


# Territory, environment and way of life: conflicts between agribusiness and the Quilombola community of Morro de São João, Tocantins

## Território, ambiente e modos de vida: conflitos entre o agronegócio e a Comunidade Quilombola de Morro de São João, Tocantins

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the implications of the agribusiness expansion over a quilombola community in the State of Tocantins (Brazil), considering the conflict through the perspective of the territorial and environmental dimensions and the way of life of the inhabitants. For this approach, the main methodological strategy was the field research, through qualitative interviews with the community members. The results show that the loss of traditional territories to the agrobusiness and the land issue are determinant to the occurrence of environmental problems (deforestation, water shortage, use of agrochemicals, disturbance to the fauna and flora), which change deeply the habits and daily life of the quilombolas.

**Keywords:** Territory; Environment; Quilombola community; Agribusiness expansion; Way of life.

### Resumo

Este artigo busca discutir as implicações do avanço do agronegócio sobre uma comunidade quilombola no Estado do Tocantins (Brasil), considerando o conflito a partir das dimensões territorial, ambiental e do modo de vida dos moradores. Para essa abordagem, a principal estratégia metodológica foi a pesquisa de campo, por meio de entrevistas qualitativas com membros da comunidade. Os resultados demonstram que a perda do território tradicional para o agronegócio, ou seja, a questão fundiária, é determinante para a ocorrência de problemas ambientais (desmatamento, escassez hídrica, uso de agrotóxicos, perturbação à fauna e à flora), o que altera profundamente os hábitos e o cotidiano dos quilombolas.

**Palavras-chave:** Território; Ambiente; Comunidade quilombola; Avanço do agronegócio; Modo de vida.

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## Introduction

The expansion and territorialization of the agrobusiness throughout the country causes a series of environmental implications, especially for the groups that have built a relationship of deep interdependence with the nature in their way of life, as is the case in traditional communities. The problematic that emerges from this fact makes explicit, therefore, the articulation between the territory and the environment in frontier agricultural spaces.

According to Suertegaray (2017), the concept of environment presupposes the transfiguration of nature by social practices, especially by socioproductive ones that alter both the metabolism of nature and the metabolism of the relationship between humans and nature. The environment becomes revealing of the tension between social organizations, appropriation of space, use/exploitation of its resources and several consequences. In this way, "environmental issues are, above all, territorial issues. Thus, environmental-territorial conflicts are mainly political conflicts (SUERTEGARAY, 2017, p.155). The conception of the current environment, when positioning itself within the territorial question, instructs to think the dialectical game, or the social disputes over the natural components. With effect, environmental problems are thus problems of the structuring of power - and of its political designs.

Such conflicts presuppose, in most cases, situations of environmental injustice, which, according to Acselrad et al (2009), occur when there is an unequal distribution/appropriation of the costs and benefits of a development model (promoted by public and private agents or, not infrequently, by both) in a general way or of a particular enterprise, in more specific cases. In relation to agribusiness and the production system usually employed, the injustices can refer to the concentration of land and the use of common goods such as water and soil, as well as the dispersive effect of inputs and wastes.

The different reactions to these injustices, albeit disproportional (given the differences of economic and political power between the groups involved), is what may characterize a situation of conflict, highlighting the dialectical aspect of the theme. It can be said that the alliance between the state, landowners and other agents linked to agribusiness, by disposing of land via economic strategy - and generating environmental problems in relation to the way in which land is used - unfolds in environmental injustice as a direct consequence of social injustice.

According to Zhouri and Laschefski (2010, p. 17), "environmental conflicts arise from the different practices of technical, social and cultural appropriation of the material world ... they involve the relations between power and environment in the land", which reinforces its territorial bias. According to the authors, conflicts are divided into *distributive* (related to social inequalities of access and use of common goods), *spatial* (related to spatial dissemination or extrapolation of undesired environmental effects of an action), and properly *territorial* (in which there is overlap between different social groups, over the same portion of space).

In cases involving territorial and environmental conflicts between agribusiness and traditional communities, there has often been an access limitation on the part of the communities to nature itself, which influences both their material and symbolic survival. Cases of this type are demonstrated by Almeida (2010), Chaveiro (2010), Barbosa and Camenietzki (2011), through situations experienced by native people and quilombolas in Brazil, just to mention a few examples.

However, the tonic of conflicts does not always appear in the readings of contemporary environmental issues, when the opportunity to emphasize the meaning of the transfigurations of nature to the society itself and the disputes involved is frequently lost. As an illustration, in the area of the relationship between climate and agriculture, one can notice in the publications of the last decades an often reductionist approach that favors the

adaptive issue of food production to the new climatic conditions in different places of the world (MEINKE et al., 2009; McCarl, 2010, OSORIO and AZEVEDO, 2014, JAKKU et al, 2016, among others). In turn, little attention is paid to the environmental changes brought about by deforestation and to the monocultures promoted by agribusiness, as well as to the inter-relationships between the causes and consequences of these changes, when dealing with affected human groups at a local scale. In these cases, it is precisely the production of agricultural commodities that has contributed to the reduction of agrobiodiversity and food production by traditional communities, which establishes territorial and environmental conflicts.

Diegues (2000) defends the productive systems of these communities, to the detriment of the productive model of large-scale commercial agriculture, in the sense that they contribute to the conservation of biodiversity itself. He emphasizes that the ancestral management techniques used by them can help in the regeneration of forests and the preservation of animal species in their territories, among other benefits. Based on this reasoning, the author proposes the concept of socio-biodiversity, capable of portraying the variety, both biological and sociocultural, that produces a *continuum* in the environment, favoring the conservation of nature concomitantly with human presence (DIEGUES, 2005).

Mazzetto-Silva (2009) states that until the 1980s more than half of the Brazilian Savannah was composed of areas of natural landscapes managed by traditional groups (natural pasture, extractivism, etc.) that have been "either replaced or cornered by modern monocultures "(MAZZETTO-SILVA, 2009, p.98), which directly reflects on the livelihoods and survival of these communities. Hoefle (2017) considers that the degree of capitalization and the cultural characteristics of different social groups are directly related to environmental ethical aspects in the use/exploration of nature in areas of recent agricultural frontier in Amazonia, pointing to a process of proletarianization of small landowners, who become employees on larger

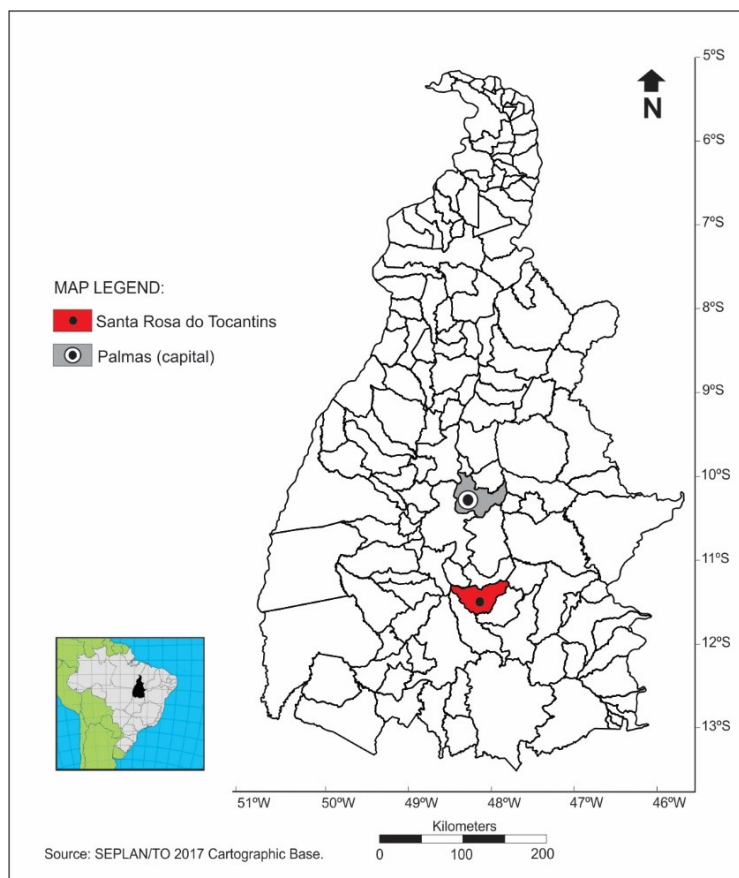
proprieties. It is noted, then, the way which the expansion of agribusiness has changed the life of certain groups in the field in different dimensions.

The set of actions, logistics, productive forces and strategies of land market oriented to the production of agricultural commodities reflects the geopolitical organization of the world dominion of the productive sector of the agribusiness. Currently, one of the frontiers of expansion of this sector is located in Tocantins territory. Using the criteria of the first phase of the so-called border opening in the world of the Savannah, the expansion of agribusiness in Tocantins makes use of cheap land prices; of the incentive of federal and state spheres; and the ideological discourse that the expansion of the sector will be the lever of the economic and social development of the areas in which it is installed (LIMA, 2015).

In terms of environmental changes, the role of deforestation can be highlighted at first. According to Richards (2015), the presence of soybeans causes direct and indirect changes in land use, affecting the land market, occupying areas of former pastures and forcing the opening of new areas for livestock, through deforestation, a productive investment when there is a favorable environment. In the wake of deforestation, other environmental changes in crop areas and in their surroundings, such as those related to energy balance (increase in heat), water flows and contamination by pesticides, and the implications on fauna (for example, scarcity and changes in dietary and reproductive habits) and flora (such as the gradual disappearance of certain native species).

In the wake of the capital (Palmas) and the regional hub of Porto Nacional, from the possibilities of land management, transportation and communication logic and the flatness of the relief, the expansion of agribusiness in the direction of the municipality of Santa Rosa of Tocantins, located in the center-south of the state (Map 1). Thus, this municipality has experienced a significant advance in soybean crops since the beginning of the 2000s.

Map 1 - Location of Santa Rosa do Tocantins (TO)



Org: authors, 2018.

The data provided by the electronic portal of the Laboratory of Image Processing and Geoprocessing (LAPIG) of the Institute of Socio-Environmental Studies (IESA) of the Federal University of Goiás (UFG), through the *Territorial Intelligence* tool (UFG, 2017), show that the municipality of Santa Rosa do Tocantins underwent an accumulated deforestation of 7.64% of its area, between 2008 and 2015, which is the greatest relative value among the municipalities of Tocantins in the period. According to the same source, in the year 2014, the municipality had about 15% of its area covered by soybean crops, standing out among the main areas cultivated in Tocantins.

The municipality of Santa Rosa do Tocantins houses the Quilombola Community Morro de São João, in the western portion of the city, currently with 113 inhabitants in a small nucleus of habitants (village), according to data obtained in the field, between the months of December/2017 and January/2018. It is a contemporary quilombo, in the words of Fiabani (2008), because it constitutes a rural black community whose formation refers to lands donated through will to descendants of the relationship between a priest and a slave in the nineteenth century. The original area, of approximately 21,500 acres, passed through division processes throughout the generations, being the greater part transferred to the hands of farmers outside the community, allowing the installation of properties directed to livestock first, and, more recently, to the cultivation of soybean (CLETO, 2015).

The Quilombola community was formally recognized by the Palmares Cultural Foundation in 2006, the same year that the land regularization process was instituted by the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), according to information on the websites of the respective government organs. Carvalho (2011) points to a series of difficulties encountered by INCRA in Tocantins, related to material and human resources, to evaluate the requests for land regularization of quilombola communities in the state, despite the existence of 44 (forty-four) territories already recognized by the year of 2017. For Monego et al. (2010), the food insecurity prevailing in quilombola communities in Tocantins is closely related to land and environmental problems in the territories. The panorama of the Quilombola Community of Morro de São João reveals both the problems related to the systematic reduction of its territory over the years and the environmental implications of the soybean agribusiness practice, a condition found in other areas in the state (SOUZA, 2016a).

From this context, this article raises the following question: what are the tensions caused by the advance of the agricultural frontier on the

Quilombola Community of Morro de São João, especially regarding territorial, environmental and lifestyle aspects?

## Construction and execution of the research

In methodological terms, the research was developed through different strategies and procedures. The main way of access to information was through systematic fieldwork, with qualitative (semi-structured) interviews being conducted with members of the Quilombola Community of Morro de São João, after approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Goiás (UFG) via Plataforma Brasil. The research, involving different stages, was carried out from April/2017 to March/2018, and fieldwork for the interviews was carried out on December 15, 2017, and on January 6, 14 and 20, 2018.

An orientation topic was elaborated to guide the interviews, taking into account the territorial, environmental and livelihood aspects in the community, with inspiration being taken into the works of Guyot et al (2006) and Barros (2012), which involved similar themes with traditional communities, through qualitative research. The comparative approach between the periods before and after the presence of agribusiness in the quilombola territory, although being the focus of the research from the start, naturally emerged in the content of interviews by the subjects themselves, which ratified the importance of the theme to the community.

Understanding the meaning of the qualitative interview, its limits and potentials, as well as the preparation for its execution, were anchored in the recommendations of Poupart (2008) and Gaskell (2013). The construction of the empirical *corpus* was performed gradually, through the indication of the subjects themselves, with the goal to achieve the widest range possible of profiles/extracts, but also considering as an inclusion criterion the experiences and accumulated knowledge needed to approach the themes.



Based on the empirical saturation principle, when one can perceive the consistency of the central information and the relative redundancy of possible new interviews, a total quantity of 12 subjects was reached (PIRES, 2008; BAUER; AARTS, 2013).

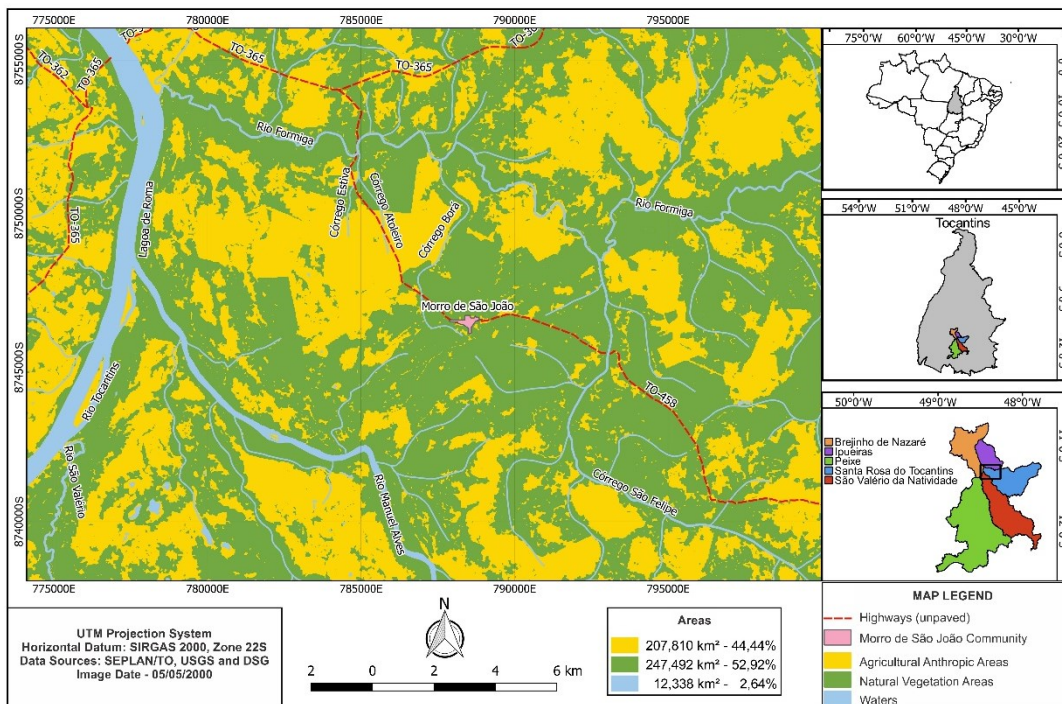
The interviews lasted an average of 41 minutes, and were performed in the interviewees' homes, recorded in audio and then transcribed, following the recommendations of Longhurst (2010). The interpretive text, on the other hand, was elaborated based on the central issues that emerged from the interviews, as Cope (2010) suggests.

Fieldwork was also an opportunity for different observations and memo recording, which inevitably helped in the approach presented. Finally, in order to obtain the spatial representation of the quilombola territory and the alterations suffered regarding the coverage and the use of the soil in the recent period, two maps were elaborated, referring to the years 2000 and 2017, from images of the sensors Landsat 7 and 8 (spatial resolution of 30 m), respectively, by supervised classification in ArqGIS 10.2 software and editing in QGIS software 2.14.10. These maps provide an initial overview, from which the remainder of the discussion continues.

## Effects of agribusiness in the Quilombola Community of Morro de São João

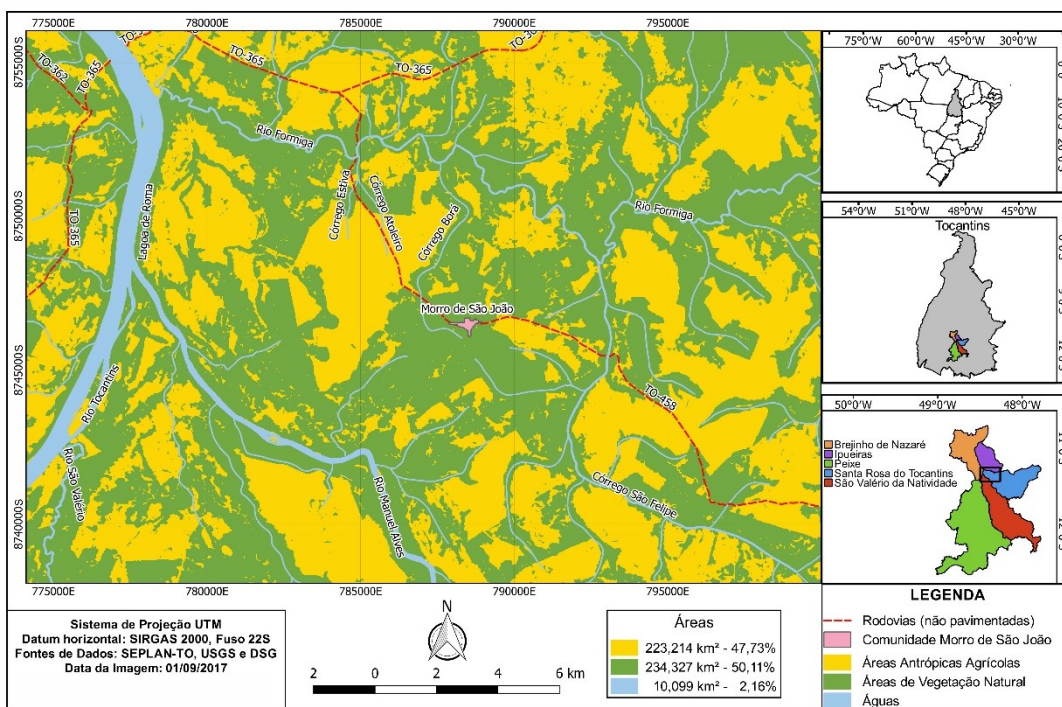
The territory claimed by the community in its land regularization process is delimited by the Tocantins, Manuel Alves and Formiga rivers, as well as the São Felipe stream, as shown in maps 2 and 3. The maps show the main classes of land cover/use in the area in 2000 (2) and 2017 (3), with the Morro de São João village in its center, where the residents are concentrated.

Map 2 - Land use/coverage in the quilombola territory and surrounding areas (2000)



Org: authors, 2018.

Map 3 - Land use/coverage in quilombola territory and surrounding areas (2017)



Org: authors, 2018.

The observation of the maps allows the proper visualization of the changes regarding the suppression of natural vegetation in the Savannah for agricultural use in the area, in an expansion coming from the southeast, from the areas of soy culture already consolidated in the municipality of Santa Rosa do Tocantins. It is perceived the position of the quilombola territory between the mentioned water courses, in the western limit of the municipality, which makes the community progressively cornered by the expansion of the crops, especially in the last years (after 2012, according to information obtained during the field surveys).

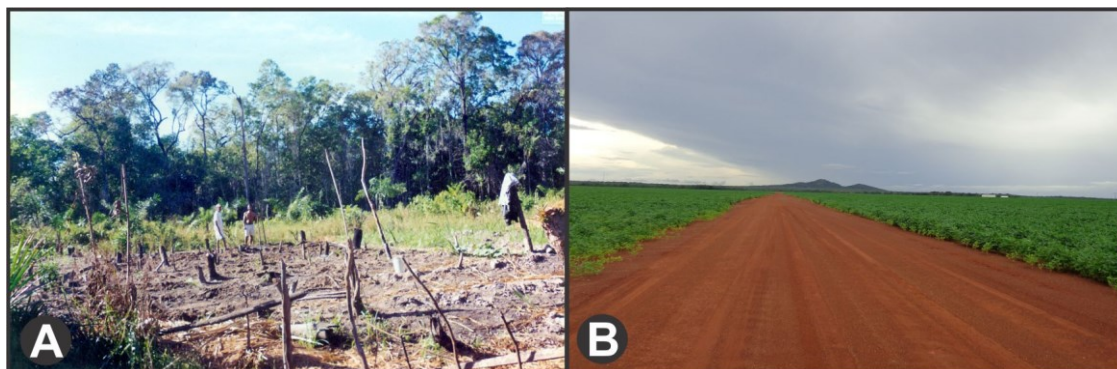
As previously stated, the empirical *corpus* of the interviewees was composed of 12 subjects, being nine men and three women, with an average age of 59 years (distributed between 36 and 92 years of age). Most of them (seven subjects) have an incomplete elementary level, two in higher level education, one is illiterate, one has a complete elementary level and one has a complete secondary level. Among the subjects, only two do not have a degree of kinship within the community, having been aggregated among the residents 23 years ago. The average residence time in the community is 47 years, which indicates a deep relationship and knowledge about the territory and its modifications. Half of the subjects present themselves as farmers, but there are other functions such as public servant, student and merchant. Three people have already gotten their retirement pensions. Only four are still landowners in the area. The average number of residents per house unit among the subjects is 3.3 people, which reflects the departure of young people from the community, mainly to cities in the region, in search of work and study.

The origin of the issue that involves the expansion of agribusiness in this territory is mainly related to the sale of land by the quilombolas, before landholding regularization (not carried out yet by INCRA). The acquisition of land was done by private entities from Tocantins and other states, without the direct intervention of public policies, especially since 2000.

Among the subjects, there were reports of transactions at pretty low prices and exchanges for lower value goods, but also payments not made by buyers, enclosures and documentation of higher areas than those negotiated, which may lead to the practice of land grab. There are many reasons for the sale of land, such as the size of the areas resulting from the division between heirs, the lack of resources for structuring and production on the land, obtaining of retirement pensions and difficulties to access water resources. This situation means that few quilombola families are still in possession of land, especially after the process of agribusiness territorial expansion in the region has been accelerated.

Previous to this scenario, the traditional productive systems existed in consonance with the collective use of the territory by the part of the quilombolas. Among the support pillars of the families were extensive cattle ranching and the so-called slash-and-burn "*No cattle, no land, none of these had value in that time (.)*" (Subj.12), explains a subject. The livestock were raised in a loose way, which happened with the other farming processes, receiving only the marking of each owner, feeding on native grass and fruits of the Savannah. The slash-and-burn crops, for the cultivation of rice, beans, corn, squash, peanuts and manioc, were formed by each family, in a rotation system that guaranteed agrobiodiversity and allowed forest regeneration in the small clearings open in the vegetation (Photos 1A and 1B). In addition to these practices, food strategies also included hunting and fishing, which were abundant in the territory, while the water supply was provided by numerous springs and water-holes scattered in the lodgers of the houses in the village.

Photographs 1A and 1B – Slash-and-burn crops used in the quilombola community, in 2001 (A); Soil farming with the bottom of the hill that gave rise to the denomination of the community, in 2018.



Source: personal collection of A. R. N. (member of the quilombola community) (A); first author (B).

This arrangement, according to the subjects, favored the sharing of food among families, work and community life, in a daily routine that consisted of working in the territory throughout the day, taking advantage of their common goods, returning to the village for resting at night. On the one hand, it was a metabolism or organic relationship capable of setting a certain equilibrium condition and allowing self-sufficiency, using the term derived from Marx by Suertegaray (2017). On the other hand, based on the concept of Diegues (2005), also used by Mazzetto-Silva (2009), this relationship between community and nature expressed a model based on socio-biodiversity, with mutual benefits and relative autonomy.

From the changes observed in the territory, there was the break of this model in the quilombola community. Among the first consequences of the parceling/sale of land and the presence of commercial crops, it is worth noting the impossibility of maintaining the herd and planting crops, because of things like the lack of land, the new need to surround the animals and, therefore, to cultivate pastures, among other things. This new reality ended up reducing the activity of livestock and agriculture among the quilombolas, and today there are few who still hold some cattle and plant their crops. According to one of the subjects, *"in the last three years only rich people has*



*been planting soy. Then we stopped planting crops. Everyone around here, right?! (.)*"(Subj.4).

The suppression of natural vegetation for the introduction of commercial crops has been another severe implication of agribusiness, since it has broader environmental consequences for water, climate and fauna, for example. "[...] *Everything is already sold, everything is toppled, it is weird (.)*" (Subj.2), comments one of the subjects. Interviewees show awareness of many of these relationships, establishing causal links between deforestation and several environmental problems to which they are currently subjected. Even the aspect of the free movement of people through the territory is remembered, since many used alternative paths and trails through the woods to access different places, taking advantage of the shade, an alternative less and less viable.

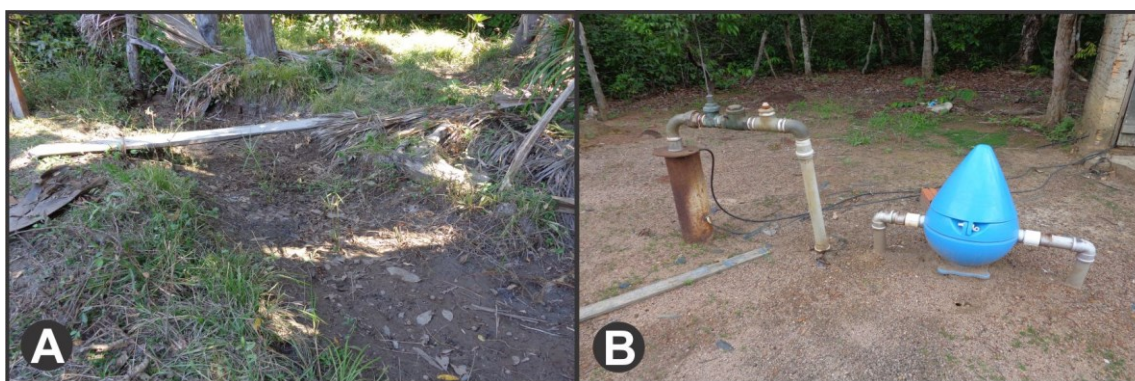
Among the climatic aspects, the subjects indicate the increase of the sensation of heat and the significant reduction of types of atmospheric weather with milder temperatures that were common in the middle of the year, according to reports. These conditions may be at least partially related to the local microclimatic changes promoted by the withdrawal of natural vegetation along the quilombola territory and in the surroundings. The trend observed by the researchers in the field works is a gradual substitution of the materials and techniques used by the quilombolas, such as adobe and taipa, which were replaced by conventional masonry constructions, which contribute to the thermal discomfort.

Regarding the rainfalls, subjects also spoke about changes in their regime/regularity, especially through reports of frequent floods that hit the area in the past, but which are not occurring anymore. This, incidentally, has also been a limiting factor for planting crops in the community. In the words of one subject, "[...] *there were months already under our control, we planned everything from the onset: we will begin to plant in that particular month because it is the rainy season and such, and it will rain from that month until*

*that other month [...]. Nowadays you cannot do this, you end up losing everything [...]* "(Subj.3). In general terms, the situation outlined very much resembles the one shown by Barros (2012), in the case of the Quilombolas of the Kalunga Community in Goiás.

Still regarding water dynamics, the water scarcity is another point always mentioned in the subjects' discourse. Watercourses have been losing their continuity over the last few years, with many drying out completely during the dry season. The old household supplies, which used springs and water-holes with good quality water, were abandoned, due to the exhaustion of these springs. In substitution, piped water to the houses was used through a semi-artesian well drilled in the village, although the residents' disapproval about the quality of the water (brackish) and the excess of chlorine added in the treatment was prevalent (Photographs 2A and 2B). Thus, the residents continue to search for other sources of water for daily consumption (in cisterns, for example), using water only for domestic cleaning, for the most part. "We're drinking from neighboring houses here, because the water is very salty" (Subj.8), explains a subject.

Photographs 2A and 2B - Waterbed (dry) of the Estiva stream, in August/2017 (A); Semi-artesian well and water treatment system with chlorine, in December / 2017.



Source: first author.

Among the smaller watercourses that cross the Quilombola territory we have the Borá, Estiva and Atoleiro streams (as previously shown in maps

2 and 3), but there is concern about the water consumption due to possible contamination by pesticides washed from the crops by surface runoff, denounced by the muddy aspect of the water after the rain episodes. The spraying of these products in crops, by land or aircraft, is a matter of concern to the subjects, who report a bad smell and high death rates of plants such as vegetables, small cornfields and grass around large crops. The atmospheric drift of agrochemicals in this area can be enhanced by the incidence of east/southeast winds, by the Atlantic Tropical Mass on Tocantins, since the community is on the leeward of soybean plantation areas in the municipality (SOUZA, 2016b).

Given this scenario, the reduction of fauna becomes a very probable consequence, beginning with the reduction of habitats and fragmentation of native vegetation. Although there may be interference of predatory hunting and the occurrence of wild fires in the quantitative of the populations, the subjects indicate a sharp decline in the incidence of wild animals sighted in the quilombola territory during the last years, like deer and tapirs. They also report the frequent incursion of outside hunters and the presence of hunting traps, the so-called "trabucos". Concomitantly, the community has been frightened and has been changing its habits over the years, due to the increase in the occurrence of felines (jaguars) in the area, describing innumerable cases in which cows, dogs, pigs and even horses have served as food for these animals, which may be related to the lack of other preys in nature.

The ichthyofauna has also been systematically reduced in the water courses that drain the quilombola territory, and the subjects report the disappearance of some species of fish, such as surubim, fidalgo, traíra, jaú, piabanha and iuiu. Possible reasons include predatory fishing, contamination of waters by pesticides, construction of hydroelectric dams in the Tocantins river basin, and water shortages, especially in small watercourses. The quilombolas soon perceived the gradual reduction of the fishing habits in the



community, practice that is now only occasional and performed in distant places.

The medicinal use of plants and wild fruits for food also integrates the knowledge and traditions of the quilombola community, being a common practice among the subjects interviewed and their families. However, there are also reports of a decrease in the occurrence of certain varieties within the territory, such as baru, sucupira, mangaba, murici and puçá. As stated by the subjects, medicinal plants found in areas of ciliary vegetation are still easier to obtain in nature, due to the mandatory maintenance of fluvial permanent preservation areas (PPA). However, those typical of environments and land used for crops plantations have been suppressed along with the rest of the vegetation.

According to one of the subjects, "[...] *we are living from the supermarkets*" (Subj.2). These words, reproduced from one of the interviews, summarize the whole set of changes in relation to the ways of life, the routine, the work and the sources of food and water, among the quilombolas of Morro de São João, instituted from the presence of the agribusiness in their territory. The metabolism with the nature is broken, requiring progressive adaptations regarding the different habits and traditions, as well as those verified in other traditional communities, such as the cases portrayed by Guyot et al (2006), Key Chain (2010) and Barbosa and Camenietzki (2011). Box 1 below presents the main changes observed in the community and addressed in the article, highlighting the link between the different dimensions.

**Box 1** - Summary of the conditions before and after the presence of agribusiness in the territory of the Morro de São João Quilombola Community

Dimension	Conditions prior to the presence of agribusiness in the Quilombola territory	Conditions after the presence of agribusiness near the quilombola territory
Territorial	Free/collective use of territory; Absence of fences and internal boundaries; Lack of landownership documents.	Land disintegration, limited/private use of land; Presence of fences in the internal currencies; Organization of land documents.
Environmental	Larger areas of natural vegetation (forest, savannah); Grass native as pasture; Widespread water availability (springs and rivers); Abundance of wildlife and ichthyofauna; Low use of agrochemicals (quilombolas); Rare sightings and occurrences involving felines; Cooler air temperature and frequent cold sensation; Increased abundance and regularity of rainfall; Facility to find variety of medicinal plants in the natural vegetation.	Smaller areas of natural vegetation (forest, savannah); Cultured pastures (exotic species); Water scarcity (springs and rivers); Reduction of wildlife and ichthyofauna; Extensive use of agrochemicals (soybean farmers); Frequent sightings and occurrences involving felines; Higher air temperature and frequent heat sensation; Less abundance and irregularity of rainfall; Difficulty finding certain medicinal plants in the natural vegetation.
Way of life	Habit of slash-and-burn planting; Self-sustaining agriculture and sale of agricultural surplus; Plenty of loose animal husbandry (cattle, swine and poultry); Household water supply via water holes; Wide use of natural remedies; Habit of incursions in the forests to hunt; Frequent fisheries in close proximity; Use of traditional building materials and techniques (clay, wood, palm trees).	Abandonment of the slash-and-burn planting; Acquisition of food at local retail; Few animal husbandry (cattle, swine and birds) fenced/confined; Household water supply via semi-artesian wells and plumbing (chlorinated water); Limited use of natural remedies; Use of hunting traps ("trabucos"); Occasional fisheries and in more distant places; Gradual replacement by conventional building materials and techniques.

Org: authors, 2018. Source: field work, 2018.

Taking the ideas of Zhouri and Laschefski (2010) as a reference, it is noted that the agribusiness implications in the study area establish environmental conflicts of a territorial, spatial and distributive nature. Territorial, due to the overlapping of interests, albeit for very different

reasons, over the same area. Space, due to the clear propagation of the damage caused, by the free circulation of water, air and fauna. Distributive, due to the increasing difficulties of access to the common goods of nature, such as potable water, although there are no irrigated agriculture projects in the area, which could potentially aggravate the problems of this community.

Despite the theoretical exposition of the conflict borrowed by Zhouri and Laschefski (2010), the relationship of subordination and the divergences between quilombolas and farmers are often veiled, through strategies of approach by the way of work (hiring temporary workers in the community), housing donations and sponsorship of religious celebrations by the second group. There is a certain passivity, in addition to a declared humility among the community members, which often appears in interviews.

It is notorious that the financial imbalance and access to legal mechanisms for property protection between the two groups tends to favor such subordination. However, although there is dissatisfaction with the changes experienced and concern about the future of the community, the subjects appear to be rooted in their territory: "[...] *as long as I am still capable of walking, making my own food, I will not leave here. I think it is very good* (.) (Subj.9), words that express the tone of resistance of the Morro de São João Quilombola Association.

The reflections presented clarify the following: the expansion of agribusiness, in Tocantins, in general, and around the Morro de São João Quilombola Association in particular, includes a geopolitical status, which is called, on a world scale, financialization of food production; at the national level, the power pact between the State and the rural sector; and on the regional and local scales, the enterprise of an economy whose unfolding is the environmental injustice and the fragmentation of the original identities.

However, as seen in the field - and through the conversations and interviews - although with internal conflicts, there is an organization of a resilient power arc in which is found the presence of leaders of social

movements and academic sectors of the university. It is also observed that the organization of the resistance includes, on the one hand, the ideological clash, in which landowners linked to agribusiness try to restrict the organization by offering gifts to leaders and pressure; on the other hand, the discourse that the sense of belonging of the subjects in the community, their cultural affiliation and their sociability should be the premise of life that sustains the struggle.

The territorial interpretation of quilombola communities has been, in contemporary Brazilian geography, a way of broadening the understanding of power and its links with subjects and, especially from the contributions of geographers such as Haesbaert (1997) and Porto-Gonçalves (2004). their ways of life. It is also observed in authors such as Almeida (2009) and Mendonça (2004), among others, a premise: every territorial action process, involving concrete subjects, incites positions, resistances, political and solidarity articulations within the segments that are attacked and pressed. In many cases, as seen in the Morro de São João Quilombola Community, the organization starts from its own community association (Photographs 3A and 3B) - from articulation with the political field and from discernment of problems to cultural affirmation, devoting that all the struggles must speak the voice of life.

Photographs 3A and 3B - Board with logo at the headquarters of the Morro de São João Quilombola Association in August/2017 (A); Assembly of the Morro de São João Quilombola Association, in January / 2018 (B).



Photographs of the first author (A and B).

## Final Considerations

At the end of this article, it is perceived that several tensions caused by the advance of the agricultural frontier over the quilombola community in focus are presented in different dimensions: territorial issues are the first to be manifested, involving the slowness of land regularization and transfer of land for the agribusiness sector; from the implantation of a new productive logic through the great commercial crops, the several environmental problems that involve especially water, air and biota; and finally, the community's own way of life, including its knowledges and tasks, ends up compromised. This articulation demonstrates the very complexity of material and symbolic life, amplifying the role of community organization, its resistance and struggle for land, nature and culture.

However, addressing the conflicts between agribusiness and traditional communities in Brazil today implies considering not only the complexity of particular cases, such as the one shown here, but above all the situation unfavorable to the guarantee of the rights conquered by these people. In a time when the agribusiness sector is organized in defense of the private ownership of land and the free exploitation of nature by capital, together with other conservative wings of society, the possibility of reproduction of the whole socio-biodiversity in the country is put into question.

At the academic level, especially in the field of Geography, the challenges for a solidary approach to the subject stand out, extending the perspectives for the elucidation of the facts and phenomena in question, together with the possibility of mutual learning between the different disciplines and currents. In this respect, the territorial and environmental problems are intertwined, becoming concretely evident in the daily life.

From the point of view of traditional communities, it is not a matter of idealizing the peasant way of life, exempting the subjects from their

responsibilities, but recognizing their protagonism, their necessary self-criticism and their positioning in the face of the complex circumstances that surround their past, present and future. The sense of empiricism, notable for the fieldwork, is prodigal in revealing the richness of connections and the innumerable individual and collective contradictions that end up designing the situation of a people seeking to secure their own space and, ultimately, their existence.

Finally, in view of the quantity of themes that emerge from the relationship between territory and environment in the proposed framework, some initiatives are highlighted in terms of more detailed field research, in an interconnected and cooperative way, such as: deepening knowledge about the implications of agribusiness (microclimate formation and radiation balance), water (contamination by pesticides, scarcity and management), fauna and flora (behavior in face of changes in habitats and extinction of populations), the social and economic structure (detailing of the land situation, working conditions and income, access to public policies of infrastructure, health, education and housing), and culture (food, daily life, traditions and religiosity). It refers, in this case, to a broad agenda, both political and scientific, with which we are confronted.

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