

MIGRATION AND DISPERSION: TERRITORIAL PATTERNS CHANGE IN THE URBAN - RURAL FRINGE IN SANTA CATARINA STATE, BRAZIL

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Abstract

In 2003, the State Government of Santa Catarina State, Brazil, launched a new decentralized administrative network, aiming to balance development in different regions of the state and to avoid a significant decrease of population in small and medium cities of the hinterland with a strong migration towards the seaboard's cities. Nevertheless this action was not followed by an appropriate political and institutional framework linked to strategic goals for the vitality in most regions of the State. Those strategies should involve the creation of structures: to reproduce the local workforce, to improve the capital circulation system, to improve the quality of people's livelihood, for the sustainable use of the environment, to inter institutional cooperation, among other things. Within this context, this work sought to follow the development of the Far West Region of the Santa Catarina State in the last twenty years, marked by a complexity of urban-rural interactions, an important urban dispersion process and slight population shrinkage. In this region a "periurbanization" process arose creating newly dispersed urban settlements within the rural environment, with an unplanned and diffuse morphology developed by unconnected stakeholders. This paper's aim is to analyze the change in territorial patterns and its effects due to both political and socioeconomic factors, and point out weakness and gaps that make the regional balance difficult (in terms of population density, infrastructure and economic issues) and its socioeconomic equity.

1. Introduction

The urban and rural are constant objects of study in the social sciences due to contemporary social changes. Consequently, the rural and urban concepts have had a mutant character in the last fifty years. If in the 1950s agricultural activity was needed in the countryside and the city was characterized by the existence of industrial activities and services; in the 1960s and 1970s the rural appears as the territory which will house an irreversible urbanization, confirming the fate of an urban-rural continuum (Mathieu *apud* Bernieri, 2002, p. 23). In the 1980s, the economic paradigm shifted due to globalization and brought ambiguity to urban and rural concepts. On the one hand it reinforced the concept of the rural through their productive and environmental characteristics and the local/global debate encouraged an endogenous development, while the rural concept seeks to mitigate differences with the city within a "productive liberalism" (Bernieri, 2002).

In this context, this article seeks a reinterpretation of the concepts of the urban and rural, trying to characterize the process of territorial occupation and structuring of the urban network of the Far West of the State of Santa Catarina region, Brazil. This study may provide an opportunity to

discuss topics of more general scope as the "urban sprawl" and the "demographic mobility" in its different manifestations and scales.

The Far West of Santa Catarina houses an economic dynamism focused in agriculture and agribusiness (swine, poultry and dairy cattle) and their related productive chains, as well as an increasing expansion of the tertiary sector, especially polarized by cities such as São Miguel do Oeste and Dionísio Cerqueira (Figure 1). The dynamics of economic output in this region are characterized by the interdependence between the urban and rural, and between family farms and agribusiness. Here we will report specifically the case of the city of São Miguel do Oeste and municipalities polarized by it. The effects of the intensification of the urban-rural interaction are seen on the reorganization of activities and its consequence on both, on the urban spatial restructuring and on the composition of the regional network of cities, causing structural changes in the intra-urban and interurban scale as well in the rural environment.



Figure 1 Urban-Rural diffuse landscape in São Miguel do Oeste, Santa Catarina, Brazil. Foto: Max Zuffo, Panoramio Google

2. Diffuse Periurbanization: building a concept

Nowadays, regional planning science overpasses the urban-rural divide. One of the most obvious aspects of this bridge in contemporary capitalist society are the landscapes of urban and metropolitan edges, marked by the unbounded extension of the urban-rural territory developed as a model that combines functions and is able to reorganize the territory, producing these different territorial contexts within the globalization and economic neo-liberalism logic (Baldini, 2008).

Apart from this dichotomy, the center-periphery model no longer meets the dynamic construction of the territories that unfold nowadays in urban fringes. Today, heterogeneous, expansive and diffuse territorial structures that go beyond legal urban perimeters are driven by an economic policy that facilitates industrial dispersion and the strengthening of a higher tertiary beyond the urbanized territory. In this context the urban, periurban or metropolitan landscape becomes dominated by large enterprises that will structure the main socio-spatial relationships, many times overwhelming actions of State and local solidarity networks (Queiroga, 2004).

Thus, the construction of an analytical structure of space "extra-urban" (peripheral, "rural-urban" or even metropolitan) requires an understanding of both the multiple connections that insert the different territories within the context of a globalized world, and the understanding of different forms

that stakeholders build and establish their dialogues with the natural, rural and urban world. Specifically, the marks of the contemporary processes of change in urban networks in Southern Brazil arouse particular interest, since its conformation results from a peculiar way as the urban agglomerations and productive structures have been built in the region.

The extensive study of Reis Filho (2006) on the characteristics of urban sprawl in São Paulo can be a starting point for an understanding of the political-economic and infrastructural conditions that have defined the territorial profile of the cities of south-central Brazil and in particular the southern region, which includes the micro-region of São Miguel do Oeste. In that study, Reis Filho shows that the expansion of areas "perimetropolitanas" have been reorganized on the basis of communication networks, especially the mobility system with the creation of new automotive arteries as well as increasing the efficiency of those already existing.

The new urban networks settings are no longer only guided by the periphery-center duality, but also between "peripheries", which allows "inter-regional" accessibility. The immediate consequence is the regionalization of the labor market and the decentralization of industrial plants, followed by residential and tertiary decentralization. This model also implies a mix and fusion of economic functions and activities in the related reorganization of the rural and urban (Baldini, 2008). Although traditionally the city is moving forward and penetrating the rural territory, modifying its original agricultural vocation, cases should be noted where depopulation induced a resumption of urban areas with agricultural functions¹.

Another important approach needed in this argumentation are the concepts of "diffused city" and "urban sprawl". The notion of "diffuse city" was defined to qualify peri-urban areas of the Italian region of Veneto by Francesco Indovina in 1990. Since then, the term has been appropriated by various authors to characterize different situations (Grosjean, 2010). Grosjean (2010) proposes possible and significant territorial characteristics that can suit link the use of the terms "dispersion and diffusion" to the complex structures that define them.

A first aspect noted by the same author relates to the exponential spread of mobility and communication in the regional space, which takes away the dominant aspect of polarization of the urban centers. The second point is the lack of planning on this scale (which can also indicate the absence of the State) and the great spatial fragmentation, resulting in a territory built according to different and competitive rationales. The third important feature highlighted in the "urban diffuse territories" is the absence of centrality able to organize displacements and infrastructure. This leads to the fourth point, which is the isotropy of the network with multidirectional relationships. Finally, the character of low density on land use, showed by different configurations and functional accommodation expressed on territory by the urban-rural mix (Grosjean, 2010).

3. Santa Catarina – between urban sprawl, rural shrinkage and rural industrialization

Regarding its process of colonization, the State of Santa Catarina State is unique in Brazil, showing a balanced net of cities and well shared spatial distribution of the population up until the last decades of the last century. Mainly due its fragmented geography, the State of Santa Catarina had an occupation pattern characterized by a "small proprieties rural structure" and by an absence of an

¹ Flaminia Paddeu (Encouraging urban agriculture: land-use planning innovations in Detroit) and Joe Schilling (Emerging Networks of Urban Greening NGOs in Shrinking Cities) papers presented at City Futures, Paris, 2014, showing as new urban agriculture movements are taking care of shrinking areas in USA.

“urban pole” with a broader coverage. Within this structure, independent and diversified economic regions emerged through the State territory (Siebert, 1996).

Despite this welcome economic diversification, the lack of roads infrastructure and the geoeconomics fragmentation kept the Santa Catarina cities isolated from the more dynamic centers of the country until the middle of the 20th century. By this date the development of the road system in the State had increased the connection between West and East, including in the State’s economic flows areas previously excluded, and also facilitating the population flows. Road improvements along the coast also changed the economic State trends, pushing city developments by a reinforcement of the tertiary economic sector (Pereira, 2003) and increasing the tourist flow to the seaboard, impacting the cultural and behavioral local patterns.

The significant migration towards the seaboard also caused an important decay of small scale agriculture in the centre-west (Pereira, 2003) and expanded the coastal cities periphery towards rural areas. On the other hand, it allowed a good diversification of productive activities that embraced several successful local productive arrangements within the State (Turnes, 2008).

Due to concerns about the migration towards the seaboard, in 2003, the State Government launched a new decentralized administrative network, aiming to balance development in different regions of the state and to avoid the significant decrease of population in small and medium cities in the hinterland. However this action was not followed by an appropriate political and institutional framework able to link economic strategic goals to spatial aims that would rebalance territorial occupation, increasing the economic vitality of the region with a better share of educational, cultural, leisure and basic health services (Moraes, 2006).

In this context, different processes promoted by both the private sector and the State, led to the expansion of the cities network, and metropolization process occurred in Santa Catarina regions. Near the Atlantic Coast, where the economic dynamic was stronger, the process was characterized by a socio-spatial structure with the emergence of bigger urban poles, and with more complex urban-rural interactions, contrasting dynamic economic regions and shrinking rural regions. Away from the coast in the west of the State, economic issues delayed urban development while maintaining the primarily rural economic base, reducing population growth and increasing migrations index (Siqueira, 2010).

In spite of this delay, the less dynamic regions such as those in the west, displayed in the last three decades a steady economic performance, due mainly to the major agro-industries of the State. Since the 1980s, the neoliberal national policies have changed the economic scenario for the small and familiar agricultural producers of Santa Catarina. , since they were not prepared for the new productivity levels (Rodolfo and Teixeira, 2011). At the same time, the growth of the agro-industries had a positive economic performance.

Those economic changes due to a “productive modernization” have induced important changes in the populational index in the west. Singer (1990) relates strong migration flows due to new capitalist order, where a share of the inhabitants has their capital influx lost and migrate to new opportunities in more dynamic regions. This process was observed clearly in the west of Santa Catarina, where many authors identified a populational shrinkage due to the relationship between family agriculture and agro industrial complexes (Silva *et al*, 2003 and Mattei e Alves *apud* Rodolfo and Teixeira, 2011).

This scenario changed the previous well-structured network of cities, creating new urban settlements close to large cities, in its limits and near major roads, as a transition border between the urban and rural environment. Within this context, a new environment emerged transforming the urban-rural edge in an unplanned and diffuse urban territory, disconnected from basic infrastructure offer, and developed by disconnected stakeholders. The new developments had several impacts (social, economic and environmental) on the previous rural and urban (peripheral) communities due to the lack

of a spatial restructuring able to promote better tertiary activities, which could be polarized by basic urban services.

4. The Far West of Santa Catarina: a peculiar region

The Far West of Santa Catarina is a peculiar region in the country due to its colonization process, its current economy and to its urban network configuration. This urban network consists of 19 small towns (under 40,000 inhabitants) and low levels of urbanization (Figure 2 and 3). According to the IBGE (2010), 13 of these municipalities have the majority of the population in rural areas. The industrial and service sectors have significant importance in some cities, and the predominance of small plots in rural areas differentiates this agricultural region from others in the country dominated by extensive land proprieties.

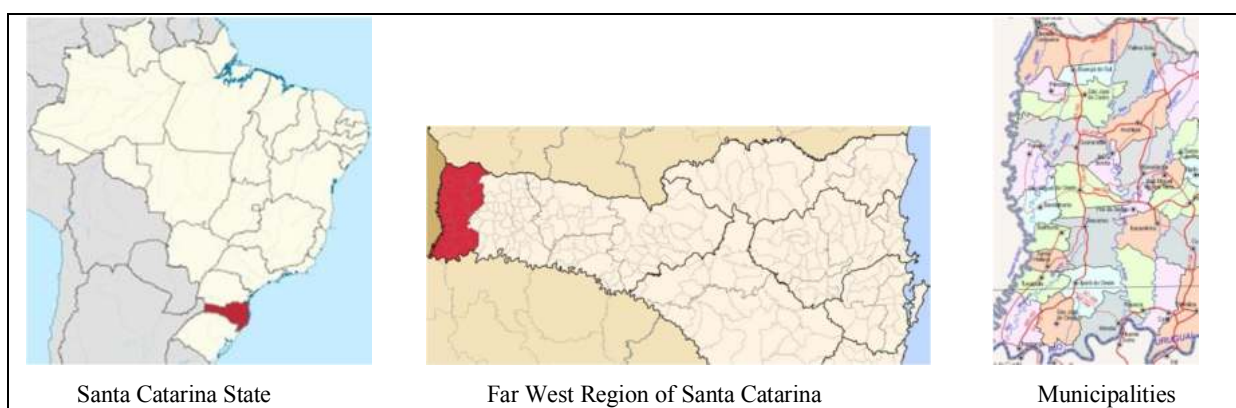


Figure 2 – Far West Region of Santa Catarina State. Source: fecam.org.br

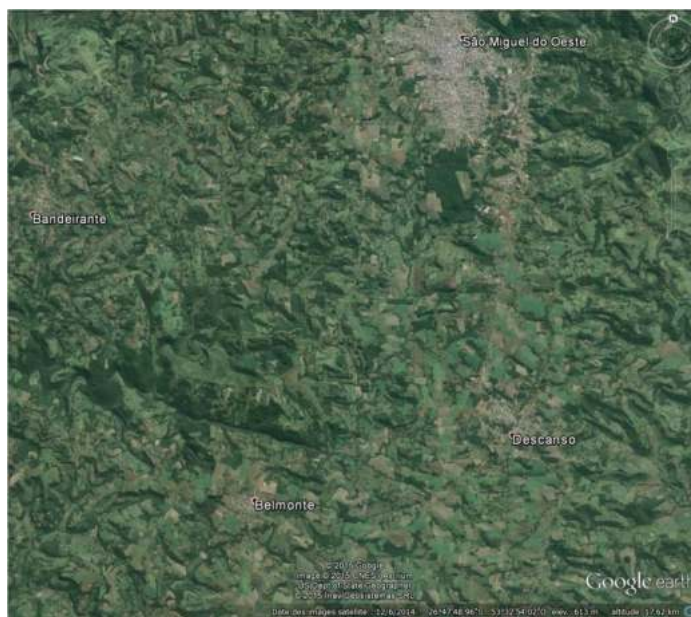


Figure 3 – São Miguel do Oeste City and satellites cities. Google Earth, 2015

Until the 1940s, the region was predominantly used as farms for livestock that supplied the regions of Paraná, Minas Gerais and São Paulo. In that decade, subdivisions and big estates appeared due to a land granting process started in the nineteenth century to farmers willing to promote the occupation of this region of the country. Also, in that decade, a “corporate colonization” began with the installation of small farms, modifying the peasant way of life in the region (Bavaresco et al, 2013).

Moreira and Medeiros (2006) report that colonizing corporations of that period created a land structure in which each property was usually composed of lots sized at most thirty hectares and counting on the participation of members of the family of settlers in territorial planning. The production process was carried out by settler, itinerant or nomadic agriculture (a land rotation system). Production for family subsistence was the priority; later the production surplus was exchanged with local home business for other products unable to be produced on the farm, thus creating a dependency with the urban merchant. As the exchanges were not paid in money, the farmer had a system of credit or debit sales, with prices dictated by the merchant. So began the dependency between the farmer and the merchant, between the rural and the urban.

At the end of the 1960s, agribusiness multinationals (seeds, pesticides and machines) began to be present in the countryside, marking the start of a modernization process in the Far West of Santa Catarina State. The date is also marked by the indebtedness of small producers seeking to follow this modernization investing in inputs. In the following decade agribusiness created a small producer dependency system (called "integration system") where the costs of the inputs from big enterprises was deducted from the sale of the final raw products (pigs, wheat and soy) for the same enterprises, dissolving the self-sufficient mode of production adopted in colonization (CEAG / SC, 1980, p. 74 *apud* Bavaresco, 2003).

So, in this period began a gradual change that brought settlers of small properties close to so called “modern industries,” a new, more urban, reality, with technological, mechanical and informational innovations, and waged labor. (Saquet, 2010). Abramovay refers to this reality as the "New Rural", where many non-traditional activities are carried out in the countryside, such as industries producing new agricultural inputs, services and entertainment activities. Thus, the countryside is no longer linked only to agriculture, and more and more inhabitants are binding on the tertiary activities (Abramovay *apud* Endlich, 2010), breaking the countryside traditional features linked to specific productive relationships, industry at artisanal stage, incipient division of labor, population dispersion, neighborly relations and identity in the villages and districts.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that the development of agribusiness played an important role in the regional working force development and on the cities network organization (Fujita et al, 2002), because they have articulated a productive chain that includes several branches: logistics, mechanical engineering, furniture, packaging, cold rooms, biotechnology, equipment and others. On the other hand, nowadays the relationship between the small producer and agribusiness is that this is the only access to the international market. As this is a very limited access, the producer has become a hostage of the internal market. Their alternative for overcoming this economic insecurity is looking to the urban market where they will find more dynamic labor conditions.

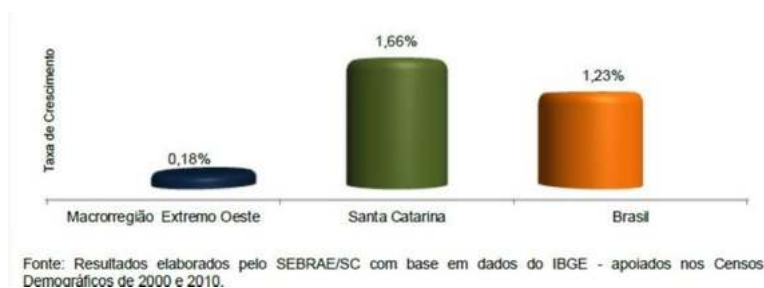


Figure 4 – average population growth index.
Source: SEBRAE, 2013

This may explain the population reduction in the region, where the population growth index is quite below the national and State average. In the last fifteen years, many municipalities have lost population or stagnate. Between 2000 and 2010, while the population in Santa Catarina State grew 1.66%, in the Far West of the State growth was only 0.18% (Figure 4) (IBGE, 2010). The mechanization of agriculture, added to the loss of rural land to urban areas are possible reasons for the population stagnation in the region. In spite of not many new enterprises are created between 2006 and 2011, the number of jobs growth significantly. At the same time, data from 2010 shows a bigger participation of rural dwellers in the regional economy (Figure 5 and 6). These observations may indicate also that a share of rural dwellers is actually working in urban (transformation industry, services or commerce) jobs or indicate that urban workers have been seeking the countryside for housing.

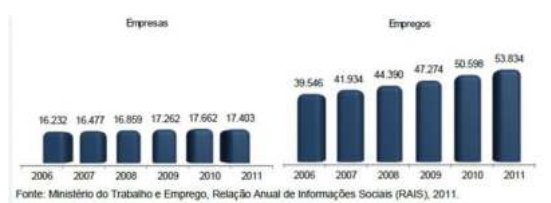


Figure 5 – Evolution of Jobs and Companies

Source: SEBRAE, 2013

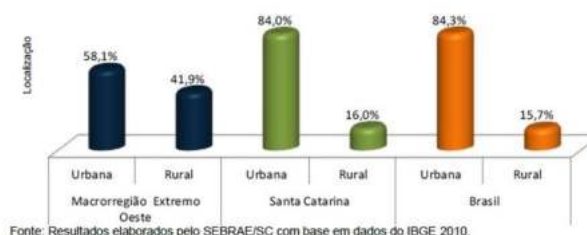


Figure 6 – IGP participation related to housing localization –Urban-Rural

Source: SEBRAE, 2013

5. The Current Urban-Rural Relationship in Far West Region of Santa Catarina

In the last half century there were important changes in Brazilian cities, at the intra-urban level as well as in the urban network, with an expansion in the growth rate and the number of cities. This reality promoted the redefinition of some roles, since there is a concentration of functions in some cities while others have lost functions due a new technical, social and territorial division of labor within a diverse and complex urban network (Bernadelli, 2010).

Specifically in the Far West of Santa Catarina, some cities have had a gradual increase in industrial activities as well as a diversification of trade, boosting the consolidation of urban centers as São Miguel do Oeste, the largest city in the region with 88.31% of its 36,306 inhabitants in urban areas (IBGE, 2010). However, the region's economy is still dependent on the primary sector -

agriculture - and its agro-industrial local value chain. 1991 data (IBGE, 1991) shows how this region is marked by small farmers, where 75.19% of farms have between ten to twenty hectares, favoring the occupation of a regional work force in rural areas.

Nevertheless, since the 1980s, the demand for rural labor has decreased due to the increasing modernization of agriculture, industrialization and urbanization. This low labor demand also instigated a part of the rural population to migrate to larger centers in other regions, or to seek insertion in the urban environment through commercial and services jobs (Veloso et al, 2005). In this context, the urban network of the Far West of Santa Catarina is currently marked by the relationships established between the small cities (that arose as complementary to them) and between cities and their now diversified countryside.

In Brazil, the official “urban condition” is linked to legal, economic and political criteria. The municipalities have autonomy to define the physical limits of their urban areas by their own criteria. As municipal taxes in Brazil are collected in urban or urban expansion areas, and the federal taxes in rural areas, it is easy to conclude that the expansion of the urban area increases municipal tax revenues. However for a certain area be considered urban the municipality has to provide infrastructure facilities, such as: I - curb or pavement, with rainwater channeling; II - a water supply; III - sanitary sewage systems; IV - a public lighting network; V - a primary school or health center within a maximum of three kilometers. (Federal Law n° 5172 of October 25, 1966 - Article 32, paragraph 1). Thus, by extending the areas of urbanization, the municipal power often causes the retraction and disqualification of rural areas, as these services are denied to rural conditions. (Wanderley, 2009). Specifically in the Far West of Santa Catarina, urban-rural relations with asymmetries and discontinuities in supposed complementary relationships can be observed.

These asymmetries can be highlighted as opposing the housing conditions of the rural workers of small farms with the new real estate projects aimed at the middle and upper class, which accentuate the dispersion of industries, retail and services between small towns and countryside. However, in spite of many Government initiatives aiming to keep the “family farmers” on their land, an illegal process of land subdivision aiming to expand urbanization is going on in the region along with the municipality's complicity. The former thirty hectares colonial estates in rural areas began to be sold to major real estate corporations and changed to second leisure homes for the economic upper classes, even though the Federal rural legislation allows subdivisions for estates in rural areas for urban land use, only in exceptional cases².

While decent housing, with access to all basic public services, is only recently and gradually being achieved by the rural population through specific governmental housing programs (Sordi, 2006), the occupation of non-urban areas by projects with good infrastructure is indicative of an increased presence in rural areas of urban-origin residents. This may indicate an increase in the capacity of rural areas to provide comfortable living conditions, including so-called "modern amenities" (Wanderley, 2009). Also, the rural communities may benefit from the dispersion of urban activities in the countryside, since the new links between the urban and rural increase the access to jobs, goods and services within rural areas. The development of these new net of services tends to reflect the demands

² Instrução Incra n° 17-B - 22/12/80: The land subdivisions with urban purposes, outside the city limits must have the prior consent of INCRA (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform) and can only be approved if the area is a) by their characteristics and situation, are opportune for the location of community services in rural areas surrounding (b) of urban expansion or specific urbanization defined by the Master Plan or regulatory Municipal Laws (c) officially declared a tourist area or characterized as a health resort or seaside, (d) has demonstrably lost their productive characteristics, making uneconomical its agricultural use. This proof must be made through report signed by a qualified technician submitted by the owner or by the Municipality, being the INCRA to investigate its veracity (Silva, 2012. p. 326).

of agricultural households indispensable for their families to remain in the countryside such as electricity, water systems, and recently, an internet connection.

In the studied region, due to the proximity of the rural and urban areas, and due the multiplicity of small towns, there is a strong regional interconnection between rural and urban spaces, facilitating a “regional” structure of life, contributing to setting up a different conception of distinguishing rural and urban spaces. In this sense, as observed in our field study, a holiday home for leisure, a new road in the countryside, a mall along this road, are elements of a “new urban fabric” that is not restricted solely to the built-up area of the city.

6. Conclusion

Not different from several regions in Brazil and around the world, the bigger and growing cities keep attracting rural populations away from low paid agricultural jobs and from a precarious lifestyle. Notwithstanding, several infrastructural improvements and the diversification of activities in the urban-rural fringe generates a “counterurbanization” of population as wealthy urban dwellers choose to live in rural areas around the cities and commute to work.

In the region of São Miguel do Oeste, this regional dynamic is evident, and it is controlled by four main stakeholders, which do not always share common goals.

Firstly, there is the Federal and State Governments who promote diverse programs such as housing, production (qualification and product diversification, encouraging agro-ecology and rural tourism) and infrastructure for rural residents, in order to avoid rural-urban migration.

The Municipality appears as a second actor, concerned more about the expansion of the urban context for increased tax collection. Thereby, municipal laws aimed at simplifying the implementation of projects in rural areas (often dodging federal laws), ends up changing the character of the area and making room for a scattering of urban activities in rural areas.

Thirdly, there is the agribusiness, which promotes the dispersion of industries in rural areas. On the one hand the agribusiness expansion brings new employment opportunities and development for defined areas; on the other hand it submits the small agricultural producer to an economic dependence that encourages rural-urban migration.

Finally, the real estate market, which seeks to take advantage of the infrastructure implementation by the government and industrial dispersion in the countryside, buying agricultural land and turning it into leisure residences for the more privileged classes. Thus it acts both in stimulating rural-urban migration, as in the urban-rural one.

The end result of the convergence of actors seems to be especially perverse with small-scale agriculture, as local political and economic forces do not create appropriate strategies that could increase and facilitate their rural activity as well their everyday life quality, stronger enough to avoid rural workers migration. On the other hand, Federal government programs of productive diversification and a more balanced and widespread distribution of basic services (education, health, and infrastructure) by the municipalities of the region could place the small farmer as a potential key element for regional development in a changing economy.

Therefore, a preliminary analysis shows that it is essential to improve the quality of life for family farmers who are reliant on public policies aimed at expanding the countryside citizenship beside policies for productive diversification. Making attractive and qualified “periurban” areas, with decent homes and adequate public services can transform the region as a whole, boosting the economy and environmental sustainability. Today this reality is made possible by the mobility and accessibility to the countryside. One should not however consider those improvements as a strategy to requalify

the rural, because the choice of country life should not mean the renunciation of goods and services, which were previously identified as urban.

Nowadays, to develop possibilities in territorial planning and management policies it is important to understand territorial structures and their key components. The policies have to deal with the socio-economic and territorial complexity of rural and urban spaces, intertwined in urban and metropolitan fringes. This article sought this understanding through the observation of territorial relations, which can be references in the constitution of new development paradigms of urban areas on the countryside and on the periphery of large Brazilian cities and metropolises.

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