

Scenes and scenarios of a Quilombola community in the Brazilian amazon: Between culture and inequities

Cenas e cenários de uma comunidade Quilombola na amazônia Brasileira: Entre cultura e iniquidades

Escenas y escenarios de una comunidad Quilombola en la amazonía Brasileña: Entre la cultura y las inequidades

RESUMO

Objetivo: caracterizar questões socioambientais de uma comunidade quilombola no estado do Pará, na Amazônia Brasileira durante a pandemia da COVID-19. Método: Estudo etnográfico, descritivo a partir de abordagem qualitativa e baseada em roteiros, diário de campo e antropologia visual a fim de caracterizar o ambiente e suas dinâmicas a partir dos registros fotográficos do cenário durante a pandemia. Ocorreu na comunidade quilombola do Baixo e Médio Itacuruçá, pertencente ao território das ilhas de Abaetetuba, e ocorreu nos em julho de 2021. Resultados: Foram realizados 340 registros fotográficos que destacam as características culturais do grupo e da região atreladas aos impactos sociais advindos das intervenções do modelo econômico hegemônico e identificados a partir da mobilidade, trabalho, lazer, alimentação e ambiente. Conclusão: Não foram observadas mudanças significativas no modo de vida evidenciadas pelas inserções dos protocolos sanitários frente à COVID-19, mas identificou-se a acentuação das iniquidades sociais em virtude do acesso geográfico.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Populações Vulneráveis; Quilombolas; População rural; Cultura; Iniquidades em saúde.

ABSTRACT

It aims to characterize socio-environmental issues of a quilombola community in the state of Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ethnographic study, descriptive from a qualitative approach based on scripts, field diary and visual anthropology in order to characterize the environment and its dynamics from the photographic records of the scenario during the pandemic. A total of 340 photographic records were made that highlight the cultural characteristics of the group and the region related to the social impacts arising from the interventions of the hegemonic economic model and identified from mobility, work, leisure, food and the environment. No significant changes in the way of life were observed evidenced by the insertion of the sanitary protocols in front of COVID-19, but the accentuation of social inequities was identified.

DESCRIPTORS: Vulnerable Populations; Maroons; Rural population; Culture; Health inequities.

RESUMEN

El objetivo es caracterizar las cuestiones socioambientales de una comunidad quilombola en el estado de Pará, en la Amazonia brasileña, durante la pandemia de COVID-19. Estudio etnográfico y descriptivo desde un enfoque cualitativo y basado en guiones, diario de campo y antropología visual para caracterizar el entorno y su dinámica a partir de registros fotográficos del escenario durante la pandemia. Fueron 340 registros fotográficos que destacan las características culturales del grupo y de la región vinculadas a los impactos sociales resultantes de las intervenciones del modelo económico hegemónico e identificadas desde la movilidad, el trabajo, el ocio, la alimentación y el medio ambiente. No se observaron cambios significativos en la forma de vida evidenciados por las inserciones de los protocolos de salud frente al COVID-19, pero se identificó la acentuación de las inequidades sociales.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Poblaciones vulnerables; Quilombolas; Población rural; Cultura; Desigualdades en salud

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INTRODUCTION

The Unified Health System (SUS), established by the Federal Constitution of 1988, required the commitment and commitment of managers, workers and users, presenting undeniable advances. However, there are challenges to be overcome, such as the particularities on health proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as social, ethnic-racial factors and cultural issues relating them to the production of health inequalities due to the exposure of some segments of the population to a condition of greater vulnerability.¹

This scenario includes traditional populations, which are groups with a particular social and cultural organization that guided public policies such as the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC - Sistema Nacional de Unidades de Conservação), the National Policy for Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities (PNPCT - Política Nacional de Desenvolvimento Sustentável dos Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais) and more recently, the National Policy for Territorial and Environmental Management of Indigenous Lands (PNGAT - Política Nacional de Gestão Territorial e Ambiental de Terras).²

Among these traditional populations are the quilombola communities, a social group that has an identity through notions of belonging, memories of their historical process of formation and in the movement of social forces and organizational instances that compose them. In addition, their way of life must be observed in the care itinerary, in order to identify flows different from those predetermined by the SUS, paying attention to culturally constructed meanings.³

In this process, the Social Determinants of Health (SDH), the most adopted reference model for this scenario by Dahlgren and Whitehead, demonstrates how the ways of living of different groups produce wear and tear on health.⁴

The study proposes as a scenario the quilombola community of Baixo and Médio Itacuruçá, belonging to the territory of the islands of Abaetetuba, part of the 6th health region of the state of Pará. This community is located on the banks of the Maratauíra River, a tributary of the Tocantins River, which directly influences the way of life of these people for everyday social, economic and cultural practices.^{5,6} It is a community in a situation of social vulnerability, which stands out for its precarious drinking water supply conditions and due to the inexisten-

ce of a sanitary sewage network, in addition to electrical oscillation, internet network deficit, and precarious means of transport.^{6,7}

In these terms, the research aims to characterize socio-environmental issues of a quilombola community in the state of Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon during the COVID-19 pandemic, based on visual anthropology and the use of multimethods, given that this technique allows revealing the essence that wants to be captured in the images.⁸

METHOD

The present study is characterized as an ethnographic study, with a qualitative, descriptive approach through a single case study. It is a case study that explores an object in detail in a given context and through the interpretation of social issues.^{9,10} For greater understanding, cultural and historical aspects were considered.¹¹

The research had as inclusion criteria the following requirements: being a community in the quilombola territory of Abaetetuba, data from the National Registry of Health Establishments (CNES - Cadastro Nacional de Estabelecimentos de Saúde) for the base year of 2021. Photographic re-

cords with people, groups and that were not related to the object of investigation were excluded.

The study site was the quilombola community of Baixo and Médio Itacuruçá, belonging to the territory of the islands of Abaetetuba, part of the 6th health region of the state of Pará. The entry into Itacuruçá took place in July 2021, using a field diary and the camera tool of the Xiaomi Mi 8 cell phone. Data collection, considering the research framework, was carried out following four distinct steps.

For the first stage, a theoretical survey was carried out on research in the region. The second stage aimed to analyze the information about the health of the municipality of Abaetetuba found in the CNES base year 2021 and in the SINAN, looking in particular for records from the community of Itacuruçá, for which a database was created using Microsoft Excel. In the third stage, an infographic was created (Figure 1) of the access flow to the communities, demonstrating the process of displacement from Belém to the low and medium Itacuruçá, which can be done both by water and by land, which was created using the graphic editing website Canva. In the fourth stage, the entry into the field took place together with the photographic records.

The theoretical basis was Malinowski's visual anthropology applied as a tool to capture images of people's practices, customs and activities, in order to understand the social organization of a certain place with the immersion in the data and in the process of living of the people. (MALINOWSKI, 1978; MARQUES, 2016). Moving on to content analysis (BARDIN, 2016). These allow the analysis by different techniques, verbal and non-verbal contents, such as speeches, photographs and messages, observed between description and interpretation. (TEIXEIRA, 2003, p. 192).

This research is part of a macro-project on Health and diseases among peoples and populations in the Amazon: characterization and records. It should be noted that the research did not need approval from the CEP/CONEP, according to resolution 510/2016, article 1, item VII.

RESULTS

The study identified that in the CNES the community of Itacuruçá presents a record of a Basic Health Unit, No. 7422946, registered on 02/11/2014, working from Monday to Friday from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.

In this process, the Social Determinants of Health (SDH), the most adopted reference model for this scenario by Dahlgren and Whitehead, demonstrates how the ways of living of different groups produce wear and tear on health.

The services offered are health surveillance and primary health care and with human resources of 5 community health agents, 1 nursing technician, 2 nurses and 1 doctor, working with a team from the Family Health Strategy (FHS). Another record is from a health center, No. 4005171, registered on 11/05/2003 that operates from Monday

to Friday from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, having registered only 1 nursing technician and offering an outpatient service.

340 photographic records were made that highlight the cultural characteristics of the group and the region linked to the social impacts arising from the interventions of the hegemonic economic model and identified and organized considering: mobility, work, education, food, culture and environment.

With regard to mobility, the following models were identified: road and waterway, being respectively characterized by municipal public transport and, sterndrives, boats and canoes. In relation to work and local source of income, three modalities were identified: services in potteries, extractivism and trade in açai and production of miriti artifacts. The diet is presented by the consumption of açai and its derivatives, cassava flour and industrialized products.

The practices of education and culture were identified three schools, being the following: Manuel Pedro Ferreira that serves students from kindergarten to high school, and from the 5th to the 3rd year of high school, teaching is carried out through the System of Modular Education Organization (SOME - Sistema de organização modular de ensino) that has an agreement with the state, Raimundo Bandeira, which serves students from kindergarten and elementary school up to the 4th year, and Santo André, which covers the levels from kindergarten to high school.

Regarding the relations with the environment, such as basic sanitation and housing, houses with stilt infrastructure with masonry and wood bases were registered. There are two sources of water: the river and a public water tank restricted to some houses.

DISCUSSION

Access to the community of Itacuruçá can be done by road and river. It is observed that transport by waterway is present throughout the route to access the locality. Due to the geography of the region, the waters are important elements for the displace-

ment of local populations. The rivers and their waters then become essential for the maintenance of life and local development.

It is noteworthy that mobility is an important movement of displacement and a factor for active participation in social and recreational activities in the community.¹² It was identified that there are few alternatives, and linked to precarious building and transport infrastructure. This situation is associated with social conditions of social vulnerability, even creating barriers for individuals inserted in the context to carry out activities beyond their territory, which conditions the isolation of people and groups, allowing a feeling of loneliness by the limitation to new interpersonal relationships.¹³

Water courses are also an important dynamic to be highlighted, given that they influence economic relations, especially in floodplain regions, since moving depends substantially on the summer or winter periods.¹⁴ However, the precariousness of transport to local Amazonian populations is observed, linked to the consequences of regional spatial transformations and the historical processes of occupation of rural spaces.^{15,16}

The floodplain lands, observed in the study, are the low-lying areas on the banks of rivers where displacement is carried out by a canoe-type tail with an engine and not very deep rear propeller, without awnings, used in shallow rivers, canoes and boats, which affect the lives of residents across the river, a movement accompanied by people from the communities.⁶ In these terms, climate variability is a determining factor, because for the displacement of population groups in traditional locations in the Amazon, water flow is dependent on the flow of water, but it also influences the density of vector mosquitoes, being decisive for zoonoses¹⁷ as well as other infectious diseases.¹⁸

In terra firme territories, which are high areas occupied by forests that are not subject to flooding, displacement is carried out by cars, buses, bicycles and walking, in which there are difficulties because the streets are not paved, they have holes and they have mud when it rains, making the route more difficult, in addition, in this community

they have commuting for work and schooling at a technical and higher level, which generates fatigue and longer travel time due to the distance.

As for food, it is pointed out that it consists of in natura or processed foods. The inclusion of processed foods in the diet of populations of quilombola communities has been recorded in recent studies that show high consumption of sweetened coffee, margarine and saltine crackers, for example.¹⁹ Despite these notes, it is clear that açai (Euterpe oleracea) is the main food, being consumed in the day and night eating habits, accompanied with meat and/or shellfish and flour (Figure 2). It is important to note that studies indicate that açai has a highly energetic nutritional value, in addition to its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory properties, and cardioprotective effect on the body.²⁰

Açai in the Amazon is consumed in different ways and spaces²¹, in the region, studies point to its association with Chagas disease²² mainly by the economy around the fruit.^{23,24} In this regard, açai is considered an affordable food in the locality, sold on average per liter for BRL 5.00 in a kiosk that sells exclusively açai.

Food alternatives were observed, such as the so-called miriti wine and porridge, being an alternative to açai during the Ama-

zon winter, when the harvest is reduced. As well as the sale of food via the circulation of rabetas through street vendors offering various types of food such as fish, meat, vegetables and fruits.¹⁹ There are also small kiosks and/or taverns* where it is possible to purchase various foods and the alternative is to travel to the municipality of Abaetetuba to carry out monthly purchases through supermarkets or the like, which suggests economy and planning for displacement, but that also depend, as in other communities, on seasonal conditions.¹⁹

Food habits are part of the cultural identity of quilombola communities, because it is linked to the idea of belonging²⁵; and in times of a pandemic, it is clear that there were no major transformations, since access to food and displacement for these purposes remained with small sanitary changes, when the necessary displacement to other locations.

In relation to the predominant works of the community, we have the potteries (Figure 3), a place destined to the production of tiles and bricks that use clay or clay as raw material. The removal of clay for the potteries is a practice that can be carried out in floods and floods, but it is more intense in the summer.⁶ Currently, this activity has an average market value of 1,000 pieces for BRL 600.00, relative to July 2021. It is im-

Figure 1 : Panel with infographic and the diversity of means of transport in the low and middle Itacuruçá community



Source: Field Archive, 2021

portant to note that this production chain based on the production of tiles and bricks in the Amazon is common in the region and is part of the traditional work.²⁶

As a characteristic of the Amazon region, we have other means of economy such as extracting açai for sale and for the families' own consumption. Flour production as observed during the on-site survey; and paneiro production using the branch of the miriti tree (*Mauritia Flexuosa*) (Figure 11). The miriti raw material is used to manufacture miriti toys, which have an identity character of the region, permeating the economy, culture and social relations.²⁷ Its commercialization takes place through miriti toy sellers and is highlighted during the Círio de Nazaré, a religious manifestation that takes place during the month of October in Belém. This activity has been identified as a resource used to maintain the source of income from an ethno-economy, but above all it is characteristic of communities in the municipality of Abaetetuba.²⁷

Despite being a region surrounded by water, and the relationship of Amazonian men in this region with the rivers being part of their daily lives⁶, fishing is not carried out in the rivers of Itacuruçá, and fishermen who live in the region need to move to the Maratauíra coast.⁶ The relationship between man and nature was perceived in continuity throughout the research, and presents itself in continuity even in the face of the restrictions imposed by the circulation of COVID-19.

In terms of education, it was noticed that it covers the elementary and middle level of schooling, this organization reveals the need to move community members to continue their studies at other levels when necessary, such as specializations and higher education. Through education, it is possible to strengthen the cultural and ethnic identity of the quilombolas, which is evident on special days such as black consciousness (Figure 4). Furthermore, the school plays a fundamental role in the transversal insertion of the theme about Afro-Brazilian and indigenous culture that allows the discussion about ethnic diversity.

This movement between culture and

education is essential for understanding the history of the community linked to the period of enslavement, with the school being a social space for training for the recognition of the quilombola identity. In this way, helping individuals to understand the customs and cultural traditions of their ancestors, in addition to being a condition for people to seek their rights conquered through social struggles and which today are supported by public policies, such as land ownership and preservation and conservation of the surrounding environment²⁸ and above all because the educational process and culture is a mechanism for the manifestation of the

genesis of these communities.⁶

Knowing the conditions of the environment which are relevant to the health of a population, as well as basic sanitation and housing are of total relevance for the establishment of promoting the quality of life of individuals, families and the community in question.²⁷

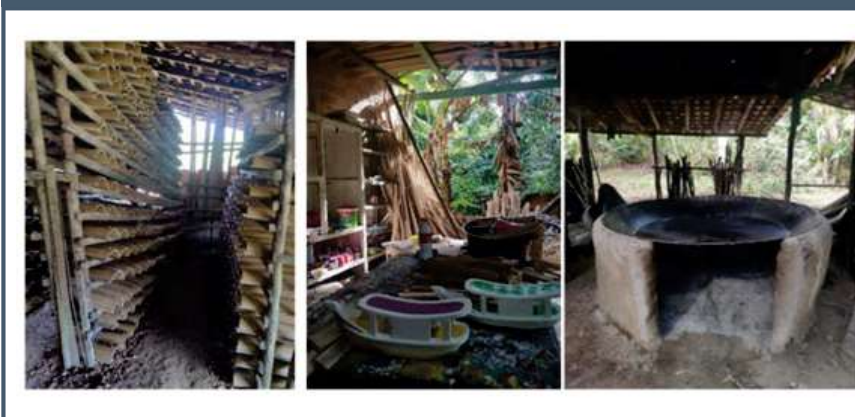
In the community of Itacuruçá, the availability of potable water for drinking and preparing food was supplied with the installation of two collective water systems from a water tank (Figure 5), where residents fetch water and store it in buckets. River water is used for bathing, washing clo-

Figure 2: Food in the low and medium Itacuruçá community characterized by shrimp and açai



Source: Field Archive, 2021

Figure 3: Exhibition of clay tiles in local pottery



Source: Field Archive, 2021

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thes and dishes, which can be done on the riverbank or installed in a system that leads from the river to a water tank that supplies the house.⁶

Although there are policies to encourage basic sanitation through the National Health Foundation (FUNASA - Fundação Nacional de Saúde), including for strategic actions such as environmental health education, it is important to emphasize that it is up to the municipality to seek the budget resources provided for in FUNASA Ordinance No. 5,461, of November 18th, 2020. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand that the search for infrastructure involves the human dignity of quilombolas.²⁶

In relation to housing, the houses in the communities are, in general, characterized in the floodplain regions by wooden infrastructure and in the form of stilts. Stilts are a type of housing supported by stilts on the banks of a river or other wetland.²⁸ These are houses that do not have a sewage system, and biological waste is dumped into the river. It is important to emphasize that the collection of solid waste is carried out by the city hall on a weekly basis. However, for those who live on the banks of the river, the dynamics are different, using the resources of waste separation by type: paper and plastics, which are burned in the backyard; Metals that are taken to potteries, organic matter that is thrown into nature to decompose naturally.

Regarding the electrical energy infrastructure, distribution throughout the community was observed, however with irregular distribution between the days of the week, requiring supply through a community generator. Other deficits were also identified as the means of communication, as there is no standard cell phone signal, and internet access is possible in houses that install antennas, with limited quality, which interferes with access to information, real-time social media and effective remote education, especially in times of pandemic.

CONCLUSION

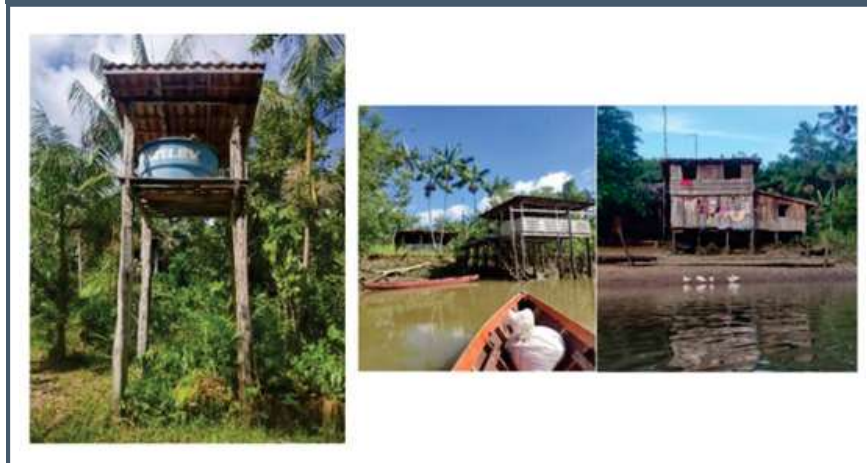
During the research, it was possible to identify the socio-environmental charac-

Figure 4: School and cultural manifestation in the low and middle Itacuruçã



Source: Field Archive, 2021

Figure 5: Infrastructure and availability of drinking water in the low and middle Itacuruçã community.



Source: Field Archive, 2021

teristics of the quilombola community of Itacuruçá, which made it possible to understand the daily life and maintenance of their traditional and cultural practices. It was identified that mobility is inherent to survival, as well as subsidizing work and access to food. It also promotes the movement of individuals along the course of the river and between communities and the city of Abaetetuba. The local characteristics are in line with those of other communities in terms of nature, food, leisure and source of income,

as well as the dependence on travel to other municipalities for access to higher and specialized education. Regarding interventions in the local dynamics against COVID-19, no specific intervention was identified in the scenario.

The study was an important step towards understanding the potential and difficulties of this community, and could stimulate new work in this and other regions, as well as assist in proposals for health interventions in quilombola communities based on their

spatial characterization. The research was limited by the situation of the epidemiological scenario in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, which for the safety of both researchers and community residents, it is clear that this entry had to be postponed in compliance with state and institutional flags.

The continuity of research on the region is considered important, since it is a locality with a deficit of studies on the health of the population, pointing out ways to implement local health policies.

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