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## **Rural Adaptation and *Quilombola* Community: Dynamics and Complexities of Nested Social Territorial Systems.**

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### ***Introduction***

Important changes of social models often correspond to important changes of political models. In Brazil, between the 1960s, marking the beginning of the military dictatorship and the 1980s, times of transition to democracy, we can observe a renewal not only of the political models but also social models, including rural models. During the 1960s and 1970s, the export agriculture (*agronegócio* or agribusiness) takes off<sup>1</sup>, relying on the intense modernization of the activity: it mechanizes as it intensifies, it defines a new productive and technological profile as new working relationships (Zanoni and Lamarche 2001). The conditions of the 1980s, when the return to democracy allows voices to rise and social movements to emerge, mark a turning point for the rural models. The critics of part of the society towards this productivist and modernizing model open the space for alternative rural models (Wanderley *apud* Zanoni and Lamarche 2001). That is when, for instance, the famous landless movement arises and claims for the small poor farmers, not only the access to land ownership, but also the renewal of the prevalent rural model.

These claims occur in a key moment of political paradigm shift, leading to the 1988 Federal Constitution. Thus, the democratic model opens the way to diversity and begins to integrate all the specificities and fringes of the Brazilian society, and especially these small poor farmers. In this multiculturalist context, an

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<sup>1</sup> According to William Roseberry (1993), the modern changes of the agriculture consists at the same time of “a transformation of the landed regime, the introduction of cash crops, the investment of capital in agriculture, the out-migration of villagers, the urbanization or suburbanization of a village, or the adoption by villagers of reproduction strategies stressing fewer offspring”. In Brazil, this agriculture model focuses on products such as soy or sugar cane (essentially used for the ethanol manufacturing)

ethnopolitical category of “communities of remnant *Quilombolas*” arises. Thus, the *Quilombolas*, descendants of maroon slaves, can claim this official status and its respective rights. The Article 68 of the Federal Constitution stipulates that “For the remnants of *Quilombos* communities occupying the land [of their ancestors] is recognized as having the definitive ownership, State to issue their respective titles.” Thus, these rural communities correspond to the enforcement of a legal-institutional model, setting both territorial (a bounded area characterized by an inalienable land status of collective ownership), cultural (related to kinship and identity criteria as well as a *Quilombola* identity and various representations of identities and territories), ecological (according to resources system and specific uses), and sociopolitical boundaries (in accordance with multiple organizations such as “*Quilombola* community”, associations, religious community, etc. linked to territorial organizations). Currently, Brazil has a hundred of tenured land since 1995, comprising around 185 *Quilombola* communities. The trend is still increasing with more than a thousand current procedures for granting land tenure, which represents around 1200 rural communities (CPISP 2010).

On the sidelines of the homogenization of a productivist rural model on one hand and of urbanization and “desagrarianization”<sup>2</sup> processes on the other hand, this social and rural alternative rural model highlights the dynamics and future prospects of rural areas, transforming and adapting according to the conditions, requirements and changes of the modern globalized world. Therefore, focusing on a conceptual model, we plan to examine adaptations’ specific mechanisms and modalities of *Quilombola* rural populations and their territories. Thus, we will try to determine reproductive abilities and understand how rural communities such as *Quilombola* ones succeed in maintaining themselves and adapting themselves to a big variety of internal and external changes (from local resource management to urbanization and markets’ pressures).

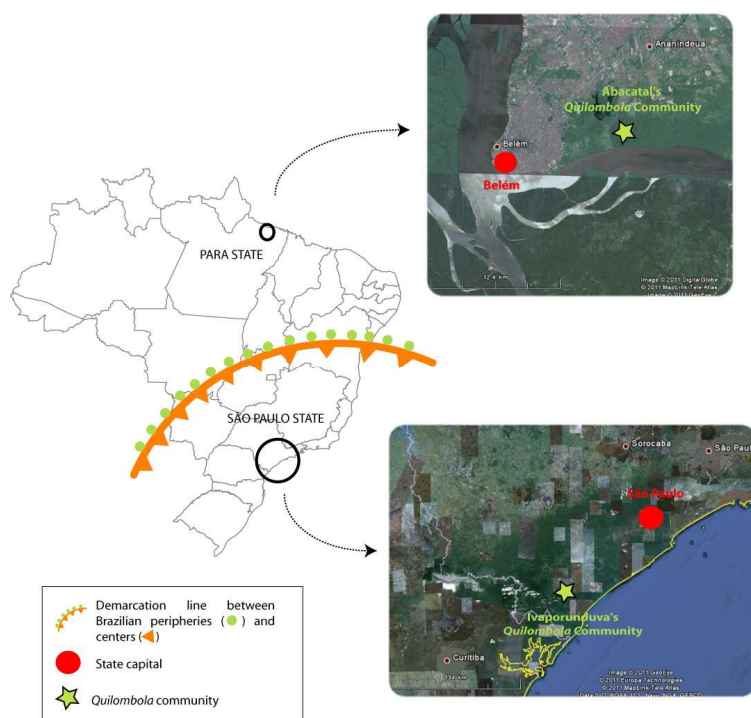
The case of the *Quilombola* community is particularly relevant. Based on a dual origin, as an old socio-cultural group and as a recent political and legal category, the *Quilombola* community presents very modern issues. Characterized by both their local specificities and their inclusion into encompassing political, economical and social sets, this kind of rural communities is part of multi-scalar networks. In this context, to

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<sup>2</sup>This process has been point out by several authors in different regions of the planet (Lamarche 1991, Netting 1993, Mendras 1995, Abramovay 2000, Steward 2007, etc.). It consists of a disconnection between small farmers’ livelihood and the agro-extractivist activities. Thus, the desagrarianization is characterized by a diversification of the activities towards manufacturing and service sectors which also lead to changes in the livelihood and the socio-cultural identity of this desagrarianized population

what extent these territorial and socio-political arrangements allow *Quilombola* communities to cope with external and internal pressures while seeking to satisfy new socio-economic expectations?

This paper is part of a research which will focus on two *Quilombola* communities, located in fragile ecosystems which are essential for the conservation of biodiversity. The goal will be to compare and analyze them in their specific local contexts. Abacatal<sup>3</sup>, one of the first which acquired *Quilombola* land tenure status (1999) is located in the Amazon, marginal region of Brazil, although in a central position inside the Metropolitan Region of Belém (the capital of Pará State). On the other hand, Ivaporunduva, a *Quilombola* community recently tenured (2003), belongs to a mosaic of other communities in the Vale do Ribeira, the remote mountainous and costal area of São Paulo, Brazil's flagship state (*Map 1*). Thus, the comparison would be useful to highlight (or not) a *Quilombola* specificity within the setting of different positions and contexts.



**Map 1: Localization of *Quilombola* Fields. A Dual Center/Periphery Situation.** *Designed by Céline Raimbert. Source : Google Earth, 2011.*

<sup>3</sup> This community has been the subject of field research (September – December 2008) whose results appear in my master's dissertation submitted in June 2009.

This paper consists of a conceptual theoretical approach and methodological reflection, using the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) and Social-Ecological System (SES) Frameworks (Ostrom, 2005) and combining it with sociological and geographical theories and concepts. Thus, we will focus on the conceptual implications of adaptation's abilities and reproduction of *Quilombola* communities. As a complex process, we will assume that the adaptation's abilities rely both on the structures and dynamics of rural communities, conceived as an evolutionary layout of social and territorial systems and sub-systems where the Collective Action can express itself. Referring to and adapting the SES Framework, we will try to understand how we can consider *Quilombola* communities as Social Territorial Systems which involve interaction of the Community and the Families, the Territories and the Micro-Territories. Then, we will discuss our methodological strategy, proposing a representation of the Temporal Dynamics of *Quilombola* Social Territorial Systems. There, we will emphasize above all the key role of the Collective Action and its mechanisms. Finally, to complete these conceptual and methodological assumptions, we will illustrate it by analyzing a concrete case, based on previous fieldwork researches in the *Quilombola* community of Abacatal.

## **1. Quilombola Communities as Social Territorial Systems: A Conceptual Context.**

### *A. Complexities of the Rural Reproduction Process and the SES approach.*

Our first assumption is that the rural reproduction implies a complex process: multi-level as well as non-linear, systemic as well as dynamic. The multiplicity of the variables to be considered to analyze the adaptation's abilities of rural areas invites to consider them as complex systems. A myriad of local and global characteristics interweaves, in order to generate a resilient rural environment. These characteristics may be of different natures: socio-demographic, institutional or economical-environmental. Therefore, rural systems, such as *Quilombola* communities, appear as articulated sets of relationships and interactions at various spatial (from global to micro-local) and temporal scales (evolutionary perspective). The reproductive process is based on multiple mechanisms, sometimes idiosyncratic, sometimes generic. Dynamic and

flexible, each rural system is characterized by both its local peculiarities and its inclusion into encompassing sets.

As systemic and complex, the *Quilombola* rural areas can be conceived as “Social Ecological Systems”. According to Elinor Ostrom, “the SESs are composed of multiple subsystems and internal variables within these subsystems at multiple levels analogous to organisms composed of organs, organs of tissues, tissues of cells, cells of proteins, etc.” (Ostrom 2009:419). This approach, by emphasizing the relationships between a local system and encompassing situations and powers, allows a more complete and multi-scalar analysis of the reproductive processes and transformations of rural systems.

In accordance with this framework, we propose to consider the *Quilombola* community as a nesting of dynamic systems and sub-systems, whose adaptation’s abilities depend upon an on-going arrangement of its parts. Furthermore, these different parts are constantly and interdependently interacting at different levels, adapting and recomposing according to changing situations over time. In this context, we assume that the rural reproduction of *Quilombola* communities is based on a perpetual adaptation’s process, depending upon two types of flexible sub-systems: social systems and territorial systems, giving rise, by their interaction, to a relevant system that we can define by its capacity for collective action and adaptation. These systems, in turn, are formed by many sub-systems: a community unity and its territories as well as kinship and family groups and their respective micro-territories. Both of which could be further disaggregated to more individual levels.

### *B. Adapting the structure of the SES: the hypothesis of a dual movement.*

So, we argue that the first systems base on a dual dynamic of the collectivity and the individual, the community and the family<sup>4</sup>, as the basic social unit of rural group (Kohler 2006). We will combine this approach with Denis Segrestin’s theoretical model (Segrestin 1980) about Communities of Collective Action, which he develops in the context of professional mobilization. Thus, Segrestin collates a “Concrete Community” and a “Community of Reference”. The latter, as a multidimensional basic unit, takes the

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<sup>4</sup> By family, we mean groups of individuals bound by real or imagined kinship. Indeed, the kinship combines at blood ties and shared ancestrality with shared history and relations of solidarity and reciprocity. Thus, Family is a multi-scalar concept which could represent a whole community as well as a household. In our analysis, we consider the family as an expanded domestic nucleus.

features of the family nuclei, grouped around common values and interests. The former, the “Community of Reference”, both more abstract and less complex, appears as a political institution of action, mobilized in specific situations (like Threat Situations). It reduces the community to its fundamental and ideological dimensions. In the *Quilombola* case, it would be an organization which bears clear and strong messages around the *Quilombola* identity and does not take into account all the diversities and complexities of the “Concrete Community”. The “Community of Reference” serves as a showcase for the “Concrete Community”. It is its spokesperson, particularly facing the encompassing society and institutions.

We will question the dynamics of interdependence between the collective “reference” and the “concrete family units”. How can we explain the predominance of the Community or the Family dynamics into the rural system? Does merely the concern with economical interests give more weight to the Family dynamics and political ones to the Community dynamics? Does this mechanism depend only upon individual fears and threats which require collective reaction and actions? Or are there also any structural effects or constituent characteristics, especially linked to their *Quilombola* status? But to answer these questions, we need first to take into account the other side of the Community Systems: the Territorial Systems.

We will consider them in the way of the social and cultural geography of Jean Gallais (1976), Joël Bonnemaison (1981) and Guy Di Méo (2005) as ambivalent and flexible. They are characterized by a diversity of Community Territories (resources territories, socio-cultural territories and institutional territories, all governed by laws, rules and norms) and Micro-Territories (Raimbert, 2009). These micro-territories can be considered as territorial subsets defined by specific functions, both socio-political, economic or ecological. They are also closely associated with family/kinship systems.

All these territories are characterized by graded boundaries (Ellen 1991). This notion defends a conception of boundaries as lines defining interactions at different levels of intensity and at different scales of inclusiveness. Thus, it allows to conceive “system (and ecosystem) (...) less in terms of absolute and discrete boundaries than in terms of centers, peripheries and structural focus” (Ellen 1991: 192). Thus, the graded boundaries define a systemic vision of spaces and interactions such as a dynamic approach of the limits conceived as reactive and capable of adaptation. In this context, different Territories and Micro-Territories can overlap and design numerous family, institutional or economic networks, depending upon adopted

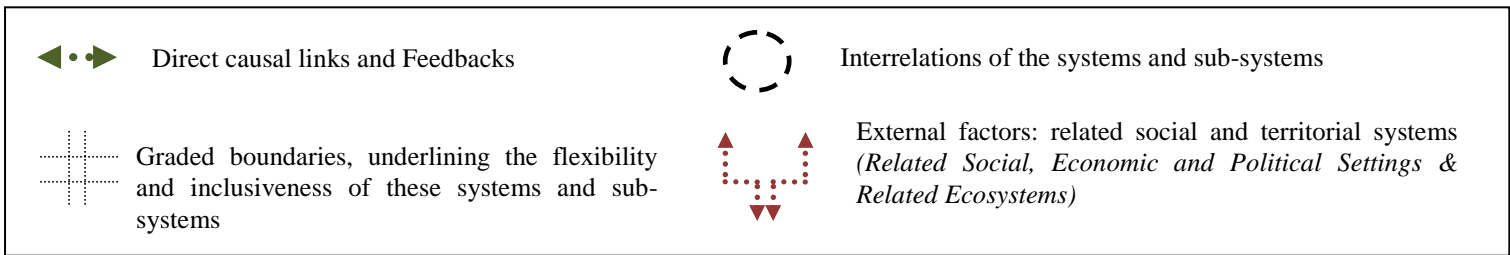
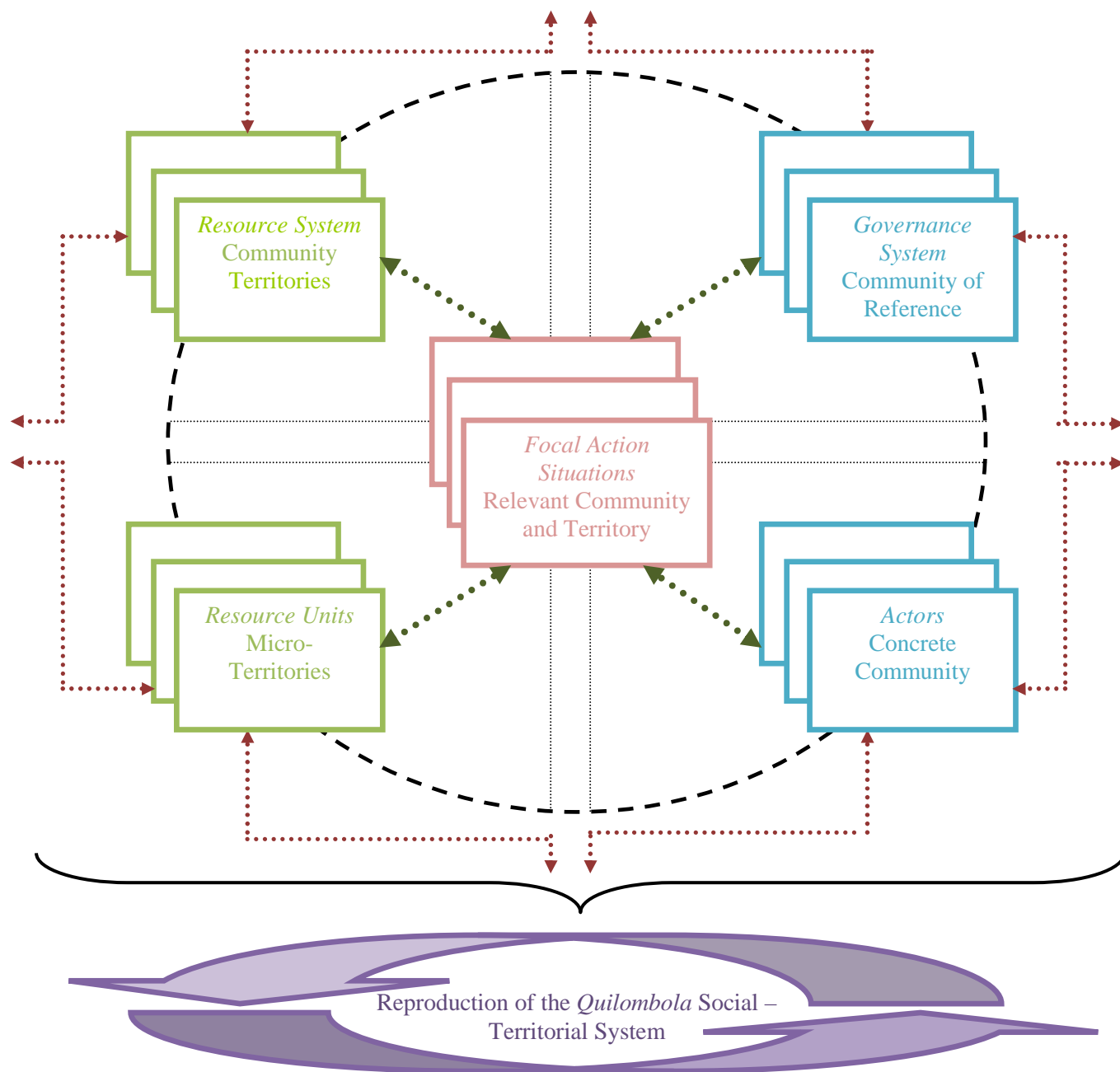
perspectives and considered situations. Thus, they point out the adaptation abilities of the rural community as a whole.

This territorial approach would be one of the specificities of our analysis. It helps to draw attention to the key role of the territory and its dynamics for the understanding of the “Social Ecological Systems” and *Quilombola* communities’ trajectories. Indeed, the concept of territory (Di Méo and Buléon, 2005, Haesbaert, 2007) highlights the consubstantiality between societies and spaces, showing how social groups occupy, use, inhabit, belong to and/or depend upon many spaces. In this context, the balance of the territory is necessary for the balance of the social group, and *a fortiori* for rural groups such as *Quilombola* communities, for whom agriculture represents not only an essential economic value but also a social and cultural one. So, we consider that territorial processes – such as local integration, internal control of the boundaries, symbolic appropriations or landownership – support the “Social Ecological System’s adaptation. Finally, we would propose to expand the ecological aspect of this system to a territorial perspective, in which may merge biological and social (socio-cultural and identity representations) issues of the environment, resources and ecology. In this perspective, the “Social Ecological System” could become a Social Territorial System (*Figure 1*) in which Society and Territories interact to create meaning and coherence. So, while the Social Ecological System proposes a model for the organization and management of the resources, the Social Territorial System try to extend the analysis to the organization and management of the whole community. This figure represents the Social Territorial System, based on SES Framework’s figure, with its bi-scalar and bi-dimensional characteristics<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, as an adaptation of the SES Model, the Social Territorial System presents real differences, especially because of the passage from ecological to territorial dimensions. Therefore, we can notice a real shift in the scale of analysis, for instance, between Resources Units/Micro-Territories (which would include various Resource Units).





**Figure 1 Configuration of the Social Territorial System: An adaptation of the Social Ecological System (SES) Framework.** Source: Céline Raimbert. Adapted from McGinnis 2010b.

C. A Reproductive Relevant Community and the Key Role of Collective Action for Society and Territories.

Finally, the intersection of social and territorial systems and sub-systems can be captured by a third conceptual device: the “Relevant Community”. This “Relevant Community” thrives on the aforementioned elements as much as it strengthens them. Indeed, the interdependency between the “Relevant Community” on the one hand and the “Concrete Community”, the “Community of Reference” and their respective territories on the other hand is strong. While the “Relevant Community” base on the “Concrete Community” and the “Community of Reference”, those ones need the “Relevant Community” to sustain themselves. This “Relevant Community” and its territories are designated as a hybrid formed of the “Community of Reference” and the “Concrete Community and the Community Territories and the Micro-Territories. Thus they represent the balancing point of the *Quilombola* system, in other words the key of the adaptation’s ability and the reproduction basis.

Thus, our assumption is that these “Relevant Community” enable to generate the Collective Action, then considered as the instrument of the adaptation and the matrix of the rural reproduction. In this regard, we argue that the Collective Action creates cohesion, from a social as well as territorial perspective. We propose to treat it as the vehicle for the organization of people and spaces in the broadest sense. From the social point of view, Collective Action could appear as the cement of the community system, by creating a unity of interests and identity. So it bases, among others, on a profound reciprocity to confront external situations and internal pressures. As the collective mobilization reinforces the social cohesion inside the group, it also generates differentiation processes with regard to the outside. The mechanisms of Collective Action operate in the territories in a similar way, consisting essentially of a control of the boundaries, resulting on a stronger territorial cohesion. Thus, the differentiation is not only social, but also territorial (Barth 1995). Protecting their territories, the *Quilombolas* are preserving their social unity and vice versa. These phenomena lead us to pay a particular attention to boundaries, their meanings and their roles in the rural reproduction process, assuming that effective, even flexible, boundaries (of different natures) are the results of Collective Action.

Now that we have outlined a framework to study the rural adaptation processes in *Quilombola* communities, the challenge is to design a methodological strategy for the analysis and assessment of Social-Territorial Dynamics in the *Quilombola* case.

## **2. Temporal Dynamics in Social Territorial Systems: Elements for a Methodological Strategy.**

We will illustrate this methodological strategy with the help of a diagram (*Figure 2*) which highlights at the same time the dynamic, systemic and multi-scalar characteristics of the rural reproduction as we conceive it. Based on the temporal axis of *Quilombola* rural community, this theoretical diagram shows a succession of disturbances and regulations of the Social Territorial System. Thus, the tension between the Family and Community Efforts – and its territorial implications –, by generating a Collective Action, develops the adaptation's skills of the rural community, and so its balance and reproduction.

We suggest that the Social Territorial System is dynamic and owes its durability to the Action. But, at the same time, the Social Territorial System needs a deep social and territorial rooting in order to generate the Action. So, we consider the Collective Action not as a series of isolated and purely reactive events (Segrestin 1980) but as complex Social and Territorial mechanisms inherent in the Social Territorial System. This assertion doesn't mean that strategic and rational incentives don't exist, but that they can't explain the complete Collective Action process, which also bases on structural elements. Thus, we choose to distinguish two kinds of Action variables: some situational, the other structural.

First, the situational variables change very often, according to each particular situation the rural community has to face over time. In most cases, we consider that they are defined by a Threat for the all rural community. The Threat could be assimilated to a "Collective Action Problem" or a "Social Dilemma". So considered as a lack of cooperation (Ostrom 2005, Poteete *et al.* 2010), the Threat undermines the cohesion of the *Quilombola* Social Territorial System. The individual concerns increase in a critical way and, therein, a disturbance appears either in the social or territorial organization of the system. Then, the Family Efforts (or individual concerns) takes over the Community Efforts. In these situations, we can, for instance, observe cases of free-riding or other kind of lack of collective behaviors or interests which threaten the whole social and/or territorial structures.

Thus, the line of the diagram represents the Collective Action Efforts which fluctuates between the Community and Family forces and structures. Obviously, the line just expresses a trend and makes explicit what is prominent (between Community and Family Efforts) for each situation and at each time of the evolution of the Social Territorial System. So, this line as well as the whole diagram does not illustrate the total reality of the Social Territorial System. Rather, it consists of diverse Family and Community Effort as well as many Threats leading to multiple Action Situations at the same time. It explains the Collective Action Effort, and so the layout of Community and Family Dynamics, for one expression of the rural reproduction, its catalysts and its obstacles. We can thus imagine that many diagrams and many lines could juxtapose and then represent all the evolutions of one *Quilombola* Social Territorial System.

Next, we assume that, at least in most of the cases, the community crisis situation created by the Social Dilemma leads to an Action Situation. We consider the Action Situation as a Reaction to a Threat, but also, as the results of the structural forces inherent in the Social Territorial System. Thus, the Action Situation depends at the same time upon situational and structural variables. While the situational variables are very flexible and change, sometimes radically, in accordance with each particular context, the structural variables concern the fundamental basis of the Action. They group a set of essential and characteristic elements of the *Quilombola* Social Territorial System. We don't mean that these kinds of variables never change, but that they don't change easily. Indeed, little influenced by specific contexts, they appear very stable on a long-run and their transformations are small and without important rupture.

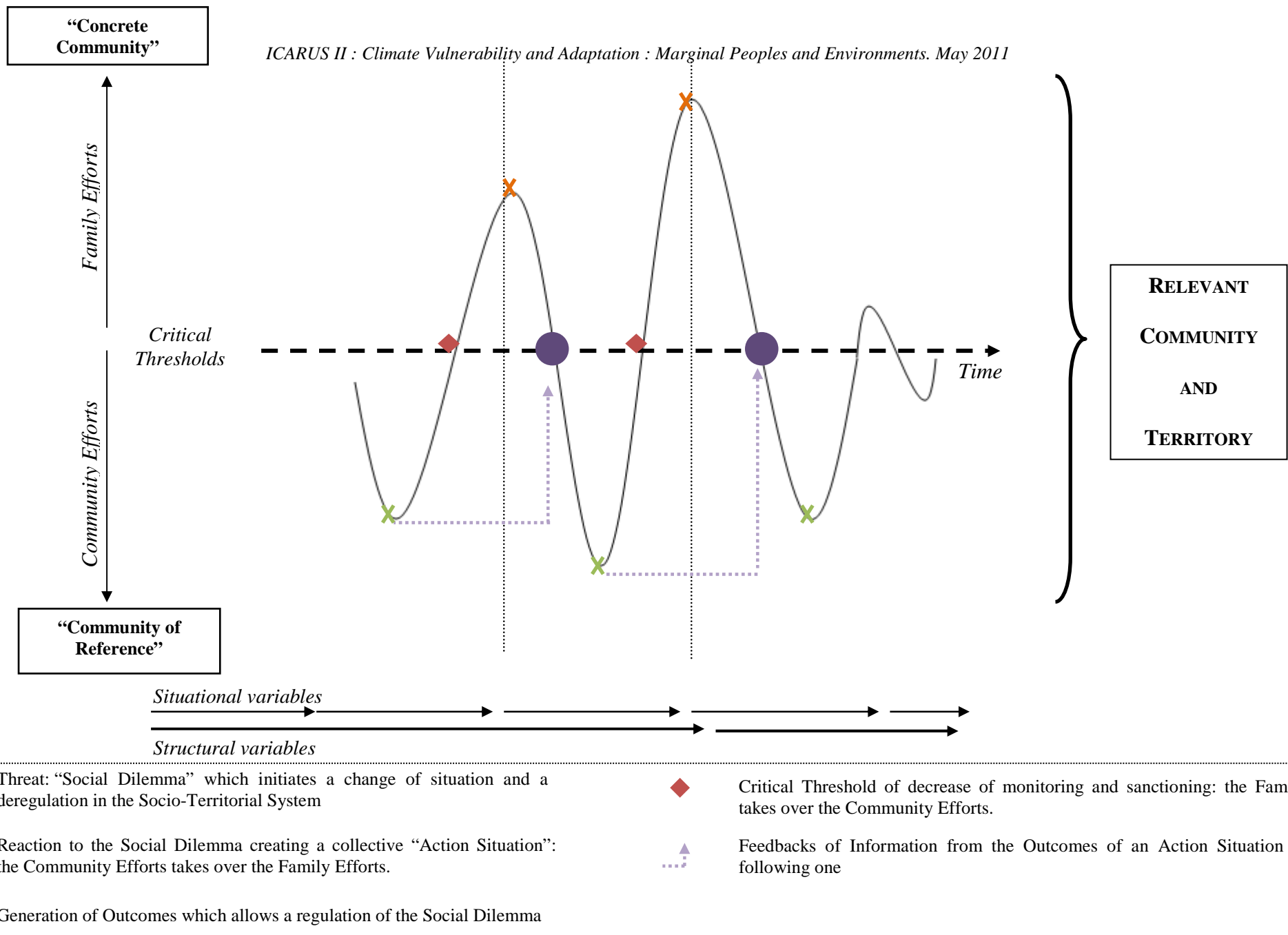
In addition with these two variables, we can point out other layout of relevant factors to be considered:

- (a) Multi-scalar variables which distinguish exogenous and endogenous factors as well as micro-local, local and global levels;
- (b) A set of thematic variables. Indeed, as demonstrated in the IAD Framework the causalities of the Action Situation are divided between Biophysical Conditions, Attributes of the Community and Rules-in-Use, we choose to differentiate three similar types of relevant causal variables : socio-demographic ones which encompass the population aspects as well as the social and cultural features of the *Quilombola* Social Territorial System; institutional ones which contain the rules and norms issues either in the social and territorial organization; finally eco-environmental ones, including the questions of activities, resources management and their relationships with the ecosystem.

As the IAD Framework describes it, the Action Situation leads to some Outcomes. This moment is characterized by an increase of the communication, regarding information about the current situation as well as feedbacks from past experiences. In the ideal (and thus, successful) theory, we assume that the Outcomes are positive and resolve the Social Dilemma. They lead to the regulation of the *Quilombola* Social Territorial System, that is to say a re-balancing between the Family and the Community Efforts and a strengthening of the Relevant Community and Territory.

However, as a dynamic and evolutionary system, this re-balancing is temporary. Indeed, we could assume that the disappearance of the Threat, after a while, will lead to a situation of confidence and lower alertness among the Community, and thus a loosening of the Community ties and a stronger focus on Families. The basic unit changes and could lead to a critical threshold where the decrease of the Community Efforts means a decrease of monitoring and sanctioning, in other words, a loss of the legitimacy of the Community of Reference. Again, it may appear a new Threat, and so forth.

*In fine*, these movements seem to describe the breathing of the rural community and its adaptation's ability and allow its reproduction. Thus, we consider that it is not only the Action Situation and the Outcomes which explain the rural reproduction, but much more the whole process, including, in the same way, the Community and Family Efforts. They enable, together, to balance and stabilize the *Quilombola* Social Territorial System. So, we argue that the rural reproduction process consists in an unceasing game of regulation and deregulation, a constant re-balancing of the Concrete Community and the Community of Reference, of the Micro-Territories and the Community Territories.



**Figure 2: Temporal Dynamics of the Social Territorial Systems or the Cycle of the Collective Action, a Representation of the Rural Reproduction Processes.** *Source: Céline Raimbert.*

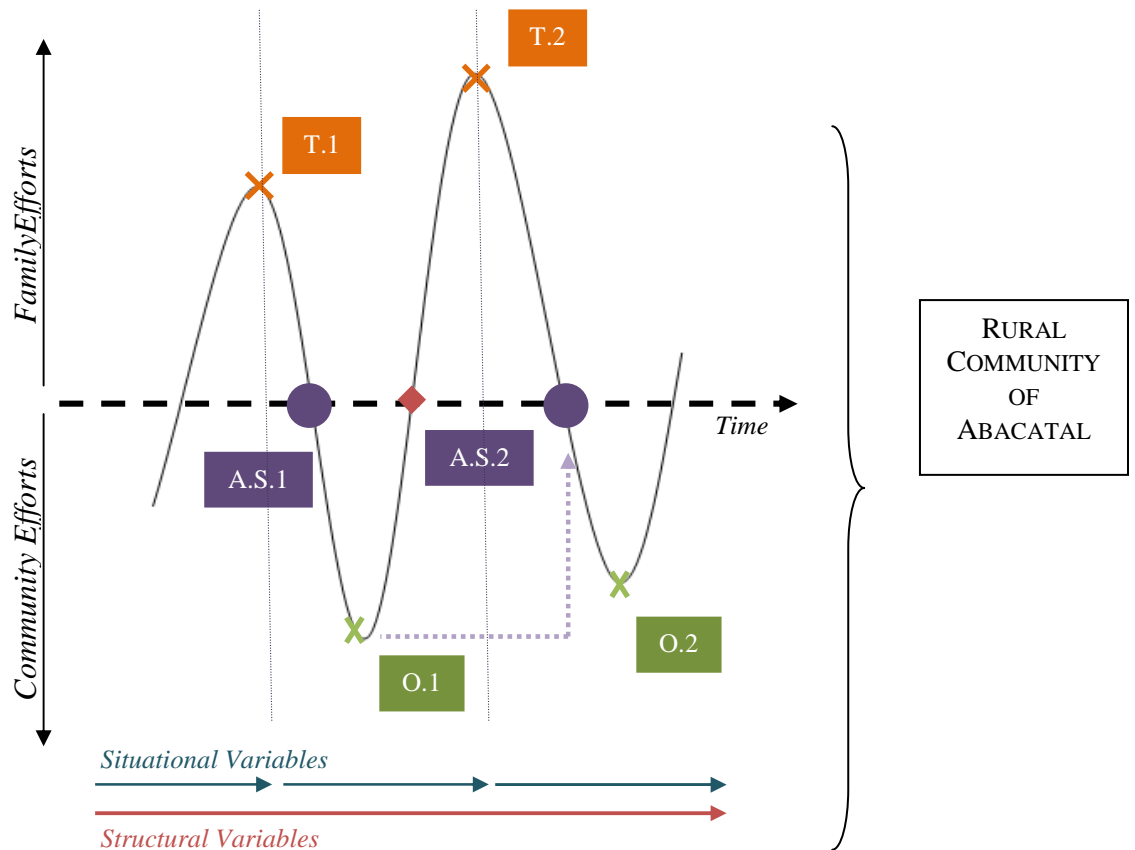
### **3. Implementation of the Methodological Strategy of the Cycle of the Action.**

#### ***Illustrating with a field example.***

After having discussed the methodological strategy of the rural adaptation of the *Quilombola* Social Territorial Systems, we propose to illustrate it by describing with more details a concrete case. As we noticed before, the diagram could be multiple, because different situations could occur and develop at the same time for a same *Quilombola* community. Thus, we will expand here the question of the territorial control in the *Quilombola* community of Abacatal in the Brazilian Amazon (*Figure 3*). Abacatal is a community of about 70 families, extending over some 650 acres. Located at 7.5 miles from Belém, capital of Pará State and at only 4 miles from Ananindeua, other city included in the Metropolitan Region, the rural community is one of the first to be tenured in 1999. This tenure is the result of a strong claim of Abacatal's inhabitants who passed through a long and suffering land conflict. Indeed, since 1957, a *grileiro*<sup>6</sup> posed a threat to Abacatal's inhabitants and their spaces of life (Acevedo and Castro 2004). By issuing a decree, he legally took possession of the spaces long inhabited by the black farmers. But the conflict became really extensive some years later (1980s – 1990s) when he decided to sell the land to a firm from Rio de Janeiro. Then, while the *grileiro* let the farmers stay and cultivate according to a severe system of sharecropping, the firm would no longer tolerate their presence and claim their expulsion. Thus, we could consider this contentious situation as the first Threat (T.1) for the rural community of Abacatal.

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<sup>6</sup> *Grileiro* is the Portuguese term used for those who illegally falsified documents to become the rightful owner of vacant or without tenure land.

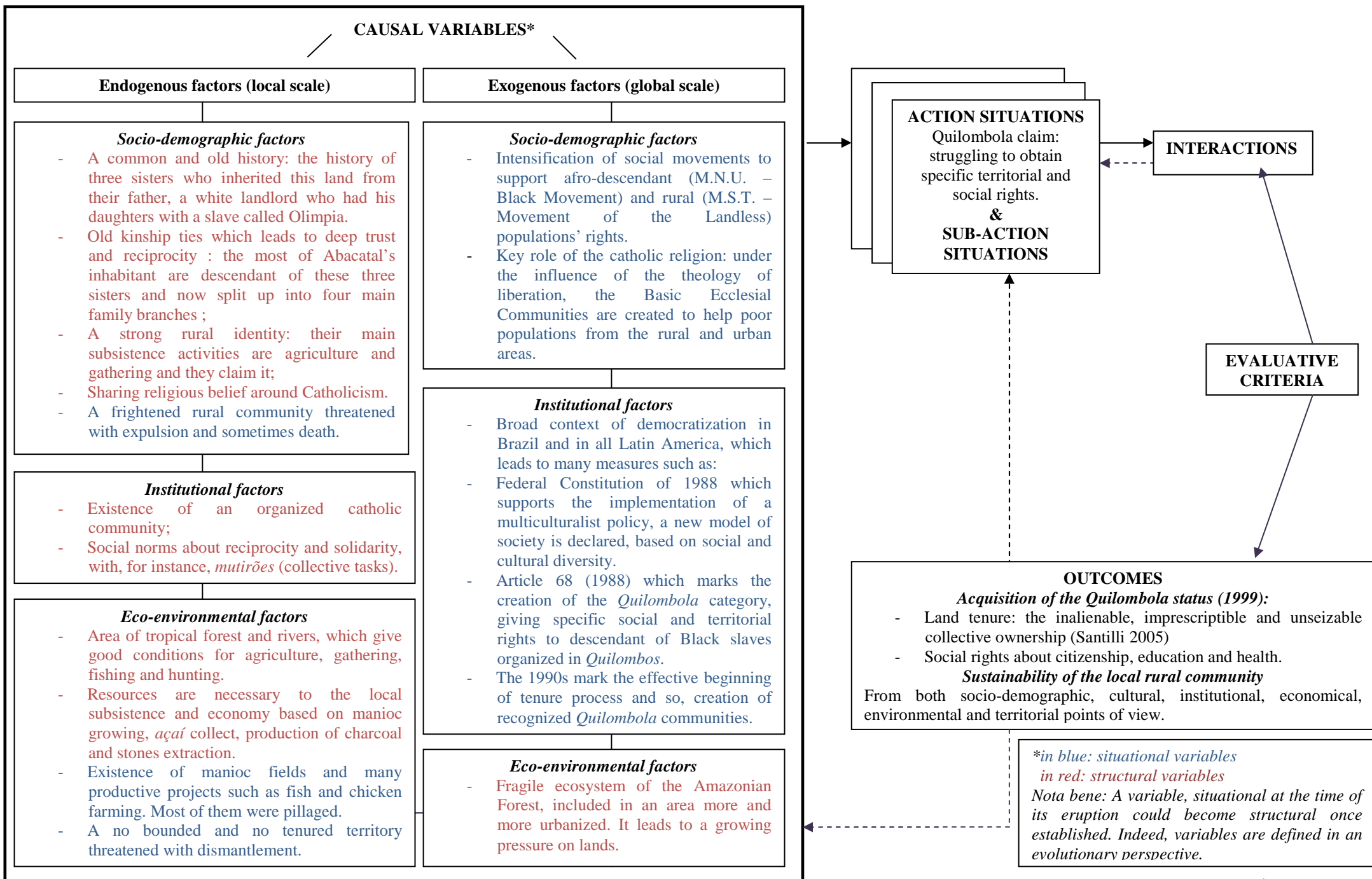


**Figure 3: Temporal Dynamics of the Social Territorial System of the *Quilombola* Community of Abacatal. Focus on the issue of the territorial control.** Source: Céline Raimbert.

**Threat 1: A free-riding which leads to a land conflict.**

The origin of the Threat bases on a case of Social Dilemma: a free-riding. This *grileiro*, welcomed a few years before by the locals, eventually abuses their trust in dispossessing them of their own land. Thus, this loss of control over their territory creates a strong deregulation of the all Social Territorial System, in other word a long and violent land conflict. During this time, many houses and crops are looted and some farmers are threatened with death. This critical situation could cause a collapse of the rural community, due to the dissolution of its territories perceived as resources and living spaces. Thus, depending upon the correlation of a specific both local and global situation on the one hand and structural characteristics of the Social Territorial System on the other hand, a Reaction, *i.e.* an Action Situation appears, based on the claim of a new ethno-political category : the *Quilombola* identity and its added territorial and social rights.





**Table 1: The Action Arena 1: Tenure and acquisition of the *Quilombola* status in Abacatal, 1999.** Source: Céline Raimbert. Adapted from McGinnis (2010)

***Action Situation and Outcomes 1: The tenure and the acquisition of the Quilombola status.***

We present the detailed Action Arena in the Table 1. There, we can distinguish a main Action Situation formed of many sub-Action Situations, with different types of strategies.

The institutional strategies, first, base on the implementation of a clear “Community of Reference”, which would enable the rural community to organize inside and to have a public arena to express itself outside. Thus, Abacatal develops a leadership, who appears as the spokesperson for the rural community. Its relationships with a broad network of social and religious organizations are intensifying a lot. Abacatal receives the active support of the CEDENPA, Center of Study and Defense of Pará’s Black Population, the CPT, Pastoral Commission of the Land and the *Sagrada Familia*, Ananindeua’s parish. In addition with this new activism, in 1988, Abacatal creates its own institutional expression: the Association of the Inhabitants of Abacatal-Aurá, which gives an official framework to the rural community and structures a set of rules and norms which defines other kind of socio-demographic and eco-environmental strategies.

The socio-demographic strategies, based on the “Concrete Community”, above all focus on exclusion rules and norms. They set out specific criteria for the settlement in the community area. The installation of newcomers, generally already known, is governed by very restrictive conditions: known rural workers and public technicians, friends or relations of Abacatal’s inhabitants. These conditions respond to a strategic intent of Abacatal’s inhabitants and are effective only for the period of important disorder. Moreover, kinship norms are confirmed and regulate the conditions of residence and land and resources uses in the rural community. Only *Quilombolas* and their relatives can live in Abacatal. Besides highlighting the fundamental role of family values, this point brings out the strategic thinking of Abacatal’s inhabitants as well as their ability to learn from experiences. Indeed, the setting of stricter rules seems to respond to the past experimentation of free-riding, henceforth perceived as the consequence of permissiveness towards newcomers.

As for the eco-environmental strategies, they essentially focus on the territories: Community Territories as well as Micro-Territories. Thus, a stronger control of territories is operated: while a

barrier is installed to prevent the intrusion of belligerents and looters, families gather on a small portion of territory and unite to promote solidarity and reciprocity. We can also observe the beginnings of a territorial organization. The Community Territory is divided in plots of equal area for each family. It represents a private resources stock that each family can use. Furthermore, a layout of Micro-Territories appears: territories could be defined by their own functions and positions. We can distinguish, central micro-territories where are concentrated the political and symbolic functions as well as the residence of *Quilombola* heirs and peripheral territories, living and working lands of the more or less recent newcomers.

### ***Transition between Action Situation 1 & 2.***

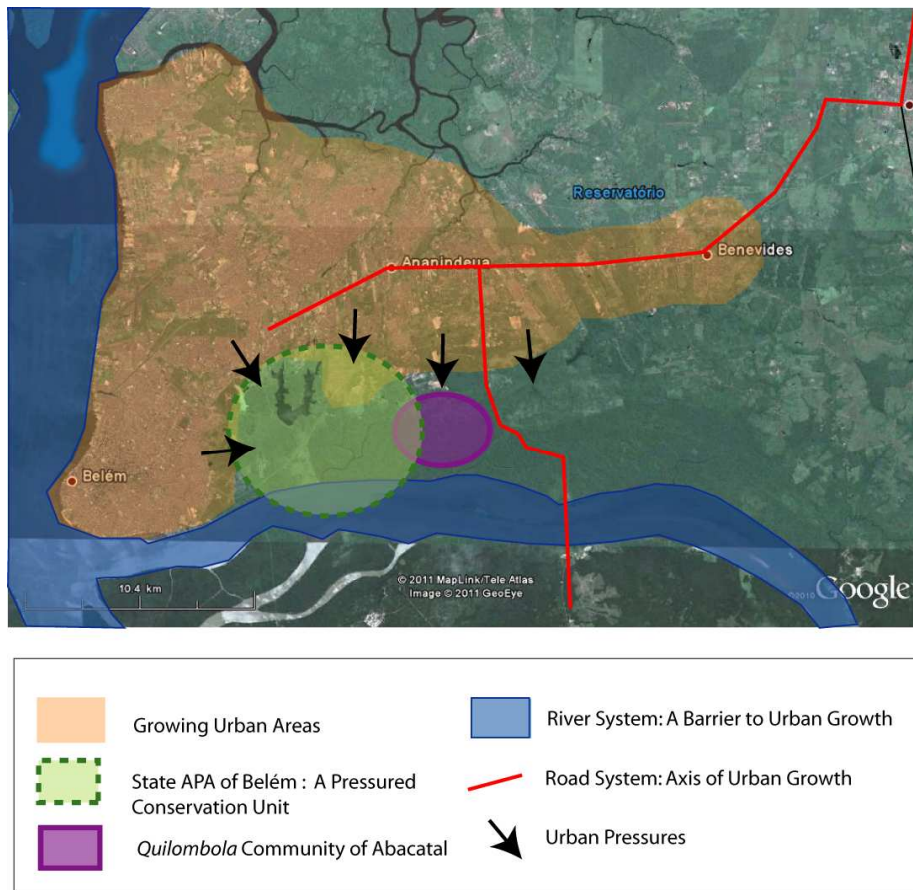
This transition from a regulation moment to a next disturbance is the results of the confidence with the new situation. Now they have obtained the guarantee of their citizen and territorial rights, they have less pressure on their territorial and more social stability. Therefore, it seems that the families are more concentrated on their own household, their own plot, their own economy. The monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms still exist but in a weaker way, especially as regards the regulation of the relationships with the community encompassing environment. A new threat eventually appears.

### ***Threat 2: Urban pressures.***

The position of the *Quilombola* community puts on her a stronger and stronger urban pressure, in a context of global urbanization. Indeed, the city, still getting closer, appears as an intrusion for Abacatal's inhabitants<sup>7</sup>. This perception of an increasing and threatening urban proximity has different aspects. First, it takes the features of a territorial pressure due to the urban growth of the Metropolitan Region of Belém. Thus urbanized areas are gaining ground, like the recent slum of Aurá, settled along the way to Abacatal, located few miles away (*Map 2*).

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<sup>7</sup> All the assertions about the representations and perceptions of urban areas are the results of a fieldwork based on a series of questionnaires, interviews and participant observation. The conclusions of this work could be found in my Master's Dissertation (Raimbert 2009).



**Map 2: Urban Pressures on Abacatal Quilombola Community.** Source : Céline Raimbert. Google Earth 2011. Created with Adobe Illustrator CS.

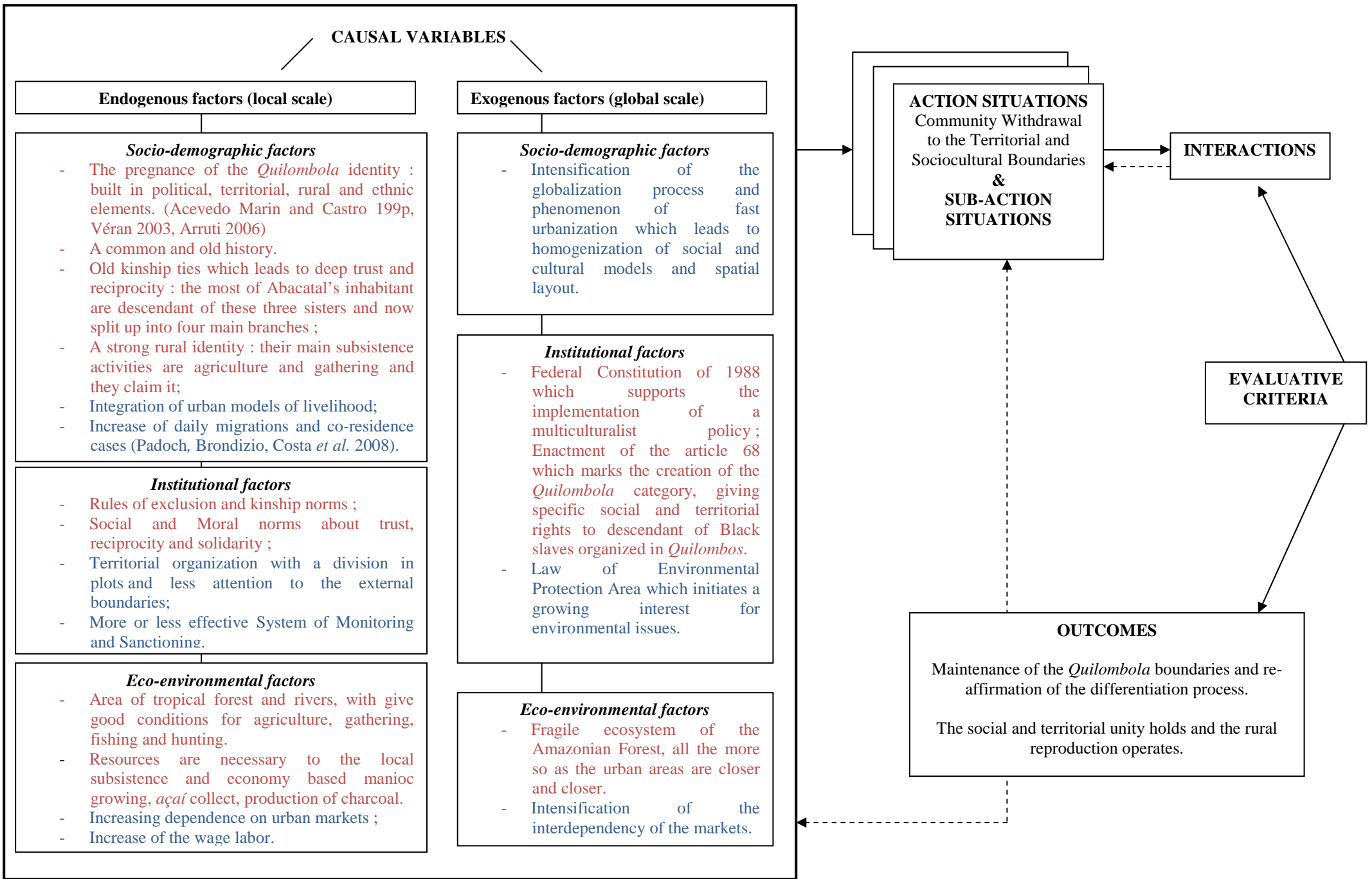
Moreover, freely accessible with the decrease of boundaries control, Abacatal is gradually invested by city dwellers who come there to enjoy the waterways and the quiet of the countryside. Therefore, visits by foreigners are increasingly numerous and quite unpopular with the locals. The rejection of the city reaches its peak following violent events inside the rural community such as robberies with sequestration and murder. In this context, for the *Quilombolas*, the dangerous city groups all the clichés of violence and uproar. The pressure is also socio-cultural and has the effect of transforming some aspects of the livelihood. This adaptation to the urban models is sometimes perceived as a loss of reference points and leads to fear of fading of the *Quilombola* identity, guarantor of the territorial and social rights. Finally, these fears, real or imagined, would initiate a Reaction of Abacatal's inhabitants.

**Action Situation & Outcomes 2: Community withdrawal to the territorial and socio-cultural boundaries. (Table 2)**

This broad objective is reached thanks to one main action which involves the installation of a large barrier at the main entrance of the *Quilombola* community and the creation of a *mutirão* system responsible for overseeing the comings and goings. Always closed and locked, the barrier is only open to community members. Before crossing the gate, foreigners must identify themselves and justify their entry into Abacatal. The barrier presents itself as a barricade against the outside (including city) and its potential dangers. It collects all the votes of the *Quilombolas* and is the subject of a genuine consensus within the community. Thus, the barrier is supported by a Barrier Committee. This important organization, responding to a Community rule, involves all the men of Abacatal (18 to 60 years) who takes turns keeping monitoring the main entrance of the *Quilombola* community.

Finally, this set of Action Situations results in the protection of physical and symbolic boundaries of the *Quilombola* community, which operates as a process of differentiation. Indeed, insofar as this differentiation offers them both an independent territory and an own place in the Brazilian national society based on an intrinsic diversity (Ribeiro 1995), the *Quilombola* identity is fiercely preserved and defended by Abacatal's inhabitants. Thus, the situation is regulated but for how long?

This diagram represents a way to observe and analyze the former and new evolutions of the rural communities. Based on a set of variables, it tries to identify relevant factors which could explain the success of each Action Situation and so the rural adaptation and reproduction of the *Quilombola* community. In our example, we have chosen to illustrate the evolution of the territorial organization in Abacatal, from the long conflict. But we could also develop some other kind of evolutions of the rural community such as the evolution of the activities (by examining the uses of resources, the intensification of the agricultural activities, the level dependency on the resources, the level of predation of the agro-extractivist activities, the weight of other sources of income, etc.) or the demographic formation (the size of the community, the distribution by age and sex, the cultural features and weight of the kinship, the level of definitive and temporary migrations, etc.)



**Table 2: The Action Arena 2: Community Withdrawal to the Territorial and Sociocultural Boundaries, 2005.** *Source: Céline Raimbert. Adapted from McGinnis 2010a.*

## **Conclusion**

Postulating the complexities and the dynamics of the rural adaptation, we choose to consider the *Quilombola* communities as a nesting of systems and sub-systems. More precisely, we assume the predominance of a dual and multi-scalar interaction of Community structures and Territories arrangements, generating Collective Action conceived as an adaptation's ability, and so the basis of the rural reproduction. As a regulatory mechanism, Collective Action enables the balance of Families and Community interactions as well as Micro-Territories and Community Territories overlapping, depending at the same time upon endogenous and exogenous factors. Thus, this conception of the *Quilombola* community underlines its adaptation's abilities, sustained reciprocally by social and territorial elements. Thanks to some structural dynamics and flexibility and situational strategies, the *Quilombola* community may manage to respond to local and global changes, to internal and external pressures. We then have tried in the second and third parts of this paper to make explicit these theoretical elements, proposing a methodological strategy to highlight these dynamics in an evolutionary perspective. Thus, we choose to structure the dynamics according to a triple situational movement of Threat-Action Situation-Outcomes, also supported by some constituent factors. Now we have summed up these theoretical and methodological strategies, we will need to test it with field data and then, make the necessary adjustments.

In this respect, the next step will be to think about methodological tools which would enable to answer questions such as: How can we evaluate the Community and Family Efforts? What are the interactions between Families and Community and their specificities and relevance at each time? How can we identify the key moments of Threat and Action Situation? How can we anticipate the next Threats and next Action Situations?

This fieldwork will base on a comparative analysis of two *Quilombola* communities in different contexts, in order to point out the relevant causal variables for a rural *Quilombola* community to reproduce itself. Thus, this is to confront the homogeneity of a specific category with the heterogeneity of socio-political and cultural situations. Indeed, *Quilombola* communities are characterized by this dual aspect: a diversity of local elements included in the unity of a stable

institutional frame. *Quilombola* categorization establishes at the same time territorial, socio-cultural and institutional stabilities and boundaries: the collective and inalienable ownership of a land, a specific and recognized identity which gives to *Quilombolas* social and economical advantages and an institutional structure able to express and defend their own interests on the public arena. At the same time, each *Quilombola* community is different (Almeida 1989, Boyer, oral communication), formed by its own history, its own social and cultural basis, its own set of rules and norms as well as its regional environment. In this context, what is the role of each of these elements, the global categorization and the local specificities? Which are the most decisive factors between institutional or local determinants to explain and sustain the rural reproduction of *Quilombola* communities? While the conclusions of the Duramaz research program<sup>8</sup> (Le Tourneau Droulers 2011) shows that “local reality must be taken into account and not administrative and cultural labels”, what about *Quilombola* communities? Are only the local specificities that elucidate the question of the sustainability issue of the *Quilombola* communities? Could not we think that the categorization does also play a role in this process? (French 2004).

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<sup>8</sup> Duramaz (2007-2010) is a French Research Program carried out by the CNRS (National Center of the Scientific Research, France), the IRD (Institute for Development Research, France) and the CDS (Center of Sustainable Development, University of Brasilia, Brasil). Its main objective is to define the geographic, demographic and socio-economic determinants of the sustainable development in the Brazilian Amazon. Thus they chose to analyze different experiences of sustainable development (payment for environmental services, different kinds of reserves, indigenous territories etc.) in different ecological contexts (deforested areas, arc of deforestation, isolated areas) and activities situations (commercial agriculture, small agriculture, extractivism, tertiary activities).



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