Abstract: although the State of Santa Catarina is considered one of the most developed States of the federation, the territory of North Plateau in Santa Catarina stands out due to its alarming levels of social inequality, which is reflected in the incidence of poverty among its inhabitants. The objective of this article is to analyze the historical aspects that still influence the perpetuation of poverty in the North Plateau region of Santa Catarina, with due qualification that eventual comparisons may refer to other regions of the state. The approach exposes two perspectives of poverty and historically examines poverty in Brazil and in the Plateau region of Santa Catarina, focusing on public invisibility and the caboclo way of life, long since underlined by relationships of solidarity, coming from customs practiced by the residents of rural neighborhoods. It is evident that the historical process of the concentration of land ownership, mainly resulting from the use of foreign capital, which once deeply affected the caboclo way of life and contributed to the outbreak of ‘The Sertanejo movement of Contestado’ (1912-1916), still remains in force today in the territory of Santa Catarina’s Plateau. The consequences of this process consist in the domain of the means of production and while in the control of a wealthy generation, renders the obliteration of poverty unfeasible. Considerable challenges now exist in the elaboration and implementation of alternatives that foster regional development and the distribution of wealth in order to reduce poverty in the territory of the Northern Plateau of Santa Catarina.

Keywords: Poverty. Planalto Norte Catarinense. Regional Development.
pobreza entre seus habitantes. O objetivo deste artigo consiste em analisar os aspectos históricos que ainda hoje influenciam a perpetuação da pobreza no Planalto Norte Catarinense, com a devida ressalva que eventuais comparações se referem às demais regiões do estado. A abordagem expõe duas perspectivas da pobreza e examina historicamente a pobreza no Brasil e no planalto catarinense, enfocada a invisibilidade pública e o modo de vida caboclo, há muito pautado por relações solidárias, advindas de costumes praticados pelos moradores de bairros rurais. Depreende-se que o processo histórico de concentração da propriedade da terra, resultante, principalmente, da atuação do capital estrangeiro, que outrora afetou profundamente o modo de vida caboclo e contribuiu para a deflagração do movimento sertanejo do Contestado (1912-1916), ainda hoje permanece vigente no território do planalto catarinense. As consequências desse processo consistem no domínio dos meios de produção e no controle da geração da riqueza, inviabilizado a obliteração da pobreza. Ingentes desafios recaem na atualidade, visando a elaboração e implementação de alternativas que propiciem o desenvolvimento regional e a distribuição da riqueza, com intuito de reduzir a pobreza no território do planalto norte catarinense.


ASPECTOS HISTÓRICOS QUE INFLUIENCIAM LA PERPETUACIÓN DE LA POBREZA EN EL PLANALTO NORTE CATARINENSE

Resumen: aunque el estado de Santa Catarina es considerado uno de los entes más desarrollados de la federación, el territorio del Planalto Norte Catarinense se destaca por los índices alarmantes de desigualdad social, lo que se traduce por la incidencia de la pobreza entre sus habitantes. El objetivo de este artículo consiste en analizar los aspectos históricos que aún hoy influencian la perpetuación de la pobreza en el Planalto Norte Catarinense, con la debida resalva que eventuales comparaciones se refieren a las demás regiones del estado. El abordaje expone dos perspectivas de la pobreza y examina historicamente la pobreza en Brasil y en la meseta catarinense, enfocada a la invisibilidad pública y al modo de vida caboclo, desde hace mucho pautado por relaciones solidarias, provenientes de costumbres practicadas por los moradores de barrios rurales. Se desprende que el proceso histórico de concentración de la propiedad de la tierra, resultante, principalmente, de la actuación del capital extranjero, que otrora afectó profundamente el modo de vida caboclo y contribuyó a la deflagración del movimiento campesino del Contestado (1912-1916), aún hoy permanece vigente en el territorio de la meseta catarinense. Las consecuencias de este proceso consisten en el dominio de los medios de producción y en el control de la generación de la riqueza, inviabilizando la obliteración de la pobreza. En la actualidad, los desafíos pendientes en la actualidad, con vistas a la elaboración e implementación de alternativas que propicien el desarrollo regional y la distribución de la riqueza, con el fin de reducir la pobreza en el territorio del altiplano norte catarinense


It is plausible to say that poverty results from the joint action of multiple factors, arising from social, political and economic aspects. Poverty unveils itself as the nefarious and universal expression of social inequality. In this context, two burning questions become pertinent: the first is about identifying the causes of poverty; the second on the elaboration and implementation of alternatives to suppress it, or at least mitigate its consequences.

The purpose of this article is to explore the first issue, specifically within the territory of the Northern Plateau of Santa Catarina. As such, the text is oriented by a theoretical-methodological proposal consistent with the perspectives of English social history – especially the notions suggested by Thompson - that is, studies that opt for an analysis that values a “history from below”, which proposes that the poorest also demonstrate (al-
though this fact is often ignored or omitted) the development of an awareness of the social and political conditions of their marginalization. Thus, the poor are conceived as agents of their own lives, capable of decision and action, even if the ruling classes invariably try to control them, by disqualification of the discourse and actions of the lower class. It is important to emphasize that the perspective proposed by English social history exposes the pressing need to develop a “history from above” in order to complement the “history from below”, thus avoiding the neglect of a perspective that values an integrated relationship, or in other words, the lower classes and the ruling classes need to be perceived in their mutual relations and with the State (THOMAS, 1984).

THE MAP AND THE TRAVELER

In addressing the problem of poverty, it’s necessary to reflect, among other issues, on the origin of this condition. Supposing a traveler was to depart in search of this answer, there would be two possible paths. The first one, dotted with comforts, opportunities, shortcuts, pampering, pleasures, second chances, among other merits, finishes by bringing the traveler to a universe in which the poor - all of them - are solely responsible for the condition in which they find themselves. In this cosmos, constructed from the multiple and elementary deprivations never experienced and therefore misunderstood by the traveler, the poor are perceived as lacking in determination, will power and entrepreneurial spirit, the attributes considered sufficient to overcome their condition. Thus, the hypothetical traveler concludes that the poor remain satisfied in this condition, to the point of not seeking to overcome it, resulting in the accommodation and perpetuation of poverty.

As a result, He will think that this group will depend on those who work and produce, resulting in the designing of the State and its public policies being aimed towards vulnerable populations. These 'alms' overwhelm the state, raising public expenditures and aggravating economic crises, he concludes. This perception is recurrent among those travelers who had access to the material resources, necessary for their physiological maintenance and for their intellectual development.

The second route available to the imaginary traveler, is marked by old and persistent places where shortage, deprivation and suffering reign. On the other hand, there is a continuous and untiring struggle, and there are myriad of sources of sensitivity, humanity and empathy, from which critical knowledge, political action and the search for equality and popular sovereignty emerge, where inequality and social injustice are unacceptable. This path leads the traveler to a very specific universe in which the identification and understanding of the causes of poverty are related to structural issues, which, are rapidly perceived by our traveler as being identical to those customarily found in capitalist society, namely: the exploitation unleashed by the owners on workers and, given their parasitic condition, the maintenance of power by elites both in relation to workers as well as public resources which invariably are more easily accessible to them.

ASPECTS OF POVERTY IN BRAZIL

In the case of Brazil, our poverty, in general, has color: it’s mulatto, black; and this immediately refers to the experience of slavery, a key institution for economic accumulation in Brazil for three hundred years. Slavery, based on the absolute expropriation of the slave person, engendered sentimental structures and standards of public morality incompatible with the demands of a decent society. (Walquiria Rego e Alessando Pinzani)
Although the understanding that all individuals are equal in rights and duties has prevailed in many nations of the European continent since the nineteenth century, in Brazil, society has continued to perceive slavery as an indispensable and irrevocable resource. The legacy of this historical process, marked by the maintenance of slavery for more than three centuries, has resulted in the understanding - still very much present in our cultural framework - that human poverty and misery are natural and inevitable (SCHWARTZMAN, 2004).

At the end of the period of slavery and the beginning of the period of the Brazilian Republic, the national population consisted of a small white elite, the former slave system operators, and a multitude of freed slaves, descendants of impoverished Indians and whites, and of miserable immigrants that arrived from Europe. However, the difference between the black and the poor white (which is so evident today) already had perceptible contours. The Brazilian State subsidized the arrival of immigrants and invested in the preservation of the lives of the newly arrived Europeans, for example, by combating the yellow fever epidemics that decimated those individuals, devoid of immune resilience. In contrast, blacks (even after their liberation) were systematically decimated by other epidemics, such as tuberculosis, which was not the subject of any public policy (CHALHOUB, 1996). It can be seen that after gaining freedom, the Afro-descendant population was not included in actions of the State, neither through education, work nor social assistance. On the contrary, the aim was not to prevent as many blacks as possible from perishing, which, according to the racist theories of the time, would promote the cleansing of the race and, consequently, would enable Brazil to become a developed nation.

This cynical and cruel stance, perpetrated by the state and by the elites at the end of the nineteenth century, fostered a situation of profound inequality, social exclusion and poverty, which continued through the following decades and subsequent centuries. Among the consequences of this process was the public invisibility of non-white individuals. That is, the members of these groups disappeared in the midst of the population, they were annulled.

Public invisibility, intersubjective disappearance of a man among other men, is a poignant expression of two psychosocial phenomena that take on a chronic character in capitalist societies: Social humiliation and Objectification [...]. Social humiliation presents itself as a historical phenomenon, built over many centuries, and a determinant of the daily life of the poor. It is an expression of a political inequality, indicating intersubjective exclusion of an entire class of men from the public sphere [...]. Objectification is a process whereby, in industrial societies, the value (whatever it may be: people, inter-human relations, objectives, institutions) presents itself to the consciousness of men as a value of exchange: everything starts to count, first and foremost as a commodity (COSTA, 2004, p. 63-4).

Social humiliation, the commodification of human actions and, consequently, the public invisibility of significant sectors of national society, has been perpetuated over the centuries in Brazilian territory.

In the south of the country, the process was not any different. The states of that region were marked by the construction of a narrative in which the European immigrant, supposedly imbued with 'natural' attributes, such as an entrepreneurial spirit, the vocation to work and the quest for autonomy, became responsible for the progress and development of the entire region. The national population, as usual, was rendered invisible.

In Santa Catarina, some groups were persecuted, excluded, marginalized, or even exterminated, simply because they did not fit the previously established model. Initially, the natives were considered as obstacles to the advance of the Europeanized white society.
As a result, they were persecuted and systematically obliterated. Subsequently, something similar occurred with the national peasant populations which began to face a process of exclusion and marginalization.

In the Northern Plateau of Santa Catarina, the unbridled search for immigrants, aimed at colonization was based on the assumption that the territory consisted of a demographic void, which needed to be occupied as rapidly as possible. This process took place to the detriment of the national Cabocla population, and was consolidated as from the Republican period, when a new modernization project was established based on racist principles of cleansing and Europeanization, excluding those groups not identified as whites. Thus, “progress” had a violent impact on the way of life of the Cabocla population, composed of individuals who did not have the characteristics desired by the State and by the Brazilian elites.

As a definition, the caboclo of the Santa Catarina plateau could be considered as:

[...] the poor inhabitant of the countryside. Although there is no ethnic connotation in this word, the caboclo was frequently ‘mixed race’, often ‘black’. But the main characteristic of this word is that it distinguishes between a social and cultural condition, that is, caboclos are poor men, small peasant farmers and squatters, aggregates or travelers that live in an economy based on subsistence and who are devotees of Saint John Mary (MACHADO, 2004, p. 48).

Notwithstanding this definition of the caboclo from the socio-cultural characteristics of their lifestyle, the members of this group could be characterized as not belonging to white ethnicity, a fact that, in itself, in a society with indelible traces of slavery, turned them into undesirables, relegating them to social humiliation. In addition, the cabocla population, for the most part, did not perform productive activities with economic objectives. In the plateau of Santa Catarina, a significant portion of the cabocla population developed agro-pastoral activities exclusively for the purpose of subsistence, the more notable among such activities being the cabocla garden and communal animal husbandry (TOMPOROSKI, 2015), practices that compose a way of life based on the exploitation of the bare necessities. This characteristic made them a target of the second element of social invisibility: Objectification. The cabocla population of the Santa Catarina plateau, and, in general, the Brazilian national population, were perceived as idle and lazy, devoid of an entrepreneurial spirit and of the love of work.

THE POOR OF THE SANTA CATARINA PLATEAU

The way of life of the poor population of the Santa Catarina Plateau depended mainly on the grabbing of land. In his possession, the caboclo built his ranch with his own hands and with the wood of the land. At the bottom was a small garden (VINHAS DE QUEIROZ, 1966), with various crops which assured him a certain amount of food practically all the year round. At the same time, He maintained some species of fruit trees which, together with the winter pine nut tree, supplemented his diet. In addition, He raised a few small animals - chickens and pigs - plus some pet dogs to help with the hunt. He kept a weapon, where possible a Winchester rifle, necessary for abundant hunting and for the protection of his possessions, his honor, and his life. As of the month of June he began to make ‘erva’, that is, to collect the ‘erva mate’ grass of the available native herbs. Both the little left over from their fields and the extracted ‘erva mate’ grass were destined for small commerce - through the means of exchange - with the local winemakers or with the drovers that plied the region. The goal was to acquire essential products: salt, to preserve the flesh; gunpowder to activate the rifle; kerosene to illuminate the ranch and rum to warm
the soul. Thus, the inhabitant of the region maintained a way of life that depended on agriculture, the breeding of animals and the exploitation of the woods. It should be noted that the cutting of the ‘erva mate’ grass and the collection of the pine nut (araucaaria seed), still mobilize the poorest people to this day, who sell these products in small quantities, in order to complement their income.

Of course, work was the essential element of the culture of the poor of the Santa Catarina Plateau. Growing the garden, cultivating the ‘erva mate’, logging, hunting, or fishing were activities that allowed the caboclos to survive and required expertise in the use of tools and weapons. These ideas were transmitted orally, and in that process, in these exchanges, other forms of knowledge were passed on: social experiences shared by the community, accepted and reprimanded practices, as well as the notions collectively legitimized by the members of the group. Such customs transmitted orally spread between generations. They were important in a wide region, far beyond the plateau of Santa Catarina, which we could define from the region of Prata to the interior of São Paulo, that is, covering an extensive territory.

In the interior parts of the Plateau of Santa Catarina, where the greater part of the population lived, the necessities of survival fostered practices that congregated many neighbors. These activities, which offered the possibility of mutual assistance, also contributed to the definition of the boundaries of that locality. It is plausible to consider that the occupation of the entire Santa Catarina Plateau resulted from the formation of what we can call rural neighborhoods (MELLO; SOUZA, 2001). The rural neighborhood consisted of a cluster of a few or many families, whose connection was not characterized solely by their proximity. The dwellings could be quite close together, as in a village, or so separated, that the observer would not be able to perceive that they comprised a single unit. There, small subsistence crops were interspersed with a pine forest and small houses. Therefore, the elements that brought these people together were related to social and cultural life. The inhabitants of the rural neighborhood built their bonds through coexistence, the need for mutual assistance for the heaviest and most urgent work, and through the sharing of both playful and religious moments (MELLO; SOUZA, p. 2001, 81).

In fact, those who were integrated into a particular rural neighborhood were those individuals who were summoned to come to the assistance of their neighbors’ activities, and so, when necessary, they too had the legitimacy to carry out such a summons. Activities of mutual assistance are common in different regions and eras, especially among the poorest sections of the population, who are obviously in greatest need of aid to ensure survival, which results in the consolidation of bonds of horizontal solidarity. Commonly called ‘mutirão’ [a mobilized task force], in the region of the plateau of Santa Catarina, the name applied was ‘pixirum’ or ‘pixuru’:

The work of mowing is usually done around June - which has the inconvenience of coinciding with the most appropriate time for cutting ‘erva mate’, however, It’s the best time to cut back the forest. As this is an overwhelming task for a single man, in the back-country of the Plateau as in other parts of Brazil, it is necessary to resort to the friendly and voluntary work of neighbors. The assembly here is called the ‘pixuru’: twenty or thirty men, animated by the spirit of cooperation, amongst humorous speech and song, happily throw down in one day, something akin to two bushels of wood (VINHAS DE QUEIROZ, 1966, p. 37).

The pixirum facilitated the execution of tasks such as building houses or sheds, which are virtually impossible for a single man to accomplish in a few days. However, the most common form was the summoning of the pixirum for mowing, for the clearing of land and for harvesting. However, pixirum was even required for practices not directly
related to work, such as the division of meat of slaughtered animals, or the socialization of wells and springs in the dry season.

These practices nourished bonds of trust and nurtured networks of cooperation, representing a fundamental resource for the individuals who exercised them, whose benefits were shared by all members of the group, strengthening their ties and relationships of solidarity. Such observed practices together could be called social capital (D'ARAÚJO, 2003).

The ability of people to cooperate, trust their neighbors, and establish horizontal ties of participation, demonstrates the value of this attribute in that society. However, voluntary cooperation, based on trust, is only possible in societies that live with rules of reciprocity, which encourages spontaneous cooperation. In the case of the pixirum, the act of summoning and being summoned meant having legitimacy within that community and the main element of that mechanism consisted in the principle of mutual obligation, that is to say, the neighbor who has benefited from the work of the members of the rural neighborhood should repay the favor by immediately attending a call when requested. The moral obligation to immediately respond to any summons for assistance, similarly for those who had previously been helped, determined the formation of a wide network of neighborhood relations, interconnecting the inhabitants of the rural neighborhood. This system fostered the development of a collective consciousness: All participants formed a single group, and its efficient functioning depended on the participation of all. The absence of any form of remuneration for the service reinforced non-economic values, solidifying the importance of solidarity collaboration. Moreover, in these forms of participation, each individual has a relatively equal degree of importance, which makes possible an increase in confidence and allows for future collaborations. In societies in where assistance is mutual, spontaneous collaboration and continuous cooperation are crucial factors for the subsistence of the poorest, their relations are governed by a moral contract that fosters synergy and facilitates the increase of positive results, because trust and enjoying the advantages of trust, produces more confidence. Trust in this context is “the expectation of reciprocity that people in a community, based on shared norms, have regarding the behavior of others. Those who feel and know that they can trust, receive more collaboration” (D'ARAÚJO, 2003, p. 33).

Therefore, in this vast and complex historical process pertinent to the territory of Santa Catarina Plateau, characterized by events that pervaded the daily life of the caboclo, such as the demonstrations of solidarity stimulated by ties of union and collectivity, with the exception being that they also gave rise to situations of conflict, we can identify future configurations of class. Of course, in this class, there is as much division as unity, characteristics which are not mutually exclusive. The customs and practices described were rooted in the life of the countryside and would present themselves as obstacles to the economic interests that were found in the incipient process of the institution in the territory of the Santa Catarina Plateau, resulting in particular, from the advancement of foreign capitalist forces (THOMPSON, 1998). Such practices and customs were considered rebellious, in other words, their protagonists reacted to the attacks and restrictions imposed on them, the outcome of which culminated in the outbreak of the “Sertanejo do Contestado” Movement (1912-1916).

THE CONTESTADO MOVEMENT AND THE FIGHT FOR RIGHTS

The progress of research on the movement of Contestado has made explicit, the anomaly and the diversity of motivations and objectives that varied according to the location of the disputed zone in which the uprising of the rebels and other social sec-
tors that joined the movement took place. However, it is possible to emphasize that the implications arising from the activity of foreign companies throughout the Contestado region were a decisive element in the outbreak of the conflict. That is, the local population claimed their rights and clearly demonstrated against whom and what, they were fighting: foreigners, capital and constituted authorities, thus explaining the profound rationality of the movement, which did not represent an odyssey of “fanatics” or “gun-men”, but the struggle of poor people for what they considered to be just and theirs by right. Based on the motivations of the members of the movement, we can attribute to the same, a character of social conflict, in which the targets of the rebellious insurgents show the intrinsic rationality of the movement: foreign capital; the political and the land domain of the colonels; the exclusion of the national population to the detriment of the settlement of foreigners; the injustice practiced by those who occupied the of the municipal, state and federal spheres of government. The poor resisted. The action of the cabocla population of the Santa Catarina Plateau demonstrated the existence of a rationality of its own, which was defined by its customs. Therefore, we understand that individuals of the lower classes can indeed manage to solve their problems and control their lives according to their own logic, which gives the poor the right to be agents of their own lives (THOMPSON, 1987).

POVERTY IN PLATEAU OF SANTA CATARINIA 'IN THE TIME OF NOW'

Te year 2016 marked the centenary of 'The Sertanejo Movement of Contestado’ (1912-1916). The commemoration of those events stimulated intellectuals, researchers, the academic community and, more broadly, society in general, to carefully reflect on the Contestado. At present, a concern remains about the continuation of serious social problems throughout the aforementioned territory. In the case of the Plateau of Northern Santa Catarina, high levels of poverty, agrarian conflict and social-ethnic exclusion all still exist.

Walter Benjamin, when reflecting on the concept of history, stated that “[...] the gift of awakening in the past, the sparks of hope are the exclusive privilege of the historian, convinced that even the dead will not be safe if the enemy wins. And this enemy does not stop winning” (BENJAMIN, 1987, p. 222).

The enemy indicated by Benjamin's in 1940 at the height of World War II was not the Nazis but the ruling classes and European historiography that took advantage of the field of history and turned it into a science concerned only with the great achievements of the elites. As for Benjamin, he urged the foundation of a new concept of history, which corresponded to the demands of the present time, the 'time of now'. Therefore, let us take Benjamin's orientation and ponder the time of now.

In the middle of the second decade of the XXI century, in the territory of North Plateau of Santa Catarina, the enemy pointed out by Benjamin takes other forms, such as: the excessive concentration of wealth by minority groups, as it has been for generations; the precariousness of the living and working conditions of urban and rural workers; the impediments to the organization and political action of the impoverished population of the Contestado region; the degradation of both material and intangible heritage, especially that associated with the memory of the traditional populations and their remnants; the process of concentration of land ownership by logging companies and the pulp industry, some of whom are foreign to Brazil, which monopolize access to land - as in the past - and disseminate exotic vegetable species, discouraging the continuity of activities on small property, ignoring the limits of environmental resources and...
socializing the debris resulting from their industrial production; the continuation of the
centenary-old process of exclusion and marginalization of the traditional populations -
Indigenous, Afro-descendants, Caboclos, in addition to the descendants of those who
were in the strongholds of the War of The Contestado\(^1\).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The scenario analyzed was - and remains - deeply influenced by the predominance
of a dominant class (economic and political), which controls the exploitation of natural
resources and the generation of wealth, making it impossible to implement a model that
reduces the social gulf that still prevails in the Contestado region.

A century later, the territory of Santa Catarina’s North Plateau continues to face
serious obstacles to its development. Several factors can be listed to explain their
causes, which in fact, have already been mentioned. However, a considerable part of
this conjunction is related to the historical legacy. As in the past, control of land by the
dominant classes and the process of concentration of land ownership, whether by large
landowners or by foreign companies in the pulp and paper sector, maintains the need for
continued reflection on land problems in the region. For example, farms with less than
50 (fifty) hectares currently make up 82.7% (eighty two point seven percent) of rural
properties, however, these small farms occupy only 28.6% (twenty-eight point six percent)
of the total area. On the other hand, those agricultural establishments with more than 500
(five hundred) hectares, represent only 1.2% (one point two per cent) of rural properties,
but occupy 32.2% (thirty two point two percent) of the territorial area, practically a third
of the total area (SOUZA, 2009).

This data indicates a serious process of concentration of land ownership in the
territory under analysis. Both large landowners as well as large multinational corporations
have extended their landholding by expanding the cultivation of grain crops (especially
soybeans) and forestry, the latter for paper and pulp production. In addition, ‘erva mate’,
historically a fundamental element for the subsistence of the socially more fragile sectors
of the region, has been commercially exploited by medium and large producers, which
dominate the sector. The consequence of this reality is the persistence of significant levels
of rural poverty, in the municipalities that endure this process.

Serious problems afflict the population of the Northern Plateau territory, to a
great extent resulting from historical processes that still have a permanent repercussion,
characterized, on the one hand, by the predominance of private interests to the detriment
of public needs and by the neglect of the State in relation to underlying tensions, social
injustice and the attack on the rights of the poorest population; and on the other hand, by
the history of resistance and struggle that profoundly affected the whole region.

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\(^1\) The Irani Charter - a document elaborated by researchers that studies the subject - points to the hundreds
of social problems faced by the poor population of the Contestado region and the need for state action
to address them.


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