

# To be or not to be an artisanal fisherwoman? Female work, recognition and social representation among shellfish collectors in the Campos Basin, RJ

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## ABSTRACT

This text describes and analyzes, from a gender perspective, how the working relationships of women in artisanal fishing in Campos dos Goytacazes, RJ, focusing on the process of participation and female representation in the Artisanal Fisheries Management Group. Based on qualitative research and narrative interviews, we analyzed the refusal and ban on the use of fishermen's labor identity through the agency's native categories of shellfish catcher (s), backyard fishery (ies) and backyard fishery owner (s). These descriptive data were cited and stressed on the theory of sexual division of labor and the analytical category of gender to understand possible inequalities and forms of (in) visibility of female labor in local artisanal fishing. This article is the result of research financed by the Pescarte Environmental Education Project (PEA) which is a mitigation measure required by the Federal Environmental Licensing, conducted by IBAMA.

## KEYWORDS

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## INTRODUCTION

This text analyzes, from a gender perspective, the labor relations of women in artisanal fishing in Campos dos Goytacazes, RJ. The work is based on qualitative research carried out in this municipality with women workers in artisanal fishing on Farol de São Thomé beach, who were elected managers in the Artisanal Fisheries Management Group (GG) of the Environmental Education Project (PEA) Pescarte<sup>1</sup> (Petrobras/IBAMA/UENF<sup>2</sup>), enrolled in the Campos Basin Environmental Education Program (PEA-BC). PEA Pescarte follows parameters and conditions of Technical Note CGPEG/DILC/IBAMA No. 01/2010<sup>3</sup>, Line A and the Participatory Diagnosis of the PEA-BC (2012), and aims to build and articulate a regional social network formed by artisanal fishermen and their family members, promoting training processes based on critical environmental education (Quintas, 2006) to strengthen and enhance community organization. Therefore, PEA Pescarte is part of promoting social mobilization and encouraging participation in educational processes aimed at involving fishermen and their families in the construction and participatory and democratic implementation of Generation Projects of Work and Income (GTR) articulated to the knowledge and practices of artisanal fishing and guided by the solidarity economy.

The choice of the social group of artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen is made in order to incorporate groups living in the Campos Basin region and who maintain greater dependence on the available natural resources, being more vulnerable to the impacts of the oil and natural gas industry installed in the region. Of the 14 municipalities that make up the Campos Basin and that have activities in the oil and gas industry, only seven were covered by PEA Pescarte in the 1st and 2nd phases of activities. They are: Arraial do Cabo, Cabo Frio, Macaé, Quissamã, Campos dos Goytacazes, São João da Barra and São Francisco de Itabapoana.

Within the scope of PEA Pescarte, the Management Group (GG)<sup>4</sup> was created, a collegiate decision-making body, established by the IBAMA process No. 02022.000466/2015-77, of a deliberative, regulatory, democratic and consultative nature of the GTR project to be built by PEA Pescarte (Timóteo, 2016). The GG is formed from a democratic process carried out through secret ballots in the communities where PEA Pescarte operates, with eligible men and women working in the artisanal fishing chain and their families. Anyone from the fishing community could run for the GG and each voter was entitled to four votes, and the twenty most voted were elected to compose this deliberative and consultative body of PEA Pescarte, whose period of operation was two years, concomitant with the 2nd Phase of Activities of this PEA. Each municipality that is part of the project has a GG with representatives from the fishing communities in their locality. The main purpose of the GG is the articulation of PEA Pescarte with traditional communities<sup>5</sup> of artisanal fishermen, as a way to achieve the main objective of promoting the strengthening of community organization through

**1** | The Campos Oil Basin is responsible for more than 80% of the oil and gas production in Brazil and has been the target, for years, of large undertakings that generate social and environmental changes that ended up impacting the lives and work of artisanal fishermen and fisherwomen in the region as a way of to reduce or offset such impacts, the oil companies installed in the region were forced, from 1990 onwards, to undergo environmental licensing process in accordance with IBAMA, as expressed in Law 6.938/81, in CONAMA Resolutions nº 001/86 and nº 237/97 and in Complementary Law nº 140/2011. Such legislation discusses the State and Federal competence for environmental licensing, based on the location of the enterprise. Environmental licensing is a legal obligation prior to the installation of any potentially polluting or environmentally degrading enterprise or activity and has as one of its most expressive characteristics the social participation in decision making, through mandatory public hearings as part of the process.

**2** | State University of North Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro (UENF), whose headquarters are located in Campos dos Goytacazes, RJ. The activities of this PEA are promoted by professors and technicians from the Center for Human Sciences - CCH, under the general coordination of prof. Dr. Geraldo Marcio Timóteo and in partnership with the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA).

**3** | Resolution No. 237, of December 19, 1997. "Art. 1st I - Environmental Licensing: administrative procedure by which the competent environmental agency licenses the location, installation, expansion and operation of projects and activities users of environmental resources, considered effectively or potentially polluting or those that, in any form, may cause environmental degradation, considering the legal and regulatory provisions and the technical standards applicable to the case". Analytics presented here can also come to be relevant for the configuration of collective processes of resistance, inspiring, more broadly, joint actions that aim to avoid the reproduction of the hegemonic norm. The final version of this article owes much to exchanges with Marília M. Pisani, Álvaro Okura, Nayana Fernández and Mariana Ribeiro.

the principles of environmental education and the participatory construction of GTR Projects. Educational actions and/or activities have monthly regularity, have guidance and execution carried out by technicians, professors and researchers from CCH/UENF and are supervised by IBAMA.

The qualitative research, carried out by the researchers during the years 2016-2019<sup>6</sup>, was developed from the participant observation of the activities of the Campos dos Goytacazes GG<sup>7</sup> and conducting narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2002) with three women living at the São Thomé Lighthouse, elected by artisanal fishermen and family members to compose the Campos dos Goytacazes GG (PEA Pescarte) itself.

With the creation, in 2003, of the National Secretariat for Women's Policies (SNPM), linked to the Presidency of the Republic, interministerial actions for the creation of social policies focused on the construction of mechanisms to promote gender equality began to be articulated, among them Law No. 11,959 of June 29, 2009, regulated by Decree No. 8425, of March 31, 2015, which expands the legal definition of artisanal fishing categorization, ensuring that fishing activities were recognized, that is, exploitation, exploitation, cultivation, conservation, processing, transporting, marketing, researching fishing resources, making and repairing fishing gear and gear, repairing small boats and processing artisanal fishery products. So, the Women workers in the chain of artisanal fishing activities for the first time began to be recognized as artisanal fisherwomen, being guaranteed access to the General Registry of Fishing Activities (RGP). This legal definition recognizes and gives legal support and access to public policy to women who work with activities related to the daily life of fishing, such as artisanal fishermen. However, we can say that historically structures of male domination were built that helped to make the artisanal fishing women workers invisible and withdrawing autonomy.

According to Huguenin and Hellebrandt (2018), the Defense Insurance, created in 1990 and updated in 2003 through Law No. 10.779, whose regulation takes place only in 2015, in Decree No. 8424, is a benefit granted to professional artisanal fisherman registered in the General Registry of Fishing Activity (RGP). Yet, for the authors, there is a contradiction when we compare this legislation with Decree 8,425/15, which provides for the criteria for registration in the RGP. While Decree 8425/15 allows fishing support workers to have the RGP, Decree on Safe Defense – No. 8424/15 – does not extend the benefit to them. Or that is, even with access to the RGP, artisanal fishing *support* workers and *members of the artisanal professional fisherman's family group* are not benefited by the Defense Insurance.

It is necessary, however, to understand that there is a duplicity of legislative action linked to the artisanal fishing sector which, also through the action of the fishermen colony and municipal bodies of Campos dos Goytacazes, has, since 2007, granted recognition to working women of artisanal fishing and access to a type of municipal

4 | Its creation complied with the requirements of the General Coordination of Oil and Gas, of IBAMA's Environmental Licensing Directorate (CGPEG/DILIC/IBAMA) as conditions for the Petrobras Conduct Approval Term (TAC) units in the Campos Basin. Available at: [https://www.petros.com.br/cs/groups/public/documents/document/xznv/bv9u/edis/2017\\_05\\_24\\_tac\\_petros\\_com\\_notas.pdf](https://www.petros.com.br/cs/groups/public/documents/document/xznv/bv9u/edis/2017_05_24_tac_petros_com_notas.pdf), accessed on: February 20, 2018.

5 | For the purposes of PEA Pescarte's actions, the compliance with the legal provisions established by Law 6,040/2007, which ensures the recognition of the Peoples and Traditional Communities, Traditional Territories, having as prerogative the Sustainable Development.

6 | This text produced by four hands articulates the results of the Masters in Social Policies defended by Rafaella Theis, with CAPES funding, under the guidance of Lilian Sagio Cezar, and the anthropological research and scientific advice developed for Line 1 PEA Pescarte, between June 2017 and July 2019, under the coordination of the same researcher, through funding administered and transferred by Fundação Instituto de Administração (FIA), conditioned by IBAMA. We are grateful for the resources earmarked for funding both surveys.

7 | Between 2016-17, PEA Pescarte went through a process of funding interruption, which did not imply the closure of their activities due to the voluntary actions of technicians and professors

defense insurance. This is a program that guarantees the direct transfer of a minimum wage to saltwater fishery workers in the municipality. To receive closed insurance, the beneficiary must meet the a series of criteria. This policy is characterized by the instability of action due to the difficulty in accessing City Hall funds, which annually leads women from the São Thomé Lighthouse to organize protests in order to obtain closed: they march and close, with burnt tracks and tires, the access to the road that connects this district to the center of Campos and other roads that pass through it. Despite the direct transfer of funds, there is no link between this insurance and Social Security and Social Security at the federal level, which implies not obtaining maternity insurance and special retirement.

In Campos dos Goytacazes, the Municipal Secretariat for Human and Social Development, through Resolution nº. 001/2017, of May 2, 2017, makes public the list of artisanal fishermen and fishery support workers considered eligible to receive the Municipal Salt Water Protection Insurance.

The list of beneficiaries of municipal defense insurance published in the municipality's Official Gazette in 2017 demonstrates that this group is mainly composed of women: of the total of 430 people benefited by the municipal law, only 31 are men. Examining the city's law, we note that the use of the term "shellfish" as an identity nomenclature is not explicit, even though this is used regionally to name women who work with fish and shrimp processing.

In 2009, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture (MPA) became the federal entity responsible for the regularization and recognition of the exercise of artisanal fishing activities, and the initial process of recognition and access to bureaucratic procedures for making the RGP was under responsibility of the colonies of fishermen. Still, women in the São Thomé Lighthouse community, as well as in other locations (Melo, Lima, Stadtler, 2016), suffer from the lack of access to recognition and documentation that ensure their labor identity in fishing craft, which is the main mechanism of inequality in relation to the category.

There are also reports of shellfish gatherers who started the process of issuing the RGP more than two years ago and never received any response, from the MPA and the colony. Even in cases where there is legal recognition of women as fisherwomen, we realize that the discourses and speeches of fishermen and representatives of the colony publicly question and disqualify the legal and legal use of the term fisherwoman to characterize the manual work of shrimp and fish processing, the filleting and final marketing of the product.

At the same time, we verified in the speeches of the GG of Campos managers a certain refusal to use the work identity of fisherwomen and the agency of different native categories, which refer so much to female work associated with fishing handicraft, as for the women who carry out such activities at Farol de São Thomé.

We seek to analyze, from the point of view of our interlocutors, the specific

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who continued to promote the monthly meetings of the CGs until the establishment of a new FIA/Petrobras/UENF contract, in July 2017.

construction of the native categories of shellfish gatherers as a social marker of difference capable of semantically delineating the identity of women workers in artisanal fishing, as well as describing the categories of background (s) of *backyard* (s) and therefore her term of ownership by a locally designated *woman as the backyard owner*. Descriptions of the construction of these categories natives are tensioned and, thus, analyzed from the theories of the labor sexual division and from the analytical gender perspective. It is noteworthy that, historically, the achievement of legal recognition of artisanal fishers is a result of intense political mobilization of artisanal fishing social movements and feminist movements, aiming to expand and guarantee access to federal social security benefits (defense insurance, maternity insurance, retirement under a special regime) for women workers in artisanal fishing.

While male fishermen have their social role recognized by the work of capturing and killing fish, women are generally seen as helpers, which generates situations of financial, legal, political, social, etc. subordination to men in the community, especially, to those who belong to your own family (father, brother, husband, son). It is in the meantime that we seek to question hierarchical inequalities, structural constraints and forms of non-recognition and invisibility of female work in the field of fishing handmade. Therefore, we will start from the analysis of the women's narratives and the direct observation of the performance and speech of our interlocutors at the meetings of the GG PEA Pescarte, understanding the nuances of the relationships established there and questioning the forms of identity recognition, as well as their participation touted in their speeches.

#### **WOMEN'S WORK IN ARTISANAL FISHING AT FAROL DE SÃO THOMÉ**

Farol de São Thomé beach is geographically located in the district of Santo Amaro, municipality of Campos dos Goytacazes, RJ. This locality is mostly inhabited by artisanal fishermen and their families and is spread along the coast stretching for 28 km, from the limit with the Lagoa do Açu State Park, belonging to the municipality of São João da Barra (in the north) to the Canal da Flechas, the southern border that demarcates the boundary between Campos and the municipality of Quissamã. As it is approximately 50 km from the center of Campos dos Goytacazes, Farol de São Thomé beach welcomes, during the holiday season, the wealthy families of this city, who have historically built summer houses in the vicinity of the 45 meter high lighthouse, designed by Gustave Eiffel and inaugurated in 1882 on the seafront.

According to Bulhões (et al., 2016), the main fishing activity in the region is shrimp fishing, a species that is also marketed to other states, using trawler-type vessels, with the size adjusted to overcome the waves of the strong sea of the place. In this regard, the difficulties faced by fishermen and fisherwomen in Farol de São Thomé to start their fishing activities should be highlighted daily: most of the launching and

attraction operations of the vessels are done by tractors that tow the boats through the sand from the beach to the sea (Bulhões, et al., 2016), with a right time for launching, which are the spaces of calm between sequences of larger waves. There is also a small fishing terminal at the end of this location, next to the Canal das Flechas, which is a meeting point and sociability for artisanal fishermen, as this is the place where part of it happens since this is the place where part of the unloading of fish takes place, in addition to the purchase and supply of ice and diesel oil for the boats. Both the fish unloading point, called Pedra<sup>8</sup>, and the fishing terminal are markedly considered sociability points men, since the activities developed there are related to the departure and entry of boats into the sea for the development of the fishery, which involves the search, capture, killing, storage and transport of fish and shrimp to the points landing and marketing of fish. These processes are hierarchical based on economic criteria and/or knowledge inherent to success, efficiency and care for oneself and one's companions during fishing, building networks of sociability and mutual help in the face of multiple adversities inherent in the craft of artisanal fishing.

The owner of the vessel, also called boat owner, is the one who holds the economic power of the fishery production means; the captain is the holder of the knowledge and practices that guarantee the survival of the boat's crew at sea open, knowing the locations of capture and killing point of the fish, being also responsible for commanding the fishermen on deck so that they take due care so that the vessel does not suffer the action of whales, sharks or even weight excess of fish caught in the net, which can heel the boat. Staying up to 12 days and nights in open sea opens up vulnerabilities in relation to other vessels, either due to the difference in size (transatlantic route), or due to threats of theft, looting, trafficking; environmental and climatic contingencies, such as sudden changes in temperature, winds, storms, in addition to giant waves, reefs, which are also present threats in the craft of artisanal fishing and, in view of each of them, the captain's knowledge and his ability to negotiate, command and conduct the crew are daily and continuously tested as to their origin and effectiveness, when translated into practical actions.

Master boaters, responsible for building and repairing boats, net makers, tractor drivers responsible for pulling boats on the sands of Farol de São Thomé beach, local fish sellers, among others, also participate in the male sociability network.

Once landed, fish and shrimp enter the product's marketing circuit, which can happen with or without processing, that is, with or without the action of cleaning, packaging, packaging and cooling. Generally, the beneficiation process takes place in slaughterhouses or in the backyard, by the hands of local women who self-identify as shellfish gatherers.

The women who work cleaning fish and their filleting or cleaning shrimp at Farol de São Thomé are recognized locally and socially by their native category of shellfish gatherers. These women usually belong to families of fishing tradition.

8 | Name given to the place of disembarkation and large-scale commercialization of artisanal fishery products at Farol de São Thomé beach.

Historically, both the wives and daughters, as well as the fishermen themselves, are responsible for cleaning the fish and shrimp caught and brought in from the sea in order to “help” support the Family of fishing tradition. Historically, both the wives and daughters, as well as the fishermen themselves, are responsible for cleaning the fish and shrimp caught and brought in from the sea in order to “help” support the family.

Even with the establishment of slaughterhouses on the Farol de São Thomé beach, which employ (formally and informally) a part of the artisanal fishing workers, mostly women, there are reports of male participation in the shellfishing work, which allows us to relativize the division of roles performed and the consequent social hierarchization carried out. In common, these women report having grown up watching their mothers, sisters, aunts and grandmothers in the house, raising of the children and “helps” in cleaning the fish from the boat in which the family worked.

According to data from the PEA-Pescarte Census (2016), 221 women fishers are self-declared in Farol de São Thomé, out of a total of 455 people, showing that almost 50% of the workforce related to fishing processes is made up of women. The activities of peeling shrimp, cleaning and filleting fish constitute that which is locally called shellfishing. These activities are carried out in the region in two distinct spaces: the slaughterhouse and the improvement spaces called backyards.

The slaughterhouses are formal fish processing units established in the region that employ part of the shellfish gatherers. Working in these places on a daily basis, not always with registration in a Work Card and access to social rights guaranteed in the 1988 Constitution, men and women who work in slaughterhouses alternate in shifts of eight hours a day, cleaning the shrimp and/or cleaning and filleting the fish, later receiving packaging and proceeding to storage and marketing. The slaughterhouses in Campos have their activities and sales registered and formalized in the market through a seal of sanitary inspection from a municipal body, which translates into a requirement for cleanliness, asepsis, cleanliness, hygiene in relation to the actions performed on their premises.

The work carried out in the backyards of the region is responsible for absorbing mainly women’s labor. In these places women work flexibly, unregistered and dependent on third parties to obtain the raw material to be processed (fish or shrimp). Such spaces are called backyard because it is usually a place of work attached to the house, either the yard or a point in the vicinity of the residence (door of the house, under the shade from a tree, end of a cul-de-sac, etc.) of a main seafood restaurant, known locally as the backyard owner or backyard owner, as she is the one that offers the structure of access to treated water or well for the cleaning of fish, in addition to a freezer, Styrofoam and plastic boxes for storing the product, as well as knives and grinders so that she and the other women can work filleting fish and cleaning shrimp.

The backyard is arranged contiguously with the backyard owner's house. Despite receiving this name, which in common sense refers to a space for conviviality, leisure and sociability associated with the house itself, the backyard in Farol does not constitute an expansion of the domestic space. According to Kofes (2001), the domestic can be understood as a place relationally associated with the sense of the feminine, being eminently marked by structural constraints that guarantee security for the family's reproduction, with the naturalization of functions and the performance of social roles by men and women who mark the distinction and, mainly, the attribution of a hierarchically subordinate character to manual work associated with the performance of domestic tasks.

Certainly the shellfish gatherers, as well as the domestic servants who interacted with Kofes (2001), invest their availability of time in carrying out a series of tasks assigned to them by someone else. In turn, the owners of The yard, unlike the housewives/bosses, share equally the use and resources (water, electricity, cleaning material, equipment), guaranteeing the minimum conditions of use of that space as a productive unit for fish processing. The actions developed in the backyard are based on a kind of associativism and mutual help (especially in the case of needing to care for the children) in which the working time does not only follow the capitalist time, but is also contingent on seasonality and oscillating alternation of activities linked to the respective families of the shellfish gatherers and to the same specificity of artisanal fishing.

The dichotomy between public and private space transcoded by the action of the sexual division of labor is at the base of the bipolar classification of social spaces that dominate each gender. Thus, women are socially held responsible for the domain of the private, which gives them the recognition of caregivers, and men, for acting in the public space, are seen as providers. In the case of artisanal fishing, according to Woortmann (1992), the sea represents the public domain and is perceived as a male environment; the land, on the other hand, is understood as space private, therefore perceived as a feminine environment. This classification ends up conferring invisibility to the activities performed by women and, as a consequence, their devaluation in the social environment. Logical sea/land oppositions; man/woman are not symmetrical and build their own hierarchy and ordering of this social world. More than a logical opposition, it is an ideological opposition, since the

(...) the activity of the fisherman is complete because he 'is' the total community, since the male identity constitutes the identity of the group (...). If the complementarity was (in the past of the studied groups) balanced, it was also hierarchical, and it was, and still is, the activity of man (who is the fisherman) that made the specificity of these groups (Woortmann, 1992: 58).



It is interesting to note that this same logic is present and orders the artisanal fishing world of Farol de São Thomé. If the male identity of a fisherman is the one capable of offering stability in social relations by hierarchizing and ordering the lived world experienced, the possibility of semantic activation of this identity category by women represents an imminent risk and calls into question the construction process of social markers of belonging and hierarchy. This risk threatens the semantically constructed and ordered social stratification through the speeches given by men, accustomed to acting in defense of their social primacy, facing women who come to defend the specific social gains of being and being associated exclusively with a select group of men (through kinship such as father, brother, husband, son, brother-in-law, nephew) of that community.

The invisibility relationship of female work is historically associated with domestic work and family care, which follows the classic division between public and private, restricting women from occupying public spaces, making her reclusive in private space and economically dependent on the men of her family, usually father or husband. For Faria (2009), capitalism engenders two distinct spheres, with the public sphere destined for production and the private sphere for the reproduction of people who reproduce this very system. In this sense, there is the production of discourses that naturalize the restriction of women to the private space, linked to motherhood, which reinforces the devaluation of domestic work in the family economic sphere. Feminist economics seeks to include women in the dominant economic paradigm, aiming to extend the relationship of well-being at work to reproductive activities, typical of the private sphere. As an integral part of the economy itself, according to Faria (2009, p. 17), “ (...) mercantile production is not autonomous and depends on unpaid work in households. In this sense there is a false autonomy of men who use the goods and services performed by women”.

It is noteworthy that this theoretical approach that thematizes the sexual labor division is linked to the very capitalist notion of labor, which reduces it to what can be exchanged in the market. This is explained thanks to the main purpose of capital, which is to expand its exchange value. For Antunes (1999), complete subordination from human labor to the process of capital reproduction has been the most notable feature of capitalism, “to convert the production of capital into the purpose of humanity, it was necessary to separate use value and exchange value, subordinating the first to the second” (Antunes, 1999, p. 12).

In the case analyzed, the fish produced through the activities carried out by the men does not have an exchange value greater than the value of the fish benefited by the action of the women shellfish gatherers, that is, the work carried out by them adds value to the merchandise they produce. Despite this, the work of men in fishing, capturing and killing fish is seen as more important in this social environment, since, without it, fish, the entire chain of artisanal fishing is unfeasible, without that there

is the realization of neither the use nor the exchange value, much less the possibility of expansion of the latter.

#### NARRATIVES OF SHELLFISH GATHERERS: WORK AND IDENTITIES

During the field research, in addition to carrying out participant observation during the monthly meetings of the Campos dos Goytacazes Management Group, we built a privileged dialogue with three managers<sup>9</sup>, all residents of Farol de São Thomé.

Eduarda is not married, is 41 years old and has four children, of which only the two minors live with her. She only has elementary school and has worked in backyards and slaughterhouses, but is currently unemployed. She learned the office with other local women. She does not have a RGP, she has already received municipal protection and declares herself both as a shellfish collector and as an artisanal fisherman

Clara has been cleaning fish and shrimp in the slaughterhouse or backyard since she was nine years old. She has a high school education and is 30 years old. She is not married and has a child. She does not have the RGP, but receives municipal defense insurance. She declares herself only a shellfish collector.

Luiza reported that she was always a fisherwoman. When she got married, more than 40 years ago, this activity started to be developed in a complementary way to the work of her husband, who was responsible for the capture and killing of fish, while she was in charge of the process related to the processing, being currently the owner backyard. Mother of five, she has completed elementary school, has not declared her age and is self-identified as a shellfish collector and as a fisherman. She receives municipal defense insurance and does not have the RGP.

<sup>9</sup> | The real names of our interlocutors were replaced in order to protect their identity.

In general, the narratives about the life trajectories of our interviewees are marked, above all, by their dedication to the family. Luiza emotionally recounts the difficulties she had overcome to raise her five children. Today, being all raised, they work in the field of artisanal fishing, developing different activities, such as master boater, sea fisherman, shellfish collector. About her boat master son, Luiza comments, with affection and pride:

When it passes through here I start to cry, a huge boat, very well made. He never studied to make a boat, [...] and today my son makes every boat, I even get emotional when I see it, and I think: my son has never had a study, as he makes these boats so beautiful, so well done?

(Interview conducted and filmed by the researchers with the shellfish collector Luiza in the afternoon of October 23, 2017. All excerpts from Luiza's speech transcribed here belong to this interview).

When Luiza talks about herself, she tells us with tears in her eyes that she went through many difficulties, with days without having to put on the table to eat.

From a very early age working with fishing, coming from a humble family, she says that she had to get married at a very young age, although she didn't even think about it at the time, as her daughters were driven to marry early to leave home. She dedicated herself to the family, to the raising children and doing housework, not much time for leisure activities. Although she is old enough to retire, her routine remains the same: every day she wakes up early to clean and fillet the fish, cook food, clean the house and take care of her grandchildren, now that the children are raised. In the words of Luiza:

[...]I was a sugarcane cutter, with my father, with my mother, we had a very difficult life, so we started working on everything. At that time I couldn't study, my father and mother couldn't afford it, at that time everything was bought. Today it has government help, Bolsa Família, everything else. Then my mother sent me to work. I've fished a lot, I cut cane, I've done a little of everything.

According to Gerber (2013), it is important to emphasize that there are variations with regard to the knowledge acquired in artisanal fishing in relation to men and women. The knowledge and knowledge transmitted to women are generally linked to production activities carried out on land, linked to the private sphere, such as, for example, fish processing activities, fish processing, fish exploitation, etc. These are activities that, based on a logic of sexual division of labor, are considered inferior, when compared activities carried out by men, related to loading, capturing, killing and transporting fish.

In this sense, Luiza is the only one to report that, in the past, she even embarked, initially with her parents and then with her husband, to fish, even in a canoe, and that the fact of being a woman did not prevent her from participating in some fishing processes, although she could not do it alone, always being accompanied by a family member or husband, as explained in the statement:

I always went with my husband, I went with my parents, then I spent many years fishing, right, we didn't go into the sea, inside, at the time it was a canoe, here on the shore. Then I would pick it up, sometimes leave at dawn, he would call me and say: look, let's go fishing, the weather is good for fishing. They say the court, right, the court is good, then we went fishing. Get out an hour, sometimes midnight, fishing, then the day dawned, I took everything, those shrimp, put them by the sea, on the sand, right, but a lot, a lot, a lot shrimp, a lot of fish. Then later he fished on the shore, then he started fishing from the boat at sea. On the high seas I didn't go, I just went on the shore.

It is through this narrative that we managed to date the process of reducing the amount of fish slaughtered at least 40 years ago, a period in which boats began to go

to the high seas. This account goes back to a past in fishing where fishery resources were abundant, with work for all shellfish gatherers. This situation is currently being degraded. Fisheries resources are decreasing in the region, the migration process resulting from regional industrialization through the oil exploration industry has made work alternatives in Farol increasingly scarce, especially after the inauguration of the Super Porto do Açu, which, after the completion of its works, made a large number of workers unemployed. This situation is evidenced by Clara's speech:

It is difficult to get [work/job] in the slaughterhouses, because they are very full and there is already that group, already certain, who were working. And then there are people who have been working there for a long time time, and then there was no selection, no indication, nothing: you went to the slaughterhouse, which worked. But then, with unemployment, there are a lot of people and then there are no more vacancies, and the people who they already have their desks and their right places to work, and then there's no way to put more people to work there.

(Interview conducted and audio-recorded by researcher Rafaella Theis with shellfish collector Clara in the afternoon of October 26, 2017. All excerpts from Clara's speech transcribed here belong to this interview).

For the work in the slaughterhouses and backyards, our interlocutors reported that it is necessary to know the different handling techniques that each type of fish requires, the type of tool they must use for each fish. One of them says: "if you don't know how to do it right, you waste a lot of good fish". The techniques of each fish are learned from the mothers, sisters, neighbors, someone who has the knowledge of the technique and who teaches you. Over time, the repetition of the same activity gives them the impression that they were already born knowing that job. This routine contributes to the lack of care regarding the risks involved in handling fish, which, in the case of backyards, happens without any protection or use of safety equipment. All the interviewees have already been harmed in the work process and, even in slaughterhouses, where inspection and control are expected, there are reports that sometimes people work without adequate protection, as Clara narrates:

Well, I wake up at 4:30 am, 5 am, change my clothes and go. Then I take my uniform, my food, my work stuff and I have to be in the salon for 6 hours. The minimum limit to leave there is 15:00 in the afternoon. We work directly with fish, shrimp. I already ran the risk there, I already took a deep cut on my finger, I almost lost my finger, I had to take 5 stitches, it was complicated, but [it's] the only thing we have for us.

In general, she works when the fish arrives, and reports that she has already

spent weeks without going to the slaughterhouse due to lack of raw material. On weekends Clara sets up an açaí stall in front of her house to supplement her income, as working in the slaughterhouse is not enough to support the family.

As we found in dialogues established with the shellfish gatherers, access to the backyard is done by means of an indication, and there seems to be no difference between the shellfish gatherer who owns the backyard and the other workers who work there. Eduarda told us that “they [backyard owners] still use the water to clean up the dirt, and the house smells like fish”. Also according to Eduarda, it is in the backyard that women establish a greater relationship of reciprocity and mutual help, with small children sometimes being allowed to stay during working hours in response to the demand of female workers who do not have access to day care centers for their young children. Thus, the children end up participating in the daily life of fishing and learning from an early age the ins and outs of this craft.

The incidence of work carried out by shellfish gatherers on fish caught (by men) has the ability to add greater exchange value to the final product to be sold, which is considered important in that social environment. Still, as filleting and fish processing are manual activities, resulting from the fishing, and that require low specialization, and are often activities carried out in precarious conditions, which involve a risk to the health of the worker, this work offers little opportunities for shellfish gatherers and social recognition.

The activities carried out in backyards and slaughterhouse use female labor to handle fish and shrimp. This division of labor may be related to the roles that are historically and customarily assigned to women, justified by common sense based on the attributes that would be “innate” to them, such as sensitivity, delicacy, dexterity of the hands, characteristics necessary for training in the trade and reach of expertise in handling manually the varied product that fishing offers. For Perrot (2005, p. 253), “real qualifications fantasized as ‘natural’ qualities, it is the result of the relationship between the sexes, which denotes to women the obligations of activities related to the domestic sphere, ‘generators of services, more than goods, are use values more than exchange values’”.

The logic of exploitation of work and minimization of monetary recognition affects the shellfish gatherers of this fishing community in a resounding manner, so much so that, when they work in slaughterhouses in the region, they are not paid for rush hour, but by the volume of production done per day. Meatpacking workers work with repetitive movements, with a high production rate, which cause a series of health risk factors related to repetitiveness and muscle overload. Linked to this, they are functions that require low qualifications, yield little remuneration, exercised in a monotonous situation, and in conditions of extreme social vulnerability.

Several things happened to me, I've fallen, I got hurt and, for a while, I had problems with several things. I got sick from working so hard on it, but I'm fine, thank God. We don't have a time to start or finish. Today we have it, because we can work after 3 am, we work as long as we want, the minimum time to go out is 3 hours, but in the past we worked per hour worked, so the more hours you worked, the more you earned. I used to spend, like, three bottles of coffee in a night, in a day, to be able to sustain my body. The coffee amazes sleep, right, so my body can handle work. I've worked from 7 am until 9 am the other day. Like, we don't earn so much for this, whoever makes a living from it knows that we don't earn very well for it, and at the time, in addition to putting together another change for not earning very well, we couldn't let the merchandise spoil, because shrimp and fish are goods that spoil easily, so the more advanced the service, the better it would be for us and the boss, and that's where we advanced the work (Clara, Marisqueira de Farol de São Thomé).

We also verified, from the shellfish gatherers' reports, that the situation of the backyards and slaughterhouses is being increasingly precarious, since the shellfish gatherers' work is inserted in a logic of neoliberal advancement, which puts the workforce of men and women in situations of extreme social vulnerability, increasing precariousness, flexibility and tendency to informality.

Eduarda is currently unemployed. She tells us that getting a job in a slaughterhouse is very difficult because she is separated and has four children, with the two minors living with her and the lack of daycare prevents her from being able to adapt to the schedules that the slaughterhouses impose on the routine of work.

Hirata (2002) points out the relationship and effects of neoliberal policies on the world of work with the increase in the number of women in the labor market linked to the creation of more precarious and vulnerable jobs, highlighting one of the paradoxes of globalization. If on the one hand we have the opening of the world of work for women, on the other hand, is accompanied by several concessions of rights, linked above all to inequalities, both between sexes and between classes, race and ethnicity. Hirata (2002) reinforces this issue when he indicates both the trend towards bipolarization of salaried work, linked to greater diversification of tasks "executives" and "intellectuals" that part of the female portion now have access and, on the other hand, to the development and expansion of the service sector, which suffers a strong impact from the creation of new professions.

Faced with the context of neoliberal attack, "we could simply bend the arc of the eminent transformation towards justice and not just with regard to gender" (Fraser, 2009, p. 55). Thus, discussing the invisibility of women and the possibilities of building recognition and female protagonism, even within the scope of PEA Pescarte, is necessary, as this can serve as a space for qualification and construction of critical awareness, served as exercise of participation and prerogative for the creation of public policies in the fishing sector at the municipal and state level, also contributing to

the expansion of possibilities for combating everyday forms of discrimination based on gender, race and ethnicity. (Laval & Dardot, 2016).

No less important is the construction of knowledge that allows the analysis of local processes in the face of some attacks. Economic and political attack on the rule of social law and labor legislation - which are ultimately aimed at its dismantling – and attacks on artisanal fishing communities, both against the neoliberal normative logic, which legitimizes the generalized competition of individuals among themselves and between individuals and industrial fishing corporations; as against the deregulation of social relations according to the market model, justifying the deepening social and environmental inequalities.

During the activities of the GG that articulate and bring together the seven municipalities served by PEA Pescarte, the fact that the São Thomé de Campos Lighthouse managers caught our attention – as well as those in the municipalities of Quissamã, São João da Barra and São Francisco de Itabapoana – present themselves from the shellfish category. We also noticed that many of them made a point of presenting themselves as shellfish gatherers and fisherman's wife, possibly announcing this condition of kinship as a distinctive and dignitary mark in the regional artisanal fishing environment, known to be sexist and machist. It is as if the category of shellfish gatherer was not powerful enough to grant women fishing workers full social recognition among their peers, belonging to the GGs that bring together representatives of different artisanal fishing communities.

Most of the artisanal fishing workers in this locality claim not to recognize themselves or to be recognized as fisherwomen. Thus, according to our interviewees, whoever fishes is the one who goes to sea and works on capturing and killing what they have fished. The activities of cleaning fish and preparing it for sale at Farol de São Thomé are called shellfishing, which gives each artisanal fisherman the job identity of a shellfish collector. The word shellfish is a feminine noun that designates a sea fish of the Scienid family. It is also a designation derived from the usual shellfishing activity, while collecting and cleaning edible shellfish and molluscs. Since the beginning of the research called us attention to the fact that the use of the native shellfish category, in Farol de São Thomé, is not associated with what is usually recognized as shellfish.

A possible explanation for this state of affairs was given to us at the end of the interview we conducted with Luiza, when we were invited for breakfast accompanied by cake, served in her home's kitchen. It was just that moment of relaxation and commensality that the activity of shellfish collection appeared in the narrative of our interlocutor, who promptly went to get a kitchen container full of the beautiful triangular pink shells, semi-open, still containing the fresh clam inside. It was only at this point in our conversation, already inside the house, opening and sharing aspects of the domestic daily life with us, that Luiza said that she is a skilled cook that she likes to receive at the end during the week his family and friends can enjoy his recipes,

including his famous shellfish pastry, which would be prepared the following day, a Saturday, for the visit of his children, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. It was with great satisfaction that we met Luiza again, after a year of her absence from PEA Pescarte's activities due to depression. On the occasion of her return to PEA Pescarte activities, Luiza told us that throughout this period she felt as if her strength and will to live were sucked and disappeared, which left her prostrate inside the house over this period, bedridden, without a will of her own. The first sign of recovery, according to our interlocutor, was an immense desire to walk along the banks of the Canal das Flechas, feeling the water and sand on her feet, to pick up shellfish, as she used to do when she was a girl, accompanied by her family. That's how Luiza came out of the prostration of depression, to shellfish and prepare her famous pastries! From then on, we met assiduously at the GG meetings and other PEA activities Pescarte, she always has a smile on her face and a sparkle in her eyes.

This episode made us question whether the discursive construction of the native shellfish category, in Farol de São Thomé, does not constitute a semantic strategy of identity affirmation, based on the collective memory of everyday activities attributed to the female, in which shellfishing represents the possibility of leaving the private space of the house (domestic) towards a collectively inhabited space, marked by the sharing of experiences and knowledge that guarantee the possibility of access, collection and capture of what is available in the nature of that environment to ensure the family food. In this way, the native category of shellfish gathers a structural type of parity with fishing and, at the same time, simulates for itself the possibility of collectively inhabiting spaces and temporalities aimed at the development of pleasurable activities, in full contact with the local nature, far from that which bears any resemblance to the domestic. Even though it does not commercially play the role of collecting/cleaning molluscs and shellfish, the shellfish activity in Farol de São Thomé and surroundings builds a metaphor that attributes value to women's work in artisanal fishing. If so, the delicacy of this native category allows ordering the world lived from the semantic separation between the masculinity performed through fishing while capturing and killing fish, and the femininity translated into the very possibility of living collectively with other women in the space of the backyard, a place eminently marked by the knowledge and actions that affirm the femininity of these women in their daily work to ensure the sustenance and food of their own family.

#### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The field research made it possible to systematize the types of female work carried out at Farol de São Tomé. Based on field research and the realization and analysis of narrative interviews carried out with three shellfish gatherers who are members of the GG PEA Pescarte de Campos dos Goytacazes, we approach the work relationships



developed in backyards and slaughterhouses in the region. The slaughterhouses employ part of the shellfish gatherers, where they clean the fish and pack it for sale. Backyard funds are responsible for absorbing the labor of women who cannot find a job in the slaughterhouses, they work autonomously, although they depend on third parties to obtain the raw material (fish or shrimp).

When we operate the analysis from the division of labor in relation to the gender issue, we understand that the Differences in work between men and women are locally perceived from the fact that men do not consider the work activities performed by women as work, but as a “help”. When labor recognition takes place, it is expressed in the daily use of the shellfish identity, as a kind of ban on the use of the legal category of fisherwoman. Through the activation of the native shellfish category, the labor recognition of these women does not presuppose symmetry (semantic, economic, political) of gender relations, not changing the patriarchal order established by the division of social work in the locality.

The field research allowed us to describe and analyze a double invisibility suffered by the shellfish gatherers of Farol de São Thomé, firstly in relation to the artisanal fishing category, in a detrimental position in relation to industrial fishing and, secondly, in relation to gender hierarchies within the artisanal fishing community. In Campos, artisanal fishing is an unstable and seasonal activity. According to the interviewees’ reports, there are days when there is no way to work due to the lack of raw material due to the scarcity of fish and shrimp, caused by the exhaustion of traditional fishing spots and the prohibition of fishing near oil platforms, which have become new attractions for marine fauna. The reports also help us to understand how labor relations are being precarious, to the point where the amount received for the day worked is insufficient for the maintenance of the worker and her family, being, therefore, below what is necessary for their own reproduction a condition further aggravated by the lack of access to labor rights.

From the analysis of the narrative interviews, we entered the representation of the social reality constructed by these women who historically manage the native categories of shellfish gatherers and backyards as a kind of semantic shield of defense against the pressures and contingencies that the surrounding society imposes on them as for the development of their work, ensuring for themselves a degree of autonomy and circulation, as long as they work with what is associated with the domestic and with a relative type of subordination to the local male labor activities.

The legislative change and expansion of the concept of artisanal fishing from Law No. 11,959, of June 29, 2009, did not result in immediate adherence by our interlocutors to the identity of artisanal fisherman, even though if they are entitled to such recognition. Discussing the invisibility of women in an environmental education project is necessary as a prerogative for the creation of alternative spaces for political exercise, such as the GG, as a place where men and women from artisanal fishing communities can establish symmetrical social relationships, guided by

collaboration mutual education and participation in training processes that allow them to focus on recognizing and facing the negative impacts of the oil and gas industry on the artisanal fishing sector.

It is important to highlight that local strategies for the semantic protection of artisanal fishing tend to be inefficient in the face of market competition pressures in the globalized scenario, governed by the trend towards free competition and deregulation of labor laws. It is in this sense that PEA Pescarte faces the challenge of promoting dialogue, production and exchange of knowledge about the consequences of the oil industry in the region, allowing local agents themselves to collectively intervene in the management of the fishing territory, based on skills and technical-scientific knowledge that is being transmitted to elected representatives of the communities fishing boats that are part of the GGs. At the same time, efforts are being made to monitor and communicate the different modalities of negotiations involving the construction and, unfortunately, the deconstruction<sup>10</sup> of public policies focused on the artisanal fishing sector at municipal, state and national levels, paying special attention to women artisanal fishing workers learn to act in the recognition, confrontation and overcoming of inequalities of opportunities, representation, economic and social ascension, still present in the artisanal fishing production chain.

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#### AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Lilian Sagio Cezar contributed to the conception and accomplishment of the bibliographic research and field research through participant observation of the activities of the Campos dos Goytacazes GG, the attainment and filming of narrative interviews, data analysis, writing and review of the article. Rafaella Theis contributed to the conception and realization of the bibliographic research and field research

<sup>10</sup> | The Special Secretariat for Aquaculture and Fisheries of the Presidency of the Republic (SEAP/PR) was created by Provisional Measure No. 103 and regulated by Law No. 10.683, of May 28, 2003. Law No. 11,958/2009 transformed this Secretariat into the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture (MPA), responsible for the implementation of a national fisheries and aquaculture policy to enable the sustainable development of 8.5 km of coastline and 12% of the planet's fresh water, transforming this economic activity in a sustainable source of work, income and wealth. This ministry was extinguished by the ministerial reform of October 2015. In 2019 the actions related to fishing are centered in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply and centralized at the Secretariat of Aquaculture and Fisheries (SAP/MAPA).

through participant observation of the activities of the Campos dos Goytacazes GG, carrying out narrative interviews, data analysis, writing the article.

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