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Qualities and inequalities in the making of globalised agri-food worlds: Migration, feminization of the workforce and labor dynamics in Latin America agriculture
THE GLOBALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

the making of quality goods.

The globalization of fresh products is a sophisticated process. Technological innovations, quality protocols and other specifications defined by potential consumers interfere with agriculture and the way in which labor is brought in.

The capture of species and new forms of exploitation of nature and work contributed to make them objects of global consumption (Goody, 1994).

Significant changes in processes of producing, packaging and distributing flowers, fruits and vegetables (Van der Grip, Marsden; Cavalcanti, 2005)

“A certified good represents a case in which the object crossing the border is one of the sites of enforcement: the emblematic case is a certified agricultural product,” Sassen says (2007, p. 217).
Globalizing food

➢ New regions of the planet enter into disputes to get in the markets.
➢ Old regions are transformed and tailored according to global demands.
➢ Who enters who stays, who leaves, under the new conditions?
➢ Inequalities in the making of global regions.
➢ (Castillo, Boaventura Santos, Giddens, Appadurai, Habsbawn, Castel, Sassen, Harvey, Pedreño, Lara Flores)
Re-inventing the local.

- Global processes, localities and logics of social reproduction
- Mobility of populations
- The struggles of local populations for recognition of rights
- The role of the State
Vulnerable, cheaper and docile labor force

Contrary to the Fordist era, in the case of labor, neoliberal globalization significantly reduced state intervention in the social sphere, diminished the power of unions and political groups of the left, and created, made available, a cheaper and docile labor force worldwide (Antonio and Bonanno, 2000, Harvey, 2005).

The major structural changes contribute to: a process of labor flexibilization whereby reduced wages, precarious and unstable employment, enhanced exploitation and political weakness, characterized the position of labor.

The unequal basis for access to land explains the persistent displacement of people and the vulnerability of migrant labor in Brazil. Latin American and in other places of the global agriculture.
Figures 1 and 2 Workers waiting to be hired or for transportation to their place of work. 2016- Photo Petrolina Rural Workers Syndicate
Figures 3 and 4 Female labor in the grape farms of São Francisco Valley in North East Brazil.
FIGURE 5 The San Francisco Valley Rural Trade Union movement- Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais (STR)
Reconfiguration of labor relationships and inequalities at work

- The global character of relationships affecting the various domains of human practice (Lash; Urry, 1994:279)
- Gender dimensions
- Ethnic dimensions
- Productive and reproductive work
FIGURE 6- Anonymes, visages et travail, Vallée du São Francisco

Photo: Ianne Samara Lima Barbosa, 2010.
The Migrant female worker in Latin American agro

- Types of contract
- Changes on the work
- Greater control of workers journeys
- Persistent exploitation
- Intensification of the daily journey (Brasil, Argentina, Mexico)
- Women’s rights
A qualidade do trabalho feminino. Nem se compara a qualidade do trabalho masculino, né? Por que a gente tem mais cuidado, mais carinho, tem mais jeito... Mas hoje em dia na roça, mulher hoje amarra, mulher poda, mulher desbrota, que antigamente era só coisa de homem, mulher dirige trator, mulher faz tudo. Isso aí hoje...
Figure 7—Anonymes, visages et travail, Vallée du São Francisco

Photo: Ianne Samara Lima Barbosa, 2010.
Quality Standards, land use and Exploitation of labor

Processes of land grab, unequal access to land and globalization schemes, increase the number of landless peasants, exclude family farmers and create an erratic population. A migrant contingent emerges and is captured by corporate capitals (Friedmann) and submitted to their rules.
Food empires (Ploeg, 2008) determine the forms and conditions of use of land, water and labor, but the needs of the native populations of regions around the globe that specialize in the production of quality goods remain out of their interests.
Mobilities of capital and Labor

Mobilities of capital and labor serve different purposes (Bendini, et al., 2012; Benência; Aparício, 2014; Bonanno; Cavalcanti, 2014; 2011; Menezes; Godói, 2011; Valdés et al., 2014), but the paths of workers and their reproduction strategies depend on both these markets and the quality of those goods.
The market is a fertile ground for the emergence of other goods, as highlighted by Polanyi in 1957, when discussing the enormous variety and endless possibilities of creating new goods and quality commodities. As it is happening in the new Global North / South relationships.

Quality distinguishes objects, people and social groups (Douglas; Isherwood, 1979; Hobsbawn, Ranger, 1983). Things have a social life (Appadurai, 1999). However, the value of things prevail against the value of individuals. The quality required for handling goods contrasts with the frequent disqualification and devaluation of the extraordinary tasks performed by workers (Lee, 1998; Bonanno; Cavalcanti, 2012).
Mobility allows corporations to integrate weak segments of the labor force into global production networks such as women, minorities, immigrants, and other marginal groups from around the world, these were sought to reduce costs of production and maintain a docile and highly controllable labor force. Bonanno & Cavalcanti, 2014

For the sake of quality standards, and subject to precarious employment relationships, workers perform, the complexities of construction of such goods (bunches of grapes, apples, pears, mangoes, flowers) and are subject to excessive working hours, according to the implied gender dimensions (Bonanno; Cavalcanti, 2012; Silva, 2012; Valdés et al., 2014; Cánovas, 2014)

(Bendini et al. 2012; Benência e Aparício, 2014; Bendini, 2011; Menezes; Godói 2011; Valdés et. al. 2014); Cavalcanti
North/South relations of power

Referring to Latin America in this inexorable process, Galeano (1973) states:
Everything, from the discovery until our times, has always been transmuted into European-or later United States – capital, and as such has accumulated in distant centers of power. Everything: the soil, its fruits and its mineral-rich depths, the people and their capacity to work and to consume, natural resources and human resources... To each area has been assigned a function, always for the benefit of the foreign metropolis of the moment, and the endless chain of the dependence has been endlessly extended. (Galeano, 1973, p. 12)
Global Commodity chain, casual labor, migrant labor: The human consequences.

The widening gap between rhetoric (for the benefit of all) and realization (the benefit of a small ruling class) is now all too visible” (Harvey, 2005, p. 203). The uncertainty of employment and housing tends to increase the pilgrimage of individuals through regions and nations globally, thus contributing to the continuous reconfiguration of rural areas and city ghettos (Sassen, 2003). Yet, as Long and Roberts (2005) remark: “off farm work, including international labor migration, is now an important source of rural livelihood”.
FIGURE 8  Migrant workers in Argentina
Demand for quality food

What types of consequences does this demand generate for labor? **The Cases:** The San Francisco Valley in Brazil and the Argentinean Valleys.
Broadening the control and regulation of work and workers

Weak worker representation: one evident condition of agri-food in the 21st century is the diminished role of trade unions (Cavalcanti; Bonanno, 2014, p. 270)
Quality for export, increases work load and decreases quality of workers living conditions

- The first job and the job of learning Monitoring activities.
- Traceability
- Fill in forms of occurrences. Records of problems encountered in implementing the activities.
- Check list, Select clusters.
- Multitasking: Work in the field and packing services. Shift from one activity to another activity.
- Tiring and demanding work routines. Feitosa, 2015
Daily routine changes

- Early waking up, bad transportation, extended journey, low wages,
- In dynamic farming spaces integrated to global markets the work configurations are complex (CAVALCANTI, 1999; Marsden; CAVALCANTI, 2001)
- The transformations on the working routine in the agriculture fields and packing houses, for example. (Workers demand for “in itinere” i.e, to include the hours spent on trip to the work place in their wages.)
Workload

➢ The workload increased because of certification rules
  • preparation of fields, pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest activities including pruning, sorting, packaging, and shipping, some expertise in management, accountability and traceability of the product

➢ Re-skilling of labor
  • “I need to make sure that all my tasks are done well. I need to pick the grapes, but also prune off those parts of the bunch that don’t look good. I need to place them in the box. If I pick seedless grapes I need to place them in plastic bags. These are the bags that are shipped out.”
The power of the supervisors

- Labor tasks must be validated by supervisors
- Behavior in the field is prescribed

“We are doing our job everyday and we have to produce a set number of bunches. Later, the field supervisor arrives to record the results. She does it. While I know how much I worked, I’m not sure how much I have actually worked until she records the number of bunches I harvested and packed. She tells us”. (a female worker)
Labor remuneration

*Paid per “piece” (boxes or bunches)*

“We have to piece work 700 bunches a day. However, as the shape of grapes in a bunch varies, so does the work to be performed. In certain cases, it takes longer to finish a bunch then in other cases. But the pay is the same unless we pick more bunches.”

“But Seedless grapes are smaller and more fragile. They are not very easy to pick as the bunches break and we need put them in plastic bags. It takes more work.”
Forms of Resistance. From individual to collective actions.

- From actions of resistance / to affirmative actions
- The workers, individually or jointly, develop "actions of resistance" against the conditions of excessive control and adjustments aimed at the external market.
- "Small boycotts" to the productive process and the imposed logic.
- Stops that are longer than usual, collectively or individually planned.
- Private negotiations with the general manager of the packing house Situations that happen under the structure and the pre-established routine
Tableau - Formes de résistance mises en place par les travailleurs des *packing houses* par rapport aux dispositifs de contrôle et d’intensification du travail. (Feitosa e Cavalcanti, 2017)

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<td><strong>Contrôle excessif quant aux objectifs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Retirer les EPI durant les activités</strong></td>
<td><strong>Communication cachée</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Formes de résistance**

- **Réduction stratégique de productivité**
  - Boycott collectif
  - Travail de mauvaise qualité
  - Dissimulation du mal-être
  - Communication cachée
  - Moqueries et blagues sur les contrôleurs
Female thoughts on daily work

- The *Classificadeiras* are the most demanded .. the last person who took the fruit will be called in case of complaints.. They are thinking of assigning a number ... each person a card ...

- I learned a lot but I am tired of the greater supervision.

- The fact that switching from one task to another, from the field to the packing industry and the monitoring of the field, gives them a feeling of homesickness of the past and increases their longing from the initial periods of work. When they felt free to sing and let the thoughts fly. Now, nothing can go wrong.

- Aqui no Vale do São Francisco eu acho importante porque assim, a gente vive numa região que o que prevalece é a agricultura, né? E a gente, graças a Deus, hoje em dia a gente vê grandes mulheres aí a tomar de conta na rédea mesmo de grandes packings. Mulheres inclusive, eu não vou falar o nome dela, porque pode ser que ela não goste, ela é uma agrônoma ela, e ela dirige assim, uma grande porcentagem aqui de fazendas, inclusive de grupos grandes aqui que ela é desenrolada a mulher, viu? Coisas que antigamente você não via. Era só os agrônimos, e era alguns, e aquela coisa. E hoje em dia a mulher tá dominando a agricultura aqui em Pernambuco. E não esteja pensando... que o povo pensa “Ah! A mulher na agricultura é só aquela coitadinha que fica lá
CONCLUSIONS
Vulnerabilities, flexibilities and overworked workers

- I learned a lot, but I am tired of the greater supervision (a female worker).
- The fact that switching from one task to another, from the field to the packing industry and the monitoring of the field that gives them a feeling of homesickness of the past and increases their longing from the initial periods of work. When they felt free to sing and let their thoughts to fly.

Quando acha umas diárias na manga, ou na acerola, ou na goiaba, a gente vai, quando não... tem que ficar em casa, né? Aí é aquela coisa... Quando a gente pega assim, um ano bom, a gente trabalha duas vezes por ano. Faz o contrato de três meses, sai, vai para outra empresa, pega mais cinco meses, aí é bom, mas quando não é... É aquele de três meses, e o resto é só em casa.

Quand on trouve des contrats saisonniers dans la mangue, l’acérola, ou la goyave, on y va. Quand on trouve rien, on reste à la maison, hein. C’est ça... Dans les bonnes années, on travaille deux fois par an. On fait un contrat de 3 mois. Ca finit, on va vers une autre entreprise, on y reste 5 mois. Quand c’est comme ça, c’est bien, mais quand ce n’est pas le cas. C’est 3 mois et après, le reste, on est à la maison.
The inclusion of regions of the so-called southern countries as producers of quality goods for global markets, and the assortment of goods exported, justified by the need to increase currency, have not very often guaranteed better working conditions for their populations. Rather the contrary. The problematic relationship of inequality prevails in critical situations of exclusion of indigenous peoples and peasants in general, by threats and confiscation of occupied lands, reducing existing work opportunities. Thus far contributing for the continuous marginalization and exploitation of migrant population around regions of the world.

Persistent forms of exploitation
Migrant workers amongst qualities and vulnerabilities

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It is not possible to ignore the interdependence of these various processes (Bonanno; Cavalcanti, 2011). Globalization has not very much contributed to the improvement of labor living conditions. Labor markets, are still “precarious and occasional”, says Cánovas (2014, p.15). The kind of globalization that feeds on the mobility and vulnerability of these people proposes new questions to Social Sciences.