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EPISTEMOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS AND EMERGING PARADIGMS IN THE
CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

**WHEN RURAL IS NO LONGER AGRICULTURAL: CLIMATE CHANGE AND
THE EMERGENCE OF AGRICULTURAL EXCLUSION ZONES**

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Objective: This article proposes and theoretically grounds the concept of Climate-Driven Agricultural Exclusion Zones (CAEZs) as a new analytical category in rural sociology, designed to capture forms of rural transformation that exceed the explanatory limits of classical notions such as desertification, agroclimatic risk, and rural development under Anthropocene conditions. **Method:** This study adopts an exploratory and bibliographic approach grounded in conceptual and theoretical synthesis, drawing on interdisciplinary literature from rural sociology, environmental sociology, political ecology and climate science. Through comparative conceptual analysis, this article examines how persistent and intensifying climatic extremes, hydrological instability, soil degradation, ecosystem disruption, and political-economic inertia interact to durably erode agricultural viability across large, formerly productive territories. South America is mobilized as an analytical reference to situate the concept

within contemporary rural transformations in the Global South. Conclusion: This study argues that the emergence of Climate-Driven Agricultural Exclusion Zones under business-as-usual climate scenarios represents a qualitative socio-ecological regime shift rather than a temporary agricultural disturbance. Unlike desertification, CAEZs may emerge across diverse biomes and are not limited to arid or semi-arid environments, producing a structural decoupling between “rural” and “agricultural” spaces, a radical reconfiguration of rural livelihoods, and new forms of territorial abandonment and population migration. By introducing this concept, this article contributes to the epistemological renewal of rural studies by questioning inherited classificatory frameworks and advancing debates on how rurality is named, categorized, and interpreted amid climate, socio-environmental, and paradigmatic crises of the Anthropocene.

Palavras-chave: rurality; anthropocene; climate vulnerability; paradigm shift; territoriality.