


**THE IMPASSES OF EXTRACTIVE RESERVES IN BRAZIL: CONFLICTS AND INTERESTS THREATENING A FISHING COMMUNITY IN CEARÁ**

**OS IMPASSES DAS RESERVAS EXTRATIVISTAS NO BRASIL: CONFLITOS E INTERESSES QUE AMEAÇAM UMA COMUNIDADE PESQUEIRA NO CEARÁ**

**LOS IMPASSES DE LAS RESERVAS EXTRACTIVAS EN BRASIL: CONFLICTOS E INTERESES QUE AMENAZAN A UNA COMUNIDAD PESQUERA EN CEARÁ**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article describes the history of the fishing community of Prainha do Canto Verde, located on the east coast of Ceará, and the struggle of its residents for the preservation of artisanal fishing and against the threats of real estate speculation. This struggle resulted in the community's transformation into an environmental conservation unit, and Prainha do Canto Verde was officially included in the list of Brazilian Extractive Reserves (RESEXs) in 2009. The status of Extractive Reserve did not prevent the continuation of predatory fishing or real estate speculation in the region, leading to internal disputes among its residents. This conflict was fueled by external agents whose tourism ventures were threatened by the creation of the RESEX and, more recently, by the arrival of vacationers who buy land and houses from fishermen at prices below market value. This confluence of factors and the ineffectiveness of environmental protection policies and agencies, such as the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio), have threatened the development and continued existence of Prainha do Canto Verde as an environmental conservation unit. By describing this scenario, based on field research conducted with a group of native people, as well as data collected from documentary and bibliographic sources, the article aims to provide elements for reflection on the problems and impasses surrounding extractive reserves in Brazil and their environmental protection policies.

**Keywords:** Extractive Reserve. Conservation Unit. Traditional Communities. Environmental Preservation Policies.

**RESUMO**

O artigo descreve a história da comunidade pesqueira da Prainha do Canto Verde, localizada no litoral leste do Ceará, e a luta de seus moradores pela preservação da pesca artesanal e contra as ameaças de especulação imobiliária. A luta resultou na transformação da comunidade em unidade de conservação ambiental, e a Prainha do Canto Verde passou a configurar oficialmente na lista das Reservas Extrativistas (RESEXs) brasileiras em 2009. A condição de Reserva Extrativista não evitou a continuidade da pesca predatória nem da especulação imobiliária na região, fato que levou a uma disputa interna entre seus moradores, estimulada por agentes externos que tiveram seus empreendimentos turísticos

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ameaçados com a criação da RESEX e, mais recentemente, pela chegada de veranistas que compram terras e casas de pescadores com preços abaixo do valor estimado pelo mercado. Essa confluência de fatores e a inoperância das políticas e órgãos de proteção ambiental, como o Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservação da Biodiversidade (ICMBio), têm ameaçado o desenvolvimento e a permanência da Prainha do Canto Verde enquanto unidade de conservação ambiental. Ao descrever esse cenário, com base em uma pesquisa de campo realizada com um grupo de nativos, além de dados coletados em fontes documentais e bibliográficas, o artigo objetiva trazer elementos para uma reflexão sobre os problemas e impasses que cercam as reservas extrativistas no Brasil e suas políticas de proteção ambiental.

**Palavras-chave:** Reserva Extrativista. Unidade de Conservação. Comunidades Tradicionais. Políticas de Preservação Ambiental.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo describe la historia de la comunidad pesquera de Prainha do Canto Verde, ubicada en la costa este de Ceará, y la lucha de sus habitantes por la preservación de la pesca artesanal y contra las amenazas de la especulación inmobiliaria. Esta lucha culminó con la transformación de la comunidad en una unidad de conservación ambiental, y Prainha do Canto Verde fue incluida oficialmente en la lista de Reservas Extractivas (RESEX) de Brasil en 2009. El estatus de Reserva Extractiva no impidió la continuación de la pesca depredadora ni la especulación inmobiliaria en la región, lo que generó disputas internas entre sus habitantes. Este conflicto se vio alimentado por agentes externos cuyos proyectos turísticos se vieron amenazados por la creación de la RESEX y, más recientemente, por la llegada de turistas que compran terrenos y casas a los pescadores a precios inferiores al valor de mercado. Esta confluencia de factores y la ineficacia de las políticas y agencias de protección ambiental, como el Instituto Chico Mendes para la Conservación de la Biodiversidad (ICMBio), han puesto en peligro el desarrollo y la continuidad de Prainha do Canto Verde como unidad de conservación ambiental. Al describir este escenario, basado en una investigación de campo realizada con un grupo de indígenas, así como en datos recopilados de fuentes documentales y bibliográficas, el artículo pretende aportar elementos para la reflexión sobre los problemas e impases que rodean las reservas extractivas en Brasil y sus políticas de protección ambiental.

**Palabras clave:** Reserva Extractiva. Unidad de Conservación. Comunidades Tradicionales. Políticas de Preservación Ambiental.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The conflicts and interests that threaten the preservation of the Extractive Reserve of the fishing community of Prainha do Canto Verde, located in the municipality of Beberibe-CE, almost 115 km from the capital Fortaleza, are the focus of this work. Created in 2009, as a result of the community's struggle for the preservation of the land and artisanal fishing, the Prainha do Canto Verde Reserve becomes the scene of internal conflicts, motivated by the interference of external agents and the ineffectiveness of policies to preserve the sustainable use of natural resources by residents. Structured in three parts, the article addresses the struggle for the conquest of the Reserve, the emergence of conflicts and the impasses that today surround its existence as an environmental and cultural conservation unit.

The Extractive Reserves (RESEXs) in Brazil were created in the early 1990s, after the assassination of political activist Chico Mendes, as an institutional response to the threats of territorial expropriation, environmental devastation and marginalization (economic, social and cultural) of traditional populations. In 2000, through Law No. 9,985/2000, the National Congress and the Federal Senate approved the implementation of the National System of Conservation Units (SNUC), the body responsible for the regulation and creation of RESEXs in the Brazilian territory.

In addition to approval and regulation, the SNUC is responsible for promoting the sustainable development of RESEXs through research, environmental education and ecological tourism activities. However, the insufficiency of inspection and structure, resulting from government budget limitations, and the pressure of illegal economic activities denounce the weaknesses of the policies for the preservation and development of the RESEXs. This scenario makes them at the mercy of the impasses and conflicts of interest that surround their dynamics and existence.

The research data were produced from the memory and report of a group of residents who acted in the struggle for the implementation of the RESEX, participated in its developments and today experience — both as subjects and victims — the consequences of the impasses involving the disputes of interests around Prainha do Canto Verde as an environmental conservation unit. By describing this history from the perspective of the natives, and including bibliographic and documentary sources, the work aimed to reflect on the possibilities and limits of the policies for the preservation of Extractive Reserves in Brazil.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From a historiographical balance of the existing impasses in the community, which emerged after its decree as RESEX, a gap was identified. Although two studies partially dialogue with the proposal of this research, they are not sufficient to overcome this shortcoming. Such works are: *Memorial de Canto Verde: Knowledge of life and struggle of the people of the sea*, by Márcia Ribeiro (2017), and *Tourism and solidarity economy*, by Viviane Medeiros (2019). Although relevant, they do not focus on the contemporary impasses related to the RESEX in the fishing community. Nevertheless, they will be used as a reference to enable comparative analyses and theoretical crossings that strengthen the proposed discussion.

In order to adequately address the analyzed reality, we adopted a theoretical framework selected based on the relevance of its concepts in relation to the object and theme investigated. In this context, we consider it appropriate to mobilize the following concepts: Territory, according to Milton Santos (1984), understood not only as form, but as used territory, being the result of the articulation between objects and actions and the expression of human and inhabited space; Traditional Community, which, according to Carmo Thum (2017), comprises a social group that establishes historical links with a physical space, transforming it into a collective territory through the work and permanence of its founders; and Collective Memory, from the perspective of Maurice Halbwachs (2013), which transcends the individual sphere, since the memories of each subject are constituted in relation to the social group to which they belong.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

In methodological terms, the work was based on the perspective of Oral History (Cardoso, 2010), adopting the semi-structured interview as the main instrument for data production. The interviews were conducted with a group of native residents who, in addition to having participated in the struggle and creation of the Prainha do Canto Verde RESEX, today occupy different positions on the board of interests and perspectives in relation to the problems that the community faces as an environmental conservation unit. In this sense, the interviewees are understood as the main historical agents, and the fishing community, as the social space where their experiences are constituted.

The interviews, conducted in 2024, were recorded (with an average duration of 60 minutes), subsequently transcribed, and then carefully analyzed, in order to ensure the fidelity

and integrity of the discourses obtained. For the proper management of this type of source, essential resources were used, highlighting the use of voice recorders and the adoption of a field diary to record the observations and reflections of the researchers. In addition to the field data, the work involved bibliographic and documentary research.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 THE STRUGGLE OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRAINHA DO CANTO VERDE FOR THE RESEX

According to the reports of the residents themselves, the first inhabitants of the area began to occupy the territory in the nineteenth century, during the period of the liberation of the enslaved. These individuals were emancipated in 1870 by a plantation owner from a neighboring village, today called Campestre da Penha. Regarding the formation of the community, the information provided by Galdino (2010, p. 29) can be observed:

The first families of the community were formed by the couples: Joaquim Fernandes do Nascimento Girão – "Caboclo" (1853-1949), who married Maria da Conceição "Filismina", and "Zé Cariri", who married Mrs. "Chica Benvinda", sister of Joaquim Caboclo. Together, they built the first house in the place, a mud house, which was inhabited by the twelve children generated by the first couple who helped to compose the base of the community's family tree. Later, other families related to Zé Cariri appeared; as well as the Baratas and Raimundo Caboclo who had a son named Raimundo Canto Verde, who lived in the neighborhood and constantly came to fish. Then, as a result of the large amount of "green", at the time existing in the place, he started to call it Prainha do Canto Verde, which gave the community its name.

The locality appears as an environment conducive to the survival and well-being of those who lived there. From the tranquility and natural beauty to the contribution of the sea, which, through fishing, provided food of animal origin and, consequently, collaborated for the sedentarization in that space. These elements made the community attractive to other families, such as the Quinins, Firminos, Correias and Dantas. With the development of community life, problems related to coexistence and collective survival arose. At that time, families were numerous (with an average of fifteen children) and faced difficulties in maintaining the support of the members. Due to the lack of nutritional support, many children did not survive the first months of life. In addition, the lack of educational institutions or actions contributed to the maintenance of illiteracy in a large part of the population. Those who

showed greater interest in education sent their children to the neighboring community of Jardim, where they were initiated in their studies through Professor Joaquim Nel.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, personalities emerged driven by speculative plans, possibly aimed at developing sun and beach tourism of great proportions. The residents of the community received news that an individual named Antônio Sales Magalhães claimed to have bought the area corresponding to the community of Canto Verde. At that moment, the first processes of mobilization and resistance of the residents in defense of their territory and the right to remain in the place began. Through discussion circles, residents collectively sought strategies and alternatives to face the presence of the intruder. As one community leader recalls:

[...] there was always a boy here who passed by my house, who was Til<sup>3</sup>, then he said that they were going to allot here and we didn't know anything, you know [...] Around 1980 I saw a man there, I still remember it as if it were today, with those measuring machines [...] then we heard that they were going to sell the land on the hill, then we immediately realized that it could be Prainha. Then at night at school (MOBRAL) there was a teacher (Vilanir) who had a sister (Inez) there at the Defense Center, in the Archdiocese of Fortaleza, defense of human rights and that they helped the poor. We wrote a letter asking for support and people started coming. (Retired, native, and female leader, 67 years old)

Professor Vilanir, through her sister Maria Inez - who at the time was active in the Grassroots Ecclesial Movement (MEB) and in the Center for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights (CDPDH) - established a fundamental contact that brought external support to the community in its struggle for possession of the territory. In this context, a team from the Archdiocese of Fortaleza, under the leadership of Bishop Dom Aluísio Lorscheider at the time, promptly made a presence in the fishing village with the objective of contributing to the organization and analysis of territorial conflicts. This meeting marked the beginning of an alliance that would be strengthened over time, joining efforts in defense of the community. It is also noteworthy the significant role of CDPDH employees in the formulation of strategies to face real estate speculation. On many occasions, it was these agents who provided the necessary support for the meetings, playing a crucial role in community resistance.

Thus, the support network built between the community and the Archdiocese not only played a fundamental role in the legal action, but also provided the inhabitants of Canto Verde

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<sup>3</sup> Native and historical protagonist registered by the real estate company as a witness in the process of adverse possession of the lands.

with valuable opportunities to exchange experiences. These interactions occurred both internally - strengthening the ties between the residents themselves - and externally, with other communities in Ceará that faced similar challenges and organized themselves through the Base Ecclesial Communities. The sharing of these experiences, anchored in the struggle against oppression, territorial loss and the defense of local culture and rights, strengthened the collective identity and contributed significantly to the maturation of community organization.

One of the most significant events in the development of collaborations between communities facing similar challenges took place between September 10 and 14, 1985, during the XIII Rural Seminar, promoted by the Archdiocese of Fortaleza, with the presence of Archbishop Dom Aloísio Lorscheider. This event, of a religious nature, brought together most of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (CEBs) of Ceará, including groups from the mountainous region, the hinterland and the coast, as well as representatives from other states. It was a milestone in the consolidation of the work of community organization, providing a space for the exchange of experiences and the strengthening of bonds. From there, Prainha do Canto Verde was officially included in the CEBs network.

Over the years, resistance has strengthened, leading to awareness of the need for a more effective institutional framework. It was in this context that, after several meetings and discussions, the natives created the Association of Residents of Prainha do Canto Verde on April 16, 1989. The recognition of the Association has become crucial for strengthening the defense of legal and juridical interests related to land protection processes.

In 1987, two years before the formalization of the Association, Prainha do Canto Verde received a visit from a Swiss, whose trajectory led him to meet the community during a trip to Jericoacoara. Upon arriving, he found a scenario of active mobilization, in which residents were already organized and engaged in the struggle to defend their territory and their rights. This first contact was decisive for his later involvement with the cause of Prainha do Canto Verde, as he himself reports:

I stayed at Til's house, where I had the opportunity to get to know the community and the group that was organizing to form the residents' association. They were receiving support from the Center for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, with the support of the Archdiocese. It was in this environment that I met several people and began to take a deep interest in the history of the community. (Swiss, 82 years old)

Among his several visits to the community, in 1992, the Swiss married a local resident and established permanent residence in Prainha do Canto Verde. Its permanence marked the beginning of a new phase in the process of community struggle and organization, which further strengthened the initiatives aimed at the defense of the territory and the sustainable development of the fishing village. In addition to his direct involvement in local articulations, the initiative to create a fish warehouse came from him, a proposal that, after extensive debate, was approved in a community assembly. The implementation of this project had the financial support of Swiss friends, consolidating itself as a milestone in strengthening the economic autonomy of the community.

Verde faced another problem: the recurrent presence of the *escafandristas*, characterizing a kind of "maritime land grabbing". It is worth mentioning that, since the sea was the main source of livelihood for the community, predatory fishing became a direct threat to local survival. Faced with the growing shortage of lobster due to the illegal activities of these divers, the need for a forceful response has emerged. That answer came on April 4, 1993, when four fishermen embarked on a fearless journey to Rio de Janeiro as a protest against predatory lobster fishing. The crossing, which lasted 74 days, aimed to draw the attention of public opinion to the neglect of the governments (federal, state and municipal) in relation to the Peoples of the Sea and to denounce the predatory fishing that devastated practically the entire coast of Ceará.

The "SOS" symbol stamped on the vessel's sail reinforced the emergency nature of the situation and the need for immediate intervention. The protest achieved wide repercussions, pressuring government officials to direct greater attention to artisanal fishing. To understand the relevance of this mobilization, it is essential to highlight that, during the crossing of the raft, the idea of creating the Terramar Institute was conceived, which had the active participation of the Swiss. The Institute was created with the purpose of strengthening its work with the community, with an emphasis on the areas of fishing and education. In the following years, it consolidated itself as a fundamental agent in expanding knowledge about the daily life of fishing communities, contributing to the improvement of their strategies of resistance and sustainable development.

On June 5, 2009, Decree No. 0-002 granted Prainha do Canto Verde inclusion in the list of Extractive Reserves. With the implementation of this category, the community obtained the ability to control real estate speculation, curb irregular constructions and optimize the inspection of predatory fishing, making the process faster and more efficient. The Chico



Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio) became the body responsible for this supervision, in charge of ensuring harmonious interaction with traditional communities and reinforcing their intrinsic relationship with nature.

#### 4.2 COMMUNITY VULNERABILITIES TO EXTERNAL INTERESTS

The initial expectation was that the implementation of the RESEX would bring a phase of stability to Prainha do Canto Verde. However, this scenario proved to be different from reality, since environmental policy generated a new conflict, now of an internal nature. After overcoming the initial challenges related to territorial speculation, the community was faced with a new battle, resulting from the implications of the RESEX, a fact that introduced an additional layer of complexity to the already challenging context experienced by the residents.

After the transformation of the village into a conservation unit, dissatisfaction and conflicts of interest arose around the preservation policy, given that the residents' expectation of change, fueled by the implementation of the RESEX, was not met. As a result, the credibility of part of the natives began to dissipate in relation to the gains they would have with the conservation unit. These discontents are associated with a set of factors that, even in the face of the testimonies, are not yet satisfactorily evidenced.

Among the main aspects that contributed to the scenario of dissatisfaction, the following stand out: the persistence of predatory fishing; allegations of favoring part of the residents to the detriment of others; impacts on external owners; and the emergence of speculative behavior on the part of external agents interested in taking advantage of the region's natural attractions. Each of these elements has played a significant role in shaping new tensions, both internal and external.

The first factor, referring to the persistence of predatory fishing, proved to be a great disappointment for the community, as it did not meet the great expectations of the residents in relation to the most sensitive aspect for the community. Despite the intense struggles to combat this illegal practice, such as the emblematic trip of the Jangada "SOS" to Rio de Janeiro (mentioned above), the implementation of the RESEX has not solved the problem of predatory fishing, which continues to threaten the traditional way of life of local fishermen. This scenario persists due to the failure of effective enforcement and the continuation of predatory practices that compromise the sustainability of marine resources, which are essential for the community's livelihood. The absence of concrete changes generated

widespread frustration among fishermen, who hoped that the RESEX would provide greater protection for natural resources and create favorable conditions for artisanal fishing.

The second component concerns the allegations of favoritism, since part of the community began to express dissatisfaction when they perceived benefits directed to members linked to the Residents' Association (known as the "old" association). This alleged favoritism generated distrust and contributed to the weakening of social cohesion in the village. The position of the group that was against the implementation of the RESEX was strengthened from the perception that the benefits of the Reserve were not distributed equitably. For these residents, the management of the Reserve favored certain groups or specific interests, generating a generalized feeling of exclusion and inequality in access to the advantages promised by the environmental policy. This scenario fueled a discourse of discontent and intensified criticism of the way the RESEX was managed. The following exposition illustrates this point:

If it's a reserve, it was supposed to have preserved it even as they said, it wasn't supposed to let the people do what they did, then, like, they have a position more for some than for others. If it's to be a reserve it's not in the right rule. The projects when it comes is more on the other side than for everyone in the community, then these little things we put together, together, we don't support, at least I don't support them. (1st secretary of Associação Nova, 55 years old)

In addition, the feeling that the initial promises - such as the improvement of living conditions and the sustainable preservation of the territory and fishing - were not fully fulfilled favored a growing dissatisfaction among the residents. For the discontented, the RESEX not only failed in its distributive role, but also contributed to accentuating internal divisions in the community, creating dynamics of inequality and exclusion. On the other hand, the group that supported the RESEX highlighted the projects developed as a result of its creation, as well as those that already existed before the implementation of the environmental policy and that were maintained or strengthened by the Reserve. A relevant example is the "Geração Muda Mundo" project, implemented in the community in October 2007, with the objective of fostering entrepreneurship among young people.

In addition, the president of the "old" Association, in his interview, stated that the community is contemplated with new projects, which are widely publicized so that all residents have access.

The third aspect corresponds to the impacts on external landowners. With the implementation of the RESEX, some external agents were directly affected, as is the case of a businessman with long-standing property in the village, whose land was included in the delimitation of the Reserve. Feeling harmed by the restriction on the use of his property, this agent began to support and encourage the group of dissatisfied residents, a fact that contributed to the strengthening of new foci of resistance to the RESEX policy within the community.

The delimitation of the area of the Reserve would have made the businessman's plans to carry out real estate speculation ventures unfeasible, leading him to seek support among disgruntled residents for the formation of a new association: the Independent Association of Residents of Prainha do Canto Verde, which later became known as "new association". As pointed out by the pro-RESEX group, the creation of the new association would have been promoted by this businessman as a strategy to contest the restrictions imposed by the Reserve. The version suggests that the businessman, motivated by his own interests, would have sought to "buy" the support of the residents, spreading the idea that the inclusion of the land area in the Reserve would be harmful to the community. In this way, the creation of a new organization marked the reconfiguration of the community scenario, which, with differentiated proposals, began to fight for the reversal of the condition of the village as an environmental conservation unit.

To strengthen his position, the businessman began to act through a local resident who, due to his native status, would enjoy greater trust and legitimacy among dissatisfied residents. Next, let's see the testimony of a resident of the old association:

That's where it started, at that time the businessman already lived here, we learned that he secretly started to create a small group. First, because there the owner of the mercantilism there, who is responsible for finding employees and is responsible, works for this businessman, so he was the one who started to win people. Some say it's deceiving, he has been deceiving some people, but many have fallen for him, but as we already knew the story, we already came from a long history, we didn't fall. That's when he started to say that it wasn't good, that the fishermen didn't accept it. (Native, fisherwoman, 43 years old)

This native, who acts as an intermediary between the interests of the businessman and the local community, currently holds the position of president of the Independent Association of Residents. Next, let us see the version of the facts from the perspective of this intermediary:

So the association was not founded directly by him as they say, now he is a fundamental part of the community, to this day. There are three ambulances donated by the businessman. People say: the businessman split the community, no! We were the ones who split the community [...] he took advantage of the split. (President of the Independent Association of Residents, 39 years old).

According to the current president of the new entity, its foundation took place even before the implementation of the RESEX, more precisely between the years 2004 and 2005. According to him, the association emerged as an alternative to enable resources for social projects, given the lack of support from the Residents' Association for the release of these funds.

Finally, the fourth and final element of internal conflicts refers to the growing speculative character on the part of external agents, interested in the natural beauty of the place and in the desire to acquire land in a community that is still little explored. This movement awakened in local residents the idea of profiting from the sale of land. However, when they were prevented from carrying out negotiations, given the restrictions imposed by the RESEX, discontent increased among residents who were already against the permanence of the Reserve.

This dissatisfaction was supported by a shared consensus on the part of the community: the belief that the families, at the time of the creation of the RESEX, would have the right to two portions of land - one intended for housing and the other for a point of commerce. This rule, which, according to them, had been created as part of an internal agreement of the community during the implementation of the RESEX, began to be demanded, contradictorily, precisely by the residents who expressed their opposition to the permanence of the village as a conservation unit. Thus, with the arrival of external agents interested in the acquisition of land, the residents wished to enjoy a right created, according to them, by the Reserve, which, however, compromised their very existence.

Without having the right of legal possession of the land or the authorization of ICMBio, some residents began to negotiate land in parallel at derisory prices, far below the value practiced in the coastal strips of the region. This scenario stimulated the accelerated growth of the speculative wave. As a result, there was a significant increase in the demarcation and fencing of land by residents. The old "story of the two points of land" lost meaning and control on the part of the Reserve, since the unbridled search for some pecuniary benefit led the natives not only to demarcate the lands on their own, in a disorderly way, but also to sell them at low cost, transforming the territory into a space disputed by whoever arrived first.

The most benefited from this behavior were the outsiders, who not only bought land at derisory prices, but also, in some cases, resold it to other external agents, for values significantly higher than the amount paid to the natives. As the native residents noticed the growing interest of outsiders in acquiring properties, the land gradually began to be more valued, although it remained below the estimated price for the other coastal strips in the region.

These four factors, therefore, caused and accentuated the internal split in the community, culminating in the formation of two distinct groups. On the one hand, the Association of Residents of Prainha do Canto Verde, which played a decisive role in resisting the initial threats and in the process of implementing the RESEX, recognized for its historical relevance and today popularly called "the old" or "old" association. On the other hand, the group of dissatisfied people, who, with the support of the aforementioned external agent, created the Independent Association of Residents, known as the "new" association, with the aim of articulating their demands and claims. Since then, this division has marked the community dynamics, which generates tensions and makes it difficult to build the consensus necessary for the participatory management of the Reserve.

It is important to record the main objectives defended by the group that opposes the RESEX, represented by the "Nova" Association. Understanding these goals is crucial to outline the motivations and foundations of criticism of the Reserve's environmental management policy, revealing the specific demands of this segment of the community.

The first objective of the "new" association is to ensure that residents obtain formal title to their land. This demand is based on the perception that legal land tenure is an essential step to ensure legal certainty and strengthen community autonomy. With the title in hand, residents would have greater stability and conditions to promote local development in a more sustainable and independent way. As the president of the Independent Association of Residents reports: "At the time we won from Henrique Jorge, they were supposed to have distributed the land titles of each resident and it was not done". (president of the Independent Association of Residents, 39 years old).

The second point is related to the demand that the Reserve become a more active instrument of public policies that directly benefit the community. The narrative of the "new" association suggests that, in the current model, the RESEX has imposed bureaucratic and structural barriers that hinder or make unfeasible initiatives that could promote local development. However, there is still a significant gap in relation to the concrete paths or

mechanisms for achieving these goals. There is no clarity about which strategies, resources or legal and legal instruments would be used to make the demands presented viable. This lack of definition reflects the absence of structured planning or effective strategic articulation, which reinforces the need for a more robust process of internal organization of the entity.

On the other hand, the "old" association sustains the narrative of the preservation of the RESEX, justifying its defense in environmental preservation and the sustainable development of the village, in addition to other aspects. A second point of conflict with the "new" association refers to the territorial scope of the RESEX. While the "ova" association argues that the scope of the RESEX's preservation rules should be restricted to the maritime area - and that, according to its members, this would have been the initial agreement for its implementation -, the "old" association and its adherents maintain that the original document always contemplated both the maritime and terrestrial areas. Let us see what the current president of the "old" association said:

The biggest banner of the residents' association was the land, the sea was something we were already discussing, the sea we were already working on the fishing agreements and everything, but the focus was never on the sea, all life was the land, so we were never going to ask for a RESEX just for the sea, we were going to ask for the land, The land was the main one, the land was the main one. You can imagine, why would we ask for a RESEX only by sea, if our main purpose of Prainha was the struggle of the land. This was distorted because the businessman realized that he was going to lose possession of it. The purpose of the new association was not to question the land issue, it was the businessman who created it because it would affect his territory, he who creates the new association. There was an intention behind it, that a part of the residents were "used". Today they are seeing that they are losing, because the big invasion of Prainha that is happening, the big culprit was the new association and the businessman, who divided the community, and it was not easy to maintain and to this day as we are maintaining. So it was made with the intention of defending the businessman (President of the old Association. 46 years old)

Also according to the president of the "old" association, they are not opposed, in principle, to the creation of new associations in the community. The central point of the clash lies in the fact that this new entity proposes measures that, according to him, disrespect the socio-cultural dynamics of the community and the fundamental principles that govern an Extractive Reserve. Therefore, with regard to the objectives of this perspective, the members of the "old" association and their supporters defend the preservation of the RESEX in its initial form, believing that, little by little, the norms concerning its full implementation will be fully implemented by the responsible bodies. This perspective includes the belief that vacationers

who have arrived in the community will be gradually expelled, re-establishing local control over the lands.

In the midst of the disputes between these two sides, we perceive a point at which the residents converge. This aspect concerns the bureaucracy imposed on residents to obtain essential services (such as a point of light), understood as something resulting from the specific norms that configure a RESEX and which, so far, have not been properly regulated. This contributes to the dissatisfaction of residents, especially those who are against their permanence.

I am against the Resex because of this impact it has, which prohibits native people from making a reform, increasing something, you have to ask them for permission. My revolt is more because of this energy business, which we want to put energy into but can't, it's embargoed. If you have a light to put on, if you call Enel, tell ICMBio to ask for authorization. Then because of this whole thing I get disgusted, I'm not going to support something like this that I see is not right. (1st secretary of Associação Nova, 55 years old)

Residents who are supporters of the "old" association, who support the RESEX, are also impacted by this process and express their dissatisfaction, as expressed by one resident:

I support the idea of the extractive reserve for all that it represents: environmental protection, appreciation of traditional communities and a sustainable life model. However, it is difficult not to feel deeply unhappy with the bureaucracy and the delay in having access to something as basic as electricity. Even living in a place where preservation is a priority, you can't ignore the impact that the lack of structure has on people's lives. (Native, 26 years old)

Despite the access to the testimonies recorded here, the scenario of conflicts and narratives around the RESEX is still difficult to understand. As previously exposed, the lack of clarity reflects the multiplicity of existing interpretations and perspectives, with each group constructing narratives according to its own interests and experiences. The fact is that internal conflicts and the absence of effective articulation keep the community in a state of uncertainty, which needs to be overcome so that residents can not only preserve their identity, but also build a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.

#### 4.3 THE DIRECTION OF THE EXTRACTIVE RESERVE: NAVIGATING IS NECESSARY, STAYING IS A CHALLENGE

The impasse in Prainha do Canto Verde is so deep that the community finds itself in constant dependence on jurisprudence, with legal disputes that shape the local dynamics. The current situation is characterized by a true "war of lawsuits", marked by legal clashes between the two groups and by the continuous questioning, by the community, of the actions of ICMBio. This occurs especially when the agency prevents or hinders local residents from accessing new points of light as a reprisal for the improper sale of land to external agents.

In this context, it is questioned about the role that ICMBio, as a federal agency and potential mediator of conflicts, has played in the community. In some episodes, the institution has acted contrary to this role, being perceived not as an agent of mediation, but rather as an institution that adopts an intimidating and sometimes repressive posture, a fact that further aggravates polarization and conflict in the region. There are reports, especially from the dissident group linked to the New Association, that the agency engages in arbitrary and authoritarian behavior when, for example, it confiscates the construction tools of local residents who work as bricklayers in the homes of external agents and imposes fines on them for the alleged illegal work activity against the RESEX. It should be noted that the activity of bricklayer, which most of the residents learned to develop in parallel with fishing, became, according to the testimony of the natives themselves, the second main income or the complementary income of the community.

It is understood that the primary function of the agency is the management, inspection and control of preservation areas. However, considering the specific context of Prainha do Canto Verde, where speculation is already a consolidated reality and there is no viable solution in sight, it becomes pertinent to adopt a more dialogical stance. In this sense, it is suggested that the entity assume a mediator role, promoting debate between the parties involved and seeking alternatives that minimize socio-environmental conflicts while a definitive solution is not established, which may require more incisive measures.

Another aspect to be considered, still in relation to the local source of income of the community, and which makes the situation of the RESEX even more delicate, concerns the job opportunities brought about by the growing presence of outsiders in the community. Although these opportunities are not enough to guarantee local socioeconomic stability, the increase in commerce (small supermarkets, restaurants, sale of handicrafts) and the hiring of local labor (in domestic activities and gardening) today represent a source of income for



residents in the face of the scarcity of other economic activities in the region. Even people who are favorable to environmental policy and maintain greater proximity to the "Old" Association, also act as bricklayers, in commerce and in other activities linked to the new local dynamics, which makes the RESEX scenario even more complex.

It is also worth highlighting the changes in the life expectancy of the new generation of local residents, who, for the most part, do not identify with the profession of fisherman, due to the harsh working conditions that the activity demands, and do not necessarily want to follow the fishing tradition. Expanded access to education has provided many fishermen's children with the completion of high school and, in some cases, entry into higher education. This scenario has generated new professional perspectives and changed the socioeconomic dynamics of the community, directly impacting the continuity of traditional fishing practices.

In the midst of this scenario, in 2024, the Management Plan for the Prainha do Canto Verde Extractive Reserve (RESEX) was approved, through ICMBio Ordinance No. 554, of February 22, 2024. This action, which also had the active participation of the "Nova" Association, presents itself as a possible point of convergence between the divergent interests. The Management Plan is a fundamental instrument to ensure the sustainable management of the territory and the maintenance of the ways of life of traditional populations. However, the question arises as to to what extent it will be effective and whether it can really act as a catalyst to unite the divergent parties for the sake of community preservation and development.

Although the Management Plan suggests the possibility of a new horizon for the RESEX, the persistent impasse, marked by the absence of dialogue and a mediating agent, raises questions about its real effectiveness in overcoming this conflict, especially with regard to two points: 1. To what extent will the community be able to **appropriate** this instrument as a **protagonist** in the search for solutions? 2. Will the Management Plan be sufficient to reverse the situation of impasse and promote a collective understanding? Such questions offer opportunities for future research, allowing a more in-depth analysis of the developments and impacts of the Plan.

## 5 CONCLUSION

It is important to note that an Extractive Reserve aims not only to protect the territory, but also to ensure the cultural continuity and way of life of a traditional community. It should be noted, however, that culture is not static, especially when inserted in a context close to

urban areas, where external influences are constant and social and economic transformations occur in a natural and accelerated way. In this sense, the community itself is undergoing changes, driven by new demands, aspirations and expectations, especially among the younger generations.

Given this scenario, it is necessary to ask: what does it mean, in fact, to preserve? Preservation cannot be understood as the freezing of a culture in time, preventing its evolution according to the needs and desires of its members. On the contrary, preservation must be understood as the dynamic continuity of cultural identity, collective memory and the well-being of the community, maintaining a constant dialogue with social and economic transformations. This includes the incorporation of contemporary elements and respect for the expectations of the new generations, who often do not see fishing activity as the main source of income, seeking other job opportunities and ways of life.

This debate leads to reflection on the strategic role of ICMBio as manager of the RESEX. Considering the specific context experienced by the community, the hypothesis is raised that the agency, in addition to its role as an inspector of environmental standards, may be able to assume an expanded role as a cultural mediator, facilitator of dialogue and articulator of public policies that promote the socioeconomic sustainability of the community. This would include fostering spaces for negotiation and clarification, enabling an environment of constructive conversations that contemplate both environmental preservation and the economic and social needs of residents.

By articulating cultural preservation with sustainable development, ICMBio will be contributing to the construction of inclusive solutions adapted to the current demands of the community. If these points continue to be neglected, the impasse will tend to perpetuate itself, which will compromise the effectiveness of the preservation policy and the well-being of the local community. Thus, it becomes essential to promote a continuous and participatory dialogue, which allows the community to be a protagonist in the construction of its future, ensuring not only the preservation of its territory, but also the continuity of its cultural identity in constant transformation.

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