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**From the Amazon Forest to the World:
Gender Divisions of Labour in an Emerging Value
Chain**

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List of Acronyms

BNDES	<i>Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Nacional</i> (National Bank for Economic and Social Development)
CONAB	<i>Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento</i> (National Supply Company)
EMBRAPA	<i>Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária</i> (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation)
FAPESPA	<i>Fundação Amazônica para Estudos e Pesquisas</i> (Amazon Foundation for Studies and Research)
GVC	Global Value Chain
GOLLS	Governance of Labour and Logistics for Sustainability
IBGE	<i>Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística</i> (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)
ISS	International Institute of Social Studies
JICA	<i>Agência de Cooperação Internacional do Japão</i> (Japan International Cooperation Agency)
LPT	Labour Process Theory
MMA	<i>Ministério do Meio Ambiente</i> (Ministry of the Environment)
MS	<i>Ministério da Saúde</i> (Ministry of Health)
OSCIP	<i>Organização da Sociedade Civil de Interesse Público</i> (Civil Society Organization of Public Interest)
SLRA	Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Approach

Glossary

Açaizal: It is an area where there is a high concentration of the açai palm tree that composes the local ecosystem. The native *açaizal* - not planted - is common in flooded soils (EMBRAPA: 2017 a). It is in açais where the *ribeirinhos* extract the fruits of açai to eat and to sell. Recently, the technology advancement has developed techniques that allow the cultivation of açai palm tree in dry soils, resulting in areas destined only to the planting of açai, without interaction with other vegetal species.

Ribeirinhos: local population who live in flooded areas in the Amazon Region located in the north of Brazil. Most of the *ribeirinhos* families live in stilt houses near the rivers. Family farming, fruit and wood extraction, fishing and hunting are the main livelihood activities.

Dedication

To my beloved Raul, Miranda and Miguel who fill my life with happiness, enthusiasm and youth. I hope that Aunt Lú's footsteps serve as encouragement in the realization of your dreams and in the constant search for knowledge.

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Abstract

This paper aims to study the role and labour of women in the açai production chain, a native fruit of the Amazon Forest, which recently aroused interest in the national and international market. Denominated as “dark gold” by the extractive people, the açai is generating income and extra work for the *ribeirinhos* families besides being the main source of subsistence. The inclusion of this new commodity in the annual calendar of the Amazonian communities has required a redistribution of tasks and significant women’s efforts to balance subsistence and household activities with the açai chain. Objectively and subjectively, this research approaches the process of divisions of labour and evaluates the recognition and valorization of women's work in açai production. This new commodity has impacted women’s relationship with their families and communities, as well as brought new actors closer to the reality of the local extractive people. Held in 6 traditional communities located in Marajó Island, in the Northern region of Brazil, this study presents reflections about a new value chain, which has the first stage based in a place where the culture is focused on the decisions of men. On the one hand, the açai has become the main source of income for the families that approached social-environmental projects and courses developed for the local population. On the other hand, the invisibility of women's labour in this chain and the challenges faced by women in reconciling activities are emerging issues, especially in dialogues between mothers and daughters.

Relevance to Development Studies

In the *ribeirinho* communities, the women play a central role in domestic activities, food production and the maintenance of the açai production chain. Since açai is the main source of livelihood and income of Amazon families, this research seeks to foster discussions about the recognition of women's labour. Despite the existence of several academic studies about the lack of visibility and valorization of the women’s labour in informal production chains, there is no research related to the involvement of women in açai extractive activities. The current debates surrounding the regularization of this new production chain are focused on issues related to the working conditions, the safety of those involved and child labour, not approaching sufficiently the role of women in this emerging chain. Thus, this research aims to bring the attention to the invisibility of the women’s work and hopes that this theme will be deepened in academic studies, normative discussions and socio-environmental projects developed around this luxurious Amazon fruit.

Keywords

Gender, labour divisions, women, açai production chain, sustainable rural livelihoods and, Amazon Forest

1. The Amazon, Women and Açaí Value Chain

1.1 Introduction

Traditionally, economic discussions around tropical forests focus on the analysis of timber harvesting or the conversion of these areas to agricultural production, usually soy, or animal husbandry, more specifically livestock (Pedrozo et al., 2011: 89). The extractive practices, characterized by the use of natural resources and forest products by the local populations, are often not taken into account, although these often traditional uses represent the identity, culture, and survival of extractive communities. Used for medicinal, artisanal and food purposes, some plants, seeds, nuts, and fruits are examples of products consumed by families living in the middle of the forest (MMA 2016).

The Amazon Forest, predominantly located in the Northern region of Brazil, is the main supplier of these products and approximately 4.2 million people live in rural areas surrounded by this tropical forest (IBGE 2010). Historically, the inhabitants of this region are immersed in an unequal socioeconomic context, forgotten by governments and without access to basic services, such as health and quality education (Brondízio 2008: 1). In this context, the forest becomes the main source of subsistence for the *ribeirinhos* communities that interspersed farming activities, fishing, and hunting with the extraction of fruits and nuts. In this reality, some Amazon forest non-timber resources have been awakening the market interests. Although not represented in the Brazilian macroeconomics, these products are becoming the main source of income for the *ribeirinhos*, especially those that live far from the urban areas, such as the extractive communities located in the Canaticu River region, in Marajó Island situated in Pará State / Brazil.

It is in this context, that the açaí is inserted.

Since the 90's, açaí has been gaining national and international visibility, arousing market and consumer interests. Used as the main source of food for *ribeirinhos*, açaí is a native fruit of the northern region, typical of flooded areas. This fruit has purple color and develops in bunches (3 to 4 per palm). The consumption of the fresh açaí has to be quick, considering that the fruit perishes in up to 48 hours without refrigeration. In addition to the fruit, palm heart has also slowly aroused market interest and the leaves and wood are used by the communities to cover houses and to construct footbridges, considering that this area where the *ribeirinhos* families live is flooded.

The increase demand for açaí has resulted in the inclusion of this traditional activity in a global value chain, involving different actors – middlemen, regional entrepreneurs, public agents, companies, and *ribeirinhos* - with different power, influence and economic interest. In this new market, extractive communities rapidly became an essential part of a new production chain. According to Peg-

ler "açai value chain is already 'offering' *ribeirinhos* households' ways to participate in larger systems of economic values" (Pegler 2015: 949). However, the expanding demand for açai has interfered in the social-environmental, labour and cultural dynamics of the Amazon families, who had to redistribute their tasks, to include açai activities in their routine to supply the market demand (Pegler and Silva 2016: 138).

In this new market, the labour of women becomes essential.

Domestic and childcare activities are still considered women's responsibilities, especially in remote places and in communities without access to information. These tasks are directly associated with gender and divisions of labour, and the household work is a responsibility for women (Whatmore 1991: 73). Activities such as cleaning the house and preparing food are considered tasks for women since childhood and are usually learned from the mother. According to Menon "the gendered notion of housework means that young girls are encouraged and trained to take on these roles" (Menon 2013: 184). In addition to household activities, the expansion of the açai also required a redistribution of the agricultural tasks among family members, demanding more involvement of women in farming practices to ensure food for the family.

During the açai harvest, the family works together and focuses on this informal chain, seeking to extract as much fruit as possible. The traditional tasks are done manually, in an artisanal way, involving intensive labour to ensure a high production and sale (Dendena and Corsi 2014: 760). Although invisible to the external agents, such as the market and consumers, and little valued in the families and communities, women's work is essential in the expansion and guarantee of açai production chain. Climbing the palm tree, picking the fruit up, preparing the baskets and carrying the production to the boats are activities coordinated and performed by women. In addition, washing and beating the açai for family consumption are also women's responsibilities that associate the food preparation as a daily obligation.

At the same time that women balance all these tasks, the açai becomes the main income activity for extractive families. Although the "income levels have risen, açai market development appears to have had only marginal impacts on attitudes toward the division of labour within the community or within the household" (Pegler 2015: 945). In this context, issues regarding the recognition and valorization of women's labour are still far from the perceptions of families, communities and external agents.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Women have an important role in the açai production chain, coordinating and carrying out activities that guarantee the supply and sale of the fruit that represent at the same time, food and income for their families. However, the negotiation and sale - more valued stages in the communities - are accomplished by

the men, as well as the family management of the financial resource generated from the açaí. According to Pande, "men's work resolves around activities that produce cash income while women contribute to social reproduction through their subsistence-oriented work" (Pande 2013: 101).

Concurrently that women balance domestics, food production and, açaí activities distributed and assumed in an unequal way, the accumulation of tasks and responsibilities are naturalizing in the families' daily routine and consolidating in the culture of *ribeirinhos*. All of these activities are seen as an extension of women responsibilities at home and have become standardized in the gender divisions of labour (Pande 2013: 101). Currently, dialogues and reflections about the tasks and role of women are getting common between family members, especially among mothers and daughters. Simultaneously, discussions around the necessity to regulate this new value chain are being led by representatives of non-governmental organizations and members of the legal institutions in the main city of Pará. The academy and researchers are also addressing different aspects related to the expansion of the açaí value chain, discussing issues such as governance and the impacts of this new market on the *ribeirinhos* work (Pegler 2011:34). However, in most of these debates, the role and labour of women are not systematic detail addressed while women continue to act in an invisible way, ensuring the families' livelihoods and income as well as contributing to the maintenance of the açaí market.

1.3 Research Question

Based on these dialogues that are emerging in the communities and the women's reflections around about their responsibilities' and recognition of their activities in the açaí production chain, a central question was elaborated to guide the present research paper.

- In which ways have women's activities changed with the açaí production chain and how are these activities remunerated, negotiated and recognized?

With this main question, is possible to observe and analyze two delicate situations. Firstly, the inclusion of açaí activities in the women routine has resulted in an accumulation of tasks and the necessity to involve children in domestic and agricultural activities while generating income is the main goal of each family. Secondly, the explanations about how the activities are recognized, the women reflected on the value of their work, the losses and the gains resulting from this new informal production chain.

1.3.1 Sub Research Questions

In order to appropriately answer this central question, the following sub-questions were used. Through the gender lens, these questions aim, in an objective way, to understand the process of divisions of labour and what are the activities developed and the responsibilities assumed by women. In addition,

the women's perceptions regarding the tasks and obligations assumed, and the valorization of their work was also researched.

Tasks and Responsibilities *(to understand the effects of the açai chain on the women's tasks and responsibilities)*

- What are the women's tasks in açai production chain and how do women perceive their responsibilities in this chain at the family and community levels?

Social and Cultural Changes *(to comprehend the influence of the açai production chain on the role of women in the local culture - subordination status - and social relations – leadership role)*

- The açai production chain is influencing the social life of extractive families and the local community arrangement. What is the role that women play in the family and community and how this changed after the boom of açai production chain?

Natural Resources Aspects *(to extend the balance between açai tasks and livelihood/household activities)*

- The açai chain is affecting other activities. How was the process of division of labour related to other activities and how do women balance the açai tasks with other livelihood practices?

1.4 Background

In the mid-1980s, the globalization process driven by the speed of information dissemination and extensive investments in technology and transportation means, has resulted in economic, political and social changes in the global context, diminishing borders and bringing countries closer together (Milberg and Windkler 2013: 33). Although several scholars comment that globalization is not a contemporary process and that commercial practices between geographically distant countries have occurred since the advent of capitalism (Wallerstein, cited in Bair 2005: 156), in the last two decades, the global south countries had local production processes valued and fragmented, being gradually insert into an international market. Although the activities in the GVC are fragmented and carried out in different spaces, the actions are guided by production (Scherer 2014: 81).

In this context, global value chains/ GVC become fundamental to the economic development strategies of developing countries. This process, led by large transnational companies and producers of public policies, aims to rearrange the positioning of powerful actors in value chains, retaining and adding value throughout the production processes. The vertical disintegration of corporations and the fragmentation of the production processes are characteristics of GVC, which encompasses an intra-departments and cross-border networks (Gereffi et al., 2005: 79-80). The production analysis through the global value chain allows the recognition the powerful agents' strategies in the production

disintegration and the countries' intentions in the consolidation of business plans, seeking to generate and retain more value, both in the domestic and external markets. As said by Bair, the GVC engages "the sequence of processes by which goods and services are conceived, produced and brought to the market" (Bair 2009:2).

Nevertheless, some critical scholars point out that the production analysis through the GVC is focused on adding value to the product and the search for economic gains, not considering essential issues that constitute the production chain, such as social relations and labour conditions. Dunaway highlights that the tracking of the production process focuses on things rather than the people involved (Dunaway, as cited in Collins 2014: 30). Thus, issues related to the impact on the environment, the gender composition of the labour force and reproduction of unequal labour models are issues that need to be addressed in GVC. As Collins "wherever the global commodity chain touches down, it intersects with local social relations" (2014: 32). A gender analysis in the value chain is extremely important because it allows the mapping of the contradictions and ambiguities existing between the global production processes and the social relations of gender, which are often rooted in local culture and traditions (Barrientos 2001: 89-90). Pegler addressed the social relations in the açai work throughout analyzes of the indicators related to the human security in this labour processes. (Pegler 2015: 929) Using the collective, culture change and the sustainability as levels of analysis, the researcher demonstrated contradictions and insecurities related to the communities work flexibility but not in a gender perspective (ibid).

The network establishment, which unites the global with the local often, camouflages the work and responsibilities assumed by women, strengthening the invisibility of their activities and, resulting in a challenge in the real recognition and fair valorization of these tasks. Considering that açai is an emerging global commodity and that the first stage of the chain - picking up the fruit and selling - happens in Amazon communities with significant work of the women, this study will approach through the lens of the gender the labour process of extractive families. Issues related to divisions of labour and challenges related to the balance of açai activities with other subsistence and domestic practices of extractive families are used to analyze the situation of women in the Canaticu River.

1.5 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

This research study was developed according to the guidelines of the ISS. The purpose of this paper was previously explained to all participants and the confidentiality offered. All information collected was treated with respect. A feedback on the results of this research was requested by some respondents and this demand will be discussed with local actors to define the best approach to return to the participating communities the main themes observed and results

collected. This feedback needs to be built in a creative way with pictures, maps, and few Portuguese words.

The contact with the communities was facilitated by the Peabiru Institute¹ and by a person who works in the Agriculture Department of Curralinho, the municipality where the communities studied are located. The community approach was first carried out through the contact with community leaders. After explaining the purpose of this research and with their permission, I talked to residents. Respecting the local culture, a conversation was first held with the husbands of the participating women. Subsequently, the target public - women - were approached and interviewed. However, in two interviews, the husbands participated during the conversations, impacting in the collection of women's perceptions about more sensitive issues, especially those that involved their perception regarding the family and community recognition of women's activities.

1.6 – Outline of this Study

Afterward to this introductory chapter, the second chapter of this study presents and analyzes concepts and theories that cover the gender, process of divisions of labour and livelihood rural activities, as well a comparative literature. The third chapter describes the method and research approaches used in this study to collect and analyze the collected information and presents the case study. The fourth chapter explores the role and labour of women in the açai production chain and their responsibilities in domestic and food activities. The fifth chapter analysis the external initiatives implications in the local communities and debates around the açai value chain, and the last chapter present the conclusions of this research paper.

¹ The Peabiru Institute is an OSCIP that operates in the Amazon region, facilitating processes to strengthen social organizations and the valorization of socio-biodiversity, mainly involving extractive and rural families (Peabiru 2017)

2. Concepts, Theories, and Frameworks of Analysis

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers the concepts and base theories used in this study to address and to examine the role and labour of women in the açai value chain. Through the analysis of two theories on gender, the process of division of labour and the valuation of women's activities were addressed. A theory related to survival strategies developed by families and rural communities has also been used as a tool for approach and analysis, considering the tasks and responsibilities assumed by women in the family, community and the market where they are inserted. Finally, similar real-life study cases were used to understand the practical challenges. This helped in the analyses the case of the women's in the açai production chain.

2.2 Key Concepts Definition

The proper analysis of the frameworks chosen to fit this researched case requires a clear understanding regarding the main concepts mentioned in this study. These terms help the comprehension and investigation of the nature of the responsibilities and the labour undertaken by the women of the Canaticu River in the açai value chain.

2.2.1 Gender

The concepts sex and gender, widely discussed in the academia, used several times together, have different definitions. For most sociologists, the term sex is related to the physiological and anatomical aspects of the men or women bodies, whereas gender concept encompasses psychological, cultural and social aspects (Guidens and Griffiths 2006: 458). In other words, it can be explained that while sex is associated with the biological aspects of the human being, gender deals with responsibilities and tasks socially and culturally adopted and assimilated by men and women since the birth moment, influencing and shaping a personal socio identity.

2.2.2 Gender Inequality

The gender inequality is concentrated on the differences in status, power, role, recognition, and rules attributed to men and women. This concept should be used considering a unit, for example, the family; group and society where people are inserted. The treatment divergences between men and women can be observed through the access to existing and valued social resources such as

money and food; the existence of rules governing a given subject and, the way in which the activities are distributed and valued (Guidens and Griffiths 2006: 468).

The gender inequality concept is framed in the lack of recognition of the work of women who, despite performing important activities in production chains, have their labour remaining invisible to a particular group or society. The divergences between reward and financial gratification offered to a woman that developed the same or more activities in comparison to a man are a gender inequality. The cases that encompass women without an active voice in the negotiation processes maintain and perpetuate the gender inequality in the workplace, as well as in the forms that the activities are divided.

2.2.3 Gender and Divisions of Labour

This concept addresses the manner in which activities and responsibilities are divided and allocated by gender. It is directly connected to the existing relationships between men and women, engaging support, competition, obligations and sharing responsibilities (March et al., 1999: 18). The process of division of labour often legitimizes gender inequality, forcing women to take on responsibilities and activities that are not properly valued and recognized. Reproduction work, usually developed by women, refers to essential activities linked to the maintenance of family and community (Collins 2014: 33). Normally these obligations are not recognized and remunerated - they are not explicitly registered - and reproduce between generations in addition to supporting market-based production (Verhart and Pyburn 2012: 62). Production work encompasses the activities - of goods and services - that generate income or guarantee subsistence and are identified and valued by individuals, community and society (March et al., 1990: 19). Commonly these activities are used for consumption and exchange, being associated with work.

2.2.4 Gender and Informal Agricultural Activities

The gender inequality and the process of division of labour are also associated with informal agricultural activities that, in certain situations, are performed as a survival strategy and income generation for rural families. The absence of recognized rights and express norms that regulate this work; the lack of guarantees such as job security, benefits and an adequate remuneration for the people involved; the inexistence of healthy and safe work conditions and, the manner in which these activities have been divided and assumed by those involved are characteristics of informal agriculture. Generally, women are engaged in informal agriculture having to balance these activities with reproduction work (Verhart and Pyburn 2012: 62). However, all these women responsibilities remain invisible because all the activities that involve income and allow person's exposure, such as the negotiation processes and sale of agri-

cultural products, are conducted by men. Besides this, the invisibility of women's activities is often rooted in the local culture and traditions.

2.2.5 Patriarchal Societies

The patriarchal concept is directly related to men's dominance over women, and the level of subordination fluctuates according to the context in which society is inserted (Guidens and Griffiths 2006: 1054). As Kabber "while patriarchal power may take infinitely variable forms in different cultures and social formations, the privileged status of men and the subordinate status of women remain its defining core" (Kabber 2007: 264). The patriarchal societies are characterized by culture and rules defined and shaped according to the values and actions of men who often do not recognize and reward women by reproducing and strengthening unequal hierarchies of gender (March et al., 1999: 9).

2.3 Theoretical Foundations

All the concepts introduced were embraced and used, under different perspectives, in diverse academic theories. Based on three theoretical discussions, this study will use the existing debates and academic tools related to labour processes; rural livelihood practices and, the division of tasks according to gender issues. Through descriptions of the tasks performed and the people's perception around their obligations, it will be possible to identify, frame and analyze the opportunities and challenges faced by women in the recognition of their activities in the açai value chain.

The first building theoretical block is related to labour process theory / LPT. This framework, constituted from the Marx principles, seeks to understand the nature of work considering the capitalist system. These principles encompass the ideas that the labour process involves the production of a surplus from a workforce undertaken; there is a constant search for accumulation, stimulated by competition; market tools and mechanisms isolated do not regulate the labour process and the surplus generation; and even in a divergent environment, there is cooperation and the results achieved are consequences of the positioned and overlapping operations (Newsome et al. 2015: 4).

Based on these principles, the LPT aims to explore the tools of control, consent, and resistance that exist during the production time (Ibid: 4). This framework permits to analyze the production process and the control that organizations maintain over their employees, given the common relationships that exist between a certain group of people with the production environment - class (Guidens and Griffiths 2006: 301). Through this theory is possible to observe the value flows occurring in a production process involving workers, allowing to create, improve and capture value along a specific chain (Wong 2015: 101). The main fundamentals of the LPT allow the identification in an objective and subjective way the activities performed by each worker and how they feel

about their work. Through these analyses, it is possible to diagnose in which ways the social relations are impacted, considering the power, hierarchy, control, and voice in work relations. From this block, it is possible to go further and observe the gender issues existed in the division of labour processes and the worker perceptions about the recognition of their activities developed. However, Whatmore emphasizes that labour processes that involve informal agricultural practices, an analysis of the overlap of coercion and consent of those involved resulting in cooperation, need to be carefully observed and detailed (Whatmore 1991: 74). The extension of women's domestic responsibility for informal agricultural practices can be a legitimization of gender inequality that does not clearly appear in informal value chains. It is important to note that the production chains are constantly moving, involving different interactions among the agents (Loconto as cited in Pegler 2011: 4). In the case of *ribeirinhos*, the use of LPT fundamentals allowed to mapping the gender divisions of labour considering that the açai value chain involves different workers as well as multiple forms of production (açai, agricultural subsistence activities and domestic obligations).

The second theoretical building block approaches the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods which involves the subsistence practices performed by individuals, families and rural communities. Widely discussed in academia, the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods encompasses debates around issues related to poverty reduction, natural resource management, and rural development opportunities. This approach is based on Conway and Chamber's definition of sustainable livelihoods which describes sustainable livelihoods as the comprise the capacity, resources, and activities developed to survive, considering and respecting the natural cycle of the resources used as a basis to survive (Conway and Chamber, as cited in Scoones 2015: 6). These activities, performed in rural areas, are part of strategies adopted by individuals in their search for daily survival.

However, these strategies are dynamic and shift according to the existing pressures and opportunities. The observation and identification of available resources and the way these assets are interconnected and available become necessary as well as the analysis of the dominant context and trends in the researched reality (Scoones 1998: 9). Although most of initiatives and discussions are focused on rural practices, Ellis points out that there are several survival strategies adopted by rural families, and the farming activity is only one of the means used to survive (Ellis, as cited in Scoones 2015: 12). Despite there are other subsistence techniques, this study observed the diversification adopted by *ribeirinhos* families and communities that live spread along the Canaticu River. The adoption of this specific strategy occurs due to the temporary adversities faced by the families, and as an adaptation mechanism, due to the lack of options in the locality (Scoones 1998: 9). The Sustainable Rural Livelihoods theory is an fundamental approach of for this study because, throughout different levels, it was possible to observe the involvement of extractive families in açai production chain and to analyze the *ribeirinhos* families choices strate-

gies between focus their activities on this emerging chain or diversify their productions.

The majority of rural livelihood activities are conducted informally, executed in an artisanal manner through family labour. The division of tasks among family members, specifically in the communities located in Canaticu River, is guided by a patriarchal culture. The third theoretical building box encompasses the manner the divisions of labour occur. This extensive topic was argued among sociologists and anthropologists that studied causes and consequences related to the processes of specialization and the pursuit of economic gain, issues presented by thinkers such as Karl Marx and Adam Smith (White et al., 1977: 1). This research study used as a theoretical basis the discussions about the process of division of labour with regard to gender. The social and cultural rules that shape the role of women and define the work according to gender are the basis of this study, emphasizing that “women are often invisible and unrecognized in cash crop value chains because cash crops are domain of men” (Verhart and Pyburn 2012: 67).

This framework allows the observation of the different activities and responsibilities performed by men and women and the contrast that exists regarding the recognition and valuation - political, social or economic - of these activities considering the gender lens. It is clear that labour process theory and sustainable rural livelihoods are directly related to the process of division of labour. Thus, it is necessary to consider these foundations to examine the women inclusion in the açai activity and the way in which their tasks are recognized and valued.

2.4 Frameworks of Analysis

Some scholars have mixed these theories and concepts and created analytical frameworks. These models allow the verification in the field the objective and subjective questions related to the informal activities performed by women from the perspective of the family, community, and market. This study used the models of Harvard, Monser and SLRA approach as frameworks of analysis.

2.4.1 Harvard Analytical Framework

This framework, also known as Gender Analysis Framework, was developed by scholars in partnership with the Harvard Institute for International Development and the Women in Development office (March et al., 1999: 32). This model, published in 1985, aims to map and frame the work of men and women performed in the family and community - local levels. Through this matrix, which encompasses mainly four elements is possible to identify the differences and opportunities existing between the activities developed by the genres.

The first component is the effective description of all activities and obligations assumed by women and men, including their sons and daughters. In this ma-

trix, the production activities aimed at subsistence and incomes generation are identified, as well as the reproduced work. In this process it is possible to identify the responsibilities of each individual, the time invested in each task and the place where the work is performed (March et al., 1999: 33-34). Objective questions as like who does what, in what place and at what frequency are used in this analysis. The second component concerns access and benefits related to the use of resources. In this analysis, questions related to access and land ownership, the tasks invested, and types of equipment used are observed. Afterwards, questions that address responsibility for the income and benefits generated, the prestige acquired and the roles assumed by each person are made and indicated in this gendered matrix (March et al., 1999: 34).

The third component encompasses the factors that influence in the reality and in the tasks distribution in the families and communities, often demonstrating the differences related to women in comparison with men (March et al., 1999: 35). The local culture, for instance, based on the decisions of men; the traditional knowledge and practices transmitted between generations, involving the role of women in the family; the challenges related to geographic conditions; and the socioeconomic and cultural factors are addressed and detailed in this model. Through this tool is possible to identify obstacles and opportunities faced by women. Questions regarding the absence of public policies, the influence of external agents in the communities, as well as the challenges in evaluating the activities in regions focused on a patriarchal culture, are used. The last component addresses issues that permit the analyses of all the information collected. Through subjective questions, it is possible to identify the context and detail the women's work obligations and their perceptions.

However some scholars criticize² the use of this framework for this research project it was useful because allowed to identify in the field the profile, the process of redistribution of tasks and the activities developed by each person in the açai value chain as well as the rural livelihoods activities and domestic obligations. In addition, this matrix stimulated reflections and discussions on the part of those involved in the conversations. The influences of local culture, the community dynamics centered on traditions and economic and geographic limitations also emerged in the dialogues.

2.4.2 Monser Framework

This gender methodology was developed in the early 1980s by Caroline Monser and is focused on the empowerment of women through an analysis of

² Kabber mentions that the use of this gender analytical framework encourages a separate analysis of men and women as if they were distant groups, becoming difficult to map the exercise of power and the control at the local level (Kabeer, as cited in March et al., 1999: 24).

power and inequality. Through the elaboration of a gender planning, constituted by six tools, is possible to identify women's subordination situations and verify ways to change this reality, considering the context in which women are inserted (Monser, as cited in March et al. 1999:56).

The first tool encompasses the gender mapping and divisions of labour. At this stage, is necessary to highlight the role of women and which tasks they are responsible considering the production, reproduction, and community works (March et al., 1999: 56). Question about who does what is used in this moment. The second tool permits an analysis of strategic and practical essential requirements such as food acquisition and preparation, health care, divisions of labour, and the existence of norms that strengthen the subordination of women to men (March et al., 1999: 56). Through this tool, it is possible to diagnose women's expectations regarding the obligations assumed, directly and indirectly, by them. In parallel, the third tool involves decision-making processes and the uses of current resources. Through questioning that addresses who is responsible for the money management and who defined this distribution of activities is possible to identifying who has the power and control of decisions in the family and community levels.

The fourth tool enables to detect the manner that women balance all the activities and obligations they have assumed and their perceptions about it. The equilibrium between reproduction, production and community works and the willingness or constraint of being inserted into new opportunities, such as courses, or assuming a new role in the community are identified (March et al. 1999: 59). The fifth tool allows the observation and mapping the external interventions such as socio-environmental programs and public policies that can positively or negatively affect the role of women. In this analysis, observations and questions about projects, workshops, and courses promoted by external agents allow us to identify if there has been a change in the role of women. Finally, the sixth tool maps the previous participation of women in the planning of activities. This component was analyzed indirectly in this study through questions regarding the process of divisions of labour and responsibilities related to existing resources.

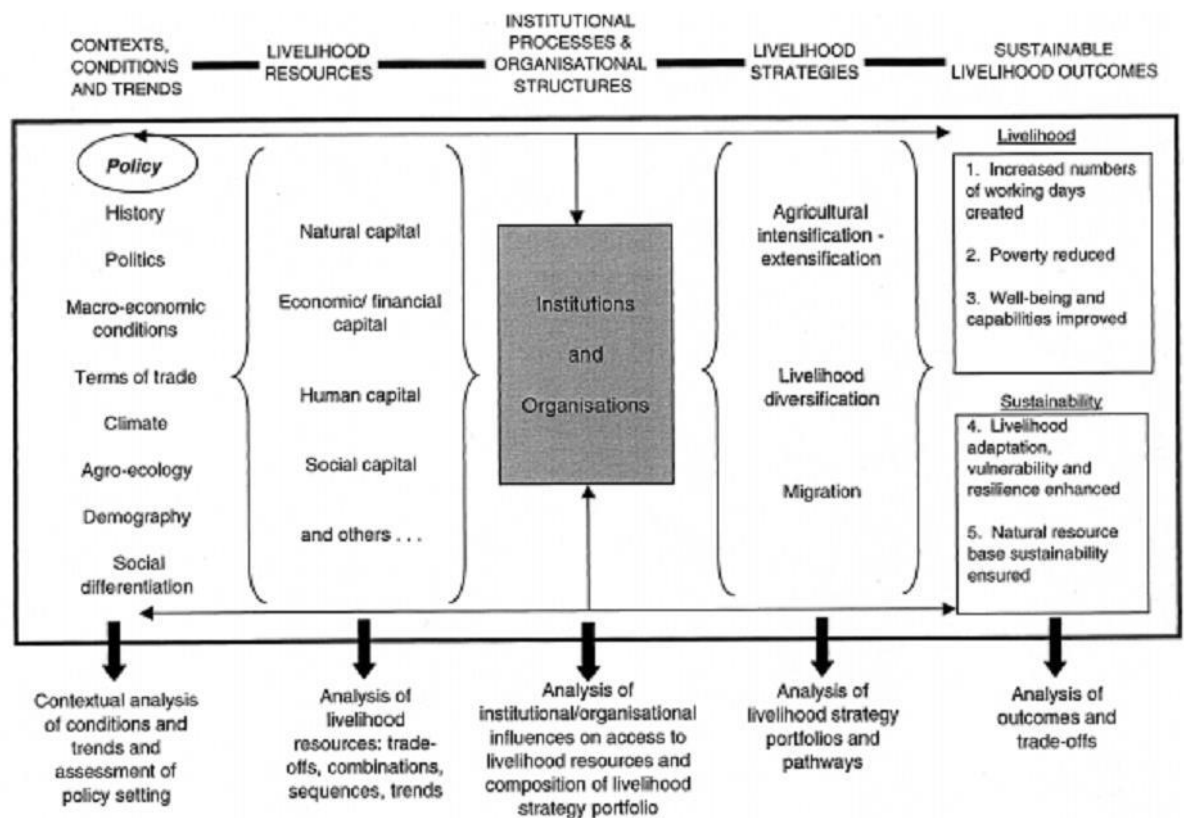
In this study, the Monser Framework was important because it allowed tracking the challenges faced by women considering the local culture; the roles and tasks adopted by women and naturalized in the relationship with their families and communities and the positive and negative influences of the external agents in the researched region.

2.4.3 Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Approach

The Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Approach/ SLRA allows the mapping and analyze the survival strategies of individuals, families, and communities in rural areas. An analytical framework focused on subsistence activities was developed for this analysis. This matrix encompasses the main assets available, the pro-

cesses of access and use of these resources and the alternatives used to survive. Through the analysis of the social, institutional and organizational processes that influence the researched region, this framework charts "linked inputs (capital, assets or resources) and outputs (livelihood strategies), connected in turn to outcomes, which combined family territory (of poverty lines and employment levels) with wider framings (of wellbeing and sustainability)" (Scoones 2015: 8-9).

Figure 2-1: Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Approach



Source: Ian Scoones 1998: 4, IDS Working Paper 72

The rural livelihood strategies used are directly related to the existing and stocked subsistence resources in the researched reality. These assets, called capital, are the starting point for mapping and analyzing the context. Natural capital is an asset that comprises the stock of natural resources and environmental services used in generating the means of survival. Water, soil, and forest resources are examples of available resources and their strategic use through individuals in the quest for survival needs to be identified and analyzed. The second capital is the financial and it encompasses money, debt, credit, savings, and equipment that are reverted by the family in consumption or labour, both related to subsistence. The human asset involves the labour force undertaken in agricultural, extractive, educational and domestic activities. The active room

encompasses social relationships, such as associations, movements, and claim processes, and is based on subsistence actions coordinated through a network.

A diagnose of these assets is necessary to understand the capitals that the family and community have available to define their livelihood strategies and create or strengthen social relationships. In spite of the academic debate about the capitals described above, involving, among other issues, the lack of consideration of political and cultural capitals, this study used these capitals described above to understand the subsistence practices adopted by families and communities (Scoones 2015: 39). The mapping and analysis of the set of available assets also involve the observation of the economic, social and political context that people are inserted. The history of the place; the influence of economic trends; and existing norms and traditions rooted in a culture that shapes the people's identities have to be identified and considered in this analysis. This detailed examination allows connect local effort with the dynamics that influence the subsistence strategies of the *ribeirinhos* (Scoones and Wolmer, as cited in Scoones 2015: 42).

The third analysis requires a detailed look at strategies designed and followed by families and communities. Migration, agricultural intensification, and diversification of livelihoods are plans drawn and adopted by households. Migration is a particular survival strategy and it is either voluntary or involuntary (Scoones 1998: 9). This action can occur as a result of a process or a natural movement of change to other places. Agricultural intensification is directly related to land uses and water availability as a survival strategy. It involves undertaking practices of new agricultural techniques aimed at the continuation or increase of a particular production and are usually accomplished through the support of external agents such as specialized agricultural organizations and public agencies that provide money, knowledge, and inputs while the community provides the labour force. These two strategies were observed indirectly in this study. The agricultural diversification presented by Scoones as a third strategy is a practice developed by the *ribeirinhos*.

Ellis believes that development can be explained by the diversification of available livelihoods. The continuous creation of diversity existing in social and economic processes influences individuals and families, demanding and resulting in changes in their way of life and, consequently, in the rural environment where they are inserted and in the ways of production used as subsistence techniques (Ellis 2000: 14). In this dynamic process, diversification becomes a strategy, encompassing the adoption of several subsistence practices. In other words "rural livelihood diversification is defined as the process by which rural households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive and to improve their standard of living" (Ellis 2000: 15).

The use of this analytical structure allowed mapping and verifying in local levels, the subsistence strategies used by the families and communities of the Canaticu River. Besides this, was possible to understand the existing and depend-

ent relations between the individuals and the assets available in the region, which shape the lifestyle of the *ribeirinhos*. In this context, the açáí supply for a new commodity chain is one of the several activities developed by the families, looking for subsistence and income. This agricultural diversification was mapped along with and the challenge faced by extractive communities in the light of external trends, such as the specialization in açáí management; the participation in training workshops; and the açáí buyers and sellers' harassment during the açáí harvest period, that were also observed and reported in the field.

2.5 Comparative Literature: Cocoa, Brazilian Nuts and Açáí Studies

Diverse academic studies and international reports address the inclusion of traditional communities in global value chains. Issues associated with the labour process, economic upgrade versus social downgrade and the role of women in the maintenance of commodity chains have been widely discussed. There are many studies that help to analyze the empirical data collected in this research project. The first is related to the cocoa production in Tanzania and the second is the case of Brazilian nut value chain. Beside this, there are studies related to the expansion of açáí market which allows mapping the labour process and the social relation around this new chain³.

In 2010, a study in Kyela district, in Tanzania, addressed the role of women peasants in expanding the cocoa production chain (Verhart and Pyburn 2012: 68). This commodity chain, which begins in rural and distant villages, is the first part of a fragmented production process that has as the main objective of supplying the international demand for the fruit. Although cocoa is not a native fruit from Tanzania, in contrast to açáí that is a fruit native to the Amazon region, the cocoa species have adapted to the African region. All of the activities, including planting, handling, harvesting, and selling the cocoa are carried out through family labour. In this study, the roles and responsibilities of men and women at a local level were observed, considering the differences in activities, production, benefits, and bargaining power (Verhart and Pyburn 2012: 68). Similarly to the case of açáí, the lack of recognition and appreciation of women's work in the cocoa production chain is also a characteristic of this global value chain. Although women develop most of the activities, the absence of women in the negotiation processes and the accumulation of domestic and subsistence activities are characteristic of both women in açáí and in cacao.

³ This study fits in a gender specific analysis within the context of GOALS project

Brazil nut, similarly to açaí, aroused interest in the national and international market after the fall of rubber in the 1980s (Cortez 2011: 18). The case of women included in the extractive reserve of the Cajari River, an area that covers 501 thousand hectares of Amazon forest in the State of Amapá - Brazil has many resemblances with the women of the Canaticu River. Both the açaí and the nut are native fruits of the Amazon biome and are present in the livelihood and income of extractive families. Both activities involve a hard work of the women, but unlike the açaí that has the commercialization carried out by the men, the chestnut of the Cajari has all its process led by the women (Nectar 2017 website). The market's interest in this kernel approached organizations, funded by public banks and social investment funds, which have conducted several courses in the region to organize this new value chain, with an effective participation of women who collect chestnut. Unlike the açaí that is sold *in natura* to the middleman, the chestnut has been benefited in the community and sold by the women themselves on the road and regional fairs, putting an end to the person of the middleman and adding value to the fruit.

In the last decade, the expansion of the açaí production chain has resulted in studies and diverse approaches around this fruit that has gained prominence in the national and international spheres. The interest of the market resulted in technological research and fruit transformation processes. In addition to the expansion of the food industry, products derived from açaí, such as soaps, syrups and shampoos began to be produced and marketed by pharmaceutical and cosmetic companies (Brondízio 2008: 188). The inclusion of informal açaí activity in a global value chain needs to be analyzed beyond cost and efficiency factors as well as power relations. This theme was observed by Pegler who, locally, dissected *ribeirinho* working conditions and governance around açaí activities, questioning the sustainability of the value chain (Pegler 2011: 4).

Recently, the same researcher evaluated the economic upgrading and social downgrading related to through the *ribeirinhos* labour process in the global açaí value chain (Pegler 2015: 929). This research was carried out using objective and subjective questions. Although the inclusion of rural communities in a GVC requires a redistribution of tasks, this study did not deepen in the gender issues. The lack of information about the process of division of tasks; the women perceptions about their role and activities; and the issues related to the valorization of women tasks stimulated my research paper. As Pegler “it is unclear whether these tasks are recognised, whether men support the redefinition of roles or whether these changes have produced more leisure, alternative opportunities or more income independence for women” (Pegler 2015: 946).

From these cases, it was possible to observe that there are different levels of analysis and objective and subjective aspects help in the collection and analysis of data. The similarity of the role of women in other production chains and the process of divisions of labour considering the gender lens also allowed for a more deep analysis of women's tasks in açaí. Finally, the economic gain of

these production chains that start in distant communities often camouflages important issues regarding the social relations and working conditions of those involved. In his article, Pegler shows the economic upgrading from the açai value chain, such as the family income, sometimes conceal important issues around the social aspects, such as labour condition, showing that in an analysis of açai value chain it is important to consider different concepts and perspectives (Pegler 2015: 951).

These studies showed that a real diagnosis of the positive and negative impacts of this chain on the *ribeirinhos* way of life requires a more specific study of the role of women, a subject that was investigated in this study. In this way, the negotiation process, the women's remuneration and the recognition by the family, community, and market in relation to women's responsibilities in açai chain were approached in an objective and subjective manners through interviews, dialogues, and observations.

3. Analytical Methods and Introduction to the Case Study

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the method used to understand the dynamics of gender in the process of division of labour in the açai production chain. It also presents the tools used in the collection and analysis of information that compose this study and, at the end, an overview around the participating public.

3.2 Levels of Analysis

These research's unit levels made possible to map and understand the gender issues in different arenas, especially regarding to women's labour and recognition of their activities in the açai value chain, in an individual, group, and external dimensions.

The household is the first unit of analysis, considering that all members - father, mother, and children – live together and are involved in the açai chain and livelihood activities. The use of the term household and not the family was adopted to facilitate the analysis of the activities distributed and developed by each member through the lens of the gender (Varley 2014: 398).

Considering the relationships among the families located in the same geographic space, sharing activities and influenced by a local culture, the community status was also applied as a level of analysis. The community is understood as the “shared identity based on location (e.g. a village) and or social grouping” (Agarwal 1997: 29). The use of this level is important considering the growing communities participation in socio-environmental projects and activities that require negotiation involving external agents (Agarwal 2001: 1623). In this context the role of women in the community, especially if they have gained voice or have acquired social status, for instance, a community leadership, through the expansion of açai market, also was analyzed.

Finally, the influence of external actors, mainly of the middlemen who are responsible for the negotiation and purchase of the collected açai as well as the sellers of clothes and household items, were also analyzed through the market level. The business practices often influence and shape the production and labour processes of families and groups, mainly in those communities located in isolated areas (Scoones 2015: 80).

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

The qualitative approach was used in this research paper. The primary data obtained through interviews and participatory observation was collected during 25 days of fieldwork in the Amazon region, specific in the Canaticu River area. The use of several research methods and the dialogue with several actors allowed a significant collection of information. The existing gap in the academic articles about the role of women in the açaí production chain was analyzed through the interviews in the fieldwork. Secondary data were used before and after the fieldwork, allowing a prior understanding of the academic discussions and collecting results that guided this research study.

3.3.1 Semi- Structure Interviews

To unpack and map the activities performed by women as well as their perceptions regarding the recognition of tasks undertaken in the açaí value chain in the three different levels, interviews were conducted. The interviews were performed in a semi-structured manner, respecting the natural flow of the conversation and seeking to establish relationships of trust to achieve the research objectives (O'Leary 2004: 164). During the interviews, confidentiality was offered, but all participants allowed the disclosing their names and responses.

For these conversations, three types of questionnaires were elaborated that were applied with women, their husbands, and specialists (Appendix I). The models used in the communities addressed, among other topics, the importance of açaí; the process of division of labour; and the role of women and the management of financial resources. The model applied with the experts has more open questions, focused on the açaí production chain; the role of the extractive communities; and risks of this business. In all models, objective and subjective questions were used, aiming to map the reality, responsibilities, and tasks assumed, as well as to collect perceptions about the interviewee's involvement in the açaí production chain.

As there is no electricity and no telephone signal, the initial contact with the residents of the communities was facilitated by the Peabiru Institution, which operates in this region with projects aimed at strengthening local protagonism around informal value chains. In the field, the access to the interviewees was carried out by means of the "snowball" process, which are, from the initial contact with the community leaders, the extractive families were indicated. During the conversations, new participants were suggested, being possible to approach families residing in 6 communities spread along the Canaticu River. In total, 29 people were interviewed, including 11 *ribeirinho* men, 15 women and 3 specialists (Appendix II).

Seeking to create an environment of confidence and respecting the local culture still very centered on the masculine figure, at the first were realized interviews with the men. In these individual conversations, the research proposal

was clarified and their perceptions regarding the women work in the açai production chain, domestic and agricultural activities were collected. Subsequently, 15 women were interviewed face to face. In some situations, the daughters of the participants were present and participated in the conversations, enriching the discussions around the recognition of women's work and the opportunities and challenges that the açai expansion brought to the family and community.

Finally, three people engaged in discussions related to açai in the state of Pará – the director of the Peabiru Institute, an Emilio Goeldi Research Institute employee and an entrepreneur in the food sector who plants and sells açai - were interviewed. In these conversations, they described the açai production chain and pointed normative discussions regarding around this emerging commodity chain. Besides this, the challenges faced by the *ribeirinhos* communities and the invisibility of women's tasks was discussed in the interviews.

3.3.2 Participatory Observation

During the three weeks in the field, living daily with the Amazon communities, the participatory observation technique was used as a complementary approach. The participatory observation allowed living daily together with the studied public, increasing the information gathered in the research paper (Laws et al., 2003: 304). Thus, the routine of women; family dynamics around tasks; community organization; livelihood practices; and the interaction of families with natural resources were observed and used in this research.

3.3.3 Secondary Data

This paper also used secondary data to define the research object as well as to guide this study and enrich and link the information collected in the field. Theories and debates in the academy – books, and articles – about labour processes, gender, and sustainable rural livelihoods were used. In addition, Peabiru Institute projects reports related to informal commodity chains developed in the Pará State and the technical papers from public agricultural agencies related to best practices of açai also were considered. Finally, data and documents available on Brazilian Government websites, such as IBGE and EMBRAPA, also have been added as a secondary data.



Community: Sagrado Coração de Jesus (2017) - photographic register of fieldwork



Community: Palestina (2017) - photographic register of fieldwork

Source - fieldwork July 2017

3.4 Data Analysis

The information collected in the 29 interviews was organized into three different spreadsheets - men, women, and specialists - and each divided into 6 topics. The first embraces an overview of the açaí; the second describes the activities developed and the process of division of labour in the family and community; later the work and role of women and the way in which they are recognized were used; the fourth is an analysis of the social and cultural changes, involving the influences of external actors and the role of women; the fifth is the balance between açaí activity and other rural livelihood practices; and finally the interviewees' perspectives about the açaí future and their family activities.

After this division and insertion of field information, common keywords highlighted in the conversations were identified and underlined. At the end of each topic, a summary was elaborated. During the analysis of the collected data, the common and divergent points were identified and pointed in each summary topic. To complement this analysis, the observations collected during the fieldwork were included in the summaries. In the end, keywords, such as recognition of women's work; diversification activities; and tasks distribution were linked to debates and academic theories, allowing a theoretical and practical analysis of the information, being the research question the guiding principle of this study.

3.5 Selection and Description of Study Area

The Amazon estuary - the confluence of the Amazon and Tocantins rivers with the Atlantic Ocean in Brazil - is a region made up of small islands that make up the Marajó “Island”, the largest river-maritime archipelago in the world. This is an area traditionally occupied by indigenous and *ribeirinho* communities, and the absence of the State, the difficulty of access to communities, the lack of basic services (education, health, and electricity) and the inexistence of formal job opportunities, transform the forest an important supplier of natural resources for the local population (Brondízio 2008: 1). In this context, the extraction of fruits, fishing and hunting, family farming, flour production and the breeding of small animals (ducks and pigs) are activities that generate food for the majority of the local population.

The Island of Marajó has 16 cities and most of the archipelago was in 1989, formally defined by the Brazilian government as an environmental protection area (Ideflor-bio 2017). In principle, all the activities developed in the Island should follow the guidelines of an economic-ecological plan elaborated by the government in partnership with the local population and social organizations. This document should guide investments in the Island as long as actions focused on biodiversity conservation and improvements in the quality of life of local populations have been carried out (ISA 2017). However, the dynamics of Marajó communities have been constantly impacted by the economic interests in the island's natural resources, mainly related to the raising animals (buffalo) in flooded areas, wood extraction, oil exploration and, more recently, the açáí commercialization.

The State of Pará is the main producer of açáí in Brazil and the Marajó Island is the main place of supply and sale of the fruit (CONAB 2015: 14). In *Currallinho*, a city that belongs to the Island, most of the local population survives from the fruit extraction, characterizing the commercialization of açáí as the main source of income. In the interview with Meirelles, responsible for Peabiru Institute, he commented that the açáí production chain removed approximately 500,000 people from the Brazilian misery list⁴. Currallinho has approximately 28,549 inhabitants and 61.71% of the population lives in rural areas (IBGE 2010). The communities of *Sagrada Família*, *Boa Esperança*, *São João II*, *Sagrado Coração de Jesus*, *São João* and *Palestina* are located in the region of the Canaticu River that drains into the Amazon River. These communities, inserted in a patriarchal culture, have approximately 270 families that have in the açáí their main source of subsistence and income.

⁴ Personal interview with Joao Meirelles

Map 1 - Brazil map ¹



Map 2 - Communities map (Currallinho city)²



Source 1:

<http://www.geografia.seed.pr.gov.br/modules/galeria/uploads/5/134regioesbrasilibge.jpg>

Source 2: Peabiru Institute 2017

3.6 Sample View

In the total, 29 people participated were interviewed, being 26 inhabitants of the local communities. The 11 men's respondents are married and only 02 women are not married. Most of the women did not complete the studies and 4 women's participants are illiterate. Only one women's respondent, the youngest of them all, completed the high school. All the interviewees have at least 02 children and the older respondents have more than 4 children. For all the participants, the açai is the main source of income for families and the government transfers programs help in the purchase of food and fuel for the boats.

4. Women's Role and Labour in Amazon Communities

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the interactions between a woman's work in açai in relation to her family, community, and market. The structure below addresses the obligations of *ribeirinhos* women in domestic activities and agricultural practices. Subsequently, the tasks and recognition of women's activities in this new global value chain have been explored. This chapter suggests that there is a mixture of the spaces, rules, and responsibilities resulting from the expansion of this new market, with women being an important agent in these new dynamics.

4.2 Women: Balancing Food Production and Domestic Activities

The simple lifestyle and daily doubts about the food availability at dinner time until the necessity to have natural medicines at home, considering there is no hospital in the region, are common issues and situations faced by the *ribeirinho* populations spread along the Canaticu River⁵. In this context, a tightly united family, an existing strong social relation between the communities' inhabitants located in the Forest and an agricultural diversification of practices are survival strategies adopted by the *ribeirinhos*, transmitted throughout the generations. The use of available natural resources and the food exchange actions are common practices in the region and flow along the Canaticu River.

For the 15 participant women, the food production's diversification mixed with the use of forest's resources is the *ribeirinhos* survival strategy, an essential theme discussed by Sustainable Rural Livelihoods framework. This discourse, highlighted by 7 men interviewed, is based, among other causes, on experiences faced by extractive people that focused their activities on rubber production. After the market declined, these individuals had to ask for help from local residents to survive. João Barreira, the oldest inhabitant from *Sagrada Família* community, mentioned that "families that decided to work only with rubber faced serious problems when the buyers disappeared. These people learned in the worst situation the importance of diversifying the production, a traditional knowledge from the Amazon population."⁶

⁵ Personal observation during the fieldwork enriched through secondary data

⁶ Personal Interview with João de Jesus Barreira

The way of life of the *ribeirinhos* families was described by the researcher of Emilio Goeldi⁷ as "multitasking"⁸. The development of several subsistence activities, including the harvest crops period and the fruits availability in the forest, were highlighted by all the interviewees. In this natural flow, fishing and hunting carried out mainly by men, occur in a parallel way to other activities, following the family needs. This specific theme was proudly reported by 09 men that associate the hunting practice with courage and the role of men to provide food for the family. During the fieldwork period, I witnessed the families' happiness when the community men came back home after night hunting. The animals caught were slaughtered and prepared by the women being shared among the 17 families of the community.

Reflecting a patriarchal cultural, women's responsibility for home and childcare was reported by 100% of respondents, including men and women. These activities are learned early on and transmitted to the little girls because "boys do not help with housework, household activities are women's responsibility"⁹, emphasized Silvana. This point of view was verified in the field through a dialogue between two women who commented that girlfriend of the grandson of one of them would be an excellent wife because she washed the clothes and prepared the food for her boyfriend and parents. However, this culturally assumed obligation was subjectively criticized by 03 younger interviewees that have never participated in meetings in other communities because their home obligations consume all women's time. Agarwal points out that the accumulation of activities by women and the total absence of men and children in domestic activities, restricts the time of women, many sometimes limiting women's involvement in external opportunities (Agarwal 2001: 1638).

In addition to household responsibilities, 13 women also work with their husbands in the agricultural field, mainly in the planting and harvesting of subsistence crops. Although women have an essential role in maintaining the farming, their tasks are not recognized and valued. The interesting is that only 3 of the 11 husbands interviewed reported the wife's labour on food production even though they work together in the field. It suggests that farming and forest activities end up being seen as an extension of the domestic obligations undertaken by women (reproduction work), reflecting a process of gender-based division of labour (Pande 2013: 101). Another curiosity is that 9 of the interviewed husbands are formally registered as a rural producer in the Brazilian government system, which gives them the security to reinforce that agricultural activities are men's responsibilities.

⁷ The Emilio Goeldi Museum is a Scientific Institution that develops research on biodiversity; Amazon ecosystems; and cultural and social dynamics in the Amazon Forest (Goeldi 2017)

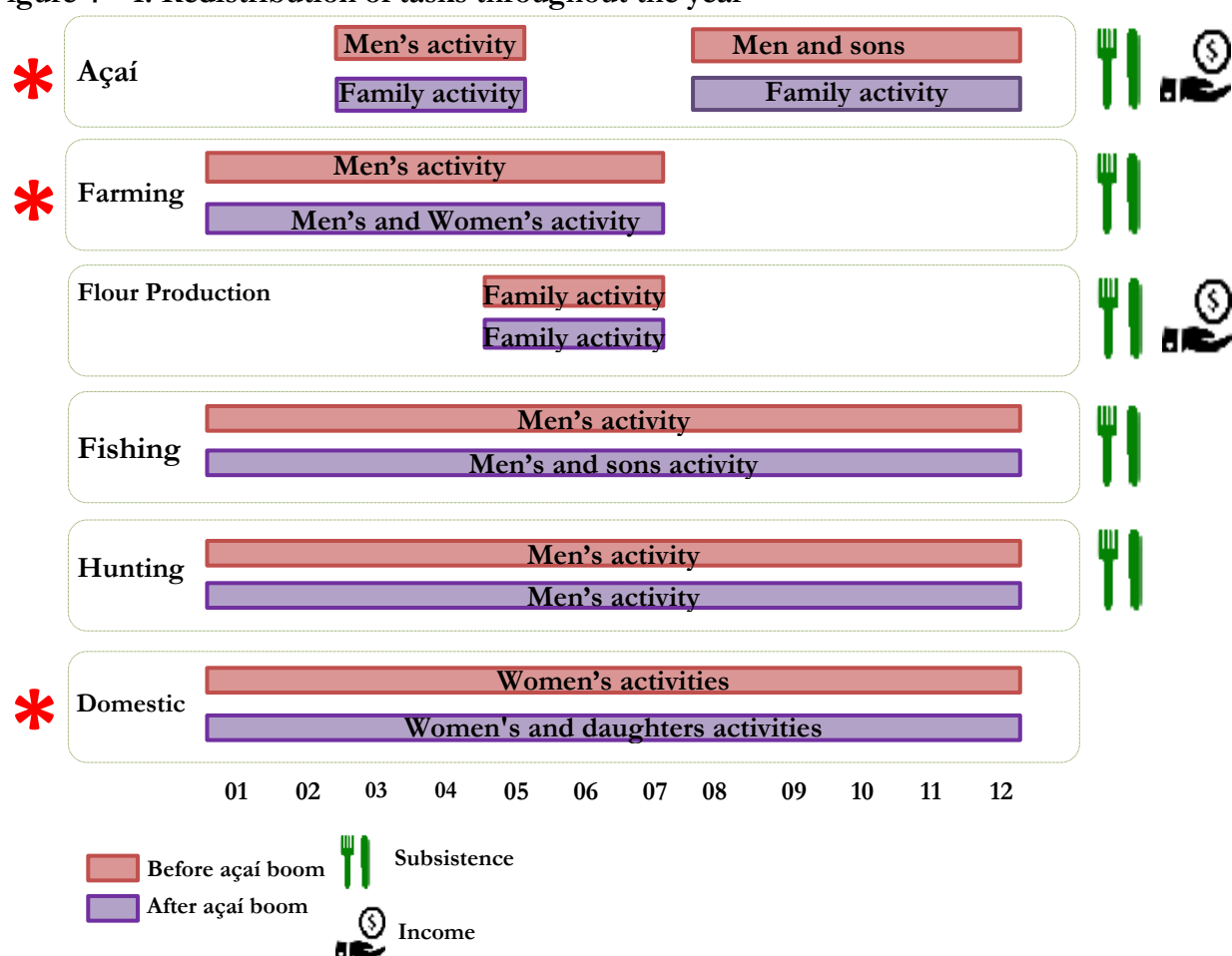
⁸ Personal Interview with Regina Oliveira

⁹ Personal interview with Silvana Martins Santiago

The cassava flour production, which occurs between July and August, is performed through family and community work. While men carry the wood to the artisanal oven and bake the flour, the women peel the cassava and bag the production. Usually, the flour is used as a food for the *ribeirinhos*, but some families commercialize locally part of this production. This sale is conducted by men and occurs in the period - two months - before the açai harvest, the moment that most of the families do not have more money generated from the berry sale.

The açai market's expansion demanded a redistribution of tasks among family's members, being necessary to incorporate children in tasks, including in domestic activities and fishing. Because of the daughters' help in the household activities, the women are acquired more agricultural responsibilities'. The açai activities began to be exercised by all the members of the families, seeking to guarantee the fruit supply and generate more income for the family. These labour divisions have resulted in women's accumulation of responsibilities activities. This new family's tasks context is a result of the açai global value chain that impacts in the family, community and local market dynamics.

Figure 4 – 1: Redistribution of tasks throughout the year



Source: author's own - October 2017

4.3 The role of women in the açai production chain

"If you ask me what was the meaning of açai in the early 90's certainly I would say food; however, today the açai is our main source of income"¹⁰. Maria Isabel opinion demonstrates the influence of the market and the speedy changes that have occurred in the Amazon reality related to the inclusion of traditional communities in a new global value chain. Described by 100% of *ribeirinhos* (men and women) as the main source of income, the açai warmed the local and regional economy. In the international market, Brazil is responsible for supplying 85% of açai world production (Pedrozo et al., 2011: 88). In the dialogue with Meirelles, responsible for the Peabiru Institute, he mentioned that the açai production chain withdrew approximately 500,000 people from the poverty Brazilian list.¹¹ While the monthly average income of a *ribeirinho* family is approximately 85 Euros, the total income acquired by the same family after the four months of açai harvest season is equivalent to 2,300 Euros.

During the harvest period, which happens in the Canaticu region between the months of August and December, the family works together and focuses their activities on this informal chain, seeking to collect as much fruit as possible. The traditional tasks are done manually, in an artisanal way, involving intensive family labour to guarantee a high production and sale (Dendena and Corsi 2014: 760). This precariousness of working conditions was observed through the stories of the interviewees and confirmed by 06 women that mentioned work accidents with members of their families, especially at the climbing of the palm tree to pick up the açai. The model of division of labour in the açai value chain is based on a patriarchal culture guided by a deregulated, informal production chain with fragmentation of the processes of collecting and selling of the fruit which is attracting more women to this type of chain (Kanji 2004: 1).

Similarly to the Brazilian nuts production chain, the activities in açai are learned and transferred from parents to their little children. "I am anxiously waiting for my son to complete eight years to teach him the açai activities,"¹² says Neuzete. Although this serious theme is not the focus of this research paper, all the interviewees naturally mentioned the engagement of children in the açai production chain, without demonstrating reflections or worries about the children's labour. This fact allows a mix of perceptions: on one hand, the child labour in açai production is rooted in the *ribeirinhos* culture and the transfer of this traditional knowledge was proudly described in the conversations; on the other hand, thinking about it in this moment can affect the family production – fewer people collecting the fruit - which consequently will impact in the family income. During the fieldwork, 7 women mentioned that the family usually goes

¹⁰ Personal interview with Maria Isabel Firmino Monteiro

¹¹ Personal interview with João Meirelles

¹² Personal interview with Neuzete Rodrigues Duarte

early to the *açaizal* because at the afternoon the children have to go to school. It indicates concerns about the necessity of children attend the school but not about the involvement of little boys and girls in the açaí activity which characterizes the children labour.

While 13 women associate the activity in the açaizais as a moment of family union, the men comment that more people working mean a higher income for the family. This divergent views regarding family involvement in açaí activity indirectly reflects one of the effects related to the process of division of labour according to gender lens. The women's perception reinforces the family cares as a priority, aligned to the household obligations and expanded for the açaí workplace. The men's impression reflects their responsibility for selling the fruit and gaining money, challenges faced in the açaí negotiation process. The importance of açaí and the influences of this value chain in the families' context were observed even in drawings made by young girls. Gabriela has 7 years old and early she associates the açaí production chain with income as well as a woman tasks and responsibilities¹³. The food (subsistence) and nature relationship were also highlighted in her drawn.

Figure 4-2: What does açaí mean for you?



Gabriela Santiago Barreiros (2017) 'What does açaí mean for you?'. **Work, nature and food.** *Information collected in fieldwork.*

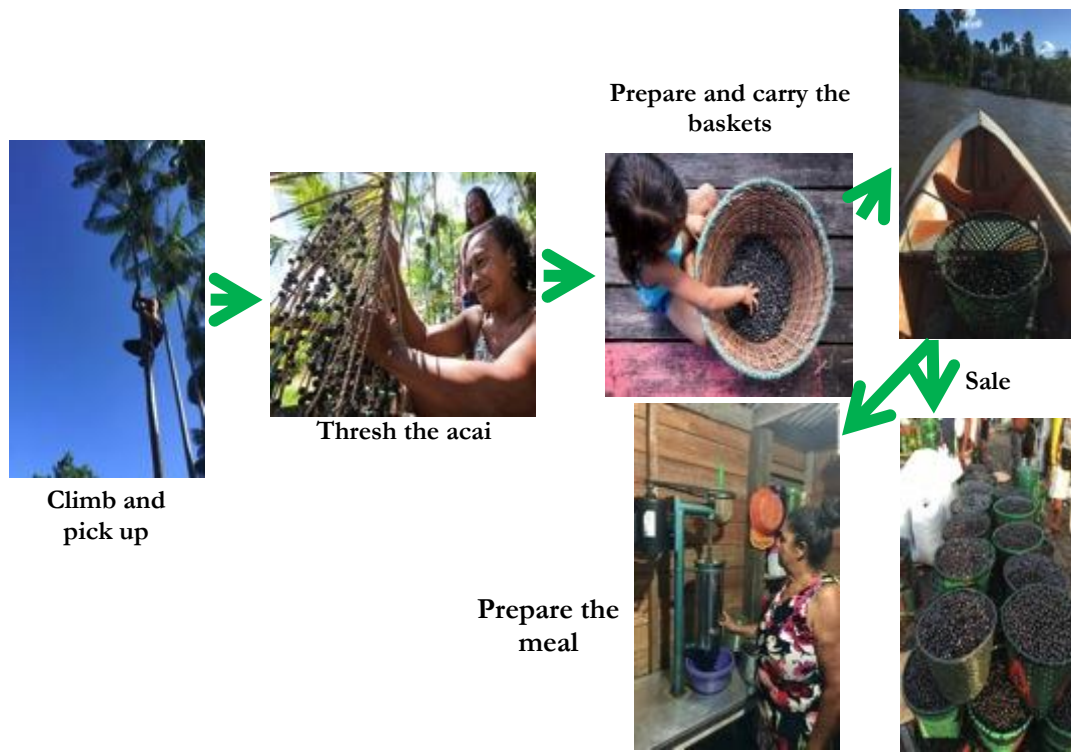
Through the use of Harvard and Monser analytical frameworks, it was possible to map and describe each family member's activity in the açaí production chain. According to the interviewees, in the Amazon communities, this emerging chain mainly covers five tasks: climbing the palm tree and picking the fruit up; threshing the açaí; preparing and carrying the baskets with the fruits to the boats and, finally, selling the açaí. Dona Maria explains that "threshing and preparing the baskets are manual and delicate activities and men usually do not have the manual ability to do."¹⁴ These manual activities are commonly associ-

¹³ Information collected in fieldwork (Gabriela Santiago Barreiros)

¹⁴ Personal interview with Maria de Moraes Andrade

ated with female responsibilities, based on the questionable idea that delicate activities should be performed by women.

Figure 4 – 3: Divisions of Labour: Açaí Production Chain



Source: author's own - October 2017 (fieldwork)

Women performed 4 of the 5 tasks described, and 100% of the participants are responsible for the daily açaí drink preparation for the family. The fruit is collected by 7 women and the others have the children support in this activity that demands agility, lightness, and courage. With the exception of one interviewed, all of the extractive women are responsible for threshing açaí bunches and carrying the fruits out to the baskets.

Despite all these activities being developed by the women, the sale process is conducted by the men. About this man responsibility, Socorro emphasizes that "man transmit another image; the woman is easily deceived."¹⁵ The women's subordination role and the challenge in self-recognizing their skills and capacity were commonly identified among the interviewees, especially in the older women. This gendered division of labour is similar to the Tanzania cacao case, where the woman is responsible for collecting, transporting and drying the fruit, while the man is only responsible for commercialization (Verhart and Pyburn 2012: 68).

Although the women work hard in the açaí production chain, 12 women proudly reported that this new market has recognized and strengthened the

¹⁵ Personal interview with Socorro Oliveira Barros

ribeirinhos population's traditional culture. Maria de Jesus goes further and says " the açáí market allowed some mothers to have an activity out of the house, otherwise, the women would stay part of the year locked all at home doing domestic services."¹⁶ This perception of freedom and the sense of "belonging" were awoken in reason of the expansion of açáí market and valorization of the Amazon fruit. For these people who live distant from urban areas, without communication or contact with people from other regions, this global value chain reduced the River and State borders, including the local communities in a huge and unequal country.

4.4 Are Women tasks recognized and valued?

The issue related to the role of women in the açáí chain was the question that brought many discussions and contradictions in the answers. The importance of women's work in the maintenance of this new market is a common point between families' members and residents of the extractive communities, but the manner in which of these tasks are recognized elicited many reflections. After describing in detail their responsibilities and the difficulties around the activities in the açáí production chain, 11 women said that "they are just helping their husbands in the açáí work"¹⁷ or that "women do everything in açáí; they are always helping their husbands."¹⁸ Out of this group, 8 women strongly commented that their activities are essential to guarantee the generation of açáí income and that "in the harvest period, women work more than men."¹⁹ Maria Madalena goes further and commented "men take to sell all the fruit baskets that women have collected and prepared"²⁰. At the same time women report that they help their husbands in maintaining the açáí production chain, the wives subjectively emphasize the importance of their activities, comparing them to the tasks of men.

Considering this, why do women oscillate between describing their hard work in the açáí with the answer that the wives are only helping their husbands? During the fieldwork, it was observed that the money contact that occurs after the production sale and the patriarchal culture rooted in the region are factors that difficulty the recognition of the activities performed by women, including by themselves. The women's subordination status and the common understanding that the production sale, and consequently, the first money contact - a stage of the division of labour - is the synonym of work, camouflage all previous steps that ensured the fruit supply and sale. On the other hand, subjective-

¹⁶ Personal interview with Maria de Jesus de Oliveira Maia

¹⁷ Personal interview with Maria Domingos Pinheiro de Oliveira

¹⁸ Personal interview with Maria Margarete de Oliveira Cardoso

¹⁹ Personal interview with Neuzete Rodrigues Duarte

²⁰ Personal Interview with Madalena de Oliveira Barreiros

ly, women in the dialogue process during the fieldwork reinforced the importance of their activities signaling the lack of valorization of their tasks. In this context, women who harvest chestnut in Amapá reported that they took many years to understand and believe that their work was essential and it needed to be properly recognized, a fact that happened after they took over the sales (Nectar 2017).

The man is the person responsible for sale the açai. The negotiation process involves middlemen - all men - that in the açai harvest season travel through the Canaticu River communities. Only one of women interviewed, a young widow is responsible for the açai sale. In detailing the process, she emotionally described the challenge of being a woman when it is necessary to sell the product in this informal commodity chain. "When the middleman realizes that it is a woman, he automatically offers a price below average"²¹says Maria Isabel. The açai price is defined by urban buyers being previously negotiated with the middlemen, without any participation of the communities. In fact, this market approach is something new and challenging for communities, which requires skills and qualifications that are far from the reality of *ribeirinhos*. In this phase, men themselves face the challenge of evaluating all the family labour, which at the commercialization time, reflects on the difficulty of demanding a fair value for the production. "The açai price oscillates a lot and we cannot charge more for the production because the middlemen have already combined among them the amount that will be paid per each basket"²², reports Raimundo. In this context, the early definition of prices and the fruit quality demands made by the tradesmen, demonstrate the influence of the external market in the local dynamics.

In this negotiation process, women's work remains invisible to external agents, including the market and consumers that associate all the family açai work to the male figure. This occurs, among other factors, because the man leads the commercialization stage, being only the husband the family member that has contact with the middlemen. The lack of knowledge about the tasks performed in açaizais is an interesting fact for the intermediary person. Firstly, because it is easier to impose value on production without having to discuss all the tasks involved, and secondly, because of illegal issues such as child labour, are not strategically observed. In analyzing the strategy of cocoa buyers in Tanzania who also associate the activity with men's work, Verhart and Pyburn comment "as a lucrative cash crop, cocoa is generally seen as the men's domain (...) this doesn't mean, however, that women don't contribute to the production of cocoa" (2012: 68).

²¹ Personal interview with Maria Isabel Firmino Monteiro

²² Personal Interview with Raimundo Santana de Caxias Júnior

The income management from the sale of the açai (the main income source of the *ribeirinhos*) is also a men's responsibility, a result of a gender division of labour. According to 13 interviewed women, the husband is responsible for the family money management. This obligation was proudly described by the men interviewed and justified by the fact that women are formally entitled to Bolsa Família, a Brazilian government's income transfer program. Although some scholars criticize this Program because of titling and reinforcing the role of women in the task of caring for the home and family (Bartholo 2016: 2), the women respondents commented with satisfaction their responsibility for the Bolsa Família. However, in the fieldwork, was noted that the management of this resource - an average of 85 Euros per month - is also carried out by the husbands. In other words, all the financial resource management, with the exception of the widow interviewee, is an obligation of the men.

When questioned about the remuneration of their tasks on açai production chain, the women comment that when they need cash, they ask money for their husband. In practice, extractive women associate the term "remuneration" with income inflow that allows to buy new items, such as clothes and furniture, for their family. In addition, subjectively the women's reports the gain of confidence and voice in her family, associated with the freedom to ask money and buy what they want. Neuzete mentions "in my case, the açai gave me freedom; if I want to buy something, I ask my husband for money because I know that he has money generated from the sale of the fruit. I picked up the açai and I gave it to him to sell."²³

On the one hand, income access can promote changes in the gender relations between the husband and the wife, from the moment the women recognize their contribution in acquiring the income (IFAD, as cited in Rao 2012: 88). In succession, women begin to achieve a new family status and have more space for dialogue, influencing decisions and strategies. On the other hand, the gender inequality of division of labour, with the invisibility of women's work and time invested in açai activities, also occurs in the income sharing within the family members, and the man is responsible for this activity (Agarwal 1997: 1635). Although family and community members are aware of the importance of women's tasks, they do not control the açai income. At the same time, women perceive their tasks remuneration as a gain of space for, where they feel comfortable to dialogue with their family and ask the husband for money. This fact looks small but it is an important step in the women's role, especially in isolated communities rooted in male-decision culture.

The açai market not attracted only traders interested in the fruit, but also sellers from other regions that travel by boats during the açai harvest season along the River, selling expensive and low-quality products to *ribeirinhos* families. While

²³ Personal interview with Neuzete Rodrigues Duarte

men usually use the money to buy fuel for boats, women use the cash to buy food, clothing, and household goods. This indicates the extension of women's responsibility in the take family care, which is based on the discourses about the use of açai income to purchase items for the family members. An observed fact is that only one person mentioned the money invested in an agricultural course for the oldest son and in the acquisition of work equipment for the farming activities. The most of the households use all the money in the purchase of durable consumer goods. Despite the significant amount resulting from the açai market, the economic resource ends before the beginning of the next harvest, characterizing the financial planning of *ribeirinhos* families as a challenge from the expansion of this global value chain. "The money ends quickly; it finished before the next açai crop"²⁴ regrets Alquideia.

Another issue faced by *ribeirinhos* is the emergence of installments payments that is resulting in the rise of family debts. As the traders know that in the harvest season the money flows through the Canaticu River, they sell their products in this period. This market relation is established between the local traders and the women, and through this new market focused on household goods, the women begin to develop negotiation skills besides control the family debts, requiring a family financial planning. Maria de Jesus says that "I use the açai resources to pay debts of the previous crop and to buy clothes, cosmetics, and shoes for me and my children."²⁵

Superti et al. comment that the local arrangements to provide açai for this global value chain begin to influence and redefine local dynamics, the social relations, the power control, and the labour processes (Superti et al., 2018)²⁶ Gradually, the reality that was based on the exchange of subsistence products between the families begins to be influenced by the entrance of the external market and the demand increase, pressing the local production processes and social relations (Pegler 2015: 217-218).

The redistribution of tasks among family members; the emergence of financial debts in one place where not exist banks; the people movement from other regions with different cultures and approaches in the communities; and the necessity faced by the communities to develop new skills, such as negotiation and financial planning, begin to be part of the *ribeirinhos* reality, interfering in the family and communities dynamics. The relationship between families and communities existing in a common territory when pressured by external agents, such as the market and public policies, generate interactions, tensions, and conflicts, reshaping the rural livelihoods lifestyle (Scoones 2015: 79). Positive externalities, such as the social organization and the border reduction putting the communities in contact with other realities and people, are results of

²⁴ Personal interview with Alquidéia Rodrigues Sá

²⁵ Personal interview with Maria de Jesus de Oliveira Maia

²⁶ Superti, E.,L.Pegler and M.M. Vasconcelos: unpublished paper

this new commodity chain. However, challenges such as competition between communities; redistribution and accumulation of tasks; and exclusion of families from social initiatives are issues that are emerging as a negative result from this market interference in the reality of communities spread of along the Canaticu River.

5. Prospects of a Gender Neutral: Açáí Value Chain

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents reflections about external influences in the community's reality of Canaticu River. The implementation of social-environmental programs, the courses development for the *ribeirinhos* and the presentation of new agricultural practices are becoming part of the context of isolated communities in the Amazon. At the same time, the market interest in the açáí brought urban people close to this new business and stimulated discussions around the legalization of this commodity chain. In these external dynamics, the extractive women are directly affected but at the same time, they play fundamental roles in this process that involves a long transformation process of local culture and values.

5.2 Good or Bad? The Influences of External Initiatives in the Role of Women

The global discovery of the açáí made the Amazon communities became an essential player in the consolidation of açáí production chain. In this context, the *ribeirinhos* and their lifestyle begin to be part of several legal discussions and development plans carried out by external agents. Through researches and academic studies related to açáí; constant technical visits by public members specializing in agricultural practices; films and documentaries that explore the Amazon communities' activities; and programs focused on sustainable development coordinated by nongovernmental organizations, the *ribeirinhos* of the Canaticu River had their reality impacted. These external influences were observed during the 20 days of fieldwork, and in this short time period a group of American researchers interested in açáí, an NGO staff and members of the municipal government were in this region.

The social-environmental projects and technical courses developed for the communities were highlighted by 100% of respondents as a positive impact of the expansion of the açáí market. These initiatives, performed by a regional organization, have as an objective to strengthen the local protagonism and organize the informal production chains aiming to add value to the fruit collected and to the families' work, issues ignored by the market actors, including the middleman. Technical workshops focused on the family agriculture activities

and best practices in açai work promoted by EMBRAPA²⁷ and Municipal Secretariat of Agriculture are also actions performed for the extractive communities. Most of these initiatives, financed by public banks and national funds, such as the Amazon Fund²⁸, have as a target, projects and actions related to local development and State interests. According to 9 interviewees, these initiatives recognize and reinforce the importance of *ribeirinhos* communities besides to approximate the local population with other cultures. "Even people who speak other languages and that have never been in the forest and in places without electricity are coming to visit us; they want to experience our lifestyle"²⁹ commented proudly Edival. These perceptions reflect a sense of importance, considering external people are interested and valued the traditional *ribeirinhos* practices, as well as the inclusion feeling that, although geographically distant and invisible for governments and urban citizens, the Amazon families begin to be a part of the plans elaborated by unfamiliar and urban agents.

"Whenever possible, the women's attend courses; sometimes they cannot stay till the end because of domestic duties, but they usually participate and learn new themes"³⁰ says Ana Lúcia. Among the communities visited, 6 men and 12 women respondents had participated in an initiative and it is interest to observe and analyze the significant number of women's engagement in these meetings. "These courses arouse curiosity in the local population and instigated the desire to learn more,"³¹ says Maria do Socorro. The same interviewee reported that, after a course related to açai cultivation, she decided to learn how to read and write, indicating a positive externality related to the emergence of programs in the region. In her opinion, these initiatives showed and encouraged the *ribeirinhos* to have contact with new knowledge. In addition, 5 women commented that their daughters also attend workshops and that other mothers are expecting the upcoming courses for inviting their daughters too. In these courses "we do not have fear to talk because it is new for all the participants" ³² reports Maria Margarete. Neuzete goes further and comments "before these courses, the woman had no voice in their homes, but now the wife was more comfortable to discuss with their husband about the production of açai and the new practices learnt."³³

²⁷ EMBRAPA It is a public Brazilian agency, which belongs to the Ministry of Agriculture, which is focused on the technological innovation related to agricultural practices in Brazil (EMBRAPA 2017: c).

²⁸ The Amazon Fund, managed by BNDES, aims to raise investments for actions to prevent, monitor and combat the Forest deforestation, as well as initiatives focused on promoting Amazonian conservation (Fundo Amazônia 2017)

²⁹ Personal interview with Edival de Matos Barreiros

³⁰ Personal interview with Ana Lúcia dos Santos Barreiro

³¹ Personal interview with Maria do Socorro Correa Santana

³² Personal interview with Maria Margarete de Oliveira Cardoso

³³ Personal interview with Neuzete Rodrigues Duarte

These insights indicate the transformations women are experiencing in their social relations. The term confident, common in the interviewees' speeches, is slowly reshaping the role of women, especially in their families and local market. The freedom to ask for money from their husband; the courage to negotiate with traders and take on long-term debts; the desire to return to study and learn; and the trust to dialogue at home are indirect results from the expansion of the açai market. This subject was highlighted as a positive surprise for the interviewee responsible for the Institute that develops initiatives in this region³⁴. Although female empowerment is not the target of the programs developed in the region, it presents as a positive externality of the influence of external agents.

This same fact was observed in the Brazilian nuts production chain in the Cajari region. Due to the visibility of the extractive communities in the nut production, several programs were developed in the local place through external actors. The women's interest and participation increased among each new course and, in 2004 a cooperative was founded³⁵. Nowadays, with 240 women's associated, all the activities in this production chain are carried out and led by the women, including the negotiation process and commercialization (Nectar 2017). An interesting point is that through these courses, work tools and awareness about the importance of safety conditions work began to be considered by the extractive women. In this context, notions of safety and health began to be included in routine, mixing the traditional knowledge with best practices concepts. In 2015, the *Sementes do Marajó* Cooperative was formally established in the Canaticu region, which has objectives to organize the açai production chain and to allow the extractive people to add value to the local fruit.³⁶ In the conversations was observed that in the beginning, the families were afraid to be a Cooperative member, principally because they need to pay their inscription as an associate. However, in last year, the number of the cooperative members' increased because the low açai price offered by the middlemen affected the families. At the same moment, the cooperative was negotiated the açai production in a better value, raising the income of families associates. Recently, a woman that works in the açai production assumed the financial responsibility in the Cooperative, spotlighting the role of women's in the açai value chain besides controlling the money payments and uses, an activity traditionally performed by the men.

³⁴ Personal interview with João Meirelles

³⁵ The Mulheres Agroextrativistas de Alto Cajari / AMAC cooperative seeks to promote actions for the preservation and the equilibrium of natural resources; and generate employment and income for the women of the chestnut trees (Ribeiro 2014: 1767).

³⁶ The Sementes do Marajó cooperative aims to organize and improve the local production process; empower the communities; and articulate partnerships focused on family agriculture and açai activities, adding value to the fruit and generating more income for the communities (Benfeitoria 2017).

An observed issue is that the contact with external agents clearly influences the culture and traditional knowledge. When questioned about açai cultivation practices, the respondents' mentioned the "new" techniques learned through the courses offered by agricultural agencies. However, during the interview, Natanael reflected about the impacts from the açai global chain and mentioned "they taught us some techniques with different names, presenting products and tools to use in the cultivation activity, but the technique is the same of we learned with ours parents."³⁷It was also noted that some proposals require working tools and financial resources, items that are far from the *ribeirinhos* reality. Regina, the Emilio Goeldi researcher, pointed out that "the local population starts to admire people outside of their reality and sophisticated techniques, forgetting the power of their local knowledge and traditional practices"³⁸

It indicates that in-depth analyses need to be done in relation to the expansion of the açai production chain. At the same time there are positive impacts many issues are not approached because of a lack of knowledge or for strategic questions. In this context, it is necessary to highlight that the market is a powerful and influential driver of this global value chain. On the one hand, this commodity involves traditional communities that are seeking to guarantee their survival, but on the other hand, there are particular interests and strong economic agents, looking for financial investments.

5.3 New Processes and Debates around the Açai Value Chain

While the *ribeirinhos* face the challenges of this new market, the expansion of açai production chain is debated among government members, businessmen, and researchers. In recent years, investments in new technologies and techniques related to the açai were boosted in Brazil. Historically, native açai has always been managed on moist soils, but specifically on floodplain areas that are subject to floods or tidal fluctuations (Lewis 2007: 295). Through the financing of a Japanese agency, the EMBRAPA institution developed the BRS Pará, an açai seed that allows to plant and produces the fruit in dry soils.³⁹After this innovation, the investment in the açai plantation is growing and becoming a new and promising market, involving influence businessmen with high purchasing power; national companies; and foreign market actors. According to

³⁷ Personal interview with Natanael Oliveira Barros

³⁸ Personal interview with Regina Oliveira

³⁹ In 2005, EMBRAPA institution disclosed BRS Pará, an açai seedling that allows planting in dry soils. This research was economically financed by the Agência de Cooperação Internacional do Japão / JICA and the Fundação Amazônica para Estudos e Pesquisas / FAPESPA, a public agency related to the government of the State of Pará (EMBRAPA 2017 b)

Nazareno "the açai planting business is increasing and becoming a promising market in Pará"⁴⁰, says the businessman who owns açai farms to supply his restaurants.

The monoculture discussion is distant from the communities spread along of the Canaticu River. Although the families pressure their selves to focus their activities on açai, considering the income generation, this strategy is still distant from the researched communities. Besides the geographical boundaries, the acquisition and use the working tools and the access to new technologies is far from the *ribeirinhos*. According to Evanildo, "the person, who pretends to focus only on açai activity, needs to have a lot of money; this is not the reality of our local communities."⁴¹ The monoculture reality is closest to the city entrepreneurs and rich farmers, which have greater purchasing power and lands available. Gradually, the fruit that is the main food source of the communities and their practices rooted in the local culture begins to be priorities of external agents. In this context, people who have never had contact with the fruit, begin to buy lands and invest in the açai cultivation, aiming a financial return. In the conversation with Nazareno he mentioned that in his farms there are not women working, being all the activities performed by men with machinery support⁴². Subjectively, in this conversation, it was possible to capture the perception that the açai tasks are hard, demand courage and physical effort, abilities associated with the male figure. Besides this, the invisibility of women's work in the açai production chain was indirectly confirmed.

A new process relates to the açai chain is the current debates around the necessity of trade agreements and rules that formalize the work in the açais. Requirements related to the fruit quality and the production standards in the açai processing process are in advanced discussions. These formalizations and legal limitations increase the distance and difficulty the *ribeirinhos* to attend to this new market. This challenge has been faced by the women that work with the Brazilian nuts and, as a result, they cannot include their products and derivatives in the supermarket without attending the formal rules that define the construction and operation of the local factory. Beside this, green labels are arousing the consumer interests but the certification process is expensive for the local communities that depend on a partnership to attend this new demand. These market and government movements were highlighted by Pegler as a warning point for the *ribeirinhos* and their economics gains through the açai chain in the case of effective application of new systems in this production chain involving value management, supply of fruits, and certification process. (Pegler 2015: 215)

⁴⁰ Personal interview with Nazareno Alves

⁴¹ Personal interview with Evanildo Benedito de Matos Barreiros

⁴² Personal interview with Nazareno Alves

From this movement, açáí-related issues begin to emerge in existing trade agreements and legislation. Charges regarding the quality of the fruit and definitions of space for processing the fruit are beginning to be demanded. In these limitations, the riverside people are increasingly distant from this new market. This challenge is being faced by Cajari women, who cannot include chestnut and its derivatives, as they do not have certification stamps and do not meet legal requirements regarding the construction of the factory. Although 100% of the interviewed men comment on the importance of having a factory in the Canaticu River region to add value to the fruit, they do not see future challenges regarding the commercialization of the product. No matter how much the investments emerge and the technologies appear, they indicate to create more distance of the riverside of this market than to include them. Although 100% of the men interviewed highlighted the importance of building and installing in the region an açáí factory to add value to the fruit, these product commercialization challenges were not mentioned, suggesting the local communities do not imagine all these legal debates around the açáí value chain. The nuts and açáí cases show that, whatever advance technologies and programs developed, these external discussions and financial investments resulted in more obstacles to the inclusion and continuity of small communities in the formal production chains.

The discussions around work security in the açáizais and the children labour in the açáí production are also being argued in these external meetings, carried by NGOs staffs and members of the judiciary. However, the women's role and labour in the açáí value chain are not deeply addressed as well as the process of tasks redistribution based on gender, which had resulted in the inclusion of children in activities. The accumulation of responsibilities and activities by the women's are also invisible in all these debates, demonstrating the importance to bring these local and live issues to the current discussion, integrating the communities in these dialogues. Otherwise, all these initiatives point for negative results for the *ribeirinhos*: an exclusion from the new formal açáí value chain because the communities production do not attend all the legal issues; or the maintenance of açáí families activities but in an illegal way, where who has more power define the rules, conditions, and prices. In these two situations, the women's labour is not observed but the participation in the local initiatives and the reflections that are emerging in between mother and their daughters' around the açáí tasks indicates a new situation, a path where the women role and labour being recognize and valued by all the agents involved in the açáí global value chain.

Conclusion: Are Women Going Further?

One of the globalization outcomes was to the countries approach, reducing the distances and approximating the political and geographical borders of different places. In this movement, the traditional knowledge, and local habits, till then limited to local population, awakens visibility and interest from several actors. At the same time, issues such as gender inequality, labour production processes, and traditional practices begin to be explored and analyzed, throughout different lenses. In this context, the açaí, a small purple fruit that until the 80's rotting in the Amazon Forest because the extractive communities and animals did not consume of all of this native fruit, aroused market interest. In this short but fast process, the açaí becomes a product of a global value chain, being the first phase of this chain starts in the middle of the Amazon forest. The *ribeirinho* communities are included in a growing national and international market. Considering this, what is the role of the extractive communities in this emerging production chain?

The *ribeirinhos* are responsible for picking up and selling the fruit, an initial and essential stage in the maintenance of this new business. These practices, which have always been focused on the subsistence of local people, are changing to attending this new market. The income generations for the families and the development of social-environmental programs in the Canaticu region have awakened in the local population a desire to increase the açaí extraction, negotiate the fruits and acquire new techniques and knowledge's. "It's not always that we have an opportunity like that"⁴³ underscore Silvana. For this respondent, the families seek to ensure a good harvest of açaí without forgetting the livelihood activities and domestic responsibilities. This new market demanded a redistribution of tasks among family members resulting in an accumulation of obligations for the extractive women. In this context, this new global value chain and most of the involved agents do not identify and recognize the role and labour of the women's, essential to maintaining this production chain. This curious situation that motivated me, as Brazilian woman and an açaí admirer, to go further and research about the women's role and labour in the açaí value chain as well as to understand what are the reasons for women's tasks are not being valued and discussed in current debates about açaí.

In this research study, issues related to gender; labour processes; social relations; and livelihoods strategies were mapped and analyzed in an objective and subjective way to understand the women's tasks and roles; the recognition process of women's responsibilities; the local organizations; and the steps that had been taken and the possible paths to be followed. This research is based on the gender equalities which income, desired by actors with power and influence

⁴³ Personal interview with Silvana Martins Santiago

different scales, is the main motivator of this informal chain. The analysis of women's tasks and role through the gender lens allowed to identify inequalities in this chain and to confirm the invisibility of extractive women work. The process of division of labour, influenced by a patriarchal culture, and the accumulation of activities by women in the açai production chain were verified during the fieldwork. The women responsibilities with the household activities and farming practices are already rooted in *ribeirinhos* lifestyle. However, the women's obligations in the açai production chain are been naturalize in the local culture, although the açai work is associated with a men activity for the external agents. The commercialization activity, which expresses the first contact with people from other places, is a men responsibility. For the women, the return of man to home with the income generated from the açai sale is the recognition of the family work.

Considering the women invisibility in this value chain and the remuneration of family work is associated with the income inflows, what did the açai provide for women? According to the research findings, the açai has given the woman the confidence to dialogue with her family; the courage to ask money for her husband because she worked and know about the income; to possibility to buy items for the family; abilities to negotiate with sellers and to take care about the family financial plan; to participate in the courses and programs developed in the community. It was interesting to observe that, during the interviews, the little girls smiled and gazed with admiration when their mothers proudly reported the importance of açai production chain and described the positive impacts of this activity.

These positive externalities show a significant part of the impacts caused by the açai global value. However, the lack of the recognition of women's tasks and the inequalities around the division of labour need to be include in the studies and debates around the açai. The data demonstrated the daughters' involvement in courses and projects develop in the Canaticu River as well as, the local transformations suffered for their mothers including purchase power and confidence to dialogue. These contacts of the little girls with all of these initiatives and their dialogues with her mother's about women's tasks and responsibilities indicate a new path to be followed. In this case, the valorization of women's activities and the strengthening the production chain for the *ribeirinhos* families will be a reality. In this fluidity between rivers and forests, the children's smile and hope accompanied me to the return for my studies. The women's speeches also encourage me to write about the extractive women situation. I hope that next academic studies and development projects approach in detail the role and labour of women in the açai value chain. This way this important theme will be included and deeply discussed in the legislation and standards about the Amazon fruit, being the women's role in the açai global value chain recognized and highlighted.

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Appendix I: Questionnaires

Appendix A

Family - Interview guide

Name of Respondent

Interview Date _____/ Time: _____ to _____

Contact (address, mobile number)

*Confidentiality

1. Interviewee Profile

1. a) Hometown
1. b) How long have you lived in Curralinho?
1. c) Marital status
1. d) Number of children
1. e) How many people live with you?
1. f) Activities (husband and children)
1. g) Main source of income

2. Açai Overview / Tasks and Responsibilities

2. a) Importance of açai for your family
2. b) How long have your family been working with the açai?
- 2.c) How many people in your family work with açai and what are their responsibilities?
2. d) In which ways the tasks in açai were divided and how do you feel about it (family and community activities)?
2. e) Where do you usually pick up the fruit (*açaiçal*) and who is the owner of this area (family or community land – legal aspects / access to these lands)?
2. f) How many times per year do you collect açai and what is the average production of your family?
2. g) What is the importance of women in the açai production chain and how does their work is recognized?

3. Social and Cultural Changes

3. a) In recent years, the demand for açai fruit has increased, nationally and internationally. What does this açai boom mean for you?
3. b) The local culture and traditional practices were affected by the expansion of açai market?
- 3.c) What are the main positive and negative results that the açai expansion has brought to your family?

4. Resources and Environmental Aspects

4. a) What are the other agriculture practices and how does your family balance all the daily tasks?
4. b) In which ways do the activities in açai production chain affect the traditional activities?
4. c) Do you believe other agriculture activities can disappear because of the expansion of açai chain?

Final

5. a) How do you see the future of açai and what do you suggest as improvements to yours activities and to the açai production chain in Curralinho?
5. b) How do you see the future of açai and what do you suggest as improvements to yours activities and to the açai production chain in Curralinho?
5. c) Do you have any question about my research / questions?

Thank you!

Appendix B

Women - Interview guide

Name _____ of _____ Respondent _____

Interview Date _____/ Time: _____ to _____

Contact (address, mobile number) _____

*Confidentiality

1. Interviewee Profile

1. a) Hometown
1. b) How long have you lived in Curralinho?
1. c) Age
1. d) Education
1. e) Marital status
1. f) Number of children
1. g) How many people live with you?
1. h) Activities (husband and children)
1. i) Main source of income

2. Açai Overview

2. a) First memory related to açai
2. b) Importance of açai in your life
2. c) How long have you been working with the açai?
2. d) Where do you usually pick up the fruit (*açaizal*) and who is the owner of this area (family or community land – legal aspects / access to these lands)?
2. e) In recent years, the demand for açai fruit has increased, nationally and internationally. What does this açai boom mean for you?

3. Tasks and Responsibilities

3. a) What tasks do women develop in the açai chain and how have these activities been defined (family and community members)?
3. b) How have women's tasks and responsibilities changed with the boom of the açai and how do you balance the açai activities with domestic tasks?
3. c) Do you perceive there is recognition by your family and community about your work in the açai chain and how these activities are valued (negotiated and remunerated)?
3. d) Who is responsible in your family and community for the sale of açai and what do you think of this process (final price, negotiation, divisions of labour and values)?

3. e) What is the importance of women in the açai production chain?

4. Social and Cultural Changes

4.a) In what way have social relations and local culture been affected by the expansion of the açai production chain?

4.b) How has the açai boom affected the local community organization and what are the main social gains achieved by the women and community through this production chain?

4. c) How has the açai production chain been influenced the role of women in her family and community and in which way have these changes given voice for the women?

5. Resources and Environmental Aspects

5.a) What is the importance of the natural resources of the region and what practices are developed locally to protect the environment and “açazais”?

5.b) What are the main socioenvironmental impacts - positive and negative - of the açai production chain in the local environment and what does this mean for you?

5. c) Do you think that is it possible to reconcile the expansion of the açai market with practices of protection of natural resources and biodiversity?

5.d) The açai activity is affecting other traditional agriculture activities. In which way the diversification x specialization of "agricultural activities" is affecting the tasks of women and how do the women prioritize yours activities (açai / livelihood practices)?

5.e) Do you think the açai activity has become the main focus of your family and community? Do you believe there is a risk that other traditional practices (subsistence farming, fishing, etc.) will be forgotten?

6. Final

6. a) What are the main positive and negative results that the açai expansion has brought to you, your family and community?

6. b) How do you see the future of açai and what do you suggest as improvements to yours activities and to the açai production chain in Curralinho?

6. c) Do you have any question about my research / questions?

Thank you!

Appendix C

Specialist - Interview guide

Name _____ of _____ Respondent _____

Interview Date _____ / Time: _____ to _____
Contact (address, mobile number) _____

*Confidentiality

1. Interviewee Profile

1. a) Education
1. b) How long have you been researching / working with the açai theme (describe activities)

2. Open questions

2. a) Positive and negative impacts (economic, social, environmental, cultural) related to the açai production chain (Brazil, Pará, Marajó Island, Currálinho)
2. b) In which ways the expansion of açai market is affecting the families and the community in Currálinho?
- 2.c) What is the role of the women in the açai production chain and how their activities changed with this new demand? Are their tasks recognized by her family and community? What can be done to improve this situation?
- 2.d) Do you realize that the açai production chain is affecting other traditional activities (agriculture and fishing)? Comment on women's labour and agricultural activities considering the lenses of diversification x specialization
2. e) How do you see the future of açai and what do you suggest as improvements to women activities and to the açai production chain in Currálinho?
- 2.f) Do you have any question about my research / questions?

Thank you!

Appendix II: List of Interviewees

List of Participants			
Interviewee	Code	Name	Community / River
1	A 1a	Evanildo Benedito de Matos Barreiros	Sagrada Familia / Canaticu River
2	B 1a	Maria Domingues Pinheiro de Oliveira	Sagrada Familia / Canaticu River
3	A 2b	Raimundo Oliveira Barreiro	Sagrada Familia / Canaticu River
4	B 2b	Silvana Martins Santiago	Sagrada Familia / Canaticu River
5	A 2c	Gabriel de Alfaia Cardoso	Boa Esperança / Pagão River
6	B 2c	Maria Margarete de Oliveira Cardoso	Boa Esperança / Pagão River
7	B 3c	Maria de Moraes Andrade (D. Ozila)	Boa Esperança / Pagão River
8	A 4d	Natanael Oliveira Barros	Boa Esperança / Pagão River
9	B 4d	Socorro Oliveira Barros	Boa Esperança / Pagão River
10	A 5e	Raimundo Santana de Caxias Júnior (Dinho)	São João II/ Sova River
11	B 5e	Maria de Jesus de Oliveira Maia (Dudi)	São João II/ Sova River
12	A 6f	Raimundo Santana de Caxias (100 gramas)	São João II/ Sova River
13	A 7g	Manoel da Vera Cruz Firmino Maia	Sagrado Coração de Jesus/ Tartaruga River
14	B 7g	Ana Lúcia dos Santos Barreiro	Sagrado Coração de Jesus/ Tartaruga River
15	B 8h	Maria Isabel Firmino Monteiro	Sagrado Coração de Jesus/ Tartaruga River
16	B 9i	Maria do Socorro Correa Santana (Arica)	Sagrado Coração de Jesus/ Tartaruga River
17	A 10j	Manoel Duarte Santiago	São João/Arassacá River
18	B 10j	Maria Domingas Borges	São João/Arassacá River
19	A 11k	Francisco Nunes Moraes (Chicoró)	São João/Arassacá River
20	B 11k	Maria Odinéia de Moraes	São João/Arassacá River
21	B 12l	Alquidéia Rodrigues Sá	São João/Arassacá River
22	B 13m	Neuzete Rodrigues Duarte	Palestina / Pareacá River
23	B 14n	Iraci Rodrigues Duarte	Palestina / Pareacá River
24	A 15o	Edival de Matos Barreiros	Sagrada Familia / Canaticu River
25	B 15o	Maria Madalena de Oliveira Barreiros	Sagrada Familia / Canaticu River
26	A 16p	Joao de Jesus Barreira	Sagrada Familia / Canaticu River
27	C 01	Joao Meirelles	Belém
28	C 02	Regina Oliveira	Belém
29	C 03	Nazareno Alves	Belém