

the academic approach about the rural brazil*

o *approche* acadêmico sobre o rural brasileiro

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the academic approach about the rural Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s. Based on a bibliography review, the results reveal that the subject rural became an issue of specific investigation to comprehend the singularity of the transformation process of the Brazilian society. The existence of a group of researchers and the production from this research confirms their interest, as well as the institutions that finance this research in the construction of a space of reflections on rural Brazil.

Keywords: Rural. Academic field. Researchers. Knowledge production. Brazilian society.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é analisar o *approche* acadêmico sobre o rural brasileiro nas décadas de 1960 e 1970. A partir da metodologia de pesquisa bibliográfica, os resultados revelam que a temática rural surgiu como um tema de investigação específico para a compreensão da singularidade do processo de transformação da sociedade brasileira. A existência de um conjunto de pesquisadores e da produção dessas pesquisas confirma o interesse destes, bem como de instituições de financiamento dessas investigações, na construção de um espaço de reflexão sobre o rural brasileiro.

Palavras-chave: Rural. Campo acadêmico. Pesquisadores. Produção do conhecimento. Sociedade brasileira.

Introduction

The academic field in Brazil has been institutionalized through creation, expansion and consolidation of learning institutions and post-

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graduate education centers. The process of building this scientific environment, as well as its distance of essayist practices and explicitly political, is directly connected to the arrival of foreign missions, especially the French, and the theoretical and methodological national maturing. The institutionalization of a set of elements in the academic space – such as undergraduate and postgraduate programs, research projects, scientific events, scientific societies, knowledge production etc. – was made possible by the resources of the state and private institutions. Universities and funding agencies created, therefore, the social and material conditions that allowed the evolution of the Brazilian academic field, as Sigaud (1992) indicated.

It is precisely in this context of academic autonomy that the rural soon emerges as a topic of research in the Applied Social Sciences and Social Sciences to understand the uniqueness of the transformation of the Brazilian society. The existence of a set of researchers and production of these researches confirm their interest, as well as funding institutions of these researches, in the construction of a space for reflection on rural, in a broad sense, and specific issues such as modernizing and industrializing agriculture, agricultural finance, the agrarian question, among others.

The construction of the object and the choice and operation of certain theoretical frameworks, by researchers on the theme of rural, are closely linked to a network of relationships determined by lines of thought, theoretical affinities and sources of influences inherent of the academic field. The use of explanatory frameworks in the constitution of this field of knowledge in the country depended on the theoretical and methodological exchange between Brazilian and foreign researchers belonging to those institutions with more consolidated theoretical orientations.

The knowledge of this academic field helps in understanding the reasons for the adoption of certain explanatory frameworks. The answers may be obtained through the analysis of the incorporation process of Applied Social Sciences and the Social Sciences in Brazil, with the influence of specific theoretical lines in national scientific formation and, as a result, the constitution of thinking in Brazilian researchers over time, as it is explained in this article.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to analyze the academic *ap-proche* on the Brazilian rural in the 1960s and 1970s. For this, it is pre-

sented the constitution of the academic field of these sciences in Brazil, the main theoretical influences and issues present in this academic field, and how the country has become an object of study in the academy. Despite the importance of knowledge concerning the rural in Brazil, before the process of institutionalization of these sciences, it was decided to locate in the center of this article surveys developed primarily within institutions dealing with higher education in the country. The determination of these limits is justified from the moment in which one aspect is fundamental in the development of this analysis: the interaction with the academic field of developed countries through the coming of foreign missions, and the theoretical influences and the choice of certain objects of research and external funding sources. In relation specifically to the analysis of the 1960s and 1970s, the cut is justified for the period to highlight the beginning of the systematic academic production in the country and the relevance of the theme rural on the research agenda of these sciences in the country. The adopted methodology was a literature review.

This article comprises three sections besides this introduction. In the second section, it is presented the constitution of the academic field of these sciences in Brazil and the main theoretical influences and problems present in this academic field are exposed. The third section details how the country becomes an object of study in the academy. Finally, the last section presents the conclusions.

The constitution of the academic field, influences and theoretical issues

Azevedo (1962) stated that, throughout the 1930s, there were political, economic and institutional changes in Brazil, such as the modernization of the national education system, in order to prepare citizens for the new dynamics of the country, and the institutionalization of the Applied Social Sciences and Social Sciences in Brazil. With the shift of political and economic power from rural areas to cities, new social relations were established outside the traditional context. In this new environment, individuals would gain new aspirations and would not be by chance that the universities would be founded, since this was a space of

intellectual development. At that time, there was the need for a professional able to understand the Brazilian society and think of ways to overcome obstacles in the path of development, as teachers, coaches, advisors and professional advisors (Oliveira, 1991; Sarandy, 2007). For the drivers of these changes, according to Almeida (1987), the modern character that Brazilian society should take from this period would be achieved with the formation of a new elite, involved in the political constitution of the new nation, and basic formation of its citizens.

The teaching and research activities in universities, pointed to a new phase of production of knowledge in Brazil, according to Azevedo (1962). By the late fifties, however, these Brazilian sciences could hardly be thought from a disciplinary differentiation, as the separation of the social disciplines is the result of the professional institutionalization (Reis et al., 1997; Silva and Silva, 2012). According to Miceli (1989) and Peirano (1991), the transdisciplinary nature of the framework of these sciences prevented the separation of the enrollment from the curriculum content, the lines of research, the applied methodologies and the main issues that motivated interest and investments. This phenomenon has emerged with the expansion of research centers, the postgraduate courses and also the growth of the production of knowledge in this area from the 1960s.

The intense international exchange between foreign teachers and the influx of Brazilian students to postgraduate programs abroad allowed the incorporation of theoretical-methodological accuracy, which is present in more developed centers. The permanence of foreign teachers and researchers in major Brazilian universities, as the São Paulo University (USP), established in 1934, and the Federal District University (UDF), created in 1935 and transformed into the University of Brazil in 1939, located in Rio de Janeiro, for example, became the set of theoretical and research topics that would help form the basis of Brazilian researchers, constituting from the 1960s, a team of national researchers. The process of dissemination of academic knowledge was decisive in shaping the field of reflection on rural in Brazil.

Theoretical influences on institutions in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro were similar: at USP and UDF, there was the influence of French social thought. The professional practice and the profession image generated at USP and UDF, however, were different: the first

aimed to prepare teachers for performance in secondary school, while the second, on the other hand, not only intended to produce professionals, but produce the intellectual basis of Brazil. The two institutions were involved, however, in a joint project to promote knowledge considered essential for the development of the country. Creating spaces for the dissemination of research conducted in these institutions, such as journals, marked the commitment of the producers of this knowledge in the understanding of the Brazilian society and a concern with the scientific character of this production (Peixoto and Simões, 2003).

By analyzing the academic production related to the formation of the Brazilian society, Ianni (1989) has identified three core dominant issues that were being discussed: the crisis of transition from society sustained in agrarian capitalism to a society based on industrial capitalism, the reinterpretation of the Social History of Brazil, and the character of the bourgeois revolution (or Brazilian revolution). The post-war, in the author's opinion, comprised a period of intense discussion of national development. The production of knowledge was an important tool to understand the transformation of the Brazilian society.

Villas Bôas, referring to the thematic lines that guided the research, stated that the first line approached the Brazilian State (formation, action and institutions), the second line examined the cultural traditions and ethnic groups, and, finally, the third one investigated "processes and socio-economic relations, the material conditions of existence of social groups, characterizing them in terms of their insertion in the production process and focusing in social inequalities existing between them" (Villas Bôas, 1991, p. 24).

In the set of studies related to the first theme line, it is identified a tendency for researches on issues and political events from the Political Economy, Political Science and History. The second thread of studies discussed the issues and cultural facts of the Brazilian society mainly through Anthropology. Finally, to socioeconomic inequalities were pointed out by the Political Economy and the Economic and Social History, and Human Geography, Demography and Sociology. The author concluded, moreover, that the discussion of these issues did not represent a break with the past, as these issues were discussed since the nineteenth century.

Finally, Villas Bôas (1991) pointed out that the production of national researchers converged on the analysis of social changes, including the bourgeois society and small communities, as well as investigations into the rural environment from the relations and conditions of work, political attachments, religious movements and conflicts in the field; and about the urban environment, with the constitution of the worker group, the union and the urban houses. The main researchers involved with these themes were economists and geographers, who had a concern with problems related to the economy and socio-economic conditions in the Brazilian regions, but also addressed to the study of the agrarian issue and the Brazilian rural.

The themes development, class struggle and national integration marked the production of knowledge of these sciences, as indicated by Bomeny and Birman (1991), and the subject of development excelled studies in this area of knowledge. Theories that discussed development in the fifties and sixties discoursed about the modernization process, industrialization and even assimilation of the culture of developed countries. They tried to understand how the movement of passing through a traditional society was, centered in the agrarian exporting sector to a modern society, having the urban-industrial sector as central in its dynamism. No process of economic and social change could occur, though, without changes in the social and political structures. These reflections regarding the national development process focused on the sixties onward in postgraduate courses in Brazil and marked, to some extent, the perception that Brazilian researchers would have concerning this development process in the country and the way of thinking the Brazilian rural.

The process of understanding the development of the country since the fifties could not be built without considering the standards proposed in the analysis of the Institute of Brazilian Studies (ISEB), the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), the United Nations, and in the next decade, the School of Sociology at USP. The formulated analysis from a developmental ideology created by ISEB and reflections about modern/old, by ECLAC, and the dependence of the USP, tried to understand the development processes and the role of the state, elites, political parties. Groups of urban and rural workers were perceived only in the context of integration with other actors (Villas Bôas, 1991).

The USP researchers, led by Florestan Fernandes, from a predominantly Marxist reflection until the late 1970s, were concerned about the distribution of income, social marginalization, social classes and the gender issue. The interpretation of this group was linked to the associated dependency (one of the versions of the dependency theory), unlike the ISEB and ECLAC, which shared the national-bourgeois interpretation of the country and conceived development linked to the idea of national revolution (Bresser Pereira, 2005).

In a proliferation of views regarding the capitalist transformations in Brazil, other interpretations have emerged to seek the understanding of this movement of capitalism development, in addition to the proposal of a bourgeois revolution, as the concepts of passive revolution, conservative modernization, among others. Besides Florestan Fernandes, it could also be mentioned the presence of Caio Prado Junior and Nelson Werneck Sodré, as intellectuals who employed the Marxism in the intellectual and political fields to understand the transformation of the Brazilian society in this context of the development of capitalism in the country. Vianna (1999) also highlighted the Weberian influence in interpretations on the Brazilian modernization process as in the analysis of the patrimonialism theme of civil society.

The variety of institutions cited, therefore, contributed to the creation of the space for reflection of Brazilian researchers, consolidated mainly with postgraduate programs, and the theoretical European influence becomes evident. The linkage with the international academic field occurred with the arrival of foreign missions and also with the formation of Brazilian researchers abroad. This environment has revealed the effort of thinking Brazilian singularities, that is, it provided the knowledge and the adoption of certain theoretic-methodological paradigms in the analysis of related themes, for example, the Brazilian rural environment, creating a field of reflection and research on its own.

In general, it was observed the influence of the perspective of the ruling class in the period, the agrarian-industrial bourgeoisie, being revealed from the interest in certain topics such as economic development, modernization, new social relations, the State transformation, etc., On the other hand, the opposite class, dominated rural or urban, also demanded a discussion on the subjects of populism, unions, claims, manifestations, revolution, etc. Thus, the lines of thought of ISEB, ECLAC,

although they were not academic institutions, and USP excelled, as it was a time of reflection not only on Brazil, but all over Latin America.

It is important to observe, however, that issues related to underdevelopment and development process of Latin American countries were not only the interest of the countries involved. The national academic field was often committed to the issues raised not only by the Brazilian political field. It was in this sense, for example, that research related to the Brazilian agrarian issue, perceived in the debate over the use and ownership of land, ended up being funded by foreign institutions, as it was presented in the report by the Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development (CIDA), which is a CEPAL sub organism, concerning the ownership and use of land, associating them with the socioeconomic development of the rural sector, in 1966.

Rural as object of study

Even before the discussion of the urban-industrial advances by the academy, the reflections on the rural in Brazil resulted in studies in the 1930s, which sought to understand various aspects of the Brazilian society, which was heavily rural: *Political Development of Brazil*, by Caio Prado Junior, *Big House & Slaves*, by Gilberto Freyre and *Roots of Brazil*, by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. These works have become the benchmark in understanding the process of formation of the contemporary Brazil and, in this sense; it was needed to understand the rural areas of the country (Garcia Jr. and Grynszpan, 2002).

It would be the academic field, however, responsible to understand what would be the space occupied by the rural population in a society leading to urbanization and industrialization, such as Brazil. The question presented by the academy was how to integrate the rural and the progress in Brazil, as its distance to the nation's objectives could compromise the advancement of the country as a whole. With the urban industrial boost and, at the same time, the impoverishment of rural areas, the researchers feared the displacement of the rural population toward the cities.

Regarding production over the 1945-1964 in rural, Villas Bôas (1997, p. 75), starting from the research collection of the National Library of

Rio de Janeiro, noted that it could be divided into two distinct periods, considering the thematic and methodological aspects and problems of research: in the first phase, there was interest in the rural world from topics like “relationships patriarchs, planters, colonels, gunmen, partners, tenants and farm workers” and “coexistence of old and new working relationships, the conditions of farm and the influence of rural in the political life of the country”, and in the last ten years, the industrial growth and the issue of modernity are to be associated with the analysis of the Brazilian rural. In relation to the first period, the interest in the rural areas as object of study could be justified because of certain aspects, such as the discussion about the role of the rural sector in the development and the attempt to resolve social crises arising from the agrarian change. The second phase was characterized by a theoretical enlargement of the tradition of thought in the country, by the adoption of a modern conception of history, and finally, by the concern of researchers with the role they should play in a changing society.

Diêgues Jr. (1962) highlighted that studies of the Brazilian rural problems produced with more intensity from the fifties, and the field research contributed to the development of these sciences in the country. Moreover, this knowledge was possible with the contribution of Economy, Geography, History, Anthropology, and Sociology. In the 1960s, the interest began to be “for regional surveys specially, in which we examine certain problems such as the peasantry, of the rural workers, urban workers, the expansion and pioneer fronts” (Melatti, 1984, p. 18).

In the 1960s and 1970s, therefore, the agricultural and agrarian issues were analyzed in the academic Brazilian field, related to changes in the production base, the technical relations of production, labor relations, organizational forms, sector relations; the existence of social classes in the countryside; public policies, among others. In some moments, the emphasis was given to a set of questions, giving space to others over time according to economic and political interests. This was reflected in the own existence of research funding lines in certain areas of interest.

The questions concerning the rural areas, especially those related to social relations in the countryside, were part of the political space since the forties. One of the reasons for this event to have happened, in the opinion of Sigaud (1992), was the emergence of the peasant movement. For this reason, there was an intense debate about the character of pro-

duction relations in the rural areas – feudalism *versus* capitalism – in the field of Economics, History and Sociology, since the middle of the last century, as Garcia Jr. and Grynszpan (2002) highlighted. The study by Palmeira (1971) is a reference in the analysis of the debate in understanding the nature of the structures and dominant social relations in the Brazilian rural. According to the author, the discussion of feudal remnants in rural areas, or even feudalism in Brazilian history, was present since the 1930s. However, it was only in the sixties that it started to have a condition of public issue.

Agrarian reform was also present as a central theme in the discussion of a project of industrialization and expansion of the country and the enlargement of the internal market. Moreover, the images of the peasant and rural workers began to be built by the left Brazilian from their work with certain groups in rural areas (Garcia Jr. and Grynszpan, 2002). According to Martins (1986), research, at first, turned to the discussion of the social relations of production and class struggle in the countryside in the process of capitalist transformation in the country. The researchers analyzed the emergence of social conflicts in rural areas, which signaled the process of expropriation of land and capital expelling rural workers: the expropriation as the central political issue in rural areas. In the debate on the land question, it was not possible to think of it as simply an isolated social problem, since it integrated the social and historical processes of the Brazilian society. The perception of the author gives some indication of the relationships that are observed in the examination of their production of knowledge and other investigations, allowing one to assume, in advance, that Marxism runs through these analyzes .

Even with the consolidation of the urban-industrial sector, the rural has not ceased to be a major theme in the Brazilian social thought. The development of the country has raised an interest for specific aspects of urban and industrial transformations in the set of issues addressed by the Brazilian academy, however, the economic, social and political aspects of relations and the rural environment were not discarded, but, in some measure, they started to apply a lower interest on researchers.

In addition to research on the topics listed above, the actual knowledge on rural has also become an object of study, such as the investigation of Palmeira (1971), who might have been the first to greatly balance on debating around the different points of view regarding the nature of

the Brazilian agrarian issue. Due to the significant size of production of knowledge on the rural, according to Sigaud (1992), many researchers dedicated themselves to study certain sub-themes, such as the Brazilian agrarian structure, small farmers, modernization and social changes in rural areas and the reflection on subjects investigated in the 1960s and 1970s. In the opinion of the author, the common denominator of these studies was the attempt to comprehend how the transformations of social relations in rural areas were being analyzed by the academic field.

As for building a space of research concerning rural, Miceli (1989) stated that the process of development of the institutional and intellectual field was linked to the expansion of public universities and the amount of government resources intended for the establishment of independent research centers. The consolidation of postgraduate programs, according to Vianna et al. (1995), has emerged due to the existence of public policies for teacher's formation. According to Sigaud (1992), the existence of sources of internal and external funding for research activities also secured the set of institutional and material conditions, so that the constitution of academic research in the country could succeed in finding results.

From the late sixties and the early next decade, it was created the space to postgraduate activities, research and scientific events, developing the dissemination of knowledge about the rural through books, articles, theses, dissertations and communications at scientific meetings. The producers of this knowledge were economists, but also geographers, historians, political scientists, anthropologists and sociologists. According to Sigaud (1992), this process created a "population of experts" responsible for the knowledge concerning the rural in Brazil.

A representative example of space of institutional production on rural was the Center for Rural Studies of São Paulo (USP), presented by Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz in the French magazine *Etudes Rurales*, in 1965 (Queiroz, 1965). After three years, Queiroz (1968) presented, in this same publication, a list of major work performed, grouped thematically. This is also a way to realize what questions were being made at that time by USP researchers. The author has divided the research subjects into two groups. In the first group, the main topics were: neighborhood groups; colonization of newer regions and small property; socioeconomic transformations of paid rural workforce in São Paulo,

and great planters and farmers. The research in the second group was divided into the following studies: work at Ribeira Valley and Study and Planning Commission for Cocoa Agriculture (CEPLAC).

Besides this institution, other spaces were indicated by Brumer and Santos (1994, 2000), as “Schools of Agronomy” in the sixties, which had the influence of North American universities cooperation in creating some postgraduate courses in the country: the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV), Superior School of Agriculture Luiz de Queiroz (ESALQ), of USP; Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), and the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (UFRPE). The purpose of the agreement between these Brazilian universities and some American universities was to promote, through several investigations carried out, the increasing production and improvement of living conditions of the rural population in order to prevent social conflicts from happening in rural areas. Finally, Rural Economy, besides Agronomy, Veterinary and Rural Sociology, had the role of assisting the modernization project of the Brazilian agricultural sector in an attempt to avoid the agrarian reform, according to Brumer and Santos (1994, 2000).

The rural theme was also presented in scientific discussion forums, such as the Society for the Advancement of Science (SBPC), founded in 1948, which has always stimulated academic debate and defended freedom of researching, including the military rule period; the Brazilian Society of Economics, Business and Rural Sociology (SOBER), founded in 1959; the National Association of Postgraduate Centers in Economics (ANPEC), created in 1973; and in specific forums, as the Exchange Project of Social Research in Agriculture (PIPSA), created in 1979 through funding from Ford Foundation, with the aim of creating a specific space for discussion of rural (Brumer and Santos, 1994 2000). The availability of funds from sources such as the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), Coordination for the Personnel Improvement of Higher Education (CAPES), the Financier of Studies and Projects (FINEP), the Ford Foundation, the state foundations research support, other government agencies and private foundations were responsible for the expansion of the number of researchers and studies related to rural.

The rural theme gradually succeeded in its consolidation as an object of study in the Brazilian academy, being part of more systematic research

agenda of Brazilian researchers in the 1970s. This debate, however, did not start from a zero point. Before this period, there was already a production of knowledge about rural, particularly in the essayist and political fields. The main objective was to understand historically the process of formation of the Brazilian nation from a point of view of both its identity and its process of development. In this sense, Brazilian society was comprehended from the contradictions between the social relations of production, which are dynamics of capitalism, leading to the use of the concept of social class and the understanding of several dimensions of development. However, only with the formation of postgraduate programs in Brazil, supported by regular sources of financing, was possible to constitute an environment of production of scientific knowledge concerning this topic. It was in this institutionalized space of research and scientific reflection on the Brazilian society that was produced a social research, which involved the rural in the country. Such relevance can be seen in the number of theses and dissertations produced in postgraduate programs in Brazil (Melo, 1997).

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, the rescue of the constitution of scientific space of production of knowledge in Brazil revealed that it was closely linked to the concerns and to the theoretical references of academic centers of European countries through theoretical influences provided for foreign missions, researchers formation in postgraduate programs abroad, funding sources for the study of certain issues, and interest for topics that would bring prestige and recognition in the academic field nationally and internationally. The formation of the Brazilian researchers was a result of a network of relations formed by spreading theoretical influences responsible for their own academic training in the country. The system of ideas available to researchers was built, on one hand, from the theoretical references imported and, on the knowledge generated in the institutions of academic research in Brazil. Researchers problematized these influences in order to think about the process of formation and transformation of the society in which they lived. It is important to mention that these changes were

the basis for understanding more specific issues in different scientific research, as with the studies of the Brazilian rural.

The academic thinking about Brazil was concerned, since its origin, with the identity of the Brazilian society. In this process of constitution of the country as a nation embedded in modernity, the character of the social, political, economic and cultural changes since industrialization and the rise of the industrial bourgeoisie, took part of one of the core of studies of the Brazilian researchers. It was in this context that a part of the production of these scientists converged on investigations concerning the national rural areas. The reflections on the rural were closely linked to the discussion on the formation of the Brazilian state, and the transformation of the agrarian structure has become an indispensable condition to eliminate the obstacles to modernization and industrialization of the Brazilian economy. That is, the agrarian question was inserted in the political and economic spheres of the country and, therefore, the analysis of the Brazilian industrial development was inseparable from the expansion of capitalism in rural areas, leading to researches about this process.

From the research carried out in this article, it was observed that the rural theme was approached from different perspectives, reflecting the diversity of issues involved. The examination of this set of researches has shown, from different perspectives, investigations about the capitalist transformations in the countryside, agricultural modernization and industrialization, the action of the State, the agrarian question, among others. Brazilian researchers have tried to contribute to the debate on important issues to the comprehension of the Brazilian rural.

For future research, it is suggested the analysis of PIPSA, which represents a second generation of researchers dedicated to this field of research; and the contribution of researchers from other institutions from the seventies that formed and influenced countless Brazilian scientists concerning the rural theme.

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