

Who owns the rural space? Changes in the society/nature relationship and the emergence of the rural space public dimension^{1,21}

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ABSTRACT

An important change is currently taking place in the rural world, which is no longer seen just as private space, but as public. This results from changes verified in the relationship between society and nature. The subject matter of this paper is the analysis of such transformations and their effects over rural development policies in the rural area of the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba, State of Paraná, Brazil.

Keywords: Rural. Public space. Private space. Society. Nature.

1 Introduction

The Brazilian rural area, which was deemed by some sectors of society as a synonym of delay and problems, is changing its status, being now identified as a solution-bearer. As in other countries and more than ever in Brazil, a rural issue arises insistently. Unlike the view that was established during several decades about an “inevitable decline” of the rural space, currently, we see its “surprising rebirth”. Currently, the rural space experiences a multiplication of its “functions” before society, after four decades of being identified as a space to produce food,

generate borders and as a depository of potential workforce for urban and industrial development.

This change of perception about the country's rural world has an important implication that can be presented as follows: the rural space, previously deemed a "private space", where the production and reproduction of a certain social group was made, begins to be identified as a "public space", meeting multiple "functions", as preservation of the environment and landscape, tourism and recreation, preservation of the cultural heritage and maintenance of the social network. The recognition of these new "functions", which is the most original and significant element in the Brazilian rural issue nowadays, rekindled the debate on the subject and, this time, with elements way more complex than those involved in the debate on the Brazilian agriculture and rural development in the last century, resulting in the "modernization package" implemented from 1960 onward. Such news is a result from changes in the relationship between society and nature, significantly affecting other social demands regarding the agricultural and rural sector and presenting new implications to family agriculture, particularly that of the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba (RMC), which is the backdrop of the debate in this paper.

RMC is deemed by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2003), the region having the largest rural area among the country's metropolitan regions. It is a region located East of the State of Paraná, in the so called First Paranaense Plateau, presenting a strong geophysical and environmental heterogeneity where Serra do Mar, with a significantly preserved part of the Atlantic forest, Serra Geral and the araucaria forest stand out. It has a total area of 15.5 thousand square kilometers (2/3 of which are rural) and population of 2.7 million inhabitants, distributed in 26 municipalities. According to IBGE's Demographic Census data (2000), 91.2% of this population used to live in the urban region and 8.8% in the rural region. However, in several municipalities of the region, the rural population used to be higher than 70%. (SOUZA, 2006) There are approximately 30 thousand agribusiness establishments, of which 84% have less than 25 ha. The regional agricultural production, in addition to supply nearby urban centers, accounts for the majority of the olericulture production in the State of Paraná and for a significant production of fruits and poultry. (SOUZA, 2006)

Despite these figures that show the significance of the regional rural space, there is little research and material about it and public policies addressing the case are minor, which assigns it certain "invisibility" within the scope of metropolitan planning and policies. Despite this "invisibility" before the institutional eyes, which has an urban bias, it experiences problems similar to those in other rural spaces in the country and faces a series of impositions and demands resulting from a new perspective of the society as a whole.

The purpose of this work is to debate, from a practical/theoretical perspective, which are the main recent changes on the Brazilian society's view of rural spaces? What type of struggles they bring to public policies that affect the rural sector? How they affect the reproduction of the family agriculture? The ideas presented herein result from works of interdisciplinary researches carried out between 2002 and 2009, with a focus on family agriculture and the rural space of the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba. Supported by researchers from areas like Economy, Sociology, Biology, Agronomy and Geography, such researches involved several field insertions and interviews with managers, local leaders, representatives of boards and associations in municipalities of the region, in addition to hundreds of families

of farmers in rural communities of the municipalities of Mandirituba, São José dos Pinhais e Tijucas do Sul, all members of RMC. Although based on case studies and field researches and provided the limitations of this paper, we mainly address theoretical and practical issues, in general, instead of situations more specific to the case studies carried out. This is because we understand that this strategy can put the debate herein together with those that result from researches carried out in other regions of the country.

In order to meet its goal, this work is divided into four parts, including this introduction. In the second part, we highlight the main recent changes in the relationship society/nature and its consequences to the rural space. Further, we address what we call public dimension of the rural space versus some aspects observed in the metropolitan rural sector of Curitiba, highlighting the struggles, conflicts and solutions proposed thereto. Finally, we made the final considerations.

2 Theoretical contributions about the study of rural and preliminaries notes over the "metropolitan" rural

At first, it seems antagonistic to talk about a "metropolitan" rural, especially because a metropolitan region as the one in Curitiba is defined much more by the concentration of people and activities in the "urban".

To the contrary, the vision that supports this paper is that this look almost restricted to urban space derives largely from the relative "invisibility" that the rural space seems to have in planning instances and regional development policies. It is understood that in the RMC, like in other regions, it is possible to advance in the understanding in a sufficient way to apprehend and characterize it as a place (or places) in which the constituent elements of social dynamic are executed in an original form, independent if it is more or less integrated urban dynamic or even unrelated to it (if this is even it is possible). The apprehension of this metropolitan rural can be seen as part of the reconfiguration process and comprehension of the rural area in its several dimensions (economic, social, territorial, etc.) resulting especially from the process of modernization of the agriculture upon the 70's decade. This is because the modernization sent to the need of other approach ways, which could deal with the reality of the national rural world. These approaches, on its side, revealed the different levels of the transformations made by the modernization in the field and, especially, the heterogeneity of the forms of organization of the rural world.

It is the case of the theoretical contributions discussing the ruralities (WANDERLEY, 2000a, b, 2001; GIARRACA, 2001; BONNAL et al., 2004), the pluriactivity (SCHNEIDER, 2003) or the multifunctionality of the agriculture. (MOREDDU, 2003; HERVIEU, 2002; CARRON; TORRE, 2003; PERRIER-CORNET, 2002; CARNEIRO; MALUF, 2003; BONNAL et al., 2004; PINGAULT, 2004; SFER, 2003) All have being very important to give visibility and relocate the heterogenic rural universe of Brazil to the place where it belongs in the development theme. Studies involving these themes were multiplied from the 90's on and in the international scope, were inspired by the debates and negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and of the European and French realities. For the Brazilian case, even starting from different basis, also the works by Lamarche (1993, 1998); Ferreira and Brandenburg (1998); Veiga (2002), among others, equally represent advances in the comprehension of the complexity of the contemporary rural.

Even not focusing the rural in the context under examination herein – a metropolitan rural – the fact is that all pass over the idea that the new social demands impose a series of conflicts to the management of the rural space. In this regard, the debates about the multifunctionality of the agriculture (MFA) have large proximity with the content of the analyses made in this paper. For example, (a) need of production versus seek to preserve the environment or (b) seek to preserve the environment in rural spaces versus the exploration of them by tourism and leisure activities, which represent the core of ideas developed herein, are also focused by MFA.

Situations like the above are far from being properly treated by the regional development policies, especially when dealing with metropolitan areas. In these terms, the use of the words "metropolitan rural" in this paper, when referring to the particular reality of the rural of the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba, fulfills a dual purpose.

First, it restates the heterogenic nature of the Brazilian rural world, which for the case in study is expressed, roughly, as a "metropolitan rural" and, therefore, it is different from the other forms of rural expression in the country. There are no elements herein to assert the existence of a "metropolitan rural" which also would be established in other metropolitan areas or surrounding areas of another big urban centers of the country. However, it is possible to say that the "metropolitan rural" of Curitiba preserves the characteristics that characterize the rural world in general, which makes it so "rural" as any other rural space from "rural" regions.

Second, it defines its position of "rural" in relation to the urban, take it out from its alleged "invisibility". In the expression "metropolitan rural", the first and not the second should be emphasized. In other words, the "rural" is the central category of analysis while the "metropolitan" is the adjective, the supplement which makes the rural different in the list of many forms of expression of the Brazilian rural.

In this regard, not the typologies of the family agriculture as Lamarche (1998), or that of the municipalities and rural regions from Veiga (2002) or the definitions of urban and rural from IBGE are used. To the contrary, we seek to centralize the rural in study in another way – as "metropolitan rural" – to preserve its relevance in the context of the study of the development processes of the metropolitan region.

Note that the adjective used is not incompatible with the theoretical approaches abovementioned (new ruralities, pluriactivity or multifunctionality of the agriculture) and it does not intend to. But, the metropolitan rural is, first of all, a resource able to bring elements to the comprehension of the regional dynamic in its aggregation, giving to the rural space the "visibility" and also the understanding of its particular form of use of space and social life.

3 Changes in the relationship society/nature and the rural spaces

It is well-known that in Brazil the political option for the agricultural modernization from the 60's onward was deeply marked by the economists' diagnosis about national rural and, especially, their view on the role or the "functions" of agriculture in the economic development process, in particular the "functions" of producing cheap food, attract foreign money, releasing workforce and constituting itself in a consumer market for industrialized products. By this diagnosis, the agriculture

issues would be evidenced if its "functions" were not performed. In this case, investments in the sector should ensure the "optimal combination" between workforce and machines, and the industry should be responsible for absorbing the excess of workforce from the agricultural sector. (MALUF, 1997) Therewith, a deep understanding of the relationships between agriculture and industry and both with the external sector was seen as a "natural" result of the modernization policies. The relationship between agriculture and nature (relationship with the "qualities" of a region, of a territory) has virtually not existed in that direction predominantly economic of public policies toward agriculture and the rural space. It was a process of "deterritorialization" of production, in the sense that it could be performed in any physical space that could be adequate to the needs_of the agricultural productive process.

In other words, the technical transformations induced by modernization, which focus was the agricultural production rather than the rural space in a wider sense, tried to dissociate "nature" from the "production process" because, by that view, "nature" could always be "corrected" as to be adjusted to the agricultural production requirements. From the 80's on, this reality starts to change with the reintegration or return of "nature" to the agricultural production issue. This occurs because, in addition to the persistence of the intention to protect nature in public spaces (through the creation of parks and other areas of protection), the discussion on the need to manage nature, including in private spaces, as those for agricultural production, starts to grow.

This change of direction is seen mainly in Europe, and it gets stronger at the same time in which increases the international pressure for the reduction of agricultural subsidies. With this change, we are going to observe a movement contrary to the one observed in the agricultural modernization process and which we have identified earlier as "deterritorialization". That is, we are going to experience a process of "territorialization" of the production. This "territorialization" process places nature back as the mediator of social relationships, including production relations, highlighting the qualities of each region, of each territory, seeking to reinforce territorial and regional identities. It is about a more pluralistic representation of nature which brings some new elements that, by gaining visibility, deeply changes the way the society sees the rural world. Both a new qualification of spaces (regions, territories) and a process of complexification of its functions based on its different uses is going to be verified.

Accordingly, the prerogatives overlap in different areas is going to deepen, as is the case, in Brazil, of the duties of the Ministries of Agriculture, of the Environment, of the Agrarian Development, etc. with the same rural space being "overloaded" by several (sometimes) conflicting political actions. In this new context, we can note a significant background change regarding the "natural-cultural" binomial in which the notion of "property" – in general connected to the past – starts to articulate itself with the notion of "sustainability"— usually connected to the durability and future. With this, we observe a reintroduction of the political in the economical aspect, provided that the merger of other aspects (other than only the productive aspect) into the debate about agricultural public policies is certainly a political choice.

In short, the foregoing reproduces the change of focus from agricultural development to rural development or, more specifically, to sustainable rural development. New challenges are presented both to the understanding of the complex "functions" of the rural space and the territories and to the formulation of public policies that should cover all this complexity. One of the core aspects of such complexity involves the adjustment or accommodation processes that were not in the agenda of the debate about rural development up to the 80's. It is about

technical adjustments (production and preservation) of rules (production-preservation and social reproduction), scales (local, regional, global), in addition to the difficulties to articulate them. It is always worth to emphasize that in the rural areas, also for reasons that shall be evidenced hereafter, the struggles involving adjustments and accommodation are particularly impressive. See the adjustments and accommodation issue from another angle.

The nature that presents itself as heritage is not the same that presents itself as landscape. If it seems easy to socially agree on the relevance of natural spaces, as Pantanal or the Atlantic Forest, as nature heritages to be preserved, and the same cannot be ensured about the definition and acceptance of other heritages that could or should be preserved. For example, the recognition and acceptance that certain practices and habits related to the rural area are sociocultural heritages that deserve to be protected undergo a construction of arguments and agreements on what and which property deserves to be preserved. In general, this new heritage framework, whose implications to the rural area are notorious, tends to be permeated by struggles and tensions.

This trend, this multiform process, addresses a new type of modernization or a new modernity to agriculture which, in some developed countries, will also include private investments in technologies less chemical and less aggressive to the environment. In short, the requirements on the rural sector go beyond the mere function of what the rural sector can produce to meet what the society wants the rural sector to produce. This affects both the concept of the rural public policies and the reproduction of the family agriculture.

Regarding the action by the state, all of this will be reflected in a race for expertise or for experts in order to guarantee "scientific", "universal" and true theoretical basis to the rural development public policies. We highlight once again that this trend gains importance especially in the scope of the conflicts on the liberalization of international trade and the reduction of the agricultural subsidies. At the time of adoption of the modernization technological package a different situation was noted. To cheap credit policies for the agricultural modernization, the Neoclassical Economics (the search for a "optimal" allocation of the factors) and the Economics of Regulation (sector regulation of agriculture) itself was capable to ensure a scientific support and legitimate the actions by the state. There is not a minimum theoretical and technical preparation to this new direction of the current agricultural policies capable to obtain a worldwide consensus. So, the use of wider instruments of agricultural policy, which mainly occurs on the developed countries, is being questioned by the countries in development. For the latter, the public policies that allegedly try to contemplate the new reality of the rural world with its multiple functions are deemed a hidden way to the rich countries (specially European Union and United States) maintain its agricultural subsidies policy.

If, on one hand, it is possible to identify in these new directions the recognition of the regional or local specificities of agriculture, in a way to not submit it only to general rules, on the other hand, obstacles to implement such directions are also verified. There are obstacles underlying to the heterogeneity of rural spaces and of spatial cutout to be used, to the competences of the political-administrative spheres, to the requirements to the establishment of a contract or an agreement which, even including only minimum criteria, it is hard to be established.

It is also good to remember that in this new direction, the agriculture is going to be requested to "produce" the biodiversity, as this is also what the society wants it to produce and, at the same time, is going to continue bound to market demands. This is equivalent, in general terms, to be in charge to solve the issue of producing

"better" and also that of producing "more". Even if the submission to the market is relative – as studies on the relative autonomy and independence of the family rural worker of farming customs – it is impossible to deny that the new role society assigns to rural has consequences to its autonomy and its production condition. To its farmer, submitted to so many new social demands, which is the autonomy and which are the possible production conditions in a rural that, in addition to comply with its production "function", is also asked to produce "biodiversity", being identified as "landscape" and "property" of collective interest?

4 The public dimension of the rural space: thoughts upon the metropolitan rural of Curitiba

At this point it is already possible to summarize the foregoing as follows: the rural space, as we identify it, besides being presented as a private space, where the production and reproduction of a certain portion of the population, becomes also a kind of public space. Thus, we recognize it because is in it that the production of a wide range of properties that, generally, are identified as public or collective properties and a series of social functions exceeding the production of food and raw material is becoming a reality. These are the cases of preservation of the landscape, the environment and the natural resources, the socio-cultural property, the safety and the food sovereignty, maintenance of social network, etc. At this point, it is worth to clarify this issue because it will be the main point of several conflicts of interest situations, especially in RMC scenarios, where the field research which inspired this paper was developed.

The cultural and policy disruption that was implied in the crossing from the peasant condition to the farmer, involved, first, the supply of raw materials to market. In opposition to the "farming" condition and to the lifestyle associated to it, was the "farmer" condition which, strictly speaking, would only identify a professional category and not a set of social and cultural characteristics able to differ it significantly from any other anymore. In short, it would be an agriculture integrated to a complex productive system, with a well-defined "function" and which attention would be closely linked to the income and not to the agronomic, physical, geographic, social, cultural, etc. It is in this regard, including, which that uncultivated portion of the territory seemed and still seems as unproductive, useless or optional area to the eyes of the agricultural production. (HERVIEU, 2002) Currently, this is not necessarily true.

The change of view about the rural space placing it as not only a space of raw materials production, but also as a landscape, a cultural and symbolic space, involves a deep reversal of priorities in the management of that which "is not city". (HERVIEU, 2002) In short, this happens because the field – when recognized as a national and collective property – is placed in a level similar to that of other collective properties as preservation areas (Amazônia, Pantanal, Floresta Atlântica, etc.) or the historical and architectonic monuments.

In these lines, the public or collective management of the rural spaces when they assume characteristics of public spaces tends to take from the farmer and of the work on the land the legitimacy of "masters" of the rural space organization. If the farmers see such rural space as the focus of an agricultural activity, even though not only that, all other social categories and, specially, all other categories of inhabitants of the urban spaces see the field as a space much more complex than a simple production space. The RMC's rural spaces are examples of these changes in

perception and fit well in the approach presented by Perrier-Cornet (2002), about the rural area marked by three figures or distinguished representations.

The first of them is the field "Resource", consisting in a rural space which is, above all, a productive space. This representation rests upon the imposition of an economic value to the resources located there and assigns to the agriculture a central place. In the researched municipalities of RMC, specially, in rural communities where field researches were carried out, the rural is presented as a productive space. The agricultural activity is crucial to the reproduction of the farming families and for the community itself. Additionally, it is a rural which is entrusted to produce and supply a considerable part of the regional demands of agriculture.

The second identified representation by the same author is the field "Picture of Life", which emphasis is on the residential and recreational use of the rural space, to which the low access costs, the beauty and the quality of the landscapes, in short, the rural "amenities" are the most important elements. In this figure, the concept of the field as a space consumed, which is also a situation verified in our studies in the metropolitan rural communities, is highlighted. Equally, the significant presence of weekend and leisure villas (which have horse ridings, canteens, agro-industries or paid fishpond, for example) points towards the existence of this representation in the regional metropolitan space of Curitiba.

The third figure is the one most representing in the metropolitan rural, at the first look, as already noticed. It is the field "Nature". The author reinforces that is not only a nature of "amenities", but an "objective" nature, including the resources (water, soil, etc.), the own cycles operation (ecosystem) and the functions of climate regulation. This space "nature" is neither a production nor a consumption space and corresponds to the goals of preservation, conservation, non-use, to the welfare of future generations, thus bounding, to the ideal of a sustainable development. To this figure, both the presence of Floresta Atlântica and Floresta das Araucárias biomes are illustrative in the RMC.

The three figures above are closely associated with the idea that the agricultural, by itself, is not the rural anymore. As must be reasonably clear at this point of our discussion, the field "nature", in spite of being the most recent, is the one who most identifies the rural of the RMC in the field of the regional public policies and the one placed in the core of the contemporary concerns about its development.

An important detail, as Perrier-Cornet (2002) reminds us, is that those three figures above are deeply interrelated, interdependent and often competitors, once they "use" the same space and the same resources. They are essentially under "stress".

In this context we can associate an important public dimension to the multiple matters "functions" of the field and the rural spaces. This is due to, on one side, an item essential support of the rural space (the soil) is inserted in the private property system; it is also the support of properties with a strong public and collective dimension – the landscapes and rural amenities, the biodiversity and the environmental properties which are collective properties. In the case of RMC, we observe the recent increasing of figures "picture of life" and "nature" is in a parallel with the increasing relevance of these "public properties" (landscapes, biodiversity, rural amenities, etc.), which have a very important role in the rural spaces dynamics of the region. This process is called "publicization" of fields by Perrier-Cornet and describes with considerable loyalty the regional situation.

According to our research, the publicization or the constitution of a public dimension of rural space can be approached from two sides: (a) by the public properties side and (b) by the public politics side. There are several implications on both sides. On the public properties side, the interaction between the subjects is going to be permeated by stress and conflicts, resulting from the competitive use of a space recognized as "multifunctional" and, especially, due to the relevance of its natural resources. It is a latent tension between production and reproduction of the farmers and the requirements connected to nature conservation or even to the occupancy of the "urban" spaces (residence, entertainment, etc.). With respect to the public politics, the matter consists of verifying in which way its creation and its action take into consideration these transformations and how they are managed. In other words, what are the society political options (and through which policies) given the rural spaces? Or also, how do the rural subjects and public institutions manage this new "right" that the society as a whole understands that it has over the rural space? Such issues may be analyzed from several points of view.

Belrhali, Bernard and Videlin (2002), for instance, analyze the issue of rural properties based on Law, as to understand the confrontation between the claim for public access to public spaces and the protection of the property right and the demand for environmental conservation. They wonder if it could be possible to raise the hypothesis of a weakness of the property right effectively in relation to the right to public access to the rural properties. However, there are concrete difficulties in this field. First, because there no global definition of "rural properties" and, second, because such properties may belong to the private domain or to the public ownership. For them, the prevailing laws seek for making the public access easy to the private properties in natural and rural spaces. The recognition of the residential and recreational uses of rural leads effectively to the facilitation of the public access to this domain. On an opposite side, the increasing awareness of the need to preserve environment leads to regulations that seek to restrain public access to certain areas of the public domain. This is the case of areas of Environmental Protection (APAs) which brings up the perception that a good management of certain environmental properties imply the restraint of its use by the public. However, the authors identify that it is on rural spaces that the confrontation of the property right and public access is going to emphasize specifically sharp conflicts on use.

In the scope of Economy, conflicts of interest have been treated based on interpretative frameworks linked to the Neoclassical Economy and to the concept of "externality". The externality is understood as a direct interaction between the functions of production and/or utility of economic agents and their interaction is not mediated by the market. The Neoclassical Economy indicates that the basic condition in order for private costs and benefits to translate into costs and benefits for the society, of any action for the individual (measured by the market price), is fundamental the overall balance and the welfare model. (RIANI, 1997) However, actions of certain units may cause losses or gains in actions of other units. These are the "externalities", that may be negative or positive and that may exist both in the consumption and the production units. Vivien (1994) remembers the classic example of the watercourse used by two companies, "A" and "B". If company "A" launches its production residues in the watercourse and it brings negative consequences to company "B" (for example, lower productivity and additional costs) and if between both there is no "agreement" defining a compensation, there is no market mediation. In the Neoclassical and free competition theoretical approach, such situation would characterize a "lack" of market. For situations like these, which are similar to those involving the use of rural spaces, the Economy has been showing three groups of solutions.

The first one claims that the taxation to the author or issuing agent, pursuant to the costs that its activity brings to the others. This is known as the "pigouvian" solution, which is based on the state intervention and acknowledges it as legitimate in such situations. Even if the Liberal Economic tradition is the defense of the non-public intervention in the economy, it is worth to remember that for some economists of this line, the state action is necessary in cases where the free game of interests cannot be established or, in other words, there are market failures.

A second line of solutions to the use conflicts involves the negotiation or the institutional arrangement between the parties, also known as "Coase" solution. Such approach does not postulate, at first, neither the issuing agent must stand alone the cost of the problem resolution, neither the government must intervene. (CARRON; TORRE, 2002; VIVIEN, 1994) For this solution, there is an economic interest in which installs a negotiation between polluter and pollution victims, and it establishes an acceptable level of pollution. The condition for this agreement execution between the protagonists is the establishment of the property rights. This is not that simple, as we already emphasize previously. Nevertheless, in the example of companies "A" and "B" above, it would define which of the two agents holds the property right over the stream for, then, to define who must pay and who must receive. Vivien (1994) remembers that, in the eyes of these theorists, the problem repose much more on the legal framework than the market failures.

The third solution group involves the creation of "markets of use rights", on which the rights to pollute shall be negotiated. This is the solution through market or marketing solution. In this case, the intervention by the state is crucial, as it is its role to establish the acceptable levels of pollution and to issue the allocation of the "rights to pollute". (VIVIEN, 1994; CARRON; TORRE, 2002) Note that, in all three solution groups, the valuation or definition of an economic value for the environmental well-being is a determinant factor. As known through the Environmental Economics literature, we can find there one of the most critical aspects of the debate on economic and environment because it involves the establishment of economic value to the environment, landscape or other subjects. The majority of the economic valuation techniques are subject matter of critical and disputes and it faces difficulties to legitimate itself and have wide acceptance. (MAY; LUSTOSA; VINE, 2003)

Caron and Torre (2002) also added a forth solution to the usage conflicts: the regulation of the occupation of space. According to them, this is a solution resulting from the difficulties to conciliate the contradictory interests of the different "functions" of the territory. This solution comprises two types of measures. The first one is related to the constitution of zone dedicated to specific activities, whether productive, residential, industrial, recreational, agricultural, etc. This is the case of the zonings elaborated with the purpose to regulate the occupation of the space, reducing the source of conflicts through an institutional way, neutralizing the effects of geographical proximity, which is, by nature, a potential source of conflict. Metropolitan Region's industrial areas and the guidelines for use and occupation of the soil defined on the Institutional Development Plan (IDP) – 2001 (COMEC, 2003), fit in this type. A second type identified by the performers is the urban planning, connected to the authorization to whether construct or not in certain areas.

In the last line of solutions regarding the conflicts it can be verified that the geographical proximity and the "organizational" proximity gain evidence for the solution of the negative "external matters" that are connected to the drawbacks of the geographical proximity. That is, external matter involving issues close in geographical and organizational terms would be mainly more subject to be resolved satisfactorily. However, regarding the rural spaces under discussion, the

geographical proximity is not always the more relevant factor when the conflicts arise.

The new regulations on production and other ways of space usage, sometimes, are imposed by public policies arising from spheres that are not, necessarily, close from the involved agents on organizational basis, especially from the farmers. In a similar way, the demands for preservation of nature and natural resources (e.g., Floresta Atlântica, Mata das Araucárias, fauna or water) do not arise, necessarily, from agents and performers geographically close. Even because in environmental issues the issue of the scale itself (local, regional, global) is also another critical factor.

Still in this direction, it is worth to mention the rural spaces and the conflicts of interests are already established previously to the formation of the zones which regulate the occupancy of the territory. The agricultural activity was already there before the emergence of new demands and usage regulation and occupancy may only happen at a later date. Once more, we reinforce what was already restated before: the complexity of the rural issue in the context of changes of the relationship between society and nature that is noted nowadays.

5 Final Considerations

In face of the thoughts presented until this point, it is possible to assert that a crucial issue regarding the rural spaces persists: how do public policies should be "prepared" (or be founded scientific and in theory) and be legitimated to admit this complexity and the conflicts of interests arising from this new vision of the society on the rural spaces?

This new vision reflects the changes in the perception of society on the nature or the "transition" from the notion of pure unchanged nature to a notion of "made" nature which involves directly the rural spaces. It places this last in a singular condition and they begin to be targets of a new apparatus of instruments of policies and public action, different from the traditional instruments of agricultural policy. Looking upon the reality of the RMC's rural – which should not be different from the reality of many other regions of the country – these changes and demands on the rural world replace the debate about the policies of the rural development on another level. Specially, they force us to reconsider both the theoretical apparatus that supported and support them and the institutional environment in which they are prepared and/or implemented.

New dimensions and representations of the rural require the production and preparation of new approaches both to its recognition and their regulation. Require that they are able to understand these new representations of the rural, result of the changes in the relationship society/nature, but not only this.

As the main struggles happen in the field of regulation of rural spaces, the apprehension of these changes must be able to sign to consensual legitimate and operationalized instruments. Otherwise, agricultural production, "production" of the biodiversity, preservation and social reproduction will remain as elements of tension in the rural.

Based on the study of the metropolitan rural of Curitiba, one of the main conclusion emerging is that the social way of production that seems to be more affected by the transformations in the relationship society/nature is the family agriculture. It is

certain that this can be a result from the geophysical and environmental characteristics of the studied region (Serra do Mar, Floresta Atlântica and Araucarias regions, etc.), but it does not cease to be worth of reflection. However, it is a fact that the (re)appreciation of the rural and the socio-cultural property associated to it, is much more related to lifestyle and way of production of the family agriculture than to the way of the agriculture employer. Generally, the association of multiple functions of rural space is with the first one and not with the second. That is, it seems that in the imaginary of society the agricultural production, the "production" of biodiversity, the preservation, the rural tourism, the guarantees of social reproduction, etc. are functions much more related to the family agriculture.

The fact that this rebirth of rural is having the ability to induce or produce a new institutional and policy conformation and to drive changes in the spaces of accommodation concerning the rural public policies cannot be denied. This because, if on one hand, a rural of recognized multiple "functions" – or multidimensional – is an element of tension and conflicts, on the other, requires a new institutional and political apparatus able to manage the agreements and consensus that must be built in order to circumvent them.

Even though, the struggles emerging from these pictures are big and there are many demands about (a) the definition of what is a material nature or an property worth to be preserved, (b) the social acceptance of such definitions (accommodation), (c) the competence (or the definition of who does what), (d) the emergence of new performers that are located in different positions and confront each other and (e) the levels and scales (local, regional and global).

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Notes

1 This title is inspired on the title of a book by Perrier-Cornet (2002), listed on the references of this paper.

2 A preliminary version of this work was presented at the 1st Meeting of the Network of Rural Studies held at Universidade Federal Fluminense, in Rio de Janeiro, from July 4 to July 8, 2006.

3 In a reference to the first tradition of the Environmental Economy by Arthur C. Pigou.

4 Reference to Ronald Coase, from the Chicago University, whose paper in 1960 inaugurated this approach.

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