

The reterritorialization and the struggle for water of those affected by the transfer of the São Francisco River in the Brazilian Northeast

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Abstract

The implementation of the largest Brazilian hydrological project, the Projeto de Integração do rio São Francisco – PISF (water resources project implemented by the federal government in the Brazilian Northeast), responsible for transferring the river's waters into the semi-arid Northeast region of Brazil, had different effects in the region and caused the deterritorialization of several families. A portion of these families were reterritorialized into the 18 rural villages scattered throughout the project, where approximately 845 families were resettled. In this context, the research conducted in the rural village of Lafayette, in Monteiro/PB, aims to analyze the process of reterritorialization of the affected actors and their strategies to fight for access to water. For this purpose, we adopted a qualitative approach and ethnographic research, using procedures such as oral history interviews with actors resettled in the village, semi-structured interviews with institutional actors, in addition to collecting documents, photographs and observations recorded in the field diary. The results demonstrate the difficulties faced by families in the process of reterritorialization in the village, the emergence of conflicts over water, in addition to apprehending the different strategies of struggle of the affected actors to obtain access to water for human consumption. In this way, the study contributes to the problematization regarding those affected by the project and the access to water within such a large project whose motto is the distribution of water, though the lives of the affected families remain barren.

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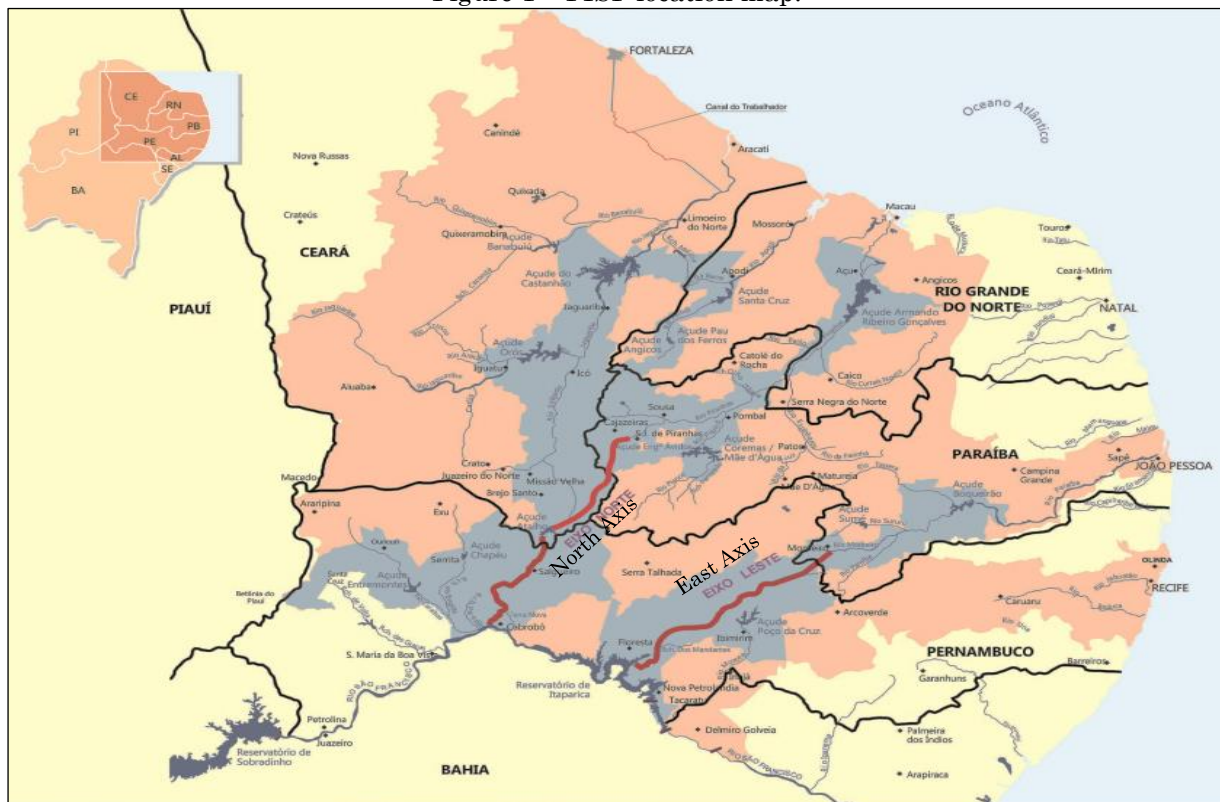
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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PISF AND THE ACTORS AFFECTED

The largest hydrological project in the Brazilian Northeast was marked by many debates and conflicts, and its construction began in 2007, lasting until the present moment (2022). The Projeto de Integração do rio São Francisco – PISF (water resources project implemented by the federal government in the Brazilian Northeast), was undertaken by the then Ministério de Integração Nacional – MIN (Ministry linked to the Brazilian federal government, effective between July 29, 1999 until January 1, 2019, which had as a guideline the application of the National Policy for

Regional Development), currently, the Ministério do Desenvolvimento Regional – MDR (Ministry linked to the Brazilian federal government, created in January 2019, to integrate the various public policies for urban infrastructure and regional development), with points of water collection for the São Francisco River in Pernambuco (specifically in Cabrobó and Petrolândia) and a distribution network that runs through Paraíba, Ceará and Rio Grande do Norte (see Figure 1). The project consists of a complex infrastructure, with 477 kilometers of concrete channels that correspond to the main axes (217 km – East Axis and 260 km – North Axis), in addition to the associated axes and other additional areas (MIN/RIMA, 2004).

Figure 1 – PISF location map.



Source: Ministério da Integração Nacional (2018).

Evidently, the implementation of this large hydrological project was responsible for the deterritorialization of several families in the Northeast region, mostly rural, forcing them to leave their territories, causing the erosion of the material and cultural bases of reproduction of life itself (PORTO-GONÇALVES, 2015), or as theorized by Escobar (2015), the ontological-territorial basis of many social groups, since, in addition to small farmers, indigenous peoples and various quilombola communities had their

ways of life impacted as a result of the PISF (ASSIS; TULBALDINE, 2016; FERREIRA, 2020).

Due to the lack of better alternatives, about 845 families, most of them displaced, opted for reterritorialization in rural villages. This process was done with the resettlement into 18 rural villages built along the PISF. Each rural village is composed of housing centers, divided into residential lots and individual productive lots, in addition to the infrastructure of basic

social services such as schools, health centers and community centers.

Associated with the process of deterritorialization of families, the problematization of their access to water was also necessary. Swyngedouw (2004) reminds us that the nexus between water and power is reflected both in the physical landscape and in the social relations of access to and exclusion from water. The access, use and distribution of it is a daily struggle for many people, it is the focus of a lot of competition, immersed in various forms of political and economic clashes and conflicts, so it is a sociopolitical issue, affecting, unequally, the various social actors (SWYNGEDOUW, 2004).

Thus, we carry out this research in the light of the political ecology of water, understanding that the allocation of water resources, the access to them and use are determined and shaped by broader socioeconomic and political aspects. This is a subfield of the broad field of political ecology (EMPINOTTI, et al., 2021), and its development was due to the particularities that the issue of water carries in the society-nature-water metabolism (SWYNGEDOUW, 2014).

Taking into account the general context of the PISF, this research was conducted in Vila Rural Lafayette, located in Monteiro/PB, composed of affected families from the eastern axis of the PISF. Thus, this research aims to analyze the process of reterritorialization of the affected actors and their strategies for struggling for the access to water.

The motivation to carry out this research was due to many issues, among which we highlight two, the necessary problematization of the effects of large projects on the lives of the affected actors, as well as the issues surrounding water, in view of the implementation of the PISF, from a critical perspective. Thus, this article is structured into five sections, in addition to this introduction. In the first part we reflected on the main theoretical concepts that supported the research, then presented how the empirical research was carried out. In the third and fourth, we discussed and analyzed the main findings and their dialogue with the theory. Finally, we presented the main conclusions and suggested future research.

CONFLICTS OVER WATER, AFFECTED ACTORS AND THEIR FORMS OF DAILY RESISTANCE

Water is an essential substance for the maintenance of life, productive activities and cultural identity. Its flows circulate ecosystems and the access to it is increasingly a source of conflict (GOMES et al., 2021; PEIXOTO et al., 2021). Over time, water has been surrounded by different interests and multiple meanings, its flows “are shaped by various cultural and temporal contexts, finding expression in specific institutional arrangements, social and religious activities and everyday economic practices” (STRANG, 2016, p. 2).

In the neoliberal context, “it does not take much to identify cultural, political and ecological forces, struggles and power relations at work in the perpetual process of the metabolizing circulation of water” (SWYNGEDOUW, 2004, p. 18). Therefore, it is necessary to “properly politicize the processes and relationships that reproduce water inequalities” (LOFTUS, 2015, p. 350). Theoretically, studies on the subject constitute the field of political water ecology, whose focus of analysis is “the socio-natural contradictions related to the use and conservation of water” (IORIS, 2013, p. 112).

In this sense, if we consider the social and political context in which the PISF was carried out, an analysis of access to water in the light of the affected actors becomes relevant. Conflicts over water are a historical issue when it comes to the Northeast region, where, on the one hand, there are long periods of drought, and on the other, little or almost nothing has been done over time to ensure the equitable distribution of water to the peripheral population. On the contrary, there was (and still is) a concentration of water through the construction of large reservoirs on private properties, allowing local elites to control it (ANDRADE; NUNES, 2014; RANGEL; MARQUESAN, 2018).

However, the hydrological project, which is being finished in the region, was originally made to distribute “water to those who are thirsty” (MIN/RIMA, 2004). Its implementation resulted in complex socio-natural processes, emergence of conflicts (ASSIS; TULBALDINE, 2016; FERREIRA, 2020) and several affected actors deterritorialized, whose ways of life were transformed with the reterritorialization into rural villages (HAESBAERT, 2019).

It is not recently that the implementation of large projects in the territories and the exploitation of natural resources have driven

the emergence of several environmental conflicts throughout the Brazilian territory. Different studies (FLEURY; ALMEIDA, 2013; IORIS, 2021; ZHOURI, 2018; 2019) have presented several conflicts in various regions of the country, bringing to light the consequences of the uneven development and the struggle of the affected populations in defense of their territories.

The struggle for the territory's production is also a cultural struggle for autonomy and self-determination, the mobilization of hegemonic groups to exercise control over the uses of the biodiversity contained in their territories is an essential factor for their social and political survival. In addition, "the particular attachment to a territory conceived as a multidimensional entity is the result of many types of practices and relationships" (ESCOBAR, 2015, p. 37).

In this way, the process of deterritorialization that the affected populations face means much more than merely a geographical change. Deterritorializing in the political-cultural sense involves geographical, cultural, economic, political and symbolic uprooting. It is necessary to understand that this process acts on different scales, including that at the family level, as well as in the social and cultural relationships and reproduction, which can result in trauma and suffering (HAESBAERT, 2019; LOSEKANN, 2018).

Evidently, such processes do not occur in a social vacuum, on the contrary, they are immersed in an intense process of struggle and resistance forged by the affected populations. Therefore, despite the asymmetry of power and domination that mark such disputes, some actors recognize the potential they present when they organize themselves collectively, that is, they recognize the political agency they have. Therefore, political agency is related to the ability of actors to act in the face of conflicts and social and environmental injustices that are imposed on them, and can be leveraged from political training, participation in associations, unions, popular movements, etc., from awareness and collective action.

Political agency, therefore, can be manifested from processes of rupture of the status quo, major clashes and confrontations, such as strikes and rebellions, as well as from minute actions, mobilizations and/or sociopolitical articulations; however, if added, they can bring significant change in the long term and change the course of conflicts in the territories. It occurs in most cases as everyday forms of resistance (SCOTT, 1985; 2011; 2013) waged by actors in reaction to the dominant hegemony.

Therefore, it is through everyday resistance, a concept coined by the anthropologist and political scientist James Scott, that social groups resist and materialize their claims. The main study that the author relies on to coin this concept was carried out over two years in a rural village in northeastern Malaysia that primarily cultivated rice. In another work (SCOTT, 1985), he focused on the daily resistance of local farmers to large farmers in the face of changes brought about by the green revolution in local agriculture.

Thus, the practices of daily resistance constitute the "prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them" (SCOTT, 1985, p. 32-33). Therefore, in everyday struggles, although an open and declared revolt against the oppressors is not demonstrated, it does not imply the absence of resistance among the dominated. Instead, there are different daily, fragmented and diffuse forms of resistance (SCOTT, 2013).

Therefore, knowing that the populations affected by large projects are precisely the most vulnerable strata of the population, it is through daily resistance that they fight in defense of their territories and their ways of life. In the case studied, the struggle for access to water is associated with the process of reterritorialization into the rural village. Thus, in the next section, we will present the methodological procedures of the research.

METHODOLOGICAL PATH

The research utilizes a qualitative approach (MINAYO, 2001) and an ethnographic perspective (CAVEDON, 2014). The fieldwork was carried out in two stages. The first took place in January 2018, characterizing the exploratory phase, whose focus was to get to know the village and interact with the people who lived there. It is pertinent to emphasize that this stage did not include any type of data collection instrument, only socialization and exchanges with some actors, which facilitated the approach for the next stage of the research.

The second stage took place between January and March 2019 with a continuous experience in the village, including accommodation at the Residents' Association's president's house throughout the duration of the fieldwork, solidifying the author's participation in the community's daily life. This made it possible to closely observe the daily life of the community, following what Cavedon (2014) proposes

regarding the ethnographic work, which means “living the studied culture daily” (CAVEDON, 2014, p. 65).

In this sense, the fieldwork involved participation in several meetings of the association, which was the first moment of immersion into the community at this stage of the research. Oral history interviews were carried out with the affected families (ALBERTI, 2008), seeking to historically understand the process of reterritorialization in the village within the context of the life of the affected actors, since oral history “is supported by testimonies and oral testimonies, enabling the manifestation of sources normally excluded from official reports” (BRANCO, 2020, p. 1).

At each approach, after the initial greetings and authorization to participate in the research and record the interview, by means of signing the free and informed consent term or recording of acceptance, the interviews were initiated with the main questions – How did the transfer process to the village occur? How is your way of life in the village? How is the access to water? etc. – followed by other questions elaborated within the theoretical framework, until the final phase.

Apart from the affected families, the experience in the village made formal and informal meetings with different actors possible, allowing semi-structured interviews to be conducted with the employee of the Companhia de Água e Esgotos da Paraíba – CAGEPA (is an operator of water supply and sewage services in urban areas in the State of Paraíba/Brazil), regarding the supply of water to the village, with the president of the Sindicato dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras na Agricultura Familiar – SINTRAF (rural farmers syndicate), in addition to accompanying two field visits by the technical team of the Projeto de Desenvolvimento Sustentável do Cariri, Seridó e Curimataú – PROCASE (the project is a partnership between the Government of the State of Paraíba/Brazil and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Organization (UN), with the objective of contributing to sustainable rural development in the semi-arid region of Paraíba) and interviewing the project's organizer. In all, thirty-two interviews were carried out, with

twenty-nine affected actors who, to ensure confidentiality, were identified by letters (A... Z), as well as three members of the association, and three institutional actors mentioned above.

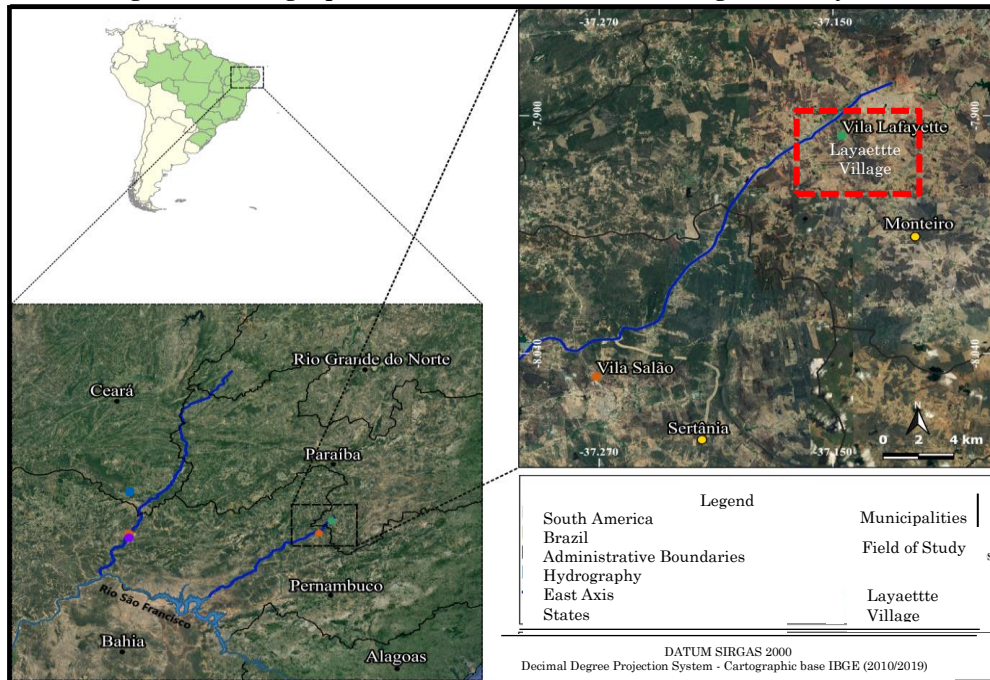
Along with the interviews, several observations were made in the field diary and, always at the end of each day, the relevant events and observations were recorded. Photographic records and videos of the community were made with the people's prior authorization, as well as a documentary search, which sought to collect historical data related to the progress of the village after the reterritorialization of the families. The main documents studied were the minutes of the association's previous meetings, letters sent to public bodies and photographs of the community.

Regarding the systematization and transcription of data, we used the NVivo® software (JACKSON; BAZELEY, 2019) although at times we opted for manual systematization. The data analysis and interpretation were done through interpretive analysis anchored in the adopted theoretical framework, seeking to identify both what was homogeneous and what differentiated the narratives, in addition to the systematic analysis of documents and the field diary.

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE LAFAYETTE RURAL VILLAGE AND THE ACTORS' NEW WAYS OF LIFE

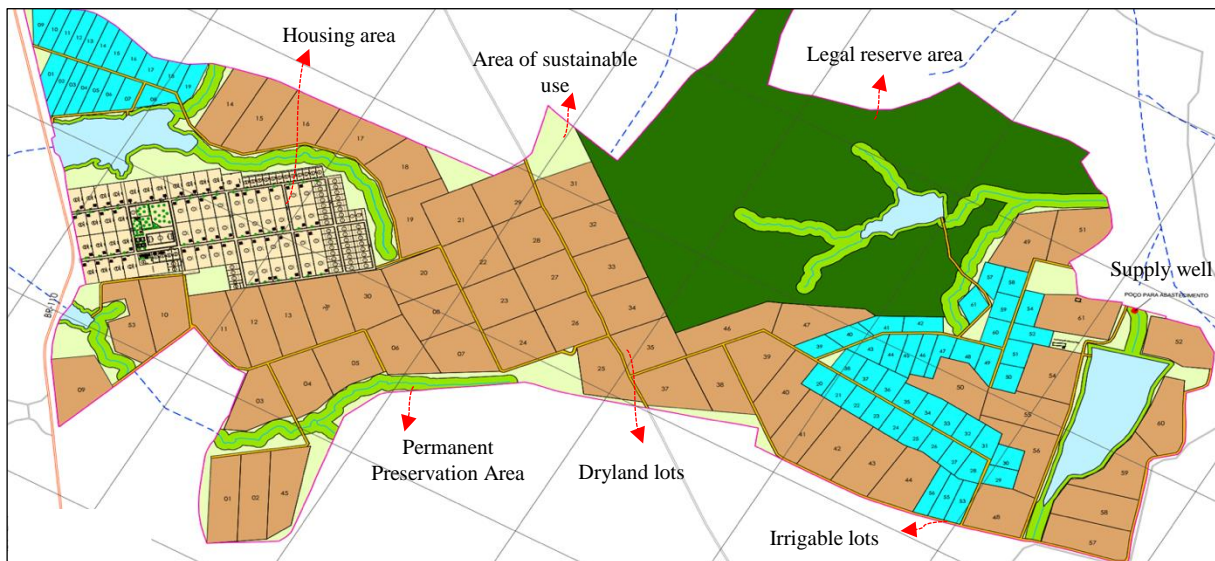
The rural village Lafayette is made up of 61 families affected by the PISF's east axis and is led by an association made up of three representatives (president, secretary and treasurer), elected every four years. The families that make up the village came from different locations, such as rural and urban areas of Monteiro/PB and rural areas of Sertânia/PE. The village is located (see Figure 2) on the sides of the BR-110 federal highway and is approximately 4km from the urban area of Monteiro/PB (about 300km from the capital, João Pessoa), and has a total area of 621.81 hectares, subdivided into different areas (see Figure 3).

Figure 2 – Geographical location of the rural village of Lafayette.



Source: The Authors (2020).

Figure 3 – Territorial arrangement of the rural village of Lafayette.



Source: Ministério da Integração Nacional (2018).

The process of reterritorialization of the families into the Lafayette village was established in March 2016, permeated by many conflicts and difficulties for families to adapt to the new ways of life. One of the aspects of the intensification of such conflicts was the difference in origins of the families who were directed to the village. The president of the association considers that “this mixture that the ministry made here is one of the greatest difficulties of this village, because the people who came from the streets have no vocation for agriculture and it hinders the progress of the

village” (Excerpt from the field diary: Speech by a representative of the association's board of directors, February/2019).

In addition to actors from different states, having people who previously resided in the urban area contributed to intensifying dissatisfaction. We found that there are tire repairmen, traders, sellers, etc. who, for the most part, had to stop exercising their professions in the city. The farmer laments: “After we came to the village, here we don't work at all. Before, in Monteiro, I had a tire shop, there was always work, here I still got some, but

there was no way. I still have the tools here, every now and then a service comes up [...]" (Excerpt from the interview: Farmer Q, February/2019).

Associated with the aspects mentioned, the fact that the village had a territorial arrangement completely different from that in which the families once lived was another barrier in the reterritorialization process. Figure 3 allows us to visualize that the village was designed to meet two main demands, housing and production. As for the social infrastructure in the housing area, until the moment of the field experience, the health center opened once a month, with a general practitioner and dental services, and the school was closed. In the productive sector, comprised of dryland lots and irrigable lots, only the dryland lots were delivered. According to the secretary of the village association, the "ministry was responsible for the piping of the transfer project, so that we could irrigate the lots for us to plant, to work with agriculture, which is what we are able to do, but nothing was done so far [...], we are still waiting today for what they promised".

It is important to remember that the reterritorialization of families into the village occurred in 2016, the eastern axis was inaugurated in 2017 and until the time of the field experience, the families were not in favorable conditions for the development of subsistence agriculture. The only source of income for families is the Temporary Maintenance Fund (VTM), which until 2016 was one and a half minimum wages, but after Michel Temer (2016-2018) took over the presidency of the republic, the VTM became one minimum wage, with a forecast of duration until the first harvest from the irrigated lots.

We draw attention to the erosion of the material, economic and cultural bases for the reproduction of life itself (PORTO-GONÇALVES, 2015) suffered by the actors, given the impossibility of developing subsistence agriculture, in such a way that the families survive at the mercy of a budget allocated by the federal government. Farmer I says "we have no means to produce, because there is no way to have it, the space here is small, our lots are far away and there is no water, you know? It's a very difficult situation for us here". Corroborating this, farmer T says "we can no longer plant anything, the rains are scarce, the space is small and we are waiting for the government to put water in the lots [...]".

In addition to the unfeasibility of agricultural activity, raising animals is also another difficulty for the actors. Continuing the analysis

of the territorial arrangement of the village (see Figure 3), it is observed that the housing area is displaced from the productive sector, which, in turn, presents dryland and irrigable lots in different locations. This implies travel costs and, in many cases, the necessity for means of transportation that the families did not previously have. Farmer K draws attention to the impossibility "of producing in both lots, because one is very far from the other and I can't keep going here and there [...]. I'm not even producing anything in the dryland lot, first, there is no water, and the money that the government sends can only be used for food; buying, like, an animal to raise is impossible". Another report corroborates the aforementioned farmer:

If I want to work there in the other place [dryland lot], it is 6 kilometers from here to there, and how can you walk 6 kilometers? Then you'll put gas to come and go, and you go very early, come back for lunch, go back again and come back at night. [...] Imagine when they deliver the lot with water [irrigable lot], which I find difficult, right, I've even lost hope [...] how are we going to work in both places? (Interview excerpt: Farmer D, Rural Village Lafayette, March/2019).

Given this scenario, it is possible to point out that the territorial arrangement defined by the State did not respect the previous territorial assemblages historically built by the families, disregarding the multiplicity of relationships and meanings that cover the territory, characterizing the reterritorialization process as an overcoded territoriality (HAESBAERT, 2019). This reality shows how the project mischaracterized the lifestyles of the affected families in the region, where people went from farmers to resettled, and especially how the federal government has reproduced historical welfare practices, such as those observed by Andrade and Nunes (2014). There is, therefore, what Escobar (2015) calls a systematic erosion of the ontological-territorial base of those affected, and not only a geographical uprooting.

The reality experienced by the actors affected by the PISF is not univocal, unfortunately, there is a historical repetition in Brazil (FLEURY; ALMEIDA, 2013; IORIS, 2021; MARQUES et al., 2018; ZHOURI, 2018; 2019). However, an issue that distinguishes the research analyzed here is the nature of the project and its promise to distribute *Water to those who are thirsty* (MIN/RIMA, 2004). However, despite the

concrete materiality of the project, the difficulties to access water and the conflicts for it are evident and have persisted over time. The photographic record made at the beginning of

the fieldwork (see Figure 4) indicated that the situation of access to water did not differentiate between the past and present of these families.

Figure 4 – Water collection in the rural village of Lafayette.



Source: The Authors (2019).

As noted, the promise of access to water was not fulfilled. According to Farmer R, the promise made "by the ministry staff was that we would have water for our daily lives, right? To drink, to do housework [...] and also for us to work with agriculture, which is what we know how to do". Another account corroborates the farmer's statement:

First, they brought us with an illusion, and until today they didn't execute the illusion that they put us here for... Before coming here it was a thousand wonders, when they wanted to get us out of our place, the proposals were like blessings. That there would soon be piped water; until today we depend on water tankers, as you yourself have just witnessed there: a water tanker!! That we would have water to work with [...] (Interview excerpt: Farmer O, March 2019).

The interviews and the experience in the field allow us to affirm that families have had severe difficulties to have access to water, even for human consumption. Initially, the families were supplied by an artesian well that already existed in the territory where the village was located, under the management of the association, however, it was not enough to meet the demand, and some conflicts over water gained concrete contours, as pointed out by the following interviewees:

There was a lot of confusion here in the village because of the water, some people installed pumps, the water came in strong, but when we least expected it, the water started to run out, only a little came out, the water didn't go up the tank. Then we set up some thousand-liter water tanks on the ground, then only a little water began to come out, it stopped there [...]. And you don't even know, one person [they did not mention the name] set up a pump in the water outlet of the tank that distributes water to the village, we always saw the pump turned on, then when you turn on a pump, the pump pulls all the water pressure and there was no water in the neighborhood because it runs out of power, this pump was connected to the plumbing that comes from the rocket that is water for everyone and that's a crime, you can't do that, right? This was talked about at the meeting, but the person just listened [...] (Interview excerpt: Farmer Q, February/2019).

As noted, water has become a source of conflict between the actors for the access to water for human consumption, which is a contradiction to what the project's motto was said to be. However, the association has made every effort to demand solutions in several

institutions, as we will address in the following section.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE AFFECTED ACTORS FOR ACCESS TO WATER

Based on the analysis of the documents made available by the association, we could identify a set of strategies to challenge the conflicting situation of access to water for human consumption, characterizing what Scott (2013) called daily resistance practices. These practices were mainly carried out by the association's board of directors and were systematized in three stages in the conflict over water.

Stage 1 was characterized by the formalization, by means of official letters, to claim for the lack of access to water, initially directed toward the body responsible for the project (at the time, the MIN), then to the governor of Paraíba, and the city hall of Monteiro/PB.

Despite the attempt to spread the demand to different actors and instances, the community did not have their demand for water met, and the next step was to formalize a complaint to the Ministério Público Federal – MPF (it is an institution whose function, defined by the Federal Constitution, is the defense of the legal order, the democratic regime and unavailable social and individual interests) in January 2018, with a hearing held in July of the same year. This claim indicates the apex of the conflict for water, representing stage 2. Therefore, the main objective of formalizing the complaint "was to bring everyone together to reach a definitive solution for water here in the village" (Interview excerpt: Representative of the association's board, March/2019). Some residents of the Lafayette village participated, engineers linked to the MIN, representatives of CAGEPA, as well as representatives of the MPF.

Generally speaking, the two main results of the hearing were: i) the increase in the amount of water tankers to supply the village; ii) the designation of CAGEPA, which is the state's water company, to take over the distribution of water. However, this did not happen immediately, because the water distribution network of the village had to undergo adjustments to fit the company's standards.

Accompanying the outlines of the conflict is fundamental, as it explains how the process of reterritorialization of families was marked by conflict and tension, and how water connects different actors with unequal political forces (SWYNGEDOUW, 2014). However, the daily

resistances led by the association were important and did not cease, despite asymmetric power relations. In this sense, a new step was taken and a new complaint to the MPF/PB was filed, characterizing stage 3 of the conflict. A representative of the association's board reports on the progression of the conflict.

When we saw that CAGEPA was not even going to supply here, then the struggle of the Association with the Ministry and the construction company CVR for the adjustments started, because we couldn't correct what they had done wrong here [...]. CVR said that it had already delivered the work, the Ministry had meetings here with us, they just kept promising that they would solve it. I would call Peter [a pseudonym for the CAGEPA employee], he would say that he couldn't do anything else until the work was done, so we were going mad here, because one kept passing the buck to the other [...], that's when we decided to call the MPF again" (Excerpt from interview: Representative of the Association's board of directors, March/2019).

While the fieldwork took place in the Lafayette Village, we were able to follow the unfolding of events that culminated in two new hearings of great relevance to the community. One took place in the Lafayette Village itself, in April/2019, which mobilized several actors from different institutions - MPF, MDR, CAGEPA, Ministério Público da Paraíba – MPPB (is an institution that acts in defense of the rights of society and as a law enforcement officer. It is essential to the jurisdictional function of the State), Monteiro's City Hall, City Council, the Secretaria de Estado da Infraestrutura, dos Recursos Hídricos e do Meio Ambiente (is a secretariat linked to the state government of Paraíba that deals about infrastructure, water and the environment), etc. According to Farmer E, the meeting was very productive and had as its main objective the definition of actions to finish the necessary adjustments to the water infrastructure of the village, and for CAGEPA to finally start operating the water system.

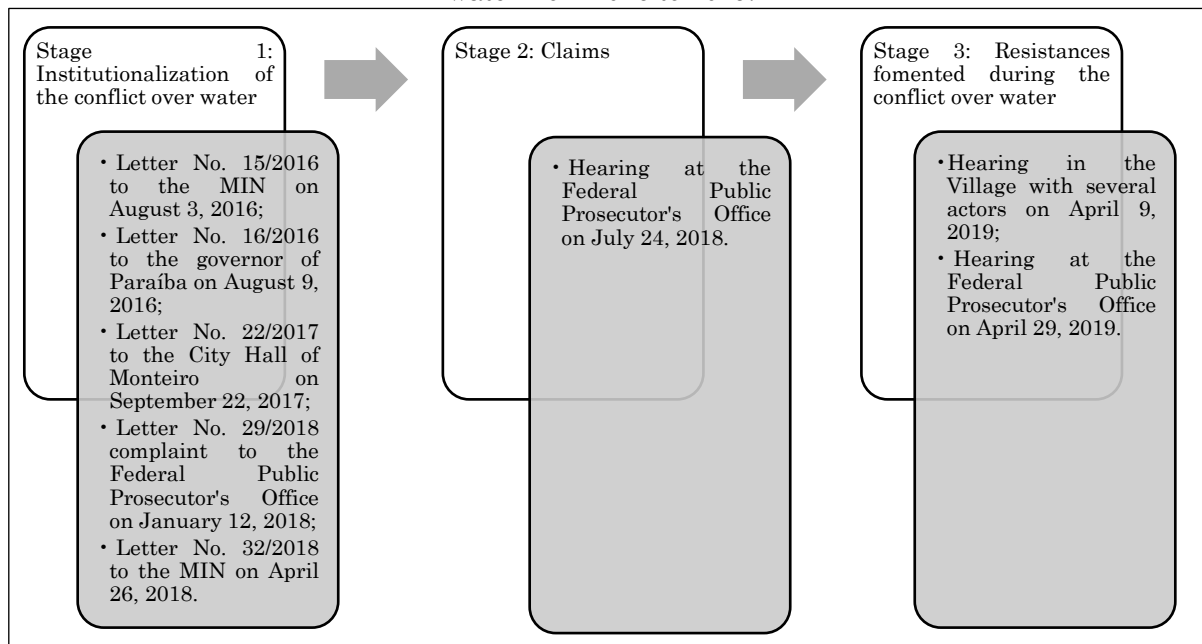
As defined in the hearing, there was a new meeting on April 25, 2019, to discuss the points raised at the previous meeting and sign the Voluntary Commitment Term, proposed by MPF's prosecutor and MPPB's deputy prosecutor. This term contained some clauses

regarding the actions of each social actor to make the water distribution viable.

According to information from members of the association's board of directors, in May/2019 the first tests of CAGEPA's water distribution in the village began, along with the registration of the families in the company, consolidating it as the official water supplier. All of the conflicts

that took place demonstrate that only through resistance and political organization are material changes possible in the lives of peripheral actors (ZHOURI, 2019). These are forms of daily resistance that the affected populations have to ensure their survival. A synopsis of such moments from 2016 to 2019 is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5 – Synopsis of the challenges of the association of the Lafayette rural village for access to water from 2016 to 2019.



Source: The Authors, (2021).

The analysis allows us to observe that there were a series of coping strategies by the association's board of directors with the purpose of solving the problem of access to water for the affected families. Thus, we understand how water is intertwined with unequal “political and ecological forces, struggles and power relations” (SWYNGEDOUW, 2004, p. 18), therefore it is necessary to “properly politicize the processes and relationships that reproduce water inequalities” (LOFTUS, 2015, p. 350). These issues gain greater importance if we consider the complexity involved in the implementation and management of the PISF in the Northeast, a region historically marked by asymmetries of power, disputes over water and concentration of water sources (RANGEL; MARQUESAN, 2018; SILVEIRA; SILVA, 2019).

We observed, therefore, an explicit political agency of the actors and how the different daily resistances were able to change the course of the conflict. It was also found that the association's struggle was not limited to the water issue, but also extended to other actions and projects, for families facing the impracticality of subsistence agriculture, such as partnerships with SEBRAE

for training courses, poultry and fish farming, projects arising from PROCASE, in addition to the Projeto Algodão (Cotton Project in English) for the production of agroecological cotton.

Despite the advances, we recommend the continuation of daily resistance practices, characterized by a “prosaic but constant struggle” (SCOTT, 1985, p. 32), for the implementation of the irrigable lots and conditions for the reestablishment of agriculture and goat-raising practices that are, above all, the way of life of rural families in the Northeast. Furthermore, the research results indicate that, although the largest Brazilian hydrological project has been completed in the Northeast region, people's lives are still barren, to quote Graciliano Ramos (Vidas Secas, 1938).

CONCLUSION

We demonstrated in this research that state actions, such as the implementation of large projects, such as the PISF, do not occur without resistance on the part of the affected actors, even

though localized and daily practices. Therefore, we emphasize the importance of their mobilization and political agency in order to fight against the injustices imposed on them. The capacity for action of the actors of the Lafayette Village is an example of how the socio-natural reality is deeply more dynamic than one can imagine, and, through struggle and political organization, they were able to bring about a few changes in the situation of environmental injustice, especially the guarantee of access to water for human consumption and the various projects that the association brought to the rural village.

Moreover, the constant struggle of the Association with the hegemonic actors was paramount, in this case, MIN, currently MDR, for families to have access to water. The reflections presented here reveal that the actors' capacity of the agency goes beyond the isolated confrontation, but seeks association with other actors (for example: actors of the municipality, state, civil society, communication, etc.) to give strength to their struggle.

We also emphasize the negligence of the MDR, the body responsible for the PISF, in ensuring survival conditions for the families affected. The fact that people cannot produce subsistence agriculture brings two effects that impact each other, first, the mischaracterization of the ways of life of the people affected, and second, the lack of economic autonomy of these people, because they are living relying on the assistance of the federal government.

Through these reflections, we present as a contribution of the research the discussion about the organizational process of the affected actors as capable of mobilizing tactics that allowed changes in the course of the conflict for water. More broadly, it contributed to the problematization of important issues for the Northeast region, which is the access and distribution of water, especially after the completion of the largest hydrological project in Brazil. The results presented are in conflict with the project's motto – water to those who are thirsty – and point out that the PISF, instead of allowing the democratization of access to water for people, intensified conflicts over water in the region.

Due to the complexity of the project and its consequences, we note that future research may answer some questions, namely: how is the distribution of water from the PISF going to be implemented? Who are PISF's new water flows for? How will the project be managed? How have other affected social groups guaranteed access to water? Therefore, we believe that this article is just the beginning!

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Jaqueline Guimarães Santos conceived the study, collected, analyzed the data and wrote the text. Eugenio Avila Pedrozo and Antonio Ioris wrote part of the text, revised the text and contributed to the elaboration and discussion of the theoretical framework of the research.



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