

Environment and health of working women: transformations in a community in the Brazilian Amazon¹

Ambiente e saúde da mulher trabalhadora: transformações numa comunidade da Amazônia Brasileira

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Abstract

The text results from the survey in the Novo Remanso community and in the Engenho Village located at the mouth of Preto da Eva River, tributary of the Amazonas River, in the Amazon, between 2011 to 2014 and emphasizes the analysis of environmental relationships, work, women and health in a place where they intertwine to complement the urban and the rural ways of an Amazonian community. The survey was constructed from fieldwork interviews and work in groups and reports the initial process of organization that gave rise to the Base Ecclesial Community movement, belonging to the Catholic Church, leading to the Sagrado Coração de Jesus Community. The community grew through the organization of farmers and in 1993 started the Farmers in Action movement, and then the formation of Associação Comunitária dos Trabalhadores Rurais do Paraná da Eva (ASCOPE), the first association of rural workers of the Amazon to be transformed into a cooperative and to get credit for growing agroindustry regional fruits. This process was the transformation of labor, especially women, who besides being housewives, are now working in agriculture and agribusiness and as political agents. They are different ways of working in an Amazonian environment linked to land, water and forest configuring the work, environment and health relationship with change and permanence in the lives of working women.

Keywords: Amazon; Women's Work; Environment and Health.

Resumo

O texto resulta da pesquisa realizada na comunidade do Novo Remanso e na Vila do Engenho, localizadas na foz do Rio Preto da Eva, afluyente do Rio Amazonas, município de Itacoatiara, no Amazonas, no período de 2011 a 2014, e dá ênfase à análise das relações entre ambiente, trabalho da mulher e saúde num lugar em que se entrelaçam de modo complementar o urbano e o rural numa comunidade amazônica. A pesquisa foi construída a partir de trabalho de campo, com entrevistas e trabalhos em grupos, e relata o processo inicial de organização que se originou do movimento da Comunidade Eclesial de Base da Igreja Católica, dando origem à Comunidade Sagrado Coração de Jesus. A comunidade cresceu por meio da organização dos agricultores, dando início, em 1993, ao movimento de Lavradores em Ação, e em seguida à formação da organização comunitária dos Trabalhadores Rurais do Paraná da Eva (ASCOPE), a primeira associação de trabalhadores rurais do Amazonas a ser transformada em cooperativa e a obter crédito para a criação da agroindústria de processamento de frutas regionais. Neste processo ocorreram transformações do trabalho, em especial da mulher, que além de dona de casa, passa a ser trabalhadora na agricultura e agroindústria e agente política. São diferentes formas de trabalho num ambiente amazônico ligado à terra, água e floresta, que configuram a relação entre ambiente e saúde, com transformações e permanências na vida da mulher trabalhadora.

Palavras-chave: Amazônia; Trabalho da Mulher; Ambiente e Saúde.

Introduction

The research that gave rise to this text is based on the categories of work, health, environment and daily life. It adopts the notion of women's health as a dynamic model, taking into account the resources and forms made use of by the women, bearing in mind the relationship between work and the conditions to which they are subject (Brito, 1999). A qualitative analysis is developed through investigation focused on understanding the work and its relationship with health in a rural environment, based on actions and reactions produced in day-to-day life in the workplace, in agriculture, where rural workers plant, cultivate and harvest as casual labor, in agribusiness, where they produce fruit pulp, in their domestic life and political activities. In order to understand this process, we met with a group of women associated with Grumascop (Ascope women's Groups) in workshops, providing a space to talk, focusing on work and social dimensions, with specific questions about the women's routines in the community and their different types of work.

At first glance, the pace in which the research was conducted is characterized by a landscape ranging from the rural to the urban, although the view of the rural area as the exclusive locus of agricultural activities and the urban area as the place linked to industry and service activities. The rural area takes on new configurations, affirming the technical process by dematerializing labor processes, with multiple and complex ways of working, and the urban contains actions and processes which are eminently rural. Thus, there is no separation of rural and urban, as they overlap, at the same time as they separate, they complement each other, and when they are fragmented they are articulated.

By viewing the space as both fragmented and articulated, the study sought to construct the subject psychologically, as regards social determinants of work and health. As part of this process, the working woman is an integral element of society and constructs her own meaning of health based on her experiences and representations. Thus, the above mentioned understanding of work and working women's health has a privileged place in discussions of the rural and the urban in the Amazon, articulating the environment, work and health in communi-

ties in which workers reside and produce in order to live, or simply to exist. To this end, this article is divided into the following parts: presentation of the methodology; social-spatial context and the relationships inserted therein; women's work and health problems; and final considerations.

Methodological stages

The starting point was understanding workers' health as multiple possibilities and mosaics of diverse knowledge, seeking to intervene in relationships between work, health-disease and the environment. In order to do this, inter-disciplinary support is needed, permeating and supporting discussions aiming for theoretical consistency. In this aspect, the workers' experience and knowledge directs the form in which falling ill is interpreted, enabling the work and health binomial to be understood in the specific reality of female rural workers in the Amazon.

In order to understand the women's work and forms of participation the instrument of analyses started from workers' health, which incorporates subjective and intersubjective elements. It deals with qualitative issues concerning the health of workers in the Amazon, emphasizing the meaning of the activities, including the work itself and its place as a product of daily life. In order to do this, the work psycho-dynamic is presented as a theoretical category guiding both the debate and the interpretations of the data from the research, seeking to capture the contradictions and dynamics involving intersubjective relationships: subject, work, social and cultural aspects. The field research supported observation of the space produced, constituted of time that is spatialized. The *in loco* observation provided understanding of historically different forms, of work methods, processes and conditions, instituted in beliefs, values and attitudes, highlighted through the mediation of the socio-environmental aspects that permeate the analysis, considering that the population studied live in a rural Amazonian environment. Studying the subjectivity of the workers was, of necessity, research and action, involving subjects-women and their objectivity, not that of positivist epistemology, but rather that of

critical thinking. It was, therefore, developed based on qualitative approach assumptions, insertion in the historical and social context as a result of the workers' actions inserted in that particular culture. Moreover, the woman's reality was described based on the day-to-day working life, their meanings and signifiers, which assist in understanding aspects in which the subject-woman is social and historic.

First contact was made with the community in 2011, and the research was conducted systematically between 2012 and 2013, in the women's workplaces and their different activities. The universe of the study consisted of 12 women working in agribusiness in the Sagrado Coração de Jesus Community Rural Producers' Cooperative - Ascope; 23 involved in Grumacope who provided services to the community, such as managing the cooperative's primary materials and profits in products such as sweets and fruit pulp, as well as administering and executing events connected to community festivals or special events when their services were requested; and 12 women working as casual agricultural laborers.

Women included in the study were those working in different areas of rural work, residing in the Sagrado Coração de Jesus Community, aged between 18 and 65. Those excluded were women whose work was not associated with agriculture.

The starting point of the research were meetings with groups of Grumacope associated, providing a collective dialogue space with the focus on work and its dimensions in the group's history, such as issues specific to the women's routine in the community and their different types of work. To map these subjective experiences and record the history of organizing women in the community, semi-structured open interviews were conducted individually and specific collectives with groups leaders, in order to understand the history of Grumacope and its importance for the women and for the community and the different workplaces, types of organization and the health-disease relationship in the different stages of the female day-to-day life.

Next, there were meetings with agribusiness workers collectives, ensuring a public space for discourse. The meetings followed a semi structured script in order to systemize the researcher's view and to explore issues related to work organization and

processes, health and the environment, and finally, issues related to recognition given for the work.

In addition to agribusiness linked work, agricultural work, planting and harvesting, was also experienced. To do this, we conducted semi-structured and open interviews, which became collective due to the closeness of the group working together planting, harvesting and cultivating fruit and vegetables. The interviews were carried out in the work place itself, taking into consideration each woman's availability to participate, as they were paid daily for their work. Criteria for inclusion was being female and systematically working planting, that is, those included in the foreman's list. Issues concerning work organization in the field, health and recognition were observed more broadly.

The aim was to discover, recognize and analyze the different workplaces, forms of work, multiple activities included in daily life, actions conducted in public spaces, discussion on work, working conditions and female rural workers' health. Uncovering all of this gives rise to knowledge that can support public policies closer to the still peripheral reality that is rural workers' health, especially in regions like the Amazon.

Place as a rural and urban dimension

In the Amazon, especially in the area studied, the rural and the urban are superimposed concerning diverse realities, intersecting through the disorganized growth of cities in which the urban contains the rural in multiple aspects that cannot be separately understood, as they are not disparate but complementary.

In an *a priori* view, rural is countryside and urban is city, although this view should be relativized, as in the relationship marked out by constructing and articulating new forms of producing space in the Amazon, the countryside and the city should also be understood in a dialectic view, as each has specificities and similarities. Moreover, the countryside is not a synonym of rural, nor is the city merely the urban. Rural and urban express ways of life and values, and the countryside and the city correspond to the materialization of the values expressed in

ways of life. Therefore, urban values are present in the countryside, and rural values can be found in the city (Mondardo, 2008).

In a specific place in the Amazon, these social dimensions are spatialized and become concrete. This is the Sagrado Coração de Jesus Community, located to the east of Manaus, at kilometer 169 of highway AM-10, to Torquato Tapajós, connecting the state capital to the city of Itacoatiara, it being necessary to then drive another 25 kilometers to Novo Remanso, and a further 16 as far as Vila do Engenho.

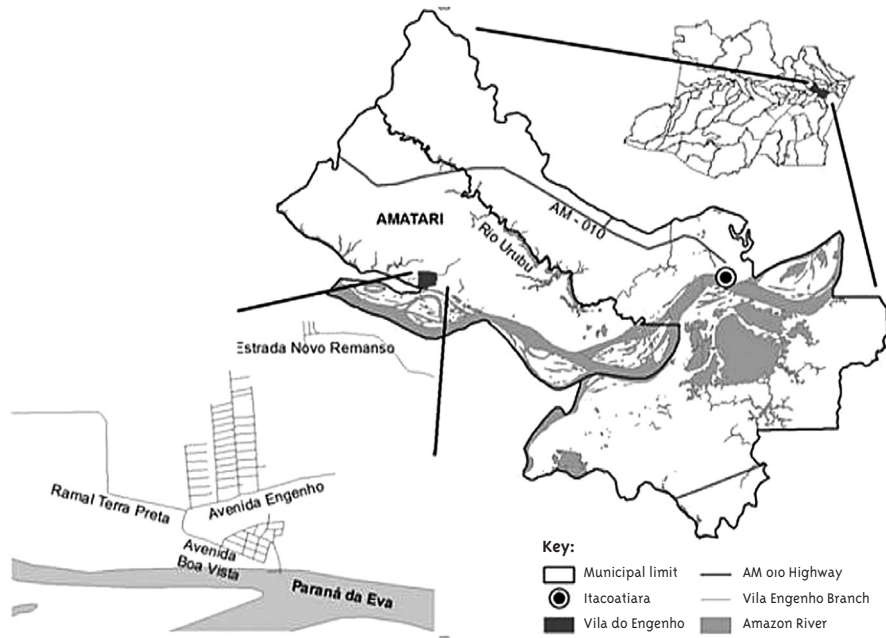
This place was first known as Bela vista, a riverside community situated in the Lago do Engenho, in the Paran da Eva, a branch of the Amazon River. Through the Catholic Church's influence, specifically that of the Prelature of Itacoatiara, it became the Sagrado Corao de Jesus Community in 1968. Two researchers, Jesus (2000) and Laray Jesus (2009), produced a history of the place, based on the family matrix formed by three groups united through family ties and religion, forming the pillars of their values and resulting in the formation of popular and political leadership from which the community has its origin.

The community was created and grew through the organization of agricultural workers and continued to grow stronger until, in 1993, it became the Movimento de Lavradores em Ao - Farmers' Action Movement, linked to the Paran da Eva Rural Workers' Community Organization - Ascope, constituting the first rural association in the state of Amazonas, including a line of collective funding, resulting in the creation of a Cooperative for agricultural production and commercialization and for agribusiness.

Part of the Cooperative's income, from large-scale cupuau fruit production in the 1990s, went into creating the Community Canteen in 1996, where food, school articles, clothing cosmetics and other materials are sold. This action was a way for the cooperative members to have access to products at fair prices, avoiding the need to buy them through trade still practiced in the Amazon, especially by river merchants.

The organization created by the residents reflects the dimension proposed by Baumam (2003), in which no group of humans feels like a "community" unless there are shared biographies, "tightly woven"

Figure 1 - Location, Vila do Engenho



Source: FVS/SUSAM, 2014.

over a lengthy history and with the expectation of an even longer future of frequent and intense interaction and, in this sense, social relationships produce territories and representations. Currently [2013], Vila do Engenho is recognized as a social community by statute, it being the urban perimeter of the Sagrado Coração de Jesus Community in Novo Remanso. Moreover, the residents recognize the community as an important part of the place's history and of work organization. In 2013, when the field research ended, 837 families were living in the community, totaling 2,935 individuals. Of this total, 225 families, 860 individuals, lived in the Vila, corresponding to the urban area, and the majority made a living from family agriculture.²

Urbanization, and the urban issue, are part of the process of transformation this place has undergone, being among the effects and causes or reasons with concerns that indicate and accentuate a way of life which, while still being rural, can be defined as urban, as a social reality differentiating itself around them (Lefebvre, 1991).

In form, content and symbolic representation, the transformation from Sagrado Coração de Jesus Community to Vila do Engenho, is highly significant, as it has come to be an urban space, a place of business with exchange value prevailing over use value. The meaning of the Vila do Engenho gained relevance with time and space coming to be regulated by activities that were revalued and included in the "kingdom of the market". In this complex movement of transformations, both the social relationships of experience in the division of labor and the multiple dimensions of life, the tendency in the Vila is modernization in and of space, with mechanization and specialization in the production.

The economic transformations in the Sagrado Coração de Jesus Community show the rural/urban overlap, based on a way of life in which residents produce a centrality, the Vila do Engenho, as a space for business, containing agribusiness, commerce and the cooperative, articulated with a contiguous area in which agricultural activities of cultivating fruit and vegetables take place. This can be seen in

² Population data were obtained from IDAM/Novo Remanso data and from the Community President. The data were collated and systemized based on the Fundação de Vigilância em Saúde - FVS/AM spreadsheet.

one of the resident's statements: "[...] *when we talk about Vila do Engenho it is to draw attention to the product we deal in and to do business, have more opportunities, as that is where the business is*".

This process is not free from contradictions or conflict. Some economic and cultural transformations can be noted in the Vila do Engenho and their effects have resulted in changes within a ten-year period. The group's survival formerly depended on collective work and support, today they seek to maintain these customs, but the advance in work relationships impose other ways of life and the long-established customs of the rural community have been gradually replaced. This replacement, however, is not entire, as there are frameworks that remain. This point will be developed in the next item, analyzing the women's work.

Women's work and health

Describing and analyzing women's work means recognizing it as a health/disease determinant of agricultural workers, making objective and subjective processes visible in the women's workplaces, the home, the plantations, agribusiness and in casual labor planting and harvesting, revealing the issues specific to each specific place. It was possible to identify a specific reality for each workplace, through statements, expressions, gestures, in other words, experiences of the multiple dimensions unique to that place.

Systematizing the study of women's workplace and day-to-day organization in Vila do Engenho mean recording the work process in organization in each place, through the statements from which the narratives of experiences were woven, revealing the health conditions of the female rural worker.

Three workplaces were analyzed, grouped into two types: 1) Ascope workers who carried out two activities, that of agribusiness worker and of Grumascop - the Ascope Women's Group; 2) casual labor planting and harvesting. Transversal to these, interconnecting with all types of work, are household chores, commonly called domestic work, working on the family plantation, characterized as assistance, and political action. All are links in the same chain, but with multiple tasks.

The female workers linked to Ascope carry out different, complementary activities. In agribusiness, the women work in all parts of the fruit processing process, especially pineapple and cupuaçu, producing fruit pulp. Two forms of contracting were identified in this work: women who are paid a salary and casual laborers hired for specific periods, basically at the height of the harvest. Of the 12 women interviewed, 11 were casual laborers, only one had a monthly contract. A contrasting relationship was observed, as they were the wives, daughters or nieces of the cooperative members, there was a desire to contribute to the cooperative. Of all the workers interviewed, only three were not related to cooperative members.

For the women who were connected to the cooperative, the work space symbolized their contribution to the cooperative, to which they were grateful for the chance to work. The statement of one worker showed the value placed on the workplace: "*We need to value this factory more, it provides work for us women, we don't have to stay out in the hot sun. Let's value it, let's take part, let's dedicate ourselves to it, I'm not just thinking of myself, half those here [...] this one's the daughter of a cooperative member, [...] that one's the wife of a member, that one there too. Let's understand this and value it, that's our job, to understand and value it*" (Statement by agribusiness worker). The statement shows work as an investment, a representation of the family and the group and valuing the place as a work collective.

In the Grumascop, the women produce jam, candies and crafts and organize events. More than a work group, it is a political action group, as its origin dates back to the history of the cooperative, the farmers' action movement, rural producers with a political trajectory, organization. Based on the Ascope precepts, their leadership began to be criticized at national and regional meetings for the lack of female participation in agricultural meetings. The issue of female participation, or lack thereof, in social movements resounded at every meeting. In this way, to meet external demand, Ascope created a women's group linked to the cooperative, mobilizing the wives of members to organize themselves to benefit the cooperative's production.

Within the ambit of work in Grumascop is pro-

cessing products from family agriculture, such as making fruit into jam and candies, and organizing events to divulge the products and bring the community together. It is in the work process that the women link their histories as rural workers making a living from what they produce in agriculture. Thus, the women's group seeks to organize itself based on production and on providing services to the community, generating income. To do this, work patterns, routines and criteria for admitting new members have been established.

Although effectively a workplace, the Grumscope functions as a reference for the women, as a meeting place, a place for decision making not only for the group as regards organization but also as a place of recognition. For this reason, it is a workplace and also a place for political action.

The other group was made up of women working as casual laborers in agricultural activities and in the Community plantations. With the expansion of areas under cultivation, there has been an increased demand for temporary labor to carry out activities such as pollination and harvesting, among others, which were already viewed as women's work, requiring care and delicacy handling the plants. They are workers on properties with extensive areas of cultivation, with different crops. The women's work process is concentrated on two branches of activity, pollinating passion fruit and harvesting peppers but, depending on demand, they may also have different activities with different crops, such as washing papaya or sowing and harvesting gherkin.

In general, there are two forms in which female workers are contracted. In the first, rural producers contract workers to complement family labor activities, either as casual labor or extra hands contracted at times of harvesting, planting or earth clearing. In the second, casual or salaried labor or extra hands are contracted more permanently as, although family members are available to work, they are not sufficient and it is necessary to contract labor in order to guarantee production.

The women who work pollinizing are the same ones who harvest the peppers, although those who work a "half day" and those who are paid for a "full day" are chosen. A full working day is only for those who are chosen based on criteria of agility, plant-

ing time, or based on the criteria of friendship with the woman organizing the work, a type of foreman chosen and directed by the owner of the plantation.

There is also, permeating the women's workplaces, work to be done in the home in the form of household chores and working on the family's plantation. When talking about household chores, the women identified them as tiring, tedious and routine, always the same thing, "and then it all has to be done again". Working outside the home is an opportunity to earn money, make friends and broaden horizons.

Some of the women suffered when making the choice to continue or to give up working outside of the home, as their husbands viewed it as work that could be dispensed with, depending on domestic obligations.

In addition to creating dissatisfaction, stress and overwork for the women on arriving home late, there is also the fear of losing the possibility of working. This is concealed, and even silenced, as it is their husbands who allow them to work, although he may restrict or even forbid them from working in the agribusiness, which would cause even more suffering, as the work symbolizes opportunities to gain self-esteem, as well as financial gain.

In addition to working and to domestic chores, they also have to "help out" on the family plantation, where the women work in the fields planting, cultivating and harvesting, as well as cooking for the other workers. "*We are rural workers, our agriculture is family-based and then we have to help out in the kitchen and in tidying the home*".

Work occupies a large part of the women's time and their stories, they deal with complex routines requiring physical and psychological willingness, as working women also have to run the home, as well as assisting their husbands on the plantation. These activities are often not shared, being done solely by the women and almost never recognized as work, rather seen as "helping out".

For Maia and Lopes (2001), the fact that the women's work is considered as helping out and thus does not appear in official statistics as productive work means they cannot be recognized as rural workers, therefore making it more difficult for them to access basic rights of health and welfare, paid

maternity leave or pension, guaranteed by law in the 1988 Constitution.

The Vila do Engenho has undergone a transformation in the productive process, as a reflex of work relations. Before a family member, now a boss, before a simple farmer, now the owner of production. Significant changes have occurred in a short period of time, with new production processes resulting in social and environmental transformations. This process, observed on the spot in this village, but it is could be happening in other places in the Amazon, not necessarily as the result of large-scale projects or big business, but in the way they are entering the world of commodities, in which relationships of use are replaced by relationships of exchange, and this has implications for the health of working women, suffering many health problems and illnesses through work without, however, this being perceived by the woman.

Health, work and falling ill has aspects that are inter-related, such as exposure to the sun and to pesticides, work-related accidents, overwork, anxiety and stress concerning new configurations of the world of work, as observed in Vila do Engenho.

Understanding health and illness means relating interlinked aspects in the women's workplace, in the Grumacope, in agribusiness and in the plantations, particularities concerning the work, understood by Carvalho and Moraes (2011) that work is central to human life and never neutral in relation to health. There are inter-subjective issues going beyond the visible in work processes and workplaces and involve social, historical, economic and cultural aspects in the daily life of the women in Vila do Engenho. But more objective issues can also be identified and related to the location at which the work takes place. There are the health problems most frequently mentioned in the workers statements.

The health problems mentioned by the workers are: overwork, pain in the upper and lower limbs and in the back, possibly triggering situations of Repetitive Strain Injury/ Work-related Musculoskeletal Diseases (RSI/WMSD), stress, exposure to solar radiation and to heat over long periods of time, exposure to noise which could trigger Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL), and possibility of chronic exposure to pesticides also stands out.

According to Silva et al. (2013), exposure to pesticides can cause health problems, especially "fertility problems, allergic reactions, harmful effects on the nervous system, mental and psychological disorders, respiratory, cardiovascular, genitourinary and gastrointestinal disorders, skin problems and eye problems".

As regards workplace accidents, although they were not mentioned, the workers are exposed to different degrees of injury from using manual tools. In agribusiness workers are exposed to electric cables and to handling machinery, and in the plantations the risk of accidents involving poisonous animals and pesticide poisoning.

Overwork from constant, intense work for female rural workers with multiple activities, both inside and outside the home was recognized by the workers in their various duties, both in Grumacope, and in Ascope and in the plantations. Complaints concerned the work environment and day-to-day work and could be aggravated and turned into illness when linked to the way in which the woman dealt with the work, home life pressures and taking care of all the tasks she was charged with. "The job is more for us who have to deal with it, we have to deal with a lot, home, deal with the sun and become like Acariquara trees" (*statement by female worker in the plantation area*).

By playing down the pain, keeping strong and holding on, comparing themselves to the thick-barked, dry and highly resistant trees used for beams supporting riverside homes in the Amazon, the women's statements express and explain the drudgery and overwork of daily life. They feel the need to justify themselves by working in their free time. Leisure is not mentioned in the women's statements, as free time is dedicated to domestic activities.

In the Grumacope, when the workers mentioned overwork they resented dividing responsibilities intrinsic to their day-to-day home life with tasks at the association. For them, in other words, the tasks at the Association enabled them to relax, gave them friendship, freedom and actualization through working in a group. The work appears as discharging the multiple domestic activities and, therefore, through this dynamic, Grumacope can

enhance health, by achieving self-esteem and confidence from guiding a group, reconciling different activities, aiming at goals and objectives to be met.

In the passion fruit plantations, when pollinating the flowers, pain in the arms, from being almost constantly outstretched, was mentioned, as was pain in the hands from the constant delicate movements to collect pollen from the plants. Another aspect is related to the need to walk between 100 and 200 meters several times along the rows of plants to pollinate them, and so pain in the legs from the hours spent standing was mentioned, as the work requires them to move from one row to another, causing heaviness and swelling in the legs.

When describing their work, the workers gave only a glimpse of the requirements of the activities and their consequences for health. However, when describing what they felt, they did not link this to the work. When reflecting and talking about the work, they mentioned health problems from a series of work activities and situations that placed health at risk.

When constructing a permanent picture of health problems, the workers recognized the pain and health problems related to the activities, although they characterized their activities as simple and light, showing the lack of clarity when associating them to the specific activity. In the case of the farmers, work conditions placed the workers face to face with risks specific to the work, as well as daily exposure to sun and rain, they were at risk of being bitten by poisonous animals, diverse types of accident as well as exposure to pesticides that could lead to increased morbidity and work-related illness rates.

Final considerations

In the universe of different tasks, the woman works and lives, interacting with the rural, Amazonian space, teacher, mother, companion, worker and political agent and in carrying out all of these roles she ends up producing spaces that could dilute the importance and the risks concerning her participation in performing productive activities. This fact is not exclusive to the interior of the Amazon, it can be seen in various parts of the world, as it is observed in

the spaces of rural communities, through the work, participation and responsibilities she takes on.

In order to understand how this process occurs in a specific place, such as the Amazon, it is necessary to understand that this is a region where transformation has been both rapid and slow, in a universe of paradoxes. In this context, the reality in the Vila do Engenho presents new configurations in the transition from rural to urban. The transformation of the Vila do Engenho by the Sagrado Coração de Jesus Community implied losing the dimension of sharing, systematically substituted by exchange based forms of work organization, relationships and processes.

Although specific, the health conditions of female workers in the Sagrado Coração de Jesus Community do not greatly differ from those found in other areas of Brazil, portrayed in diverse studies showing precarious conditions in which women live, not overcoming the obstacles that produce social, especially gender, inequalities. On the other hand, transformations have been found that lead to changes in material conditions and of women's role in political action.

The female rural workers working in places with a diversity of tasks in the Amazon, in this study constituting working in agribusiness, in Grumáscopo, in planting and harvesting as casual labor, in the home and on the family plantation, to sum up, in the activities of female rural workers, revealed dynamics that implied recognizing the process of change meaning that solidarity, companionship and resilience. As for the relationship between work and health, the research data enable us to infer that, based on the women's statements about falling ill and not being healthy, the majority do not establish a direct relationship between the working day and overwork. Thus, the invisibility of the disease and/or health produced in female rural workers is created and uncovers lack of recognition of their work linked to production in this specific area of the Brazilian Amazon, Vila do Engenho, linked to a broad reproduction of capital, and can lead to health problems because of the conditions imposed.

Female rural workers in the Comunidade Sagrado Coração de Jesus Community in the Paran  da Eva/Vila do Engenho are creating stories of resilience.

This process, mediated by the actions they undertake in the environment and expressed in the daily life of that place, produce life in all of its dimensions.

It is necessary to understand that in the Amazon the social indices are below the national average, with even greater inequality experienced in populations living in rural communities. In these places, it is more difficult to access health care for a variety of reasons that prevent higher levels of social justice being reached. However, it is important to point out that this imbalance is not produced by nature but by social process.

The work of the women in the community studied involved health issues related to gender, time of life and the environment, as well as exposure to factors that determine health problems, such as exposure to the sun and rain, to pesticide, overwork, double and triple working days and lack of equipment. The juxtaposed working days increase the degree of risk to which the women are exposed, as they could suffer accidents at home, on the plantation, in agribusiness and in the association, relativized by the women and identified as “light work”.

Despite all of this, there is some hope. The women initiated the process in which they seek new parameters in social, economic, political and cultural relationships in the community in which they live and have become protagonists in their stories through work and political action, especially in the Grumascop, which could also be a determining factor in health, as it could identify health problems stemming from inequality in the social division of labor and in other social relationships of production in this Amazonian community, Vila do Engenho.

Authors' contribution

Oliveira coordinated, guided, systemized and conducted the theoretical development. Nina conducted the field work research and tabulated and systemized the data.

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