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## **CONSENSUS BUILDING IN THE FORUM OF PUBLIC POLICY COMMUNITIES OF THE VALE DO RIO PARDO RURAL TERRITORY - RS**

## **A CONSTRUÇÃO DE CONSENSOS NO FÓRUM DE COMUNIDADES DE POLÍTICA PÚBLICA DO TERRITÓRIO RURAL VALE DO RIO PARDO – RS**

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### **Abstract**

The primary objective of this article is to analyze what are the political and social relationships built between the agents that make up the Vale do Rio Pardo Rural Territory (TRVRP in Portuguese), and that define a specific conformation and management of the community and public policy forum of the Programa Nacional de Desenvolvimento Sustentável dos Territórios Rurais (PRONAT, National Program for Sustainable Development of Rural Territories). The research was conducted using the qualitative methodology based on daily notes in the field notebook and documentary analysis. The analysis was based on the cognitive approach, evaluating how disputes and negotiations related to the production of public policy references are guided, highlighting where they occur in the forums/arenas. The research indicated that each social actor that makes up the institutions has personal trajectories and values that consequently guide their decisions in the forums. These spaces present power relations loaded with meanings and values considered positive and negative, which imply decision-making in social management processes. The arena studied helps to outline the threshold of the agreements signed, strengthening the space of the public policy forum from the expansion of the capacities of social forces to articulate, organize, confront, and establish consensus on proposals for historical problems. In our understanding, this is the key to strengthening the transformations that these spaces offer.

**Keywords:** Territorial development. Arenas. Negotiations. Conflicts.

### **Resumo**

O objetivo principal deste artigo é analisar quais são as relações políticas e sociais que se constroem entre os agentes que compõem o Território Rural Vale do Rio Pardo (TRVRP) e que definem uma determinada conformação e gestão do fórum de comunidade e política pública do Programa Nacional de Desenvolvimento Sustentável dos Territórios Rurais (PRONAT). Para a realização desta pesquisa

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utilizou-se da metodologia qualitativa, baseada em anotações diárias no caderno de campo e análise documental. A análise foi realizada tendo por base a abordagem cognitiva, a qual baseia-se na forma como são pautadas as disputas e negociações relacionadas à produção de referências de políticas públicas, dando o destaque para o local em que elas ocorrem, nos fóruns/arenas. A pesquisa apontou que cada ator social que compõem as instituições possuem trajetórias e valores pessoais que consequentemente orientam suas decisões nos fóruns. Existem nesses espaços relações de poder que são carregadas de significados e valores considerados positivos e negativos, os quais implicam nas tomadas de decisões nos processos de gestão social. A arena estudada ajuda a demarcar o limiar dos acordos firmados, fortalecendo o espaço do fórum de política pública a partir da expansão das capacidades de forças sociais de articular, se organizar, colocar em confronto e estabelecer consensos em propostas para problemas históricos. No nosso entendimento, aí está a chave de potencialidade de transformações que esses espaços oferecem.

**Palavras-chave:** Desenvolvimento territorial. Arenas. Negotiations. Conflicts.

## Introduction

The primary objective of this article is to analyze what are the political and social relationships built between the agents that make up the Vale do Rio Pardo Rural Territory (TRVRP in Portuguese), and that define a specific conformation and management of the community and public policy forum of the Programa Nacional de Desenvolvimento Sustentável dos Territórios Rurais (PRONAT, National Program for Sustainable Development of Rural Territories). The territorial extension of the TRVRP is a striking feature composed of 28 municipalities<sup>3</sup>. Because it is extensive, it also includes several social actors. The TRVRP is quite diverse, with several civil society organizations and public authorities that dynamize this space. Since its approval in 2013, there have been many spaces for debate, negotiations for project definition, elections of the directive centers, and the technical center of the Territorial Development Collegiate. These spaces are highly relevant for highlighting social participation in the development planning of the territory.

This article analyzes the tensions around the Territorial Conference of Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ATER in Portuguese) regarding two themes: the allocation of resources for the implementation of ATER and the election of a young delegate to represent the Territory in a national instance. Thus, we highlight the protagonism of the Territory's social actors during this process of integration into a public policy and how they positioned themselves in the negotiations in the spaces of the forum. This article also analyzes how the primary agents perceive the contradictions inherent to their diverse formation, their identity as a territory in public policy, and how they seek to conduct negotiations in the main forums for the production of ideas. The forum was chosen based on Fouilleux (2011), according to whom the forum is used to characterize a more or less similar community of actors intervening in the same field of activity.

Even if the public policy of rural territories has ceased to be a priority in the current government, it is important to reflect on their experience to draw lessons from it, especially concerning social management, the intersectorality of public policies, and the protagonism of social actors. The policy of territories is presented as a strategy for the discussion and construction of development characterized as a process that articulates a series of policies, considered as a space that goes beyond geographical delimitation, and should highlight social participation and intersectorality in the structuring, performance, and proposition of public policies (MDA, 2015).

The agricultural policy for family farming was increased by the creation of the Territorial Development Secretariat (SDT in Portuguese), which began to work specifically with territorial development. It was created through PRONAT in 2003 and implemented through the creation of

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rural territories in virtually all regions of the country to promote the protagonism of social actors for the governance of territory development and to enhance the impacts and results obtained through territorial policy (DELGADO; LEITE, 2015). The program had been expanding throughout the country; in Rio Grande do Sul, for example, it reached a total of 18 rural territories. Around 400 municipalities in Rio Grande do Sul were included in the territories, which meant more than 80% of the state's territory (MDA, 2016).

However, the arrangements resulting from this policy faced some challenges to their effectiveness and implementation. The implementation of a territory is related to culture, economy, and social and environmental relations, in addition to meeting the demand of social actors involved in the construction of this space, which is a necessary condition for social protagonism and the continuation of development processes. Therefore, it is essential to establish strategies to achieve these objectives since territories are spaces with life, history, cooperation strategies, and conflict. These dynamic spaces experience and encompass local institutions, actor networks, collective platforms, games of interest, and ideas established in an arena where any interventions, even those of a developmental nature, must be negotiated and possibly transformed and executed to mold themselves to this internal context. One of the main features to be considered in the formation of a territory is its identity and territorial cohesion, which will promote the feeling of belonging and co-construction of this space.

This debate is not only on the agenda in the area of public policies but in the most diverse fields of interdisciplinary science. Some more recent studies have been dedicated to understanding processes linked to formulating and implementing public policy in rural territories and their evolution in policy management processes, as is the case of Fornazier and Perafán (2018). Others have focused on issues inherent to territorial cohesion and how much the policy has contributed to rural development, such as the research of Oliveira *et al.* (2018). Issues such as the institutionalization of rural territorial development and its importance for the success of combating rural poverty are also on the agenda, as reported by Guimarães and Santos (2018).

In research involving the international field, the discussions regarding industrial districts, from the Italian experience, and their contribution to the discussion of territorial development, discussed by authors such as Lima and Neto (2019), stand out. In the European Union, the multilevel governance system is discussed as a new paradigm and the territory as a rationality factor of public policies, as indicated by Dias and Seixas (2017). These authors analyze the regional models of sustainability governance that resulted from the elaboration of the first Integrated Territorial Development Strategies (EIDTs in Portuguese).

These studies contribute significantly to understanding the dynamics of rural territories as public policies aimed at sustainable development. However, few studies make a more detailed interpretation of what are the political and social relations built between the agents that make up the territory, which define a certain conformation and management of the community and public policy forum of PRONAT.

We begin from the actors' perspective on what is politics. Thus, the qualitative methodology was based on daily notes in the field notebook and documentary analysis, and the cognitive approach was used as the analysis method, which has the conception built by Bruno Jobert and Ève Fueilleux as its primary method. These authors' approach is based on how the disputes and negotiations regarding the production of public policy references are guided, highlighting where they occur in the forums/arenas, the form of decoding created by the different actors, and the representations that maintain these references. Using this methodology during the research in TRVRP was possible since the author of this article has integrated the team of the Núcleo de Extensão em Desenvolvimento Territorial (NEDET) of the Universidade Estadual do Rio Grande do Sul (UERGS), unit of Santa Cruz do Sul, where they provided advice on productive inclusion. This immersion with the Territory by the author made it possible to make it the object of study of this research.

This daily experience, from January 2015 to December 2016, near the spaces of the TRVRP forum was fundamental for the survey and subsequent interpretation of the data, which included daily notes in the field notebook. Thus, this article is subdivided into three sections in addition to this introduction. The first section addresses the characterization of the TRVRP, followed by a contextualization of the public policy community forum. Subsequently, the construction of ideas for the defense of interests and institutions in the forum is discussed. Finally, the final considerations related to the theme addressed are presented.

## Characterization of the Vale do Rio Pardo rural territory

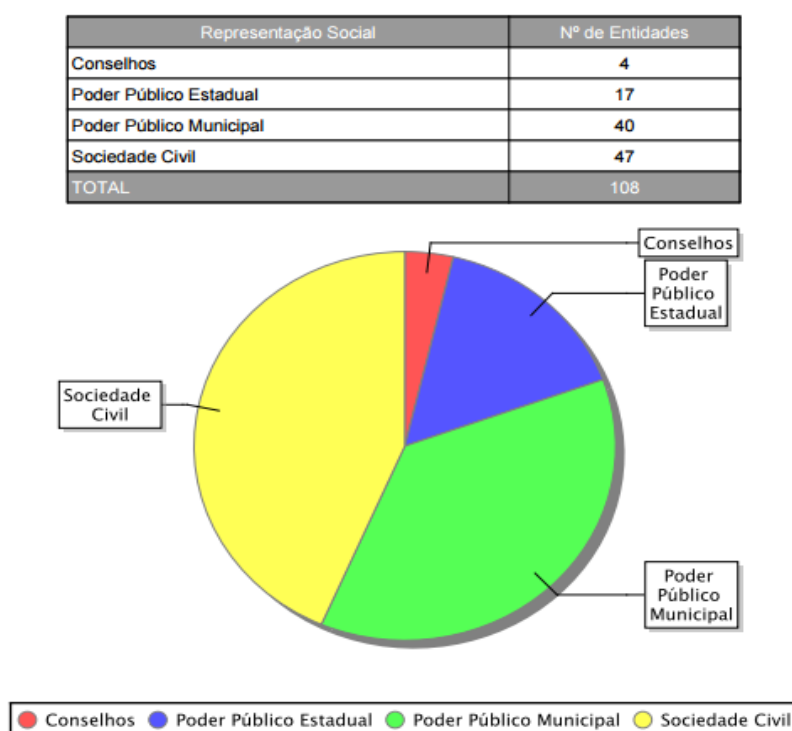
Leaders from eleven municipalities met in the Rio Pardo Valley region on November 2011 to form the TRVRP. These included Encruzilhada do Sul, Pantano Grande, Rio Pardo, Passo do Sobrado, Vale Verde, Mato Leitão, Venâncio Aires, Santa Cruz do Sul, Vera Cruz, Vale do Sol e Candelária, with 23 representatives of civil society and 16 of the public authorities. The objective was to formalize the pre-territory of the Vale do Rio Pardo to pressure the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA in Portuguese) to create the Rural Territory, including it into PRONAT (SCHMITZ, 2014).

However, only in January 2013 did the MDA recognize the Vale do Rio Pardo as a Rural Territory, establishing it with a geographical delimitation different from that previously claimed. The MDA joined two distinct macro-regions, the southern region of the Territory, referring to the Vale do Rio Pardo, and the northern region, referring to the upper Serra do Botucaraí region. The municipality of Encruzilhada do Sul was excluded from this configuration. The delimitation defined by the Ministry demobilized part of the work of articulation, organization, and data collection of the region, causing a strong disinterest among the representatives of the various entities in continuing the work given the understanding that there were not enough interrelations or identity between the organizations of both regions to compose a single territory (SCHMITZ, 2014). In addition, social actors were already articulated as a Territory in the northern region since they recognized themselves as Território do Pinhão e Erva-mate.

In this context, the Vale do Rio Pardo territory was a fertile laboratory for various investigative looks. The southern region of the TRVRP is strongly marked by the presence of family farming and food production. Its productive base is tobacco, consolidating it as the largest smoking complex in the country (ETGES, 2001). The predominant agricultural crop in the northern region is soybeans, even considering family farming.

As Muller and Surel (2002) argue, a public policy can be executed in a social environment of different interpretations of the world. However, a worldview is gradually established in its course, is accepted, and then recognized as hegemonic by most of the social actors of the forum. Thus, the cognitive approach to territorial social protagonism focuses on the analysis of the interrelationships of ideas, interests, and institutions. This approach allows us to understand the procedural changes that occur in the Territory and helps in interpreting a set of relationships and interpretations of the authors regarding what is negotiated in the discussion forums.

The center of the analysis is to observe the expressions of ideas and interests of the actors and the relationships of formulating proposals for substantiation and feasibility of cohesion-building strategies with other actors. According to Pierre Muller (2004, p. 59, our translation) public policies “must be analyzed as the processes through which the representations of a society are elaborated to understand and act on reality as it is perceived”. We instigate ourselves to understand how the process of the social concertation of Territorial policy occurs in the specific case of the Territorial Development Collegiate of the Vale do Rio Pardo Territory (CODETER VRP). Thus, the analysis focused on actors and institutions since interests and institutions exist precisely because of the actors who represent them and give them life (FOUILLEUX, 2011).

**Figure 01:** Total representation of the social actors that make up the CODETER VRP

Source: MDA/SGE, 2016.

In Figure 01, all CODETER members are represented in the TRVRP, subdivided into four categories, namely: councils, which include APL and COREDEs; state public power, which includes the offices of EMATER and State University in their different headquarters; municipal public power, which includes city halls and municipal secretariats; and civil society, which includes cooperatives, associations, social movements, and NGOs. These institutions are respectively represented by social actors within the TRVRP public policy community forum. However, some actors lead the discussions and tensions in the forum arenas and stand out as leaders before the other actors.

Today, said Territory consists of 28 municipalities, has a population of 429,236 inhabitants, a total area of 12,790.21 km<sup>2</sup>, and two subdivisions with very different realities regarding production, economy, and culture, therefore showing little territorial cohesion. However, they are organized within the same geographical space with the same governance instances, such as the executive nucleus, thematic chambers, and sectoral committees.

### Public policy community forum

This analysis is built based on the concept of forums, as defined by Fouilleux (2011), who understands them as spaces composed of specific rules and dynamics, covering the production of ideas, interests, representations, and values that are not always similar. The author also states that the forums are spaces for argumentation around a public policy where tools for analysis and evaluation of their representations are launched. The analysis of public policies is recent in Brazil, especially concerning the analysis model that places the social actors who seek social concertation of public policy at its center.

The ideas produced in various specialized forums are considered, as is the case with the various debate spaces existing in the TRVRP. Fouilleux (2011) considers that there are two types of formally defined forums, some oriented to the production of ideas and others to institutionalize such ideas, in which the *public policy* is conceived. There are several forums for producing ideas in sectorized policies, some scientific, with people from academia, and others with sectoral professionals who use the policy, such as agricultural policy. There may also be isolated and specialized forums, such as the environmental forum, which can promote environmental issues to be

addressed in the discussion of sectoral policy, as the thematic chambers and sectoral committees of the TRVRP, which bring different issues to be addressed in the debate of the territory. The electoral forum or *political forum* is the producer of discourse focusing based on ideas, elaborated endogenously or brought from other forums. Argumentation is used as a tool to increase the power of influence to carry out this process.

Each forum is negotiated by debates and controversies, motivated by cognitive references, which come from different strands depending on the forum since each has its rules and motivations. There is competition between actors in each of these forums to define the main cognitive reference, which, according to Callon (1986), can be analyzed as a translation process. According to the author, the translation leads to the designation of a cognitive reference of leadership, which will be recognized as such by most of the actors of the forum at the end of the process. When this occurs, the other actors are usually less visible.

In the TRVR, considered a public policy community forum with several actors representing their respective institutions, there are also several implications of the existence of a cognitive and normative matrix. Collective consciousness is also fed with them, in which a specific identity is produced (MULLER, SUREL, 2002).

The social actors from Vale do Rio Pardo began to mobilize for the recognition of the region as a territory in 2011 for this forum to be built. Initially, the motivation arises from a member of the Empresa de Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural (EMATER), who had observed this articulation in other regions of the company. This actor was already articulated in other forums of the Vale do Rio Pardo region, in which he was consolidated as a leader. It can be stated that he used this symbolic power to encourage other actors to mobilize as entities to constitute a specific forum to discuss sustainable rural development, guide public policies, and raise funds for family farming. It is important to mention that the aforementioned actor representing EMATER also participated in another forum in the southern region of TRVRP, a regional governance institution, referring to a policy at the state level that are the Conselhos Regionais de Desenvolvimento do Rio Grande do Sul (COREDES).

Due to this dissemination of PRONAT by the EMATER representative, some actors in the region realized the need for a regional forum that could focus especially on issues related to the rural environment. The primary actors that made this initial mobilization were Escola Família Agrícola (EFA), an entity that works with the training of rural youth at the middle and technical levels, using, among others, the alternation methodology; Universidade Estadual do Rio Grande do Sul (UERGS), which seeks to enhance the demands related to the region and its agricultural dynamics; Arranjo Produtivo Local de Agroindústrias e Produção de Alimentos (APL), a state policy created to meet the local demands of family agroindustries in the Vale do Rio Pardo; SICREDI Credit Cooperative; Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais da Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura no Rio Grande do Sul (FETAG/STR); Emater; and some municipal managers. The most hegemonic demands and agendas of the time were the diversification of tobacco production, agroecology, and facilitating the commercialization process of family agribusinesses.

According to Muller and Surel (2002), as soon as the elaboration of a program or public policy is analyzed, each group, be it associations, cooperatives, unions, etc., establishes a *leadership* relationship in the sector, directly related to the mobilization or creation of a particular cognitive and normative matrix. In other words, it is the construction of symbolic power in a process by which an actor manages to legitimize their worldview. It is a relationship in the sense of power logic by which the actor builds and takes the leadership of the sector, legitimizing its hegemony. The construction of the cognitive matrix is not a simple discourse but a construction process with correlations of forces and interactions of dynamics that are gradually consolidated in a given sector. This simultaneously feeds a *seizure of power* process, i.e., it structures a space of correlations of forces.

In this sense, the construction of the Territory characterizes this space, where several leaders arise, leading different processes and tensions of correlations of different forces. Thus, the following section will present the negotiations between social actors to build consensus and reach a common configuration within the public policy forum.

## Construction of ideas for the defense of interests and institutions

This section will present one of the critical moments configured as an arena in the Territory, in which the analysis will be directed to one of the main tensions played by the actors: the conference of Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural (ATER). From a perspective of a Territory played by social actors, we will analyze how their ideas are built, how they defend their interests and institutions, and the tensions that arise from it.

The TRVRP, characterized as a community forum for public policy and social consultation, is continuously challenged to incorporate the three “Is”, ideas, interests, and institutions, to resolve its main tensions and build the public policy framework. According to Fouilleux (2000), there is a “central referential”, which refers to an aggregate of specific ideas and representations that dominate a given forum. In this space, the objectives are defined and the debates are adapted to ensure relative stability in the changes, allowing the actors to identify themselves so that they can define priorities and make commitments within the forum. However, this process is not always consensual. These tensions brought to reflection are equivalent to the “critical moments” of a given situation in which institutionalized ideas are destabilized. Therefore, it is emphasized that the existing controversy in the idea production forum only threatens the stability of the central referential when questioned about the dominant referential.

For Niederle and Grisa (2013), there is an alternation in the phase of stability and critical contexts in the forum of public policy communities, creating two dynamics models: a) a forum configuration when the controversy is placed in latency and there is a routine production of public policy, with marginal and incremental changes that do not question the general economy of commitment; b) an arena configuration when the commitment is put in check and the controversies are exposed - critical context of the forum. Stability is only restored when a compromise is created or renewed. In this sense, the end of the crisis is characterized by the emergence of a new situation of stability that is satisfactory in the view of the division of resources and legitimacy of those actors due to the existing relations of forces.

Thus, some critical moments were identified within the spaces of idea production in the TRVRP forum; tensions that stood out and characterized arenas of disputes between the actors. The following is the analysis of the arena that was configured around the Territorial Conference of ATER, which was one of the most critical moments of the clash of ideas and consensus building of this forum.

We focused on Niederle and Grisa (2013) to analyze the negotiation of these tensions connected to the dynamics of the TRVRP, which helps to formulate and interpret the following questions: How do social actors interact in the territorial policy forum? What ideas are prevalent within this forum? Which actors command the translation processes in TRVRP? What commitments are formed between the actors? What ideas are institutionalized and become instruments of territorial policy? Why were these ideas successful and others excluded? Thus, we can analyze which relationships are built between the agents that define a certain conformation, territory management, and idea production forum.

### ATER Territorial Conference Arena

Of the various spaces organized by the TRVRP CODETER, the ATER Territorial Conference was the most controversial and with many critical moments. The ATER model desired for the territory was in question and the proposals built would be markers for the construction of public policies in the coming years, according to what the agents expected. This conference takes place every four years, this being the first at the territorial level and preparatory to the 2nd ATER National Conference. The disputes of models and ideologies of social actors and their institutions were implicit in this space.

The ATER Territorial Conference had the involvement and participation of the Território da Cidadania Centro Serra (TCCS). The territories added a total of 545 participants, 425 from TRVRP and 120 from TCCS. Among the participants were farmers, traditional peoples and communities (PCT in Portuguese), ATER technicians, municipal governments, trade unions, ATER provider EMATER, cooperatives, small farmers movement (MPA in Portuguese), and Agricultural Family Schools (EFAs in Portuguese). These segments composed a Territorial Organizing Commission (COT in Portuguese) and counted on the articulation and support of the NEDETs of both territories.

From the beginning, the COT's articulation had a great challenge: to think of an efficient methodology to ensure a good discussion and proposals. The strategy was to divide into groups of debates, each with a mediator who was already a member of the organizing committee and a rapporteur, who had the task of entering all the proposals discussed in the group into an *Excel* worksheet created by the national commission. In addition, each group had to limit itself to choosing only five priority proposals since the conference at the territorial level had a limit of thirty proposals distributed in three main and three transverse axes. According to the Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Rural Sustentável (CONDRAF), this Territorial Conference was one of the largest in the country (MDA, 2015).

Tensions between the social actors already began while defining the mediators in the groups since some institutions were becoming overloaded and others were afraid to make commitments. As expressed by the representative of Emater: *this is not fair, we make our technicians available to collaborate and others rely on us and remove themselves*. In other words, EMATER would be burdened with so many tasks assumed, mainly because, according to this point of view, the other organizations did not wish to give names to coordinate the commissions. But with this they also realized that they would have much more strength to guarantee their proposals, based on their worldviews and to defend their institution: *we have to guarantee resources to Emater, and in the proposals, we have to ensure that the official ATER is mentioned*, said another leader of that institution. The arguments used by the Emater actors indicate an orientation coming from higher instances of the institution since the emphasis on the term "official ATER" had always been reinforced.

Even with the predominance of Emater in the mediation of the groups, other actors representing the other institutions, such as the Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores (MPA/COOPERFUMOS), EFAs, North and South Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais (STRs), and municipalities also contributed to the process. In addition, it is worth emphasizing that the conference took place in rural areas, in the community of Linha Palanque in Venâncio Aires/RS, which was responsible for all support in infrastructure and food, only possible through the Emater actors that provide ATER to the community. The institutions mentioned above mobilized their target audience to participate in the Conference, in which most of the participants were farmers' families participating in public calls executed by Emater and MPA/COOPERFUMOS.

After elaborating on the proposals in a group, all went to lunch prepared with food produced mostly by the farmers of the community. The grand final plenary took place in the afternoon, a critical moment in which both territories debated, and the idea-building process for improving the policy of ATER took place. In addition, some groups were unable to reduce the number of priority proposals and this had to be defined in plenary.

Thus, for each proposal put into consideration by the mediators, the actors needed to express themselves, characterizing an intense need for negotiations. The actors involved in this process and who carried out the translation, characterized here as alliance-building spokespersons (FOUILLEUX, 2003), were mainly the providers of ATER, Emater and MPA/COOPERFUMOS. However, at a certain point in the discussion of the proposals, the EFAs joined forces with MPA/COOPERFUMOS because Emater mobilized and took a greater number of farmers from the public calls than MPA/COOPERFUMOS, which gave it an advantage when approving the proposals.

This critical moment, so denominated by Fouilleux (2000), occurs when the debate is visible to the general public, even if how the main disagreements between the debaters were exposed is not easily understandable. In the case studied, the first group presented the proposals of the first axis, namely:

Finance the ATER at the national level to ensure continuity of resources and free care for farmers, directed federal, state, and municipal resources to *the official institutions of ATER*, considering the size of the audience to be served (TRVRP, 2015).

The actor representing MPA/COOPERFUMOS asked to speak immediately: *we agree with the entire proposal, and that is what we also fight for, but we cannot limit only the official ATER institutions since this excludes all other providers. I ask you to remove the term 'official'*. He obtained



support from half of the plenary, referring to the farmers of the public calls that they executed and the EFAs.

Before going for approval, the regional head of Emater, which is a political position, asked for the floor and made a speech in favor of the institution he represents, stating that Emater has a history, which is present in all municipalities, reaffirming the importance of the institution: *... a public company consolidated throughout the country, but which needs financial support, its situation is threatened, we must reaffirm this... Am I not right?* This speech exciting half of the plenary, which applauded the representative's standing. Subsequently, the MPA/COOPERFUMOS actor requested a right of reply, and soon pointed out that Emater already received Union resources, including the same amount as non-governmental organizations, questioning other public incentives: *... on top of that, they receive the salaries of the employees and structure paid by the state and still receive contributions from the municipalities, that is not fair...* The mediator put it to a vote, and the proposal was approved as initially put, to official ATER institutions.

A tense climate was established from this process onwards, of disputes characterizing a de facto arena. In the fourth proposal of the first axis, MPA/COOPERFUMOS and EFAs pleaded for the inclusion of the following proposal:

Allocate resources for official technical assistance from states to provide permanent and continuous services. *Allocate resources for specific ATER services for civil society organizations.* Promote the integration of ATER services provided in the territory of coverage. Supervise and monitor the ATER service qualitatively with different evaluation indicators, by the contractor (TRVRP, 2015).

The allocation of resources for specific ATER services for civil society organizations was included in this proposal due to pressure from EFAs and MPA/COOPERFUMOS actors. However, the intervention of one of the actors representing the EFAs was also necessary for such: *we cannot limit access to resources since there may be other institutions that can provide ATER and that may even serve another specific segment.*

Concurrently with this critical moment, the registration of delegates for the state stage of the ATER conference was taking place and, with it, the negotiations of the actors to ensure that their institutions were well represented, after all, there was a parity that needed to be respected at the time of the elections. However, each social category could indicate its delegates within the percentages of parity that needed to be respected, which were gender parity, with 20% of young people, 20% of PCTs, and 20% of the public power with their respective assignees and alternates. There was consensus in most choices of delegates. However, there was a dispute in the election of young delegates since there were delegates and alternates nominated by EFA and MPA/COOPERFUMOS and by Emater. Both groups wished to ensure their representativeness, as observed in the argument of the EFA representative:

*we are one of the only institutions that have rural youth from all over the territory as its exclusive target audience, we have representatives here from almost all municipalities and our work is contextualized with their reality, it is very fair that we have representation. Many of our egresses are inserted in other institutions.*

Emater's representative counters the argument: *we also work with rural youth and we are not here delegitimizing your work, but we want to ensure that our young audience also has representation.* Thus, the mediators of the process took charge and opened it for a plenary vote since there was no consensus. The actors were also divided in the voting, requiring the count of vote by vote. The young representative of Emater was elected delegate and the young representative of EFA was an alternate delegate with a minimum difference of two votes.

The actors' consensus negotiations were intense in the debate arena throughout the translation process. However, the social protagonism of the representatives is the reflection of their institutional interests, observed in the form in which the actors constructed their ideas. The

constitution of these public spaces, in which these actors face ideas and values with prospects of forming new commitments, defines a new institutionality that regulates the forms that arise from public relationships (NIEDERLE, GRISA, 2013).

Spaces like these enrich the quality of public policy formulation, ensuring a fairer process with the participation of the social base. In addition, it strengthens and encourages the target audience to organize and get involved in the implementation process, as well as contribute to the social management of the implementation of public policy. Thus, it guarantees better applicability of public resources and favors the social participation of minorities that historically did not participate in discussion forums and important decisions that directly affect the social environments where they live.

## Final Considerations

It should be noted that in 2003 Pronaf Infraestrutura e Serviços Municipais was extinguished, which gave way to PRONAT, which was implemented by the SDT of the MDA, for managing Rural Territories. SDT worked in the Territories, supporting the organization and institutional strengthening of local social actors in participatory management. Thus, the Territories revealed themselves as an intermediate space between municipalities and states, allowing the participation of civil society and the public power in deliberations on rural development.

PRONAT was coordinated by SDT, which was linked to the extinguished MDA. The institutional structure that coordinated PRONAT was at the national level by the Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Rural Sustentável e Solidário (CONDRAF); at the state level by the Conselhos Estaduais de Desenvolvimento Rural Sustentável (CEDRS), and at the territorial level by the CODETERS. However, the current Brazilian political context is characterized by profound changes since the parliamentary coup of 2016, which led to the *impeachment* of President Dilma Rousseff. From then on, territorial development policies of national scope ceased to be a priority, being emptied through the reduction and cutting of resources. In this context, the MDA was extinguished. It was responsible for the territorial development policy and other policies to strengthen family farming.

The fragility of the transformations achieved is evident despite the progress made in 20 years of implementing the territorial dimension to overcome the sectorization of public policies. This is indicated by the rapid dismantling of the institutions that provided the basis for the rural territorial development strategy in the country. At the end of the term of office of former President Michel Temer, the portfolio of territorial development belonged to the Secretaria da Agricultura Familiar e do Desenvolvimento Agrário, housed in the Civil House of the Federal Government. The situation of territorial development policy is still unknown in the current government of Jair Bolsonaro. There is only one quite nebulous sign, with the integration of regional development policies through the Ministry of Regional Development.

Given the above and the uncertainty regarding the continuity of PRONAT, there is an experience of social management and participation of civil society together with the public power that leaves us with several lessons learned. One of these learnings concerns the construction and management of public policy since, by involving the target audience, the policy generates a much greater engagement, commitment, and belonging, which certainly contributes to qualifying public policy. An example of this was the voting of the ATER Multiterritorial Conference, with disputes. However, the institution that was more engaged and made more human resources available at the time, in this case, EMATER, obtained a majority and elect important proposal to guarantee the quality of its work, including in future moments. The social protagonism of the representatives is the reflection of their institutional interests, observed in the form in which the actors constructed their ideas.

The forum was built and established strategies based on the trajectories and initiatives developed by the actors who participated in the TRVRP public policy community forum. Social management demonstrates a new form of thinking about territorial development, provoking a new form of dividing representations and power. Therefore, the implementation of public policies with a territorial dimension has achieved important advances concerning the exercise of democracy and citizenship, which is necessary for the development of rural areas, as is the case of the TRVRP.

Power relations are part of the constitution of public power institutions, as well as civil society organizations. Power relations are loaded with positive and negative meanings and values, considering that the valuation of this action conditions a specific situation and context, especially

when these relationships are related to decision-making in social management processes. Power is considered an important element, in the sense of giving viability to positive changes in the development process, and negative changes when it restricts the possibility of expanding actions that can strengthen the social management process. Thus, the more the actors are engaged, the more vigorously they will act in the social control of public policies, which begins with planning the development believed to be the ideal and fair for a greater amount of population reached in the territory.

Thus, the negotiations between social actors in the territory to achieve resolutions that can account for socioeconomic and spatial demands indicate the relevance of the territorial dimension to configure opportunities for change in the forms of appropriation and use of the Territory. Thus, the arena studied helps to outline the threshold of the agreements signed, strengthening the space of the public policy forum from the expansion of the capacities of territorial forces to articulate, organize, confront, and establish consensus on proposals for historical problems. In our understanding, this is the key to strengthening the transformations that these spaces offer.

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