



**WAY OF LIFE IN PASTURE BACKGROUND  
PASTURES COMMUNITIES AND ITS RELATION  
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SOBRADINHO / BA**

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► **To cite this version:**

Maria Aparecida Conceição Nunes, Salvador Dal Pozzo Trevizan. WAY OF LIFE IN PASTURE BACKGROUND PASTURES COMMUNITIES AND ITS RELATION WITH THE NATURAL COMPONENTS OF CAATINGA IN THE MUNICIPALTY OF SOBRADINHO / BA. Emilie COUDEL, Hubert DEVAUTOUR, Christophe-Toussaint SOULARD, Bernard HUBERT. ISDA 2010, Jun 2010, Montpellier, France. Cirad-Inra-SupAgro, 9 p., 2010. <hal-00533449>

**HAL Id: hal-00533449**

**<https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00533449>**

Submitted on 6 Nov 2010

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# WAY OF LIFE IN PASTURE BACKGROUND PASTURES COMMUNITIES AND ITS RELATION WITH THE NATURAL COMPONENTS OF CAATINGA IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SOBRADINHO / BA

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**ABSTRACT** - The historic process of development of the people from Caatingas, the management of natural resources in a logic that involves the common use of "Background Pastures" as a basis in goat and sheep herding and its forms of organization allows to analyse the way of life of rural communities such as the ones in São Gonçalo da Serra and Canã in the municipality of Sobradinho/BA, recognized as traditional. From that it is possible to suggest interventions in public policy in order to provide a better management of the Caatinga natural resources focused on environmental sustainability.

**Key Words:** "Background Pasture", Traditional communities, Environmental management, sustainability.

**Résumé** - Le processus historique de la formation du peuple de la caatinga, la gestion des ressources naturelles dans une logique d'usage commun à partir des "Fonds de Pâturage" (FP) en tant que base pour le pâturage des caprins et ovins et leurs formes d'organisation permettent d'analyser le mode de vie de communautés rurales, comme São Gonçalo da Serra et Canã, dans la commune de Sobradinho/Ba, reconnues comme traditionnelles, et suggérer des interventions au niveau des politiques publiques, dans l'intention de créer une gestion de la caatinga qui permette la durabilité socio-environnementale du système.

**Mots-clés:** Fond de pâturage, communautés traditionnelles, gestion environnementale, durabilité.

*WAY OF LIFE IN PASTURE BACKGROUND PASTURES COMMUNITIES AND ITS  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

The history of “Background Pastures” initiates with the arrival of the herdsmen to the valley of São Francisco in Bahia for extensive cattle ranching that would supply the consumption of the productive littoral of sugar cane. As a consequence, several small crops and small animals raising emerged around the corrals, that served for the consumption of the herdsmen families. Thus the first communities were set up and with the decline of the big corrals, started to invest in extractive and in goat and sheep herding. It is about such singular way of living, of respect to the environment, identity

with the land and communal use of natural resources that the research was based on , precisely in the communities of São Gonçalo da Terra and Canaã located in the municipality of Sobradinho, north of Bahia.

## **1. PEOPLE FROM CAATINGA IN BACKGROUND PASTURES IN SÃO FRANCISCO VALLEY**

The region of São Francisco Valley has always been a scene of historical events that marked the life of some people from the colonization period to the conquest of hinterlands and to the present days. In the period of colonization, the extensive cattle was established with the implementation of corrals, in which big areas were taken for cattle ranching in order to supply the court in Salvador/BA, starting thus, part of the history in the region.

The cattle was raised extensively, with water fountains and ponds, in the Caatinga areas, an activity that lasted for many decades till the “Corrals” declining, due to the diminishing production of sugar cane on the coast. In areas near the pens the raising of livestock and subsistence farming, vegetal plots intended for planting beans, rice, corn, sugar cane, manioc and cotton by the herdsmen, Indians and black people families constituting the first communities. The residents of those communities could hunt, fish and collect food, mainly fruitage, which contributed to model a extractive society par excellence. (CAR, 1985 *apud* MMA, 2004)

With the establishment of that extractive society, the development of the first traditional communities is registered in São Francisco valley, denominated from the 1980’s, Pastures Back. For hundreds of years those for hundreds of years have been developing their activities focused on the goat and sheep raising under extensive raising, vegetal extraction, hunting and subsistence agriculture in “common lands”, which are areas that are collectively used profiting from water sources and lands for grazing cattle.

Such communities are concentrated in the region of São Francisco river, Bahia’s portion, in the region of Lago de Sobradinho, Juazeiro until the region of Uauá, but also in the Piedmont region of Chapada ( Senhor do Bonfim ), Chapada Diamantina Oliveiras dos Brejinhos) and in the municipalities of Barra and Buritirama. According to Ferraro and Bursztyn (2008), there are 450 communities, with the registering of approximately 20.000 families spreaded over 30 municipalities in the State of Bahia. According to reports from members from these communities, the concept of Background Pastures among them, “ It’s a simply way of living in the hinterlands, a way of life that preserves the memory of ancestors and elders; crony relationship, with cultural and ethnic diversity and strong presence of the cow keeper” (ALMEIDA, 2006).

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People from Background Pastures, fields penetrating into the virgin forest, Indians and quilombolas among others, included in the People and communities National Sustainable Policy, decree n. 6040 of February 7th 2007, and composing the National Commission of Development of People and Traditional Communities, are considered

*Culturally diverse groups Who recognize themselves as such, that have their own ways of social organization, that take and use natural resources and territories as a condition for the cultural, social, religious, ancestral and economic reproduction, using the knowledge, innovations and practices generated and transmitted through tradition. (DUPRAT, 2007).*

The convention n. 169 of International Labour Organization amplifies the legal rights. According to the Art. 14 The rights of property should be acknowledged to who its concerned as well as the right of ownership over the lands traditionally occupied by

them. This convention was ratified by the Legislative Decree n. 143, of June, 20th 2002, signed by the chairman of the Senate and later by the presidential Decree n. 5051, of April, 19th, 2004, legitimizing the specific rights to those people.

Decree presidencial n. 5.051, de 19 de abril de 2004, legitimando os direitos específicos a estes povos.

In the legal framework of the State of Bahia, "Background Pasture" communities are sustained by the Art. 178 in its Constitution:

*... In case of use and cultivation of the land under communitarian way, the State, if considers appropriate, may grant the real right to the use concession engraved in a inalienability condition, to the legally constituted association integrated by all its real occupants, especially in the areas denominated "Background Pasture" and in the islands that are property of the State in which transference of domain is restricted to it..*

Background Pasture Communities constitute, therefore, traditional ways of social organization, culturally differentiated from other ones, cultivating the soil collectively, through the extensive cultivation of goat and sheep herding based on practice skills and habits transmitted by tradition. Supposedly, those are low impact practices over the natural resources that allow the survival of human communities, a pacific interaction with nature.

These are, however, secular communities, that live on the margin of public policies. A better understanding of that way of social organization and of the use of natural resources as a way of survival can provide assistance for the formulation of public policies of strengthening of that kind of social and productive organization and the consequent maintenance of natural resources, enabling to those communities a sustainable development.

The study was developed in the traditional communities of "Background Pasture" of São Gonçalo da Serra and Canaã, in the municipality of Sobradinho/ BA. With 21978 inhabitants (IBGE, 2006), the municipality is located in the north region of the State of Bahia, hydrographical bay of São Francisco river, a region in which is planned the water management of Sobradinho's lake – RPGA XIX 554 Km far from Salvador/ BA. It is worth mentioning that in the mentioned municipality are present other traditional people such as: Indians ( Truká group), Fishermen (2200 of them organized in the Z-26 colony), Candomblé communities ( 3 of them) and Gypsy ( 1 group).

Other authors studies such Carvalho (2008); Ferraro and Bursztyn (2008); Almeida (2006); Salomão (2006); Sahr (2005); Luna (2001); Diegues (2000); Sabourin e Marinozzi (2000); Dias (1998) and Garcez (1987 in congenerical communities to the "Background Pasture" ones and in traditional communities of "Background Pasture" in the State of Bahia focus on diverse similar factors such as organization and use of the

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Nunes, M.A.C & Trevizan, S.D.P*

natural resources from the common use, legal framework and land status. Nevertheless, the mentioned studies don't prove if the traditional way of living, under the communal system of landing and its relation to the natural components, is sustainable or not sustainable, which is main focus of the present research.

Some gaps are noticed in the literature presented here, when it comes to deepening exploring the way of living of "Background Pasture" communities and its relation with the caatinga components, as a basis for support of their productive activities through the extensive goat and sheep grazing. While the research presented here examined the lifestyle of two "Background Pasture" communities in the municipality of Sobradinho/ BA, focusing on their social relations, productive and natural resources. To the development of this one ethno methodology (Coulon, 1995) was used, having as means of collection the observation, use of questionnaires through interviews with 24 family heads, photographic and audiovisual registering, secondary data and to the data analysis the examination of the conversation from the filming and collected data

interpretation with the use of a questionnaire.

With that aim, followed as an objective the characterization of the living style of those communities and its relation with the natural resources of caatinga, the cultural habits, social work and social existent relations in the communities of "Background Pasture", as well as the relationship of the communities with the institutions, in the relation of sustainability and how it is connected to the natural components: Soil, vegetation, water and wildlife, thus: "The work of sociology consists, then, in examining the procedures that the actors use in their daily lives, interactions, with their fellows, to give a common meaning the their world (Coulon, 1995)"

The aim of the research is in how people in "Background Pasture" community live:

Their habits, social relations, organization, access to public policies, its operation and how they deal with natural components: soil. Vegetation, Water and wildlife.

The research documented the life habits in relation to the management of "Background Pasture" natural resources in those communities, with the production of an audiovisual documentary exposing in a real registering perspective, their "Background Pasture" world.

## **2. SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL AND PRODUCTIVE RELATIONS**

The "Background Pasture" communities have in their organizational structure the association figure, public entity under civil law stimulated by catholic agents and govern technicians in the 1980's with the purpose of collective representation and "Background Pasture" communities' management.

The "Background Pasture" community of São Gonçalo and Canaã have rural and urban characteristics due to the intense interaction and dependency from the urban environment where they go searching for the basic services (health, education, energy) non existant in their area causing families to have also a housing in the urban area as a way to access support services. However, even with the lack of infrastructure those communities persist in their spaces and traditional practices becoming a symbol of resistance to their collective life style.

Maintaining the endemic species preservation, mainly of the birds collectively, they demonstrate that the productive activity of goat and sheep herding, considered degrading, has preserved natural areas, because the grazing practice is not based on the deforestation but on the dependence on the natural resources. An Inventory of native species was built from the information transmitted directly by the respondents being: 28 species of birds, 16 of mammals, 11 of reptiles, 14 of fish, 48 of plants ( trees and shrubs)

*WAY OF LIFE IN PASTURE BACKGROUND PASTURES COMMUNITIES AND ITS  
RELATION WITH THE NATURAL COMPONENTS OF CAATINGA IN THE MUNICIPALITY  
OF SOBRADINHO / BA  
Nunes, M.A.C & Trevizan, S.D.P*

The wildlife is presented as a potential both for preservation activities, environmental education, monitoring as well as an economic perspective with the introduction of commercial breeding registered in the competent environmental agency.

Given that fact and focusing the society – nature relation, those communities are potential models of economic sustainability, thus, it is necessary to implementation of a strategic planning, dynamizing the productive activities, giving visibility and recognition understanding them as traditional communities part of the strengthening of the environmental sustainability.

It was evidenced on the interviews and also through direct observation, that those communities have an intrinsic relation with the caatinga, that goes through the narrow dependency on the productive process, marked by the grazing of livestock, planting of the.

Regarding the extensive grazing of cattle, developed in common areas, may cause damages in case proper manage is not used, because these practices use the “Background Pasture”, represented by more than 80% of the total area of these

communities that is of 3 311,37 ha as priority basis of food supply.

Currently the flock of goat and sheep in the two communities amounts to 3.341 livestock heads, with a density of 0,69% in the community of São Gonçalo da Serra and 0,66% in Cannã answering the the ability of support established by the official organs of 1 -3 head / ha.

The Cannã communities and são Gonçalo da Serra represent respectively 17,07% and 7,18% of all the entire herd in the municipality, and according to IBGE (2009) data 60 of the goat and sheep herd in the Northeast is in Bahia and 40% of these is in the municipalities that have “ Background Pasture”. These data demonstrate that there is the possibility of expansion of the municipality activity, but focusing on a decentralized management under sustainable use of natural resources.

Based on the analysis of the research data taking into consideration the income of the the family unit and presented as: herd commercialization, retirement income and other sources, it was verified that the income that derive from retirement is a determinant key to the family economy in the community of São Gonçalo da Serra (SGS) that is equivalent to 41,69% opposing the herd commercialization in 11,32%

In cannã community, on the other hand, it represents 28,18% demonstrating the equilibrium with the income that comes from the ge goat and sheep herding commercialization that represents 26,88%. The research focused on data from other sources in : sales of sub products of goat and sheep herding (manure), eggs selling, chicken, pigs and external work which represents 46,98% of the SGS community and 44,92% in Canaã community.

Given these data, it it urgent the planning with predefined rules that Will take to an economic autonomy with sustainability with no depletion of the natural resources. This planning, linked to the Hardin theory (1968) in “ tragédia dos comuns”, with the building of plans, programs and actions focused on a geographic, biological and phytogeographical set of the region, scaling the particularities of the caatingas, dry environments, of “dry” rivers, intermittent drainage, swamps, different kinds of soils, vegetation, culture and social organization.

Knowing that the environmental management of the “Background Pastures” comes from an environmental acquirement of the communities, and that its formed throughout the history, from forms of sustainable administration of the local resources. LEFF (2001) highlights the symbolic formulations and the social practices learned by the exchange of knowledge between generations that according to Sabourin (2009) obey to a dynamic collective binary reciprocity, in which everyone is facing everyone.

The “Background Pastures” communities have their own logic of coexistence with the

*WAY OF LIFE IN PASTURE BACKGROUND PASTURES COMMUNITIES AND ITS  
RELATION WITH THE NATURAL COMPONENTS OF CAATINGA IN THE MUNICIPALITY  
OF SOBRADINHO / BA  
Nunes, M.A.C & Trevizan, S.D.P*

caatinga, with the natural resources. These values can not be lost on penalty of losing the chance not only to properly appraise the biodiversity, but also to redefine the role of each one in the process, give proper value to the cultural difference. To Leff (2001):

*The sustainability principle arises in the context of globalization, as a kind of a boundary and a sign that reorients the civilizatory process of humanity. The ecological sustainability appears as a normative standard for the reconstruction of the economic order, as a condition to human survival and a support to achieve sustainable development, questioning the basis of production. The concept of sustainability arises, therefore, from the recognition of the **support function of the nature**, potential condition of the process of production. ( emphasis added).*

According to Aziz Ab'Saber (2003) *"The inlanders have full knowledge about the productive potential of each space and subspace in the dry inlands. Linked to a culture of long maturation"*. "Background pasture" communities are in this context, in the environment where are found herdsmen, caatinga inhabitants, Holm farmers, goat and sheep raisers. Based on the Ecological – Economic zoning of Rio São Francisco bay MMA/ZEE

(2005), that evaluates the sustainability of the natural system as crucial to define the kind of uses for each area, in view of its potentials and limitations and according to its characteristics and dynamics. The " Background Pastures" areas in the municipality of Sobradinho/ BA are presented in this study, with a good level of environmental quality and moderated level of sustainability, identifying them as sustainable communities.

Base on the concept of ecological sustainability defined by " De Camino & Muller (1993).

*The ecological sustainability implies in the maintenance over time of the fundamental characteristic of ecosystem under use regarding its components and interactions; the economic sustainability is reflected by a solid profitability in time. The social sustainability is associated to the idea that the management and system organization are compatible to the ethical and cultural values of the group that is involved and of the society"*

Supported in these discussions of sustainability and in the ones held by Sachs (1994) that is the importance of planning, but a realistic and realizing planning. That is, for Sachs the planning must allow the serious and deep study of the conditions that surround a given project aimed at developing an area in a certain amount of time, highlighting not only the possible achievements, but also all the difficulties that may be found, allowing, thus, the anticipation of failures and not only promising great utopian promises. In addition, a good planning should be flexible, because the reality is dynamic. Under this reasoning the "Background Pasture" communities will reach the success of environmental management, with their production practices and interrelationship with the natural components and with the maintenance of their *way of living in the inlands*.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

"Background Pasture" name adopted in the 1980's to designate the groups that developed its activities based on the communal system of water sources use, of lands and of natural resources.

Formed by families, with compadrice ties and close relationship with the natural environment, that have as a mission preserving the natural resources ( fauna, flora, soil. Water), represented by the areas of common use, intended for nutritional reserve of goat and sheep herding, restricted area in which access is not allowed to



*WAY OF LIFE IN PASTURE BACKGROUND PASTURES COMMUNITIES AND ITS  
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Nunes, M.A.C & Trevizan, S.D.P*

indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources.

According to Bourdieu (2003) among the social uses of science, there is one that consists in putting science at service of its own progress and other in meeting the social and the economic demands, although these two dynamics are not necessarily excluding. Given this fact the research presents a proposal of municipal management aimed at the People and Traditional Communities Policy, through the institution of an

Executing Agency of the People and Traditional Communities Policy, under the municipal level, in line with the National and State Policy.

From this structure and from the extensive debate, subsequently create Municipal Commission of People and Traditional Communities, taking into consideration that the municipality of Sobradinho, detains in its territory five (5) People categories and Traditional Communities recognizes by the Federal Decree n. 6040/07 being: Indians ( Truká People ), “ Background Pasture” (14 associations ), Fishermen ( 2200 organized in the Z – 26 colony), Candomblé communities ( 3 of them), Gipsy ( 01 group) After the constitution of the commission, with advisory, normative, deliberative power the elaboration of a Municipal Plan of People and Traditional Communities will be

possible legitimated by municipal decree and delegating to the Commission the responsibility for the monitoring and applicability in line with the State Plan of People and Traditional communities, approved by the collective State in December of 2009 in the city of Salvador.

Ensuring Access to their territorial, social, environmental, productive and cultural rights, prioritizing the agrarian regularization, elaboration of a strategic planning consolidated with broad participation, budget resources allocation, accomplishing of cultural educational programs contextualized and aimed at the reality of the communities and sustainable management of natural resources.

It is also necessary the recovery of the degraded areas, wells and existent roads, establishment of infrastructure like small dams in order to regulate water and maintenance of natural floristic species, establishment of pipeline access to production, sustainable tourism with the aim of developing the ecotourism potential, rural tourism in these communities being managed by its own members.

It is understood that for the efficiency of these actions it is necessary the management and decentralized planning, transfer of subsidies with guarantee of budgetary resources contemplated in the programs and guidelines of planning and budget – PPA, LDO, in order to provide real conditions of economic and environmental sustainability. The implementation of a policy of sustainable management with transference of subsidies with the aim of developing the administration of collective areas, with subdivision of common areas for use of rotational grazing. Another point to consider is the administration of common areas for meeting the legal demands referring to the legal reserve, ensuring a differentiated management and identity preserving the principal of communal system.

Given this fact not only is proposed the creation of a new unity category of preservations presented here as Collective Reserve of Natural Heritage being the association of “Background Pasture” the manager of the area, with device in State Law to replace the Art. 178 of State Constitution.

The presented suggestions are offered for collective discussion and are not aimed at being truths and standards, but as provocations with the so as to broaden a municipal debate that will result in reaching the total sustainability of the system.

*WAY OF LIFE IN PASTURE BACKGROUND PASTURES COMMUNITIES AND ITS  
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OF SOBRADINHO / BA*  
*Nunes, M.A.C & Trevizan, S.D.P*

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*WAY OF LIFE IN PASTURE BACKGROUND PASTURES COMMUNITIES AND ITS  
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OF SOBRADINHO / BA*

*Nunes, M.A.C & Trevizan, S.D.P*

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