditions, which are no longer affective or linked to a knowledge passed from parents to children, within families, as a recurrent with regard to the artisan craft.

Perhaps the proximity to Mestre Vitalino’s legacy and the external interest in knowing the living and working conditions of those who followed the path opened by him, during the second half of the last century, motivated the second generation and enabled the configuration of a context favorable to the follow-up in the craft of a significant part of its members. In relation to the generation taken as the focus of this work, it is possible to observe a greater contextual difficulty for engaging in activity in this 21st century.

However, tracing a point of arrival or speculating a scenario in which we describe what to expect from the new generations (not only the one to which this work is aimed, but also for future ones) seems more complex, since we find, facing the various tensions experienced by the community, testimonies that reinforce both the affection for the activity and the fear of its extinction. What seems most consistent to us is to observe the directions and the dispositional demands associated with them (previously analyzed) as projective and reactive tendencies to contextual triggers - which show an unquestionable process, at least in our eyes, of ongoing disengagement.

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