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The house, the roads and the enclosures: the peasant ranch according to Capuxu children's classification

As casas, as estradas e os cercados: o sítio camponês a partir das classificações das crianças Capuxu

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Abstract: This article is an ethnography of the peasant ranch (*sítio*) as classified by Capuxu children, inhabitants of the hinterlands of the Brazilian state of Paraíba. Through participant observation, informal conversations, and the drawings produced by children, they revealed classifications of the ranch that blur the classic house/garden dichotomy established by rural studies (Woortman, 1983; Heredia, 1988; Santos, 1984; Garcia Junior, 1983; Godoi, 1999), revealing the triptych of houses, roads (and their shortcuts), and enclosures. In this sense, this article contributes to childhood studies and the anthropology of children, as well as to peasant studies in Brazil. It starts from the hypothesis that rural studies have elected the house/garden dichotomy as representative of the spaces of the ranch because they have generally heard men and women. Following Schildkrout (1978), it argues that children should always be heard lest we end up with an incomplete view of the subject under study.

Keywords: peasant village, Capuxu children, classifications, ethnography, drawings.

Resumo: Este artigo é uma etnografia do Sítio camponês a partir das classificações das crianças Capuxu, do sertão da Paraíba. Por meio da observação participante, das conversas informais e dos desenhos por elas produzidos, as crianças revelaram classificações do Sítio que diluem a clássica dicotomia casa/roçado formatada pelos estudos do rural (Woortman, 1983; Heredia, 1988; Santos, 1984; Garcia Junior, 1983; Godoi, 1999) apresentando a trilogia: casas, estradas (e seus atalhos) e cercados. Neste sentido, este artigo deseja ser uma contribuição aos estudos da infância e a antropologia da criança, bem como aos estudos de campesinato do Brasil. Ele parte da hipótese de que os estudos do rural elegeram a dicotomia casa/roçado como representativa dos espaços do sítio por terem ouvido em geral, homens e mulheres, e argumenta, conforme Schildkrout (1978), que as crianças deveriam ser sempre ouvidas sob pena de não se ter uma visão completa do tema em estudo.

Palavras-chave: sítio camponês, crianças Capuxu, classificações, etnografia, desenhos.

Introduction

This article is an ethnography of the Santana-Queimadas¹ Ranch (*Sítio*) – henceforth SQR – through the classifications of Capuxu children. It is based on research carried out between 2011 and 2014 among the Capuxu people of the hinterlands of the Brazilian state of Paraíba. This research analysed the production of the person through the fabrication of the bodies of children. Among the Capuxu, individual and collective processes for producing bodies

¹ The people who call themselves Capuxu (the Brazilian name for social wasps), and are thus known throughout the region, live in the Santana-Queimada Ranch, situated in the district of Santa Terezina, in the hinterlands of the Brazilian state of Paraíba, in the caatinga ecoregion. Approximately 200 people live along the 18km of the Ranch, in a place that practices kindred and village endogamy. There are 61 houses and gardens, distributed in hectares of land unequally distributed between families, as well as the Goiabeira River, five small salt licks and weirs, a (defunct) telephone post and the Sant'Ana Church.

and people result in the maintenance of the peasant ethos and the production of a collective identity. I wrote an ethnography of the production of the Capuxu person which focused on the numerous processes of constructing the body (Sousa, 2014a), producing a thick description of how these processes result in the constitution and perpetuation of a people with a unique ethos and identity.

An ethnography of children's classification of the Ranch brings to light the strong relationship between the people and the land, embedded in the range of processes which construct them and ensuring the tie of people to the group, thereby defining a condition of territoriality. The burial of umbilical cords that have become disconnected from the rest of the body is the strongest expression of the indissoluble relation that the Capuxu person establishes with the land, which is the axis for maintaining the peasant condition. At the same time, their land is the "bellybutton of the world" – an expression one of them used – the place where the umbilical cords of his people are buried, in an effort to keep them linked to the domestic group, sealing their fate and perpetuating Capuxu identity (Sousa, 2019).

Taking this ethnography as my starting point, the article analyses the distinct spaces that make up the Ranch where the Capuxu people live according to children's classifications. These reflections seek to describe houses, roads (and their shortcuts) and enclosures (where animals are kept) which children elected to represent the Ranch. The word 'enclosure' was chosen to represent the set of possible places for animals in the SQR; it includes perches, corrals, pens, pigsties or kennels.

Theoretical Foundation

Santana-Queimadas: "the bellybutton of the world"

I now present how the SQR was transformed into a place (Certeau 1994; Augè, 1994). To this end, I symbolically map the Ranch based on its territoriality, its physical and geographical space – which is inevitable since any representation of a place depends on space. I thus discuss how representations of space can often transcend frontiers, enclosures, gates, cattle grids, extending into the most unusual spaces, as is the case with the idea of the house – as we will see shortly.

As Wanderley (2009) argues, the place of life is not only the place where one lives, but the place in and from which the directions and meanings that guide social identities and the actors that inhabit them are constructed. I here analyse the ranch in which the Capuxu people live as "a system of diversified and complementary spaces which are articulated with each other" (Woortmann, 1983, p. 164). The ranch is hence a place brimming with meanings and affective ties. In the ranch, landscape is associated with a peasant order where the relations between humans and nature are cut across by the categories of land, family and work; this triadic order is at the essence of the definition of the ranch (Woortmann & Woortmann, 1997).

The spaces of SQR are classified through a logic that is configured by the peasant way of life, where notions of the family, work and movement are essential, and which are in dialogue with the notions of house, garden, and roads. Social relations are, after all, constructed in tandem with the construction/appropriation of the place. In order to account for Capuxu children's representations and appropriations of the place they inhabit, I start from three dimensions that, in their perspective, characterise the SQR: the house, the roads (and their shortcuts) and

enclosures, with the house and enclosed spaces being where children carry out tasks (work), as I have shown elsewhere (Sousa, 2004).

The peasant ranch can furthermore be understood as *the dwelling of life* (Heredia 1988) for rural families, where the familial dynamic is developed. The *dwelling of life* is characterized by the establishment of affective ties with the land, which makes space become the course of life, the place of life, as stressed by Wolf (1976), Heredia (1988), Garcia Júnior (1983), Castro (1997), Woortmann & Woortmann (1997), Stropasolas & Aguiar (2010), Carneiro (1998), and Brandão (1993).

The areas that make up the ranch are articulated with each other and convey meanings that are permeated by peasant morality. The organization of the Capuxu domestic unit reveals a system of values that is constituted as a text through which we can read about the peasant family. What informs the environments that make up the *place of dwelling* and how is this organized?

These environments are appropriated by Capuxu children via their own experiences, which I endeavour to describe densely. They attribute meaning to these spaces, where they anchor their value, both meaning and value constantly actualized in experience. Although I will present house, roads and enclosures separately, I do not aim to oppose these representations, but to show how all spaces of the Ranch are connected in how children appropriate them.

During fieldwork, this analysis was guided by drawings produced by children which provided clues as to how to proceed with the investigation, particularly in what concerns the classifications of the Ranch. I thus insist that such drawings, when taken alongside direct observation, can be important tools for research with children (Sousa & Pires, 2021). These drawings reveal something more than places; they reveal dynamics and relations that are established in the diverse spaces of domestic life and in the Ranch in general. This is evident in the number of pets featured in drawings, mostly around the house, some loose and wandering in its vicinity, others tethered to corrals, cages and tresses. Most of the pets which feature are named, which triggered an investigation of animal onomastics (Sousa, 2014b). These dynamic relations are also present in the roads cut through gates and cattle grids connecting diverse spaces of the Ranch, and in illustrations of trucks of different brands that travel on them, taking youth to school in the city or distributing water during the dry season.

Drawings were produced in the community's school, with material supplied by the school itself. There were no instructions for children to draw a particular subject. Nonetheless, all children drew the Ranch. The images depict houses, roads and enclosures, sometimes in the foreground and sometimes in the background. There was only one drawing which depicted gardens. In this article, the drawings have been grouped according to each of the categories investigated – houses, roads, and enclosures – as well as a few general drawings of the Ranch itself, such as those of Anna Clara (7), Iris (9), Maria Rita (6) and Rita de Cássia (8) which express varied elements of the Ranch such as lakes, trees, animals, perches, and weather. The house depicted in most drawings reveals its centrality in relation to the other spaces of the ranch, as we will see shortly. This centrality is visible in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4, as we can see below.



Figure 1. Anna Clara's (7) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.



Figure 2. Íris's (9) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.



Figure 3. Maria Rita's (6) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

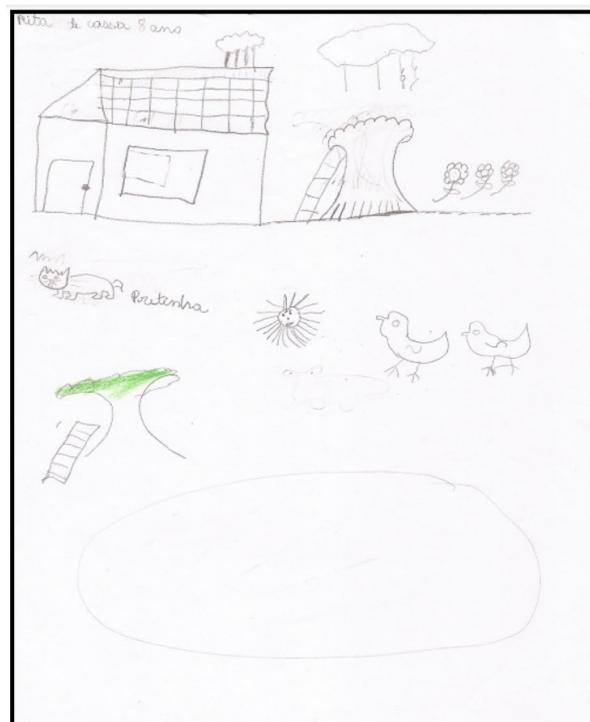


Figure 4. Rita de Cássia's (8) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

Methodology

I take how children classify and present spaces as a way of unravelling the general characteristics of the Ranch. Revealing the importance of these spaces, children provide a general framework for plotting the different environments that determine childhood experience.

To this end, this ethnography of the Ranch is presented through the elements that Capuxu children depict in their drawings and convey in their discourse, through which they offer clues regarding spaces in the Ranch to which I turned my anthropological gaze. Attentive to the point of view of Capuxu children through participant observation, informal conversations, and their drawings, I query the classic dichotomy of rural studies which reduces the Ranch to 'house' and 'garden' (Woortmann, 1983; Heredia, 1988; Garcia Júnior, 1983; Godoi, 1999)² by presenting Capuxu children's triptych of the Ranch: the house, the roads (and their shortcuts), and the enclosures.

The spaces that children point to in their discourse, and which they depict in their drawings, reveal how they appropriate the Ranch and signify it, how they attribute peculiar meanings to these spaces and define them via those places that are more accessible to them, thus demarcating a specific experience of childhood.

Children's day-to-day lives in the company of their mothers; their participation in domestic activities; their role in circulating messages, stories and warnings as well as food within a network of reciprocities; and the relations they keep with animals from a young age – all are expressed in the categories that they have chosen to explain Santana-Quiemadas: the house, the roads (and their shortcuts), and enclosures. This can only be perceived through the drawings of children, the analysis of which was fundamental to unveiling various aspects of the field research, such as the importance of roads and enclosures in a more appropriate perception of the Ranch.

Children's drawings express an unusual view of the Ranch, formatted into spaces that are significant for their experience with childhood. This article thus contributes to studies of childhood and the anthropology of children, but also to peasant studies in Brazil. It starts from the hypothesis that peasant studies have taken the house/garden dichotomy as representative of the spaces of the ranch because researchers have mostly paid attention to men and women; and it argues, following Schildkrout (1978), that children should always be heard as a variable in any field, lest one end off with an incomplete view of the object under study.

There is a further aspect to consider: the inexistence of gardens in children's drawings reveals the profound transformations the community has undergone in recent years. Between 2002 and 2004, during my first ethnographic sojourn in the field, children were present in the gardens every day, as shown in an ethnography written at the time about learning, playing and work as elements which circumscribed Capuxu infancy (Sousa, 2004). As I noted then, children's work occurred in the sphere of the garden and the surroundings of the house. In the intervening years, children visited the garden less and less. During a further period of research between 2011 and 2014, from which the data for this article was collected, gardens emerged as inexpressive in children's drawings and conversations³.

Living among the Capuxu, I produced a dense description, in Geertz's (1989) terms, that is attentive to the native categories and concepts that I apprehended 'experience near'. Participant

² The studies of Heredia (1988) and Garcia Júnior (1983) share a consensus that the organization of family labour occurs in two distinct spheres – the house and the garden. According to these authors, the house is conceived as the place of women *par excellence*, a space in which they carry out activities of childcare, preparing family meals, and the range of domestic affairs. The garden is seen to be the place where the group takes form as a unit of production.

³ Some of this may be attributed to public policies such as the Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil/PETI (Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour) and to conditioned cash transfer programmes, such as the Family Stipend. The impacts of this latter programme in the lives of children and their agency and protagonism were analysed by Pires (2009, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c), Pires et al. (2014) and Pires & Silva Jardim (2014).

observation, eliciting drawings from children, and informal conversations were fundamental techniques. Diaries, fieldnotes and photography were used as instruments of research. The use of drawings as instruments of analysis, and their production as a part of research techniques, has been discussed by Pires (2007, 2011), Sousa & Pires (2021), Gobbi (2012), Sarmento (2011), Toren (1993), Mead (1985) and James et al. (1998).

In this article I treat Capuxu children indistinctly for two reasons. First, because I have elsewhere discussed the characteristics of childhood and the ways that Capuxu adults classify children (Sousa, 2014a); second, because, living with them, I had access to all children of the community, so that, in this case, social markers of distinction do not apply.

Finally, this article revisits ethnographic data originally presented in my doctoral thesis. It updates both the scope of the data and my understanding of them at the time. The present ethnography and re-analysis of the data now seem to me more faithful to the field.

Results and Discussion

“Is anybody home?": the house and its surroundings

As Ellen Woortmann (1983) and Woortmann & Woortmann (1997) observe, the spatial system of the peasant ranch conforms to practical and symbolic dimensions in which the house is the starting point for the distribution of areas that compose it. This is how peasants think of the site of the house as a spatial reference point from which they project external environments which are correlated to each other⁴. Each person must determine the direction of work which follows from the house to the forest, respecting a logic which moves from the known and domesticated to the unknown and natural (Martins & Menasche 2011). Authors start from the analysis of the place of work, the ranch, which is itself the result of work in the spatial axis and of the secular historical process of man interacting with nature in the temporal axis⁵.

Authors such as Heredia (1988), Garcia Júnior (1983), and Woortmann & Woortmann (1997) have analysed the sphere of symbolic perceptions of the house, the hierarchical relations between the external and internal environments, the differences in gender and the associations between house and family. The very blueprint of the house can be seen to express social relations between the individuals that inhabit it, as suggested by Bourdieu (1999)⁶.

In Santana-Quiemadas, houses are made of brick, painted white and built at a distance from one another. Roofs are tall enough to ensure a breeze, making them bearable during the heat of the dry summer season. All houses have large open areas in front of them, known as the *terreiro* (patio) and in then back, known as *quintais* (yards) or *monturos* (middens). It is thus possible for the Capuxu to raise their animals in the vicinity of their houses, building pigsties, corrals, henhouses, etc. There are only a few places in the Ranch in which the houses are close to one another, or even attached to one another; this only occurs when a family builds a house for a newlywed son or daughter, a sort of semi-detached housing, which shelters so-called ‘aggregates’ in an extended family model. Houses have indoor bathrooms, with showers and toilets, and also kitchen sinks, and wood and gas stoves.

⁴ Mário W. B. de Almeida (1986) has previously claimed that the house, the yard and the garden reveal much about the rural family.

⁵ Woortmann (1983) considers the ranch to be the place of work, but for the Capuxu it is the garden that is the place of work, even if the house and its surroundings remain places where work is carried out, particularly by women and children.

⁶ Bourdieu (1999) shows that the Kabylie house in Algeria is a product of the social practices and culture of these people. Hence the “world of the house” is opposed to the rest of the world according to the exact same principles that organize it and which order the domains of existence.

Each of the houses in the SQR is inhabited by individuals who are linked by ties of kinship: father, mother, unwed children, and, in exceptional cases, other kinfolk such as the spouse's father, mother or sibling, newlywed son or daughter's sons-in-law or daughters-in-law, all of whom compose the domestic group. Living in the same household, men of a domestic group carry out tasks in the same garden, while the women and children of a domestic group carry out tasks in the house and its surroundings.

The drawings of Ana Franciely (8) and Antônio Vitor (7) show the house in the foreground, and depict the family that inhabits it and the animals in its vicinity. Amanda (9) drew herself at the window, observing the surroundings of her house, represented by plants and animals. Maria Helena (9) drew herself outside the house observing the weir. Maria Clara (6) and Thiago (8) drew the house surrounded by trees and animals. Maria Clara appears in the drawing beside her mother. Maria Helena drew attention to her house, the guava tree, her cat Maria and her dog Estrela, as well as the weir and herself before the house.

Figure 5 is Thiago's (8) drawing. Figure 6 is Amanda's (9). Figure 7 is Franciely's (8) drawing and Figure 8 is Maria Helena's. Maria Clara (6) is the artist of the drawing shown in Figure 9 and Antônio Victor (7) is the author of the drawing in Figure 10.



Figure 5. Franciely's (8) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

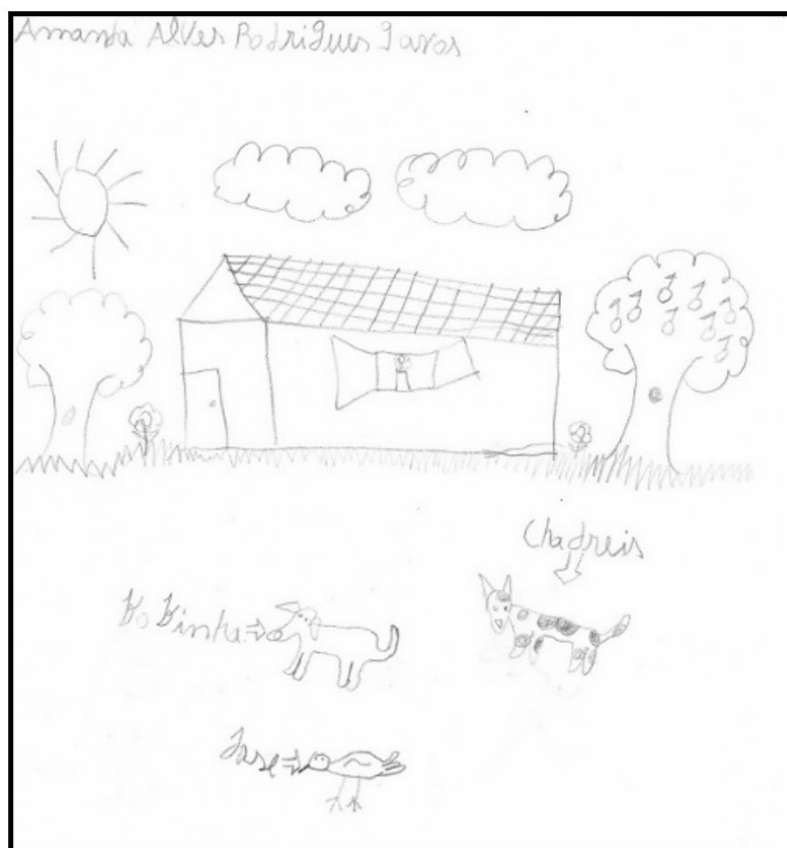


Figure 6. Amanda's (9) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.



Figure 7. Thiago's (8) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.



Figure 8. Maria Helena's (9) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

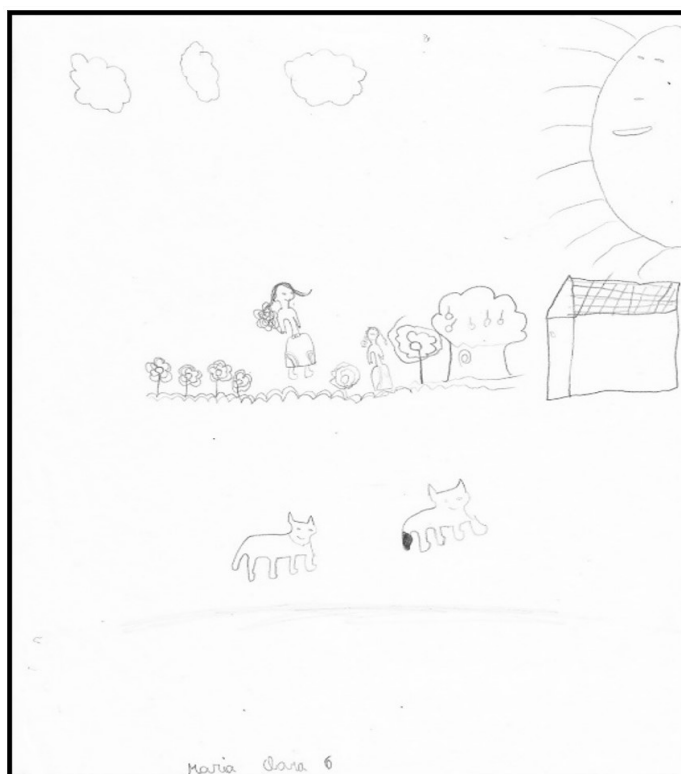


Figure 9. Maria Clara's (6) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

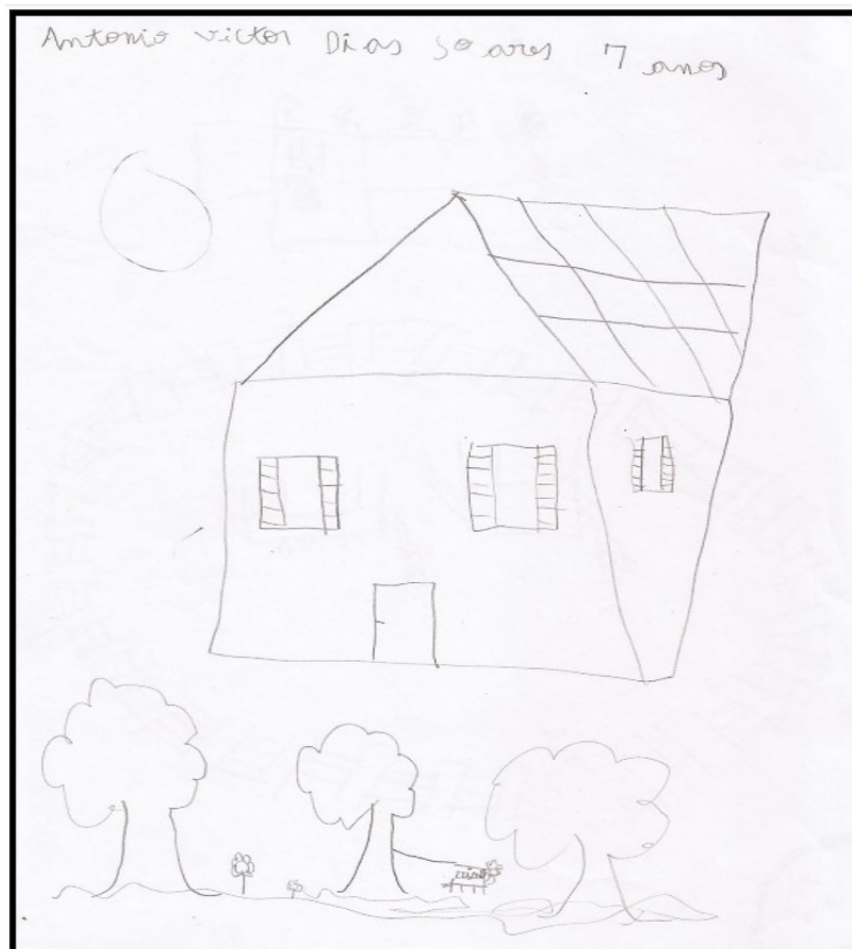


Figure 10. Antônio Victor's (7) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

The entrance of the house is almost always via the patio, where the living room is situated. However, this entrance is used mainly by people from outside the community, or by people from the Ranch who are coming from that direction and do not want to go around to the back. They are expected to shout, from the door or even the patio, "is anybody home"! Those who are intimate with the owners of the house are free to approach from the back door, which leads into the kitchen, and to announce their presence from there. These familiar faces usually show up to borrow some condiment, or a little sugar or coffee. Children who wander after their friends can relay a message or ask to borrow something from the kitchen door, or, indeed, from any window of the house.

Most houses have high footpaths in front of them, accessed by steps. When these footpaths extend beyond the front of the house they are covered, acting as a front porch. Even houses which do not have footpaths usually have steps which provide access to the main doorway. They call these steps *batentes*; they are usually also present at the back door and function as a sort of link between the land and the house.

Footpaths are important because the Capuxu people like to sit in front of the door of the house during the night, where they enjoy a light breeze that occasionally blows through the hinterlands. But when June and July arrive, the night will certainly be cold in the Ranch, particularly on higher ground.

House doors are narrow, and the windows small. Despite the fragility of the wooden doors, they are bolted shut at night or left ajar during the afternoon nap. When adults go to the garden and children are in school, the front door may be locked and people will leave via the back door, covering the kitchen door with a dishcloth. This safety is a result of the tranquillity of the place, where everyone keeps an eye out for everyone else. Some families leave the key to the front door under a rock, in a vase, under welcome mats or in a porthole in case children come back from school early.

Houses typically have two or three rooms with transparent curtains dividing them. Some have beds, but these are almost never used since people generally sleep in hammocks. Wooden closets, images of saints and family portraits line the walls.

The internal organization of the living environment reveals important meanings for the peasant world. Most houses have a living room with a sofa, rocking chairs for visitors to sit on, and a shelf with photos of the family and a television set. This space is predominantly associated with women and children, who spend more time at home. However, when the father arrives from the garden, or late after dinner, he is given the rocking chair, which has the best view of the TV and of the door and the road. The preferred places to talk to visitors are the footpath or the patio, followed by the living room. Outdoors tends to be preferred because of the heat. Rocking chairs are hence dragged outside, as are other chairs, depending on the number of visitors, and arranged in a circle around the footpath.

After the living room there is usually a dining room, with tables used only on special occasions, or when the number of visitors surpasses the number of chairs around the kitchen table. Refrigerators are often placed in the dining room. The bathroom is generally between the kitchen and the living room. It typically has a wooden door, a toilet bowl, a small sink and a shower, though it also always has a cask or large bucket with water brought in from the weir.

In the kitchen there are pots and clay water filters, a rustic table and a wooden stove. There is also a gas stove which is used less frequently. Meals such as lunch and dinner are always prepared in the wooden stove, since Capuxu people think it tastes better. The wooden stove not only transforms food, it is also saturated with meanings that convey family union. Women are tasked with cutting firewood for the stove, fanning it and preparing meals. Women lean against the stove to have a "small one" (a coffee), and boys and teenagers sit on it to talk while their sisters clean the kitchen. For younger children, the wooden stove is a perfect place for climbing and balancing on its edge.

For the Capuxu, the house is defined not only by its brick walls, its rooftop and internal divisions⁷. It extends into its surroundings; the patio is also considered to be part of the house, as is the footpath, the yard (or wall) and the midden⁸. Small plots or vegetable gardens are also considered to be part of the house; in these instances, they are said to be "inside the house", in order to be clear as to what dimension of the house is being specified. Anyone on the footpath, patio, or in any of the spaces linked to the house by contiguity or extension can say that they are "inside the house". If parents reprimand their child for some reason, and want to punish them, they will say to them "move on inside the house" (*passa pra dentro da casa*), to a place where, *a priori*, playtime and fun cease. The same would not be the case if the child were in the vicinity of the house, which always favours fun and games.

The patio in front of the house is where dogs rest under the scant shade of trees. The yard is at the back, following out from the kitchen. Children and animals love to move between the kitchen and the yard, sitting down on the steps that link the two to eat. The "yard" thus falls within the sphere of the house, as an extension of the kitchen, a place in which women carry

⁷ Referring to the small rural farms in Pernambuco, Garcia Júnior (1983) stresses that the house is not only the sheltered construction with walls, but also includes the surrounding enclosed set which they call 'patio' (*terreiro*).

⁸ Godoi (1999, p. 37) has also observed that "[...] the wall and the yard are to spaces that are always contiguous to the residence and can be considered to be [...] as if they were a projective unfolding of the house".

out a range of domestic tasks, such as washing clothes, preparing meat, etc., as well as using children to carry out small tasks⁹.

Beyond the yard there is the midden, which is where waste is discarded to be burnt later. It is hidden from the house and should remain out of sight of guests. The midden transitions from the house to woods, although it remains a part of the dimensions of the *place of dwelling* since it is visited by the family on a daily basis. But, as a transitional space, it is unkempt; not even grass that grows on it is cut. The midden is a true exit way of this complex of environments that the Capuxu call 'house'. Indeed, the frontiers of the Capuxu house can be defined by the patio and the midden.

The house and its surroundings are predominantly feminine locales¹⁰. The tasks carried out here are mostly those of women and children. Among the Capuxu, it is common for men to go to the garden and women to stay behind to clean the house and its surroundings (patios and yards are also swept), to feed animals, to make lunch, to get firewood, etc¹¹. Children aid women in all of these activities.

In the literature on rural Brazil, the house, the *place of dwelling*, is complemented by the garden, the *place of work*. From the perspective of Capuxu children, the garden gives way to enclosures. The two dimensions they identify here – the houses and the enclosures – are connected by roads. All of these spaces interact in a sort of cycle that is completed daily by adults and children. Thus, the daily movement that conducts the day-to-day of the Capuxu occurs in these directions: from house to garden (and vice versa) and between the two through roads¹².

The house features in diverse ways in the beliefs of the Capuxu, binding them to a supernatural world. Certain movements and dynamic events within it can define relations to the supernatural. The death of family members can be avoided if guests always exit the house from the same door that they used to enter it. To cross the house, entering it from the front and exiting through the back, or vice versa, brings bad luck. Yet it is difficult for children to remember this when they are in the kitchen, and the midden and animals beckon them to play. These beliefs oblige children, who always sprint so deftly, to retrace their steps, returning to the place from which they exited and reverting the bad luck that their imprudent behaviour could have caused, and which would have brought misery to family members.

Children must also carry out the rituals that will lead unwanted guests back to their houses. When guests are hosted in the living rooms during hours that a given host finds inconvenient, children, at their parents' behest, will place a broom behind the door or throw salt into the fire. Guests will then rapidly leave.

Other daily customs reveal the beliefs of the Capuxu people: the idea that bad luck will befall them if houses are swept from the back (the kitchen) toward the front; instead, they must be

⁹ According to Heredia, the space of the yard or wall is also called 'patio' by people of the Zona da Mata of the state of Pernambuco: "[...] the patio at the back of the house is fundamentally allocated to poultry and pigsties; it is also where goats spend most of their day. In a part of this space women wash dishes and clean children" (Heredia, 1988, p. 38).

¹⁰ In a study of the peasants of Maquiné, Ramos (2007) observes that "the tasks of the house and yard fall mostly to women, who raise chickens and pugs, work with milking cows and keep a vegetable garden" (Ramos, 2007, p. 72).

¹¹ Heredia (1988) has observed that "[...] house-garden opposition delimits areas of work and non-work, signalling feminine-masculine spaces that are relative to this division" (Heredia 1988, p. 79). The garden thus corresponds to the masculine space of production, of work, while the house corresponds to the feminine space, to consumption, to non-work. Although women participate in the tasks of the garden, and though they remain responsible for tasks in the household and its vicinity, that which takes place in the domestic dimension is not considered to be work and the work that a woman will carry out in the garden is considered to be 'help' (Paulilo, 1987). Even though women often carried out specific tasks in the garden, their tasks are essentially limited to the house and its surroundings where they are, in general, helped by children.

¹² Capuxu gardens are typically a few metres from their houses, almost always enclosed with barbed wire. In men's representations, the garden almost always emerges as the most important place in the Ranch, right after residences. For women, houses and their surroundings emerge as most important, closely followed by gardens from which their sustenance comes.

swept from the door of the living room to the kitchen. It is also a bad omen to sleep with one's feet towards the front door of the house, since, during wakes, coffins are always placed so that the deceased's feet point towards the street. Thus, beds or hammocks are always positioned so as to avoid the "position of the deceased".

Finally, I turn to a specific category of the house: the 'haunted' (*malassombrada*) (Sousa 2021; Pires 2011). Among the many hauntings¹³ which the Capuxu fear, we find the 'haunted-soul' (*alma-malassombrada*), which is usually seen within the house space and, less frequently, in the roads or gardens of the SQR. The so-called 'haunted houses' are spread throughout the Ranch and the imaginations of children.

The abandoned or ruined house is the most common place for hauntings, followed by brushwood, roads and gardens, though in these cases they only appear at night. There is no cemetery in the SQR. The deceased of the Ranch are buried in the town of Santa Terezinha, the district in which it is situated. The cemetery is always one of the most propitious places for the appearance of 'haunted souls'; in the absence of a cemetery, we can assume that haunted souls may, in principle, appear anywhere. Children therefore avoid abandoned or ruined houses.

There is a difference between abandoned and closed house. No one lives in a closed house, but relatives will have a key, and the deceased person's possessions will, in general, remain inside it for some time, until a new family occupies it, or decides to renovate. But it will for a long time be the "place where so-and-so died", because if someone dies at home there will be greater chance that the living will want to hold on to it.

When a house is abandoned, it lacks doors and windows, and typically will have no furniture. It is the perfect place for souls to inhabit, since souls "no longer need furniture", as I was told by a Capuxu child. Despite their insistence in transforming all spaces into places for fun, and even considering the potential of such a place for games, no one dares to play in it. Going into abandoned or closed houses is out of the question, as is playing in their vicinity or interior, particularly after dusk.

Thus, as well as in the child's own house, where the soul may appear at will, a child who enters an abandoned or ruined house, one which has been previously defined as a 'haunted house' (*casa malassombrada*), or who wanders through the roads of the Ranch, its brushwood or gardens at night, is more likely to encounter a soul which will ask to pray for it. Haunted souls are typically nocturnal, rarely being seen during the workday in the garden. Yet, although uncommon, gardens can be visited by souls during the day, where they appear to adults. These souls are the old owners of gardens, who come to check on the plantation and on how the land is being cared for, revealing a connection between the living and the dead which is also present in the strongest relation between peasants: their connection to land and work (Heredia, 1988; Moura, 1978; Woortmann, 1983, 1995).

Roads: routes, paths and shortcuts

The roads that traverse the Ranch are quite wide, converging on some junctions dividing them along different trajectories which, nonetheless, end up in the same place. Despite the importance of roads, residents often take shortcuts through garden paths. Children also take shortcuts, along liana groves, brushwood or gardens. These are always preferred paths, at least during the day, particularly for children who are fearful of walking through the woods at night lest they encounter hauntings or, less likely, raiders, since the main entrance to the Ranch is quite close to BR 361 Highway, which has heavy traffic.

¹³ *Malassombro* is a native term for apparitions, sightings, haunted souls, etc. which compose the local system of beliefs. Souls and of *malassombros* have been analysed elsewhere (Sousa, 2021).

It is not only animals and people, cars or motorcycles, bicycles and children's tricycles that move along the roads of the SQR; all forms of exchange, reciprocity and *compadrazgo* relations also move along it. Beliefs and human or animal onomastics circulate through it. I reckon that all of the peasant social organization of the Capuxu people moves through the roads of the Ranch, including kinship, family, marriages.

Many of the roads of the Ranch are interrupted by cattle grids which prevent animals from passing. There are usually wooden gates next to every cattle grid.

Houses are built at some distance from the main roads of the Ranch, although almost all can be seen by those who pass through them. In general, they face the roads, or else their sides face the roads. Houses are never built with their backs towards the roads.

The Capuxu tend to prefer to traverse shorter routes, always trying to dodge the sweltering heat of the sun of the Paraíba hinterlands. They take shortcuts through gardens, where they may benefit from shady patches for a few metres. Any respite from the sun is welcome, particularly during the unbearable days of the dry season.

The main roads of the Ranch also pass in front and alongside corrals, gardens, and plantations, as well as in front of the Church and the parish house. Part of the main road is known as the "wet-passage", a small, improvised cement bridge built over the Goiabeira River. Roads also pass alongside the football pitch where the Sunday games are played, as well as the larger matches pitting the Santana team against their rivals from neighbouring districts.

The drawings of Gabriela (8), Erinaldo (7), Evai (10) show the roads connecting the various parts of the Ranch, between houses and weirs, with the many vehicles that use them. Gateways and cattle grids can be seen in Gabriela's drawing. Tales (8) drew the Ranch's school, from which the makeshift buses take young people to school in town. In front of the school there is a corral with a bull tethered to it.

Figure 11 is Gabriela's (8) drawing and Figure 12 is Evai's (10). Figure 13 is Tales's (8) and Figure 14 is Erinaldo's (7).



Figure 11. Gabriela's (8) drawing.

Source: author's fieldwork.



Figure 12. Evai's (10) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

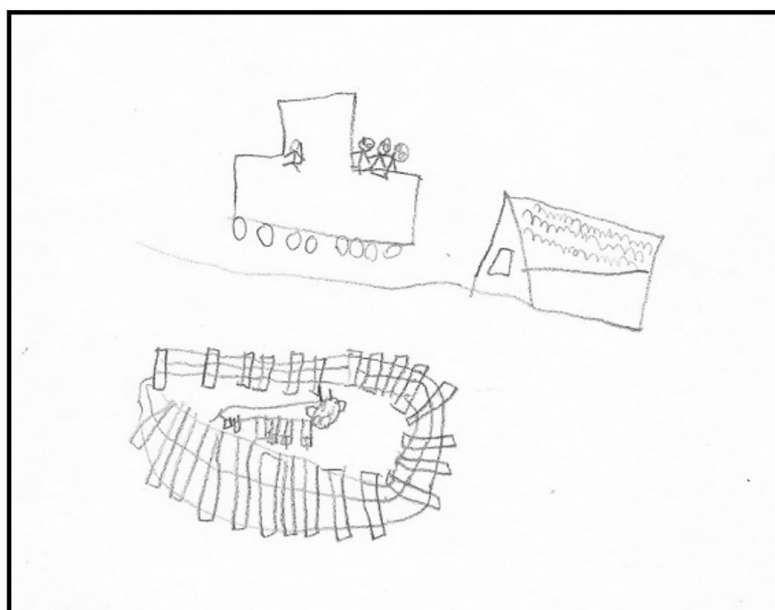


Figure 13. Tales's (8) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

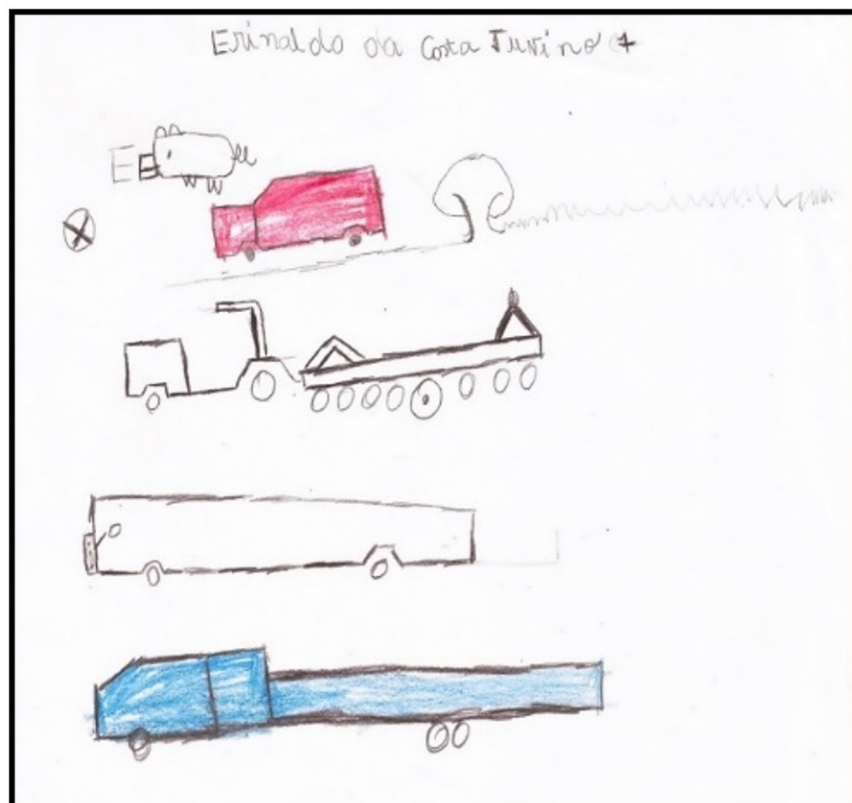


Figure 14. Erinaldo's (7) drawing.

Source: author's fieldwork.

There are social facts that traverse the roads of the Ranch other than the increasingly rigorous movement of motorcycles, bicycles and automobiles, of animals – particularly dogs, horses and donkeys – and of passers-by who traverse the road toward the school, the church, or the home of a neighbour/kinsperson/compadre, of men going to gardens, of children playing, riding their bikes or running around.

We can start by taking note of the souls, sightings or hauntings that are always on the road. The road is a preferential place for the appearance of all sorts of hauntings, particularly at night. They are thus avoided after nightfall, particularly by those who are travelling alone. Roads should only be traversed at night by people in groups, and neighbours, aunts, godmothers, or sisters-in-law are often asked to accompany one home. One never knows what the roads of the Ranch have reserved for those who tread on them alone. Hence children tend to avoid them at night, or, if they must travel along them, they will do so in someone's company, quickly, always looking back over their shoulders to ascertain that they are not being followed by a haunting.

Adobe crosses are often built beside roads; that is, at the edge of the BR highways and on roads on which someone suffered an accident and died. These become like mini-tombs: candles are lit on them, and whenever one passes by, they will make the sign of the cross, as when one passes before a graveyard or a church. The children of Capuxu will place a small stone on them whenever they pass one of these mini-tombs.

More than people and animal pass along roads. Many forms of exchange and reciprocity, and all forms of socialization, also circulate along them. One can see roads being crossed by children carrying pots and pans, dishes or small recipients in hand. They are after domestic goods that can be borrowed, such as sugar, coffee or salt which their parents forgot to buy at

the market, or which have run out. They take with them maize, beans, and they bring sweet corn cakes, maize porridge, and so forth. This circuit of exchange never ends. There is always something new to be offered to one's *comadre*, sister-in-law or sister. Children are always sent by women who exchange among themselves.

If they are lucky, children might run into a mate who is performing the very same task, and they can stop and chat for a while, or both can go together to the intended house. This might leave them with some time for a quick game on the road, racing each other or playing catch. Children seem to bear the heat better than most. They race their pets along roads, all the while calling them by their names (Sousa 2014b).

Anyone who is met on the road should be greeted, regardless of how well that person is known, what their kinship is or where they live. It is a major shortcoming to fail to greet a passer-by, to bow one's head to them, or to raise one's hand with the characteristic sounds of "ê", "ô", "opa", which are similar to the sound they make as they herd cattle. At the very least one must nod one's head to any passer-by, even to strangers who use the main road of Santana-Queimadas to reach neighbouring ranches.

Social relations, ties of neighbourliness and kinship, all are strengthened along the roads of the Ranch. The roads guide those who visit their relatives, women who take their children to the *rezadeira* ('prayer mistress'), men who are heading to Chico Miguel's house for a game of cards, young people going to the football pitch for their weekend match, teenagers on their way to visit a Capuxu newborn, friends who visit a mate who is ill, teenagers learning to ride their parents' motorcycles, or a child deftly running away after having stolen the image of a saint.

The roads of Capuxu are hence the spaces through which the dynamic relations of the peasant way of life flow. They connect houses to gardens, two important places for the construction of bodies and people. Roads are like links that connect people and places, fertile spaces for contacting the supernatural or for associating humans and animals. This is why I claim that social relations, kinship and supernatural interactions are established and strengthened along roads, which cause humans to converge, and humans and animals to meet. Roads also bring into contact humans and saints (an image nicked from a relative's house to ensure a rainy year; an image carried during the prayers of May).

Everyone meets along the roads of the Santana-Queimadas Ranch, all spheres become connected, all social webs get entangled. But it is also possible to escape from the roads through shortcuts. The Capuxu people prefer shortcuts, particularly if they not only shorten the time of travel, but also enable other forms of contact.

If one wants to meet a friend, a Capuxu person can go to a cousin's house through the garden paths. Along the way, he will cut across various gardens, passing through the back of many houses, shouting out his greetings to the family, who will know that someone is approaching because their dog will bark. He may ask the family after their animals, talk of the weather, hear news, and so on. If he passes at some distance he will raise his hand in a friendly manner, perhaps warning the owner of the garden that an animal has got loose, or is caught on some rope, or perhaps is in danger.

Children also prefer shortcuts, whether through gardens or woods, dense areas that adults can hardly get through without getting hurt by branches and lianas. But children rarely take shortcuts on their own, since they fear wild animals that may cross them, or hauntings that, instead of appearing at night, as they are wont to do, exploit a child's loneliness and the sombre tone of the brushwood to ask the child for prayer or for other favours (Sousa, 2021).

Roads are responsible for ensuring the dynamics of Capuxu relations, reciprocity, chance encounters, gentle and obligatory greetings, solidarity, fun, and stories of hauntings. Roads

lead to the garden and the house, to enclosures and the brushwood, to the Goiabeira River, the weirs and all sorts of places through which Capuxu people move with their peasant way of being, always fluid, continuous, and yet, at the same time, anchored to the same places. Along the roads of the Ranch the Capuxu people renew and actualize their network of reciprocal social relations, the peasant way of being, and life itself!

In this way, the roads of the Ranch are not “non-paces” in Augé’s (Augè, 1994) terms, although they are also places of passage. They are part of the local imagination, spaces which occupy the memories of a people who narrate episodes, events which occurred on roads. They are landscapes of constant encounters, places where one hears of deaths, of births shouted out from the windows of the homes of friends and relatives who, certain that there will be someone on the road, dangle from windows or bolt towards the door to spread the news. It is on roads that people are invited over for coffee or lunch. They are characterized by endless waiting, by animals that are in the fields, visible from roads, and which can be carefully watched by their owners, squatting on the roadside looking for some shade. At its edges, relatives and compadres squat to tell tales, lean against cattle grids or tree trunks or anywhere in which they can exchange “a bit of a tale”

Enclosures: henhouses, corrals, perches, and pens

As we noted above, we have chosen to call all spaces in which animals are raised by the people of Capuxu ‘enclosures’. This includes corrals, pigsties or pigpens, and henhouses or perches. Although ‘enclosure’ is not a characteristic of perches, my aim is to group under one dimension all spaces in which animals are sheltered and toward which the gaze, care and attention of children are directed. These are spaces which they visit, or which are under their care.

Enclosures are usually built in those spaces which I have referred to as “in the vicinity” of the house or in the house’s “surroundings”, which are domestic and feminine, and which are therefore also juvenile. Perches, sties and corrals are, with good reason, closer to the house – this universe of women – rather than to gardens, which are eminently male places. These middle-sized animals, domestic creatures, are under the watch and care of women and children. Only cats and dogs are raised with total freedom in the Ranch. Chickens, too, spend most of their time ranging free, but at night they are led to perches, a safe space for their slumber.

Classic studies of the Brazilian peasantry often mention the raising of animals as something that takes places around the house, in an eminently female domain. This view omits the presence of children and their participation in domestic tasks, activities that women and researchers call “help”, thus mirroring the same conceptual equivocation, later condemned, concerning the work of women in the garden, which was also classified as “help” (Paulilo, 1987).

The fact is that the Capuxu child is completely comfortable crossing these places and caring for animals. Early in the morning, they walk across cattle in corrals to get milk from the skilled hands of their fathers. They are almost always accompanied by younger children, who may even walk under cattle, shortening their path to their father, uncle or grandfather. They know animals, and refer to them by their name: bulls, cows, and calves. The Capuxu call these places where cattle are raised ‘corrals’. They are more often than not circular.

Corrals are generally made of wood, with overlaid boards connected to one another. They occur in various parts of a house’s surroundings: some beside the house, behind it or almost in front of it. There are troughs in which food and water are placed, large rubber stables, with sectioned palm trunks, always with large salt crystals and abundant water during the dry season.

Corrals are entered by wooden doors or gates known as *puxa-encolhe*. Wooden bolts are easily removed by children who climb on top of the overlaid boards in order to move it. Occasionally, a few stables are built in the exterior of the corrals of suspended wood. In other cases, large brick tanks store water for cattle. Sometimes it is possible to let cattle go to a nearby weir for water, when they are full.

The place where pigs are kept are called 'pigsty' (*chiqueiro*) or 'piggery' (*pocilga*). These are less common in the SQR. They are usually made of barbed wire, wood (like corrals) or brick. They also have stables inside them which store water or *lavagem*, which is what the Capuxu call the leftovers and spoilt fruit and vegetables that are fed to pigs.

Some pigsties do not have stables, nor water, nor *lavagem*, with pigs being free to seek water and food wherever. They are only tethered at night. These places are muddy and stinky, and tend to be avoided by children. They restrain themselves to opening the small gate so that the pigs may exit, and then guiding them back in the afternoon. Only piglets are touched or pampered. Once they are grown, they barely receive names from children, which are not attached to them as they are to other animals.

Carlos Daniel (9) drew attention to animals and backgrounded the house. He drew cattle, pig, rabbit and parrot in corrals or cages. The dog and chicken range freely in the surroundings of the house. Íris (9) drew the house, and also chicken and birds, the weir and a ladder leaning against a tree as an improvised chicken perch. Antônio Victor (7) chose to draw the corral, under the sub, with cattle inside. There is a truck with a driver passing in front of it. Tales (8) drew the Ranch's school, from which the makeshift bus that takes youngsters to school leaves. In front of the corral there is a tethered cow.

All of these enclosures are represented in the drawings below: Figure 15 is Tales's (8) drawing, Figure 16 is Íris's (9) , Figure 17 is Carlos Daniel's (9) and Figure 18 Antônio Victor's (7).

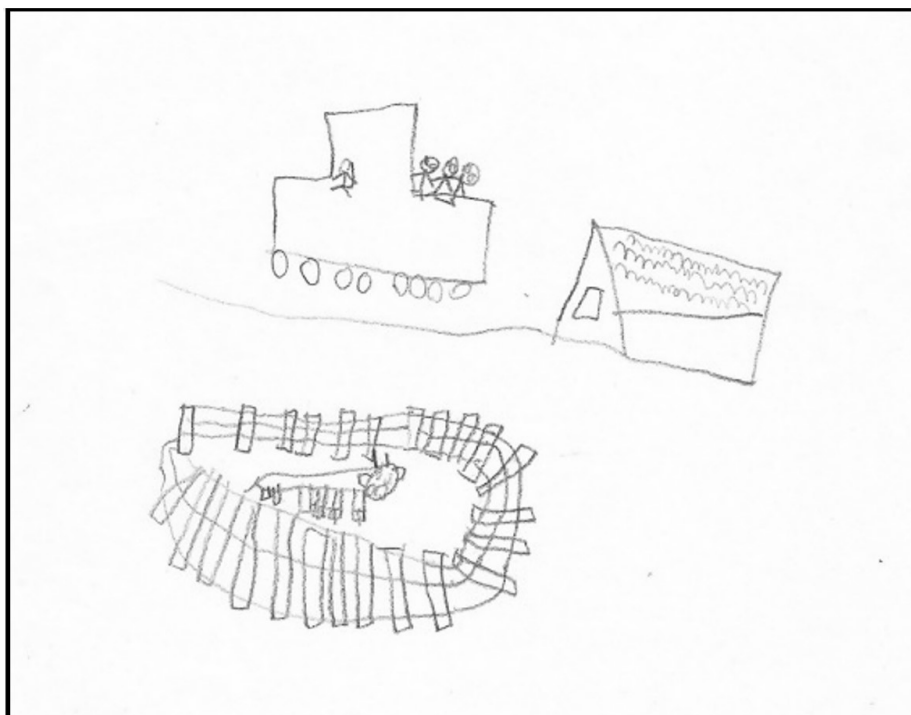


Figure 15. Tales's (8) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.



Figure 16. Íris's (9) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

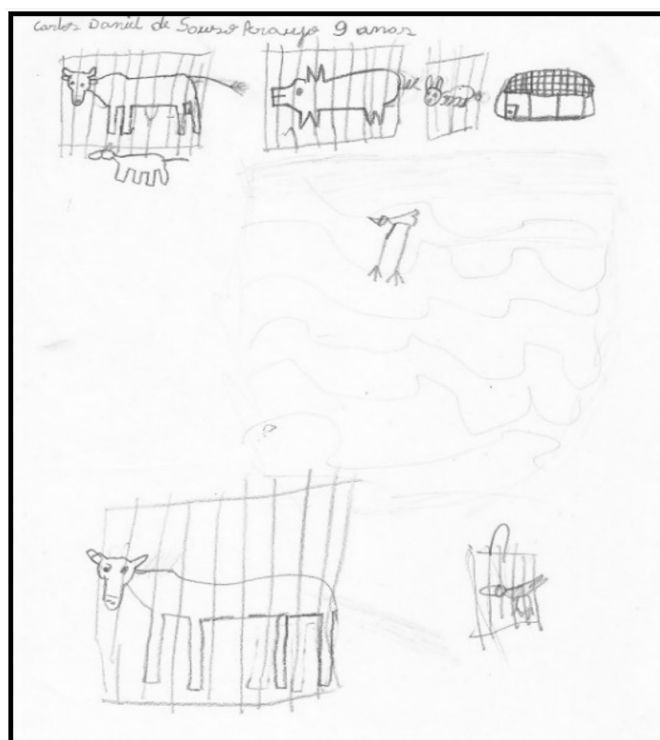


Figure 17. Carlos Daniel's (9) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

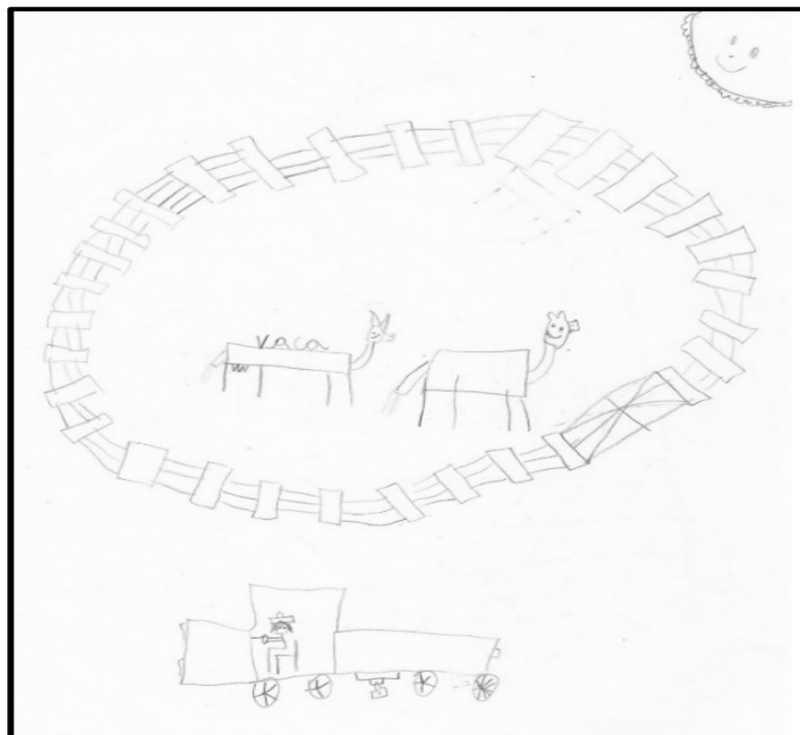


Figure 18. Antônio Vitor's (7) drawing.
Source: author's fieldwork.

Perches are generally wooden ladders, improvised, old and worn down, resting against trees and balanced on trunks or branches. Chickens can thus climb on to trees and sleep on them. Capuxu houses always have some tree in their surroundings. There is usually one beside it or in the back, and these are usually used as perches.

In the absence of a tree, it is possible to build a simple perch with wooden boards. It is also possible to enclosure chickens in with wooden beams as a small corral, but generally they are allowed to range freely. All that is necessary is a set of raised wooden boards upon which they sleep. This protects them from foxes which, according to the Capuxu, occasionally appear in search of chickens. Capuxu children count chickens at night and direct them to their perches, or to trees serving as perches.

Considering the relationship between Capuxu children and animals (which I will analyse in another article), of proximity and care, and the number of tasks that children carry out for these animals, it is no surprise that, in representing Santana-Queimadas in their drawings, they do not strive to hide the spaces that shelter these very animals. Under the watchful eye of the children of Capuxu, Santana-Queimadas is made up of houses, roads and enclosures, places that concern children in every sense possible, which they can access, which have a fundamental presence, and the use of which is depicted. These are places that children know and which they are at ease in, navigating them skilfully and dexterously, which they could traverse with their eyes closed, as they might do in a late afternoon playing blind man's bluff: blindfolded, arms raised as they move through the empty space of the corral, after cattle has left to graze, looking for their friends who hide as best they can.

Finally, there are the pens (*apriscos*), where goats and sheep are kept. Although these animals are no longer that common among the Capuxu, one can still find one family or another that raises them. The animal is considered to be well-suited to the hinterlands, capable of

surviving through long dry spells and the without grazing land. As with pigs, goats and sheep do not demand much work in order to survive, nor are they expensive to feed since they will eat anything available in the Ranch.

Pens are typically made with different-sized rods like sties and corrals. It is entered through small gates made from rods or *puxa-encolhes*. There is no need to build stables for food and water since goats spend the day freely roaming, only returning to the pens at night. Children are responsible for opening small gates to set them free, and putting them back inside in the afternoon. Children will often play with young goatlings.

When one of these animals goes missing, failing to return to the pen in the afternoon, children will be tasked with finding them, in a sort of hide-and-go-seek game. They will often gamble with each other over who will find the missing goat first, boasting of their own talent, narrating, as an epic adventure, the sagacity and skill of the child who found the animal.

Conclusions

In this article, I have described the peasant ranch as it is classified by children. My investigation has shown that, for Capuxu children, the categories which define the ranch are the house, the roads and the enclosures, in contrast to the house/garden binary which is usually stressed in the Brazilian social science literature.

I start from the view that studies of the peasantry in Brazil do not factor children into their analyses, failing to consider them another subject in the field, neglecting them even when their presence is observed, and when they act as guides for researchers. Even studies which focused on the sustainability, heredity, territoriality and viability of the ranch have tended to not be attentive to the place of children and their gaze on the land which they would inherit.

My hypothesis is that, listening only to men and women, researchers involved in peasant studies who reduced the peasant ranch to only two dimensions, the house and the garden, which are quintessentially female and male spaces, respectively. House and garden are furthermore places where the family unit is reproduced, where the ethos of the peasant condition is forged, as if children do not exist at all. Thus, other equally important dimensions of the ranch, such as roads and enclosures, were left out of the analysis, or were considered inessential in a definition of the peasant ranch. Through an ethnography that takes children as important research subjects, recognizing their agency, this work has been concerned with describing the ranch through the classification of children. It is hence a contribution to peasant studies in Brazil and studies of childhood by focusing on Capuxu children's triptych of the peasant ranch: house, roads and enclosures.

The epistemological implications of all this lead us to reflect on the importance of paying attention to children in all research, lest we provide an incomplete view of the theme under study, a point that has long been made in childhood studies. On the other hand, the results of this research point to the importance of drawings as techniques for research with children, since it is through them that I was first able to glimpse how they conceptualized the spaces of the ranch, leading me to important research findings.

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