Gaining land and gaining ground?
The Popular Agrarian Reform by the Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST) in Brazil

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Abstract
The Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST), one of the most important movements in Brazil, known for its land occupations, recently launched proposals to implement a new Popular Agrarian Reform (PAR) project. Consequently, one must ask: is there need for agrarian reform (AR) in Brazil? This question must engage with another discussion, that of the development of capitalism in the countryside and its consequences for the peasantry - the agrarian question (AQ). Its contemporary relevance is a matter of debate, and agrarian populism has gained traction in academic and popular discourse. PAR must be situated within these debates, as a response to processes of agrarian change. The aim of this qualitative case study was to understand how MST reads the AQ and constructs such response. Fieldwork was conducted in Southern Brazil in January-February 2015. Findings indicate that PAR reflects the understanding of a new AQ by MST. I argue that PAR was partly born due to an MST dilemma: frustration regarding possibilities of redistributive AR; de-legitimization of previous land occupation claims; MST’s de-territorialization in settlements/camps and settlements’ individual character. PAR must be understood as a dispute of material and symbolic territories, a strategy to conquer land, keep it and gain ground.

Key words: agrarian question; agrarian reform; agrarian change; rural development; peasant movements; agrarian social movements; rural politics; territorial disputes; social conflict; land struggle; land occupation; MST; Brazil; Paraná; social change; agroecology; thematic analysis

“A specter is haunting the world—the specter of a new agrarian question”
(Moyo, Jha & Yeros 2013)
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express immense gratitude and respect for the Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST), especially MST Paraná (PR). Not only has MST allowed me to carry out this research, it has also provided me with much more support than I could have imagined. I would like to thank my main key informant with whom I exchanged many interesting and helpful e-mails. Your help has been invaluable. I would also like to say my warmest thank you to the families in Herdeiros da Luta de Porecatu and José Lutzenberger camps where I lived, who took me into their homes and generously took care of me as a family member. The same goes for staff at the Latin American School of Agroecology in the Contestado settlement, who so openly let me become one more “student” for the time I lived there. I would also like to thank all the participants in this study, who patiently provided me with their time and knowledge. My gratitude goes also to the innumerable people I had the chance to talk to informally; such conversations proved very rich and informative. I also thank the MST PR members who have guided me in different settings, driving me around and making logistics so much easier. It is a cliché, but utterly true: without such support by MST PR, this research would have been impossible.

Second, I would like to express my deepest love and gratitude to Erik Hellman, love of my life, who has been the most solid, patient and incredible person. You have provided me full support of all kinds. I can never say it enough, but thank you. This thesis is only better because of your great contributions. You are a big inspiration to me, intellectually and personally. Third, I would like to thank my supervisor, Andrea Nardi, who gave some key pieces of advice that have been real turning points in the making of this thesis. I also thank my friends in the supervision group with whom I have walked this pathway: Elena Baumanns, Sophie Baumgartner and Malin Hassler. Our helpful sessions and mutual support have been fantastic. I also thank my good friend Mirsini Kazakou for all the support through various exciting and lively discussions.

Finally, but of no less importance, I thank my family for all the love and support from Brazil. It has been almost 6 years since I moved to Sweden, and there has not been a single moment when you have not supported this decision, despite its price for us. I especially thank my father, who has raised countless toasts and, looking straight into my eyes, has made the most sincere vows to my success with this thesis. I wish you could all be here. I dedicate this thesis to all my grandparents, whom I always miss. I dedicate it especially to my grandmother Maria Guilhermina, who advised me to study, see the world and never get attached to any man. Sorry, Vó Mina, I have made it, but only followed half of your advice. I also dedicate this thesis to Pepinho and Caquinho.
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List of acronyms

AQ – agrarian question
AR – agrarian reform
FA - family agriculture
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization
FAP - Food Acquisition Programme (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos – PAA)
FFNS - Florestan Fernandes National School (Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes – ENFF)
HSA - Health Surveillance Agency (Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária- ANVISA)
IBGE – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística)
IMF - International Monetary Fund
LASA - Latin American School of Agroecology (Escola Latino-Americana de Agroecologia – ELAA)
MST – Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Rural Workers Movement)
NFSA - National Food Supply Agency (Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento – CONAB)
NICAR - National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária – INCRA)
NSFP National School Feeding Programme (Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar – Pnae)
PAR – Popular Agrarian Reform
R&D – research and development
TDR – territorialization/de-territorialization/re-territorialization
Introduction

What should be done from now on? What is the place for an agrarian reform within the current development of Brazilian capitalism? Is there any room for it? /.../ What is the suitable role for us now? (Rodrigues 2014a)

These are questions asked by a national leader of the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers' Movement1 (MST). Born in 1984 in Southern Brazil, it is considered one of the most important social movements in Brazil and Latin America (Karriem 2009; Fernandes 2009; Domingues 2007; Petras 1998). Responsible for the nationwide organization of the struggle for land, it has joined the rural and the urban poor. Estimates revolve around a membership of 2 million people (Welch 2006: 199). After 30 years, MST finds itself in a moment of reflection on their capacity of struggle and future perspectives.

Occupying land has been MST’s main tactics of struggle. It has been claimed that “successful land occupations have a demonstration effect” (Petras & Veltmeyer 2001: 99), and “[o]nly occupations accompanied by open conflict have persuaded the government to negotiate with agribusiness to cede some fraction of the fought-over territory” (Fernandes 2009: 96). Yet some argue (Caldeira 2008) that land occupations have lost its centrality as a tactics, and ecological sustainability frames have made their way into MST’s repertoire of contentions. Agroecology, for instance, has been officially incorporated as MST’s new productive matrix in 2000 (Valadão & Moreira 2009). For MST, agroecology politically questions the mainstream agricultural model (Borsatto & Carmo 2013). However, these new repertoires “have yet to prove as effective as land occupations” (Caldeira 2008: 137). In this context, MST launched their Agrarian Program in 2014 with proposals to implement their new strategy of struggle, the Popular Agrarian Reform2 (PAR). The word of order is to struggle through the development of an agrarian reform (AR) project. However, PAR begs the question: is an AR the warranted, incontestable answer to the social and political problems of the countryside?

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1 In Brazilian Portuguese: “Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terra”
2 In Brazilian Portuguese: “Reforma Agrária Popular”
This question must engage with a fundamental discussion in the field of agrarian/peasant studies: the question of the development of capitalism in rural areas, especially its consequences to the peasantry - the agrarian question (AQ). As formulated by Kautsky (1988: 12 in Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010a: 179), it refers to “whether, and how, capital is seizing hold of agriculture, revolutionizing it, making old forms of production and property untenable and creating the necessity for new ones”. The contemporary relevance of an AQ animates different stances on the topic, namely, those who argue that there are new AQs and that this debate could not be more relevant today (e.g. McMichael 2006, 1997; Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010a/b; Carter 2010; Fernandes 2012, 2010, 2009; Delgado 2014, 2010). Other positions emphasize the lack of currency of the term, or that an AQ of capital does not apply any longer, but rather, there is an AQ of labor (e.g. Bernstein 2009; 2006). Underlying these views are positions more or less sympathetic to the value and suitability of a peasant agriculture and way of life in the 21st century. Agrarian populism seems to have gained traction in academic and popular discourse. MST’s PAR must be situated within these debates and in relation to a specific conjuncture: the rise of the hegemony of agribusiness in the last decades.

If small-scale/peasant farmers still have a role in capitalist accumulation, but many have been made redundant by processes of agrarian change as Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010a) have suggested, then understanding their responses - the modes of resistance to processes of exclusion and marginalization - is a key task. Rural politics shapes and is shaped by agrarian change processes (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010b: 256). Moreover, PAR directly touches upon development concerns, as it demands changes to the overall model of Brazilian development by opposing the export-oriented agribusiness sector. Investigating such projects can also add to a better understanding of movements’ demands, rationale and the contemporary hold of agrarian populism. This thesis is hopefully a small contribution to building these understandings. Thus the aim is to understand how MST interprets the AQ in the Brazilian context and constructs a response (PAR) to it. This study aims at contributing to current debates on the politics of agrarian change and peasant movements and, more specifically, MST’s changing politics of land struggle as a
product of its specific time and context. The following research questions guide the study:

- How does MST understand the AQ in the Brazilian context?
- How does it construct a response (AR) to such understanding in regards to the politics of land occupations/camps, settlements and agroecology across scales?

This thesis is based on a qualitative case study, whose data collection methods were in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observations and document analysis. Fieldwork was carried out in Paraná and São Paulo, Southern Brazil, in January–February 2015. This essay is organized in a simple fashion: upon introduction, the reader will find a conceptual framework, followed by an empirical context chapter that provides the context within which the case is embedded. Following this chapter comes methodology and ethical concerns, with analysis and conclusion in the sequence.

**Conceptual framework**

In a variety of concerns within the agrarian/peasant studies area, two stand out as crucial to understand the research problem: the AQ, including its correlate, AR, and the peasant and politics theme, which Bernstein & Byres (2001: 32) argue is, nevertheless, the spark that originated interest in the articulation of peasant studies as a discipline. Thus the conceptual framework draws heavily on the contemporary debates surrounding the AQ(s) and the assumptions that frame the different standpoints. I then touch upon “peasant” responses to the AQ: land occupations and agroecology, the latter being a counter-politics by such actors to deal with the livelihood and environmental effects of an existing AQ and an important element in MST’s PAR.

**The agrarian question(s)**

The formulation of the AQ is firmly situated in the Marxist tradition. Briefly, its classical version can be understood as the question of the development of capitalism in rural areas,
especially concerning the fate of the peasantry\(^3\) (McMichael & Buttel 1990; McMichael 1997). As formulated by Kautsky, it refers to “whether, and how, capital is seizing hold of agriculture, revolutionizing it, making old forms of production and property untenable and creating the necessity for new ones” (Kautsky 1988: 12 orig. 1899 in Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010a: 179) as well as whether it contributes with capitalist industrialization (Bernstein 2006).

The AQ as posed by the classical works of Marx, Kautsky and Lenin were capital-centric readings of processes of agrarian change (Bernstein 2006), a question of the emergence of capital in specific times and circumstances; a question of the constraints in place in the rural world, including property regimes, that would prevent or facilitate the emergence of the capital-labor relation, and hence, of agrarian capitalism; a question of the interplay of farming size and scale in production. The AQ through these lenses is a history of how peasants fare under such conditions of the development of capitalist social relations in agriculture; a history of class differentiation that allows the emergence of the capital-labor dichotomy and the process of capitalist accumulation in agriculture, which touches upon the issue of access to and control of productive resources; a history of the

\(^3\) Here it is of great importance to clarify the \textit{definition of “peasantry” in this study}. This is surely a complex and non-settled debate in agrarian/peasant studies. So I am not in a position of arguing for the ultimate definition, whether there can be actually one in the face of enormous diversity of the rural countryside. Yet definitions matter, analytically speaking. Vergara-Camus (2009: 378-379) argues that the definition of the peasantry in the studies of peasant rebellions cannot be based on the analytical distinction between peasants and rural wage-workers. In the contemporary Latin America, this distinction seems inappropriate because rural populations engage in various forms of productive occupations and experience different class statuses in a more fluid manner, which seems to apply to the MST case. Martins (2000) works with the “peasantry” designation, but only so because the term got much currency in the debates in Brazil, and so using it becomes necessary to engage in the AQ debate, although the author considers the incorporation of such term inappropriate: “[i]n the peasant of today there no longer subsists the peasant of yesterday, only as an ensemble of its overcomings” (ibid.: 113). Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010a: 178) state that peasants have been understood in different ways throughout the history of peasant studies and offer a comprehensive definition of peasants: “[P]easant studies’ has explored the life and times of female and male agricultural workers whose livelihoods are primarily but not exclusively based on having access to land that is either owned or rented, who have diminutive amounts of basic tools and equipment, and who use mostly their own labour and the labour of other family members to work that land. So, allocating small stocks of both capital and labour contemporary peasants are ‘petty commodity producers’, operating as both petty capitalists of little consequence and as workers with little power over the terms and conditions of their employment (Bernstein 1991, Gibbon and Neocosmos 1985). Trying to do both, within an often contradictory set of social and economic conditions, brought with it a set of challenges; while most survived, and many resiliently and indeed defiantly held onto their agrarian culture within myriad different agricultural histories, they did not prosper”. In my view, according to the realities of fieldwork and other scholarship on MST, Vergara-Camus’ (2009), Martins (2000) and Akram-Lodhi (2010) understandings seem appropriate. Thus I use the term peasant here for the sake of simplicity, but in no way am I implying some linear continuity of past forms of peasantry or any form of global peasant resistance.
emergence of wage-labor and the peasantry’s dependence on product and labor markets (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010a).

According to Akram-Lodhi & Kay’s (2010a: 187-8) interpretation of these classics, rural transformation is not an inevitable linear process; the AQ could be resolved in a variety of ways based on different national agrarian political economy contexts. In Kautsky’s thought, “there were no inevitable laws of agrarian development”. There could be different arrangements in which agroindustrial capital would thrive, and such arrangements did not necessarily mean the end of the peasantry. Due to the specificities of the agricultural sector, the peasantry would perform tasks that the agroindustrial capital would not. Thus the existence of a peasant sector can be interesting from capital’s perspective, but from the peasant’s perspective, that meant working harder and having smaller returns in order to compete with agroindustry and survive.

The AQ in classic perspectives is also to be read in relation to the political economy of international markets. Part of Engels’ work was the theorization of political responses in the rural world by the peasantry and the urban working class alliance in the context of the emergence of an internationalized food system, “an agrarian question for and about labor and the expression of its agency” (ibid.: 184-5). Here it is also paramount to mention the work of Chayanov who, in contrast to Lenin, was an agricultural economist (Bernstein 2009) and conducted extensive empirical research in the Russian countryside. Chayanov’s main ideas referred to family agriculture having its own logics different to that of capitalist farming with the former relying on family labor through more or less intense self-exploitation in order for the family to reproduce itself. Thus the basic objective of “peasant households is to meet the needs of (simple) reproduction while minimizing ‘drudgery’ (of labor)”. Yet peasant agriculture, organized through cooperatives, was considered by Chayanov as a “technically superior” way of organizing agriculture. Chayanov also argued, in contrast to Lenin, that peasant differentiation was not due to class differentiation, but rather demographics. However, both were committed to modernizing agriculture, admitting of machinery and agrochemicals to raise labor productivity (ibid.: 59-61). Bernstein (ibid.: 56) affirms that Chayanov’s ideas have been
adopted by different types of neo-populist discourse today in order to propel “small-farm(er) development”.

Today, the existence and relevance of an AQ animates contemporary debates within agrarian/peasant studies. The field is heated up by different positions, those who argue that there still is a (new) AQ or multiple AQs and that this debate could not be more current today (e.g. Fairbairn et al. 2014; McMichael 2006, 1997; Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010a/b; in Brazil, Carter 2010; Fernandes 2012; 2010, 2009; Delgado 2014, 2010; Sauer 2013). Other stances emphasize the lack of currency of the term or that the AQ, as a question of the development of capital in agriculture at a global scale, does not apply any longer, but rather, we see an AQ of “fragmented classes of labor” (e.g. Bernstein 2009; 2006; 2002). Studies of the AQ have expanded to themes beyond than just the classic concerns to encompass forms of capital’s exploitative relation regarding natural resource appropriation (Fairbairn et al. 2014: 656).

Underlying the renewed interest in the topic are positions more or less sympathetic to the value and pertinence of a peasant agriculture and way of life in the 21st century. Agrarian populism, or “the defense of the small ‘family’ farmer (or ‘peasant’) against the pressures exerted by the class agents of a developing capitalism – merchants, banks, larger-scale capitalist landed property and agrarian capital”, or yet the moral “defense of a threatened (and idealised) way of life” of the “people of the land”, is what Bernstein (2009: 68-74) criticizes in such positions championed by McMichael (see McMichael 1997; 2006). This polarization over the nature of the AQ could not be clearer than in the debate between these two authors. McMichael (ibid.) defends the idea that there is a new AQ posed due to the advent of globalization and the structuring and consolidation of the corporate food regime. This new AQ has produced a “global agrarian resistance” whose basic trait is the “peasant way” for development (e.g Moyo, Jha & Yeros 2013), the type of views Bernstein (2009: 77) calls “populist formulations of a ‘new agrarian question’”.

Bernstein (2009: 76) is especially critical of such “global agrarian resistance” and what romantic views do to research on social movements: “[C]elebrations of ‘global agrarian resistance’ and the transformational aspirations attached to it, lack any plausible formulation and analysis of how it could work as a political project /…/ Interestingly, the MST /…/ in Brazil is especially emblematic for both those who advocate land struggles as the cutting edge of semi-proletarian politics in the ‘South’ today (Moyo and Yeros, 2005) and those who aspire to transcend the capital–labour relation
For Bernstein, a key problematic aspect in such populist views is the lumping of peasants into one analytical category, a “unitary and idealized /…/ ‘subject’” (ibid.), a “notion of deep continuity with past worlds: the ‘persistence’ or survival of some essential precapitalist social category” (Bernstein 2006: 454). What the author is criticizing is peasant essentialism; in the scholar’s view, “nothing is gained, and much obscured, by characterizing contemporary small farmers as ‘peasants’” (ibid.). What Bernstein sees is an AQ constituted by the fragmentation of classes of labor and its crisis of reproduction in globalized times (Bernstein 2009; 2006; 2002). McMichael (2015: 196-200), in turn, affirms that it is “not about category purity” and that Bernstein’s AQ of labor “surely underscores the depredations involved in the purported triumph of agrarian capital”.

Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010b), upon identifying not one but seven contemporary AQs, conclude that the AQ has much relevance today in times of globalized neoliberalism. In their view, agriculture still has a role in capital accumulation in developing countries and so does “petty-commodity peasant farming”. However, the authors caution that not many petty-commodity producers are able to have such role in capital accumulation at a national and global scale due to processes of marginalization and exclusion, being “rendered redundant to the needs of capital”. Consequently, the modes of resistance to processes of exclusion by petty-commodity peasant farmers are brought to be central to the understanding of processes of capitalist accumulation; i.e., concerns that are typical of the AQ framework could not be more current (ibid. 2010a: 180).

What seems to be common to all views is that globalization has changed the rules of the game and so have neoliberal politics and economics. According to Vergara-Camus (2009), the tensions generated by the expansion of capitalism into rural areas and State-led modernization are key elements engendering processes of agrarian change and, through ‘revalorising rural cultural-ecology as a global good’. Both are frequently given to long quotes from MST documents in ways that elide that necessary distinction or distance between sympathy with the programmatic statements of the organisation and its leadership and the demands of analysis. /---/ Too many accept the ‘official’ ideology of the MST (as of Via Campesina) at face value from political sympathy, rather than combining sympathy with the critical inquiry necessary to adequate investigation, analysis and assessment”.

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consequently, uprisings both in Mexico and Brazil. It is of note, however, that the author does not see “the expansion of capitalist relations per se” in rural areas as a condition for the rise of contemporary land struggles in these countries, but instead it is “the [neoliberal] nature of the restructuring of agriculture” that has spurred the reactions (ibid.: 368). Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010b: 270-8) take the neoliberal restructuring of agriculture as a point of departure in their analysis and expose key elements to understand the 21st century AQ in the South: the forms of production and the forms of accumulation.

Regarding production, the authors identify the presence of the “export-oriented capitalist” and the “petty commodity producing peasant” subsectors, figuring alongside “semi-proletarianization” of rural populations5. Concerning forms of accumulation, the scholars conceptualize a “neoliberal agricultural export bias” in developing countries, where the domestic and export markets can be either articulated or disarticulated. I believe this is an important distinction for understanding some authors’ proposition of a Brazilian AQ today. In simple terms, when the domestic and export markets are disarticulated, production for the home market is neglected and usually gives way to high-value production for international markets. In such countries, agriculture certainly contributes to rural accumulation, but this accumulation is concentrated in the export-oriented subsector and does not get through to the home market. Such countries present high dependence on food imports, placing them in vulnerable positions. In contrast, countries such as Brazil, which have their domestic markets articulated to export markets, present production for domestic consumption in tandem with production for the export market;

5 According to Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010b: 270-4), the “export-oriented capitalist subsector” is composed of large-scale capitalist farms, rich and “proto-capitalist peasants”. It is a sector that employs much capital and little labor, is guided by market imperatives and is highly integrated to large transnational agribusiness corporations’ supply chains. At a national level, these producers are connected to transnational agribusiness through the latter’s direct ownership of farmland or through contract farming arrangements. Thus, the authors argue that transnational agribusiness have a major role in influencing this subsector and correlated processes of agrarian change. The “petty commodity producing peasant” subsector employs less capital and more labor, faces challenges in taking advantage of scale, present more diversity and are “differentially incorporated into the logic of the market imperative”. For the ones who happen to be less incorporated, access over land becomes fundamental for subsistence; however, the authors stress that if control over land is not at the hands of these less integrated strata, but is instead concentrated in the hands of landowners, any surpluses from the land will end up being appropriated by the landowners. Yet Akram-Lodhi & Kay (ibid.) argue that this subsector is not reduced to economistic traits, but rather is influenced by “the social, political and ecological characteristics of the landscapes [that] may shape behavior and identity”. Finally, the semi-proletarianisation facing rural populations is pretty straightforward: it is a strata of this subsector that both produces for subsistence, but also sell their labor for survival.
these are not necessarily at odds. Thus agriculture contributes to rural accumulation and this accumulation also happens to contribute to the home economy (ibid.: 274-8).

Broadly, these analytical distinctions support the authors’ argument that agriculture still matters for capital formation/accumulation, which in this sense contradicts Bernstein’s view that an AQ of capital at a global level is dead (Bernstein 2009; 2006). It is important to note that the argument on the existence of an agrarian crisis “has thus been fashioned as a consequence of the conditions of material reproduction that govern the traits of accumulation” in countries with a disconnected export and domestic market, which might lead us to wonder whether claims that there is a generalized agricultural crisis apply to Brazil. Above all, Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010a/b) provide a useful account of the AQ(s) as a framework to analyze processes of agrarian change, a framework that should be understood as context and time-bound, flexible, nuanced and that should capture the diversity of rural change processes in different parts of the developing world. This is a view I would argue is in line with that of Martin’s (2000) in the Brazilian front.

**The Brazilian agrarian question(s)**

For Martins’ (2000: 98) “the AQ has its own temporality”\(^6\). An AQ must be understood as a product of a specific historical time, the result of ever-changing contexts. According to the author (2000: 105-6), the beginning of the process of agricultural modernization in the 1960s, which provided incentives for urban enterprises to acquire land, meant the end of possibilities of a classic redistributive AR and facilitated the major means for capitalist accumulation: extracting rents. Therefore, in Brazil, an AQ is necessarily one connected to the structure of capitalist property relations in the countryside. Even more so when the nature of the large landholding has changed, turning it into a financial speculative tool in the economy. Consequently, the author sees an AQ of land as speculative store of value.

In Brazil, the debate on the actual existence of an AQ touches upon the hegemony of agribusiness as a productive force. Some positions highlight that agricultural modernization and the neoliberal restructuring of the agricultural sector have finally

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\(^6\) Own translation from the original in Brazilian Portuguese.
brought a resolution to the AQ. This stance stresses that AR is not necessary due to these processes that have set in place a profitable, highly efficient system that generates much foreign exchange (Carter 2010: 67; Sampaio 2010). Another argument refers to the decrease in number of unproductive landholdings in Brazil. Many previously unproductive estates are now considered to be productive (Rosset & Martínez-Torres 2012). According to Carter (2010), this has mainly happened in Southern Brazil. Agribusiness has turned the old and unproductive large landholding into a highly modernized sector.

Delgado (2010) sees a new Brazilian AQ connected to the inherited neoliberal macro-economic policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) since the 1980s. This model presupposes the generation of primary surpluses in order to generate a constant trade surplus, having effects on land prices that fluctuate according to this dynamics. The sector responsible for the generation of primary surpluses is the agribusiness, through commodity exports and land rent accumulation. Brazil has not yet broken with this model of macro-economic policy that guarantees the growth of the agribusiness sector, but does not benefit the whole economy. It also presents detrimental effects for the peasant/family agriculture sector due to land price fluctuations, high rates of rural unemployment and capture of land rents. This context amounts to an obstacle to the development of peasant/family agriculture and AR settlements (ibid.). Delgado (2014) also draws attention to the tension between land as a commodity and the social function of the land, two functions at odds with each other - see Empirical Context chapter.

Martins (2000: 114) interprets the AQ as a cyclic question, managed by the State apparatus that keeps it under control. Similar to Delgado’s (2014) view, it is the imbalance between a property regime that holds absolute rights to private property versus the social consequences of such regime that warrants an AQ. Driven off settlements due to a variety of reasons such as poor settlement management and unsuitable technical support, people end up joining and rejoining the ranks of demand for AR: “a circularity
of demand for new settlements”7. The causes for such a cycle, according to Martins, are not fully clear yet (ibid.: 123-5). What the author argues, though, is that the AQ is represented as a challenge that “ends up improperly looking like or being presented as a historical impasse that demands, for some, a revolution, when it actually demands a profound transformation of livelihoods of significant parts of the population, especially the one devoted to farming work” (ibid.: 125)8.

Contemporary formulations also conceptualize the Brazilian AQ as a territorial question. This is the contribution Brazilian critical geographer Fernandes tries to accomplish. According to the author (2012, 2009, 2008a), there is a constant territorial dispute that corresponds to processes of territorialization, de-territorialization and re-territorialization (TDR) of capital and “peasantry”: “[t]he territorialization of capital means the de-territorialization of the peasantry and vice-versa”9 (2008b: 337). Consequently, when capital appropriates “peasant territories”, it de-territorializes the “peasantry”. When the “peasantry” appropriates capital’s territories, either through occupations or other means, it de-territorializes capital and re-territorializes itself.

Territorial disputes and TDR processes entail a state of permanent tension10 (Fernandes 2012; 2008a). It is important to note that territory, as employed by the author, is not just a physical entity: territory is also the terrain of social relations and power disputes. These relations of conflict come to the fore because the agribusiness and the “peasantry” are striving for different projects regarding the patterns of use of territory (Fernandes 2012: 06). As Fernandes (ibid.: 12) argues, agribusiness also controls “peasant territory” through the imposition of “farming production techniques and technologies”, what the author calls “the territorality of capital on peasant territory”11. According to Fernandes...

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7 Own translation from the original in Brazilian Portuguese.
8 Own translation from the original in Brazilian Portuguese. Here the author is making a clear allusion to MST as well, a movement Martins (2000) believe has an equivocated, linear reading of history as if the struggles of the present constituted a continuation of struggles from the past, reasoning based “an epistemology of accumulation” instead of an understanding that history is contradictory, a movement marked by ruptures, creation and dymanic recreation. Martins is very critical of movements such as MST in this regard and how they “fabricate history in the dispute for legitimacies”, an ideological “populist revisionism” of history, besides their dogmatic ideological Marxist discourse that forgoes the richness of a “campesino radicalism” that is “less dichotomist, richer and culturally more complex” (ibid.: 110-6).
9 Own translation from the original in Spanish.
10 Own translation from the original in Brazilian Portuguese.
11 Own translation from the original in Spanish.
(2009: 97-8), the near future will likely hold a “heated territorial dispute” as both peasants and agribusiness conquer more territory of their own.

**Agrarian reform**

An important understanding concerning the demand for AR in Brazil is that democratizing the agrarian structure through AR is a tool to counteract social and economic inequality (see Carter 2010; Sampaio 2010). According to this view, many people could benefit from a massive reform, despite the majority of the population being predominantly urban\(^{12}\). An AR would create jobs in rural areas, reinvigorate the socio-economic life of small towns, mitigate rural-urban migration and contribute to the support of settlements\(^{13}\). Fernandes’ (2009: 97) states that AR in Brazil has somehow altered the agrarian structure and both agribusiness and the “peasantry” have acquired more land. Yet it has not changed the patterns of land concentration, what the author considers a paradox.

A key part of the argument for AR is also connected with notions of productivity: the efficiency of the agribusiness is brought into question due to its dependency on political support and large public subsidies in contrast to little public investment that is channeled towards family agriculture. Proponents of a redistributive AR affirm that family agriculture is more productive per hectare in contrast to the advantages of scale that agribusiness enjoys, besides producing food for the internal market to feed the population. In contrast, positions contrary to AR reinstate that settlements are nothing much of a failure. AR is seen as obsolete, an ideological construct, and might actually endanger Brazil’s international competitiveness in the global commodity markets (Carter 2010: 68-70; Sampaio 2010).

**Peasant responses: land occupations and agroecology**

**Occupations**

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\(^{12}\) The current rate of urban population corresponds to 85% of total population (UNDP n.d.).

\(^{13}\) Read more about agrarian reform settlements in Empirical Context chapter, Agrarian Reform section
Peasant social movements, especially MST in Brazil, have been important protagonists in challenging the effects of an AQ. Fernandes (2009) understands the AQ as an inherent challenge in the development of capitalism in rural areas in that it destroys and recreates the “peasantry” in a context of permanent tension between “peasants” and capital as exposed earlier. However, it is not only capital that has the power to destroy and recreate the “peasantry”; the “peasantry” also struggles by means of occupying land, for instance. This is a double-edged sword, though. As the “peasantry” tries to recreate itself through land occupations, it also reinserts itself into the very capitalist system that has promoted its destruction (Martins 1981 in Fernandes 2008b: 336).

Nevertheless, the dimension of land occupations as a means of access to land in Brazil cannot be overstated. For Fernandes (2009: 94), “agrarian reform only occurs alongside the organization of peasant movements, through land occupations” in Brazil. The author (ibid.: 96) believes that direct action and conflict have a direct bearing on the AR process, and “[o]nly occupations accompanied by open conflict have persuaded the government to negotiate with agribusiness to cede some fraction of the fought-over territory”. Moreover, land occupations as a process of “peasant” territorialization can also be interpreted as a learning process in that people build knowledge together by sharing their life histories once camps are set up (Fernandes 2008b: 345).

As important as occupations are to the territorialization and re-territorialization of “peasants” and access to land, Caldeira’s (2008) empirical research on MST in Rio de Janeiro has pointed to a slight change in MST’s politics of land occupations in favor of other forms of struggle. This would be a result of political measures from Cardoso’s neoliberal administration in the 1990s. Legal acts were passed by this same government in 2001, which considerably limited the movement's ability to conduct land occupations. Caldeira (ibid.: 147-8) concludes that “MST’s repertoires of contention are

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14 The Cardoso administration realized that the high number of settlements it had created through AR had the opposite effect. Instead of diminishing the demand for land as expected, it strengthened MST and increased the number of land occupations. The government, consequently, passed two Provisional Measures (Medidas Provisórias) (Fernandes 2008a: 48-9; Branford 2010: 411-4). One of the legal measures “prohibited the settlement of families that had participated in land occupations” previously; the other, “prevented the inspection of occupied lands for two years, when occupied once, and for four years, when occupied more than once” (Fernandes 2010: 171). This inspection is a mandatory step in the process of creating settlements. In practice, these measures made it harder for movements to occupy land. The Provisional Measures have not been revoked until this day.
changing, as well as the movement’s demands and frames”. One of these new frames in which MST has placed its struggle is that of ecological sustainability.

Rosset & Martínez-Torres (2012) come to a similar conclusion upon studying the MST case. The authors argue that land occupations by MST were backed on moral claims on the social injustice of a highly unequal distribution of land, especially so when landholdings in the hands of the agrarian elite were idle. As already mentioned, with the strengthening of the agribusiness sector, much unproductive land has become productive, and “[a]s idle lands dry up, the landless are left only with the option of occupying the productive lands of agribusiness” (ibid.), forcing movements to reformulate their claims. One way of doing so is by opposing the socio-environmental degradation of agribusiness in contrast to a virtuous, agroecological alternative that produces healthy food for the domestic market and keeps people in the rural countryside (ibid.). According to Caldeira (2008: 147), agribusiness corporations have become targets as well, and “[t]he link between multinationals, capital, large estates, and environment is then another issue that gradually has made its way into the MST’s political discourse”. However, these new repertoires “have yet to prove as effective as land occupations” (ibid.: 137).

**Agroecology**

For agrarian movements, the agroecological discourse offers the possibility of a critique of agribusiness environmental damage in contrast to an agroecological peasant farming way (Rosset & Martinez-Torres 2012). Altieri & Toledo (2011) define agroecology as productive systems that are:

…biodiverse, resilient, energetically efficient, socially just and comprise the basis of an energy, productive and food sovereignty strategy (Altieri 1995, Gliessman 1998). Agroecological initiatives aim at transforming industrial agriculture partly by transitioning the existing food systems away from fossil fuel-based production largely for agroexport crops and biofuels towards an alternative agricultural paradigm that encourages local/national food production by small and family farmers based on local innovation, resources and solar energy. This implies access of peasants to land, seeds, water, credit and local markets, partly through the creation of supportive economic policies, financial incentives, market opportunities and agroecological technologies (Altieri & Toledo 2011: 587-8)

According to the authors (2011), agroecological systems have its roots on “traditional
small-scale agriculture” and should be understood as more than just alternative farming practices. Agroecological systems’ core characteristics are sustainability and resilience. The difference between capitalist, industrial-scale agriculture and “agroecology-based peasant food systems”, in such view, is presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industrial food systems</th>
<th>Agroecological peasant food systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agroexport crop and biofuel production, thousands of food</td>
<td>Local, regional and/or national food production, local production and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miles, major emissions of greenhouse gases</td>
<td>consumption circuits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on less than 20 livestock and crop species</td>
<td>More than 40 livestock species and thousands of edible plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-scale monocultures</td>
<td>Small-scale diversified farming systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High yielding varieties, hybrids and transgenic crops</td>
<td>1.9 million land races and local crop varieties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High petroleum dependence and agrochemical inputs</td>
<td>Local resources, ecosystem services provided by biodiversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizers for crop nutrition (to feed the plants)</td>
<td>Plant- and animal-derived organic matter to feed the soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top down, technicist extension schemes, corporate controlled</td>
<td>Campesino a Campesino (farmer to farmer), local innovations, socially-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scientific research</td>
<td>oriented horizontal exchanges via social movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow technological knowledge of parts</td>
<td>Holistic knowledge of nature, cosmovision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inserted in simplified, degraded natural matrix non-conduc-</td>
<td>Inserted in complex nature’s matrix that provides ecological services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to conservation of wild species</td>
<td>to production systems (i.e. pollination, biological pest control, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: modified from Rosset et al. (2011) and ETC (2009).
Source: Altieri & Toledo (2011: 592)

Altieri & Toledo (2011) optimistically claim there is an “agroecological revolution in Latin America” in the face of a generalized food crisis, centered on five areas: Brazil, Cuba, Central America, the Andean region and Mexico. This “revolution” is based on three different types of innovations: “cognitive, technological and socio-political”, and agroecology is being constructed together with social movements. In Brazil, among other reasons for the adoption of agroecology by social movements, two seem to be relevant in MST’s case: “[a]groecology is socially activating as its diffusion requires constant farmers participation” and “[i]t promotes economically viable techniques /…/ avoiding dependence on external inputs” (ibid.: 597-9). However, the authors admit that there are major constraints to the scaling up of agroecology. One such constraint is the political
The economy of knowledge production in research & development (R&D) that supports the agroindustry with science and innovation whereas research on agroecology is neglected (ibid.: 608).

Wezel et al. (2009) argue that the term agroecology has been confusingly employed in different ways: as science, practice and movement. In the Brazilian context, the authors believe it is more of a case of agroecology as a practice and movement, rather than a science. The authors (ibid.: 507-11) also affirm that the definition of an agroecological movement varies so much that there is no clear answer as to its substance. Sevilla-Guzmán & Woodgate (2013) argue that this thinking presupposes the idea that such modes (science, practice and movement) can be separated, an idea with which the authors deeply disagree. The scholars (ibid.) trace the origin of agroecology thinking to earlier debates over the classic AQ, especially the concerns over peasant differentiation in Lenin and Kautsky and the logics of peasant farming in Chayanov. Such thinking has also been influenced by the debate on the dualism of structure and agency in sociology, more constructionist approaches in political ecology and the social construction of nature as in Arturo Escobar’s work (ibid.).

The development of agroecology has also been connected to resistance to agricultural modernization (ibid.). According to Rosset & Martínez-Torres (2012), agroecological farming has become a way for movements to organize spaces, once acquired through land occupations or AR, as peasant territories. In doing so, agroecology can be a suitable productive system for movements to “strengthen their resource base and become more autonomous from input and credit markets, and thus indebtedness, while improving their conditions” (van der Ploeg 2010 in ibid.)

Valadão & Moreira (2009) argue that this agricultural practice is seen by MST as a means for achieving (socialist) social justice rather than an end in itself. The authors (ibid.: 2845) conclude that agroecology is configured as a strategy of resistance with different dimensions, aligned to a concern for

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15 Rosset & Martínez-Torres (2012) work with van der Ploeg’s concept of re-peasantization and de-peasantization as analogous to Fernandes (2012, 2009, 2008a) TDR. However, I choose to limit myself to Fernandes’ TDR as I do not fully endorse the re-peasantization thesis.

16 It is important to note that these authors have official ties with MST/Via Campesina’s Latin American School of Agroecology (LASA).
deterring further environmental degradation, the promotion of decent living conditions in AR settlements and, most broadly, the provision of an alternative model of rural development. The resistance dimension refers to the struggle for settlers' autonomy in relation to agribusiness through the development of alternative practices in order to “improve productivity all the while minimizing environmental impacts”. Here it is key to highlight that certain social movements’ concerns regarding environment and nature do not really subscribe to an enchanted view of “deep reverence to nature”, but rather to a “material interest in the environment as a source of conditions for subsistence, not due to a concern related to the rights of other species and future human generations, but, instead, a concern for the poor humans of today”\(^{17}\) (Martinez Alier 2014: 34 in Rodrigues 2014b: 199-200).

Research on MST and agroecology has discussed the development of MST’s agroecological discourse as a way of questioning the mainstream agricultural model in Brazil (Borsatto & Carmo 2013); the feasibility of developing an agroecological AR in MST settlements (Costa Neto & Canavesi 2002) and agroecology’s potential as an “emancipatory political discourse” as well as a practical alternative for agriculture and livestock breeding models (Carli 2013). It has also documented the movement’s methodology to promote agroecology in PR (Toná & Guhur 2009)\(^{18}\).

**Empirical Context**

**The agrarian structure**

Brazil presents some of the highest patterns of land concentration in the world (Carter 2010; Delgado 2010). According to the latest census by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics\(^{19}\) (IBGE), these patterns have barely changed since 1985, a straightforward picture of land and credit concentration in Brazil and Paraná:

\(^{17}\) Own translation from the original in Brazilian Portuguese.
\(^{18}\) These authors are researchers and MST PR members.
\(^{19}\) In Brazilian Portuguese: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE). I am using the revised version of the census, published in 2012. The data refers to 2006 (reference period: January 1st - December 31st, 2006). IBGE makes
Table 1. Land concentration Brazil 1985/1995-6/2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>% of total farming units</th>
<th>% of total farming area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1000ha</td>
<td>around 1%</td>
<td>+ than 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 10ha</td>
<td>+ than 47%</td>
<td>- than 2.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from IBGE 2012

Table 2. Land concentration Paraná 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Farming area (ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>371.051 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 10ha</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;10 &lt;100ha</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;100 &lt;1000ha</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1000ha</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No data/no land</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from França et. al. 2009: 82

Table 3. Financing agriculture Brazil 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% total units that received financing</th>
<th>% of total financing received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥ 1000ha units</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;100 &lt;1000ha units</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 100ha units</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source of financing: 85% government, 15% other than government. Adapted from IBGE 2012

Paraná is a key farming area in the country, presenting a larger area covered by farming units than the national rate:

Table 4. Farming area Brazil/Paraná 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total area (ha)</th>
<th>Total units</th>
<th>% total area (ha) covered by farming units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>851.487.659</td>
<td>5.175.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraná</td>
<td>19.931.485</td>
<td>371.063</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from IBGE 2012

Family agriculture (FA) proves to have a large share of farming units, but not so as a share of land:

use of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) definition of farming unit, which is mainly economic – the farming unit is one productive unit under single management. For instance, one large landholding could have been leased into several plots to different producers, which would count as several farming units (different productive units). The other way round is also true: contiguous landholdings leased by one producer are considered one farming unit (IBGE 2012). Production in an area might or might not overlap with legal ownership of that area, given the numerous productive arrangements in place in the rural countryside.

Lower-medium (>10<100ha) and upper medium (>100<1000ha) units do not present much change in regards to their shares of total farming area and farming units during the period (IBGE 2012).
Table 5. Family agriculture farming area Brazil/Paraná 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>Paraná</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total farming units</td>
<td>5,175,489 (100%)</td>
<td>371,051 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share farming units – FA</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total farming area (ha)</td>
<td>329,941,393 (100%)</td>
<td>15,286,534 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share farming area (ha) - FA</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from IBGE 2009

The main crops grown in Brazil are soy, cotton, corn, sugar cane, rice, beans, coffee, cassava, oranges, wheat and cocoa. The most common farming produce is beef, followed by temporary crops such as beans and cassava. In terms of share value of total production, commodities top the list, as can be seen in the next tables:

Table 6. Most common produce Brazil 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Produce</th>
<th>% of total farming units that produce it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary crops (beans, cassava)</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leafy greens, vegetables, coffee, fruits, soy, tobacco, forest products and swine</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from IBGE 2012

Table 7. Share value total production Brazil 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Produce</th>
<th>Share value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar cane</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soy</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other temporary crops</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from IBGE 2012

21 IBGE works with the legal definition of family agriculture, which is defined by law 11,326/2006. The law defines family agriculturalists as people who develop activities in the countryside, do not own property larger than four fiscal modules (a measure of size that varies from region to region), who mostly employ family labor in their property, whose income is predominantly from the activities developed in the property and manage the property jointly with the family (IBGE 2009).

22 The numbers on family agriculture might vary from one table to the other, because I use the non-revised census edition published by IBGE in 2009 for family agriculture data, while the rest of the data is from the revised edition published in 2012.
Specialized farming units, whose production is majorly focused on one product (55.9% of total units), produce 81.4% of total value share. Consequently, IBGE (2012) affirms that units considered to have diversified production were responsible for less than a fifth of the total production, highlighting that the focus on producing one single or few products is common.

A trend that IBGE (2012) has observed is that there has been a 35.5% decrease in area dedicated to cattle ranching in Paraná. Crop area has increased by 12.6% in the South, a change mostly concentrated in this same state. According to IBGE’s census, the areas where I conducted fieldwork in Northern Paraná as well Lapa in the Southeast are dominated by crop production, with the exception of Antonina on the coast, an area focused on crops, but covered by forest.

Regarding FA, IBGE (2009) states that this sector is key in providing for the domestic market, a major contributor to food security in Brazil. The main characteristics of the FA sector in Brazil and Paraná can be seen in the tables below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8. FA: land use patterns Brazil 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of total FA area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(80.250,453ha, 24% of total farming area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croplands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest or agroforestry systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from IBGE 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9. FA: land ownership Brazil 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% total FA farming units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4,367,902 units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlers with no legal title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharecroppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23 Read more about the areas where I conducted fieldwork in the Methodology and Ethical Concerns chapter, section Sampling.
Table 10. FA: main crops produced Brazil/Paraná 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% of total production Brazil</th>
<th>% of total production PR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cassava</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soy</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from IBGE 2009; França et.al. 2009: 82-3

As can be generally noted, ranching covers most of the farming area, most FA producers own their lands and staples are common produce.

**Land tenure regime**

Historically, private ownership has been the main means of access to land in Brazil; tenancy and sharecropping have had a smaller role (IBGE 2012; Buainain et.al. 2008). Smallholders and the landless face difficulties in accessing these latter modalities due to lack of access to credit and input markets, problems with the terms of the contract that usually benefit the landowner, no conditions to make further investments on the land, among other reasons (Buainain et.al. 2008: 02-4).

The 1988 Constitution, the Civil Code and 1964 Land Statute are the main legal frameworks that govern rural land rights. The legal land tenure regime was officially established through the 1850 Land Tenure Law, which prohibited acquiring land through any means other than purchasing (Sampaio 2010: 398-9). Later on, the 1964 Land Statute stipulated that prices paid for expropriated land by the State should reflect the market
value, besides establishing the principle of social function of the land (Medeiros 2007: 1503), enshrined in the new 1988 Constitution. Article 186 of the Constitution defines that rural property must meet four criteria simultaneously if it is to guarantee its social function (Delgado 2014):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11. The social function of the land: four simultaneous criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Rational and adequate use of the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Adequate use of the available natural resources and environmental protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Compliance with the provisions that regulate labor relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Enterprise that favors the well-being of its owners and workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Delgado (2014: 37)

Only the first criterion has been regulated by a subsequent law, which defined specific productivity indicators based on the out-of-date 1975 census (ibid.: 37). In theory, the consequence for not meeting the criteria is the mandatory, financially compensated expropriation of unproductive lands by the State for the purposes of AR (Medeiros 2007: 1504). As a consequence of the outdated productivity indicators, few landholdings end up being deemed unproductive and, therefore, liable to expropriation (ibid.: 1515). Indeed, the first Dilma administration expropriated much less land than its predecessor

Agrarian reform

No massive redistributive AR has taken place in Brazil so far. Carter (2010: 49) states that AR in Brazil has been timid compared to other countries in Latin America. According to the author (2010), Brazil has seen a conservative AR, whose main characteristics are presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12. Conservative agrarian reform in Brazil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation:</strong> mostly a reaction to social upheaval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective:</strong> handle social conflict without conducting structural changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land distribution:</strong> palliative and ad hoc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

24 During the two consecutive Lula administrations (2003-2010), around 48 million Ha were expropriated; during Dilma’s first administration (2011-2014), 2.3 million Ha were expropriated (Dataluta 2014b: 07).
The federal authority responsible for AR implementation and land tenure governance is the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform\textsuperscript{25} (NICAR). NICAR is responsible for the creation, implementation and support of settlements, classification of landholdings as productive/unproductive and land expropriations (INCRA n.d.a). NICAR can acquire land for settlements via expropriations or purchase (ibid. n.d.b). A settlement is a landholding that has been acquired by NICAR, divided into individual plots for each beneficiary household, becoming a community. NICAR is also responsible for basic infrastructure and initial credit/technical assistance to settlers. The plot is not negotiable for 10 years until the beneficiaries become eligible to receiving the legal title. Beneficiaries must pay for the land (INCRA n.d.c; Law 8629/93). From 1979 to 2013, 9.195 settlements have been created, settling a little more than one million families in Brazil. In Paraná, a total of 322 settlements were established, and 20.043 families were settled from 1981 to 2013 (Dataluta 2014a: 18; Dataluta 2014b: 16). The evolution on the number of settled families is presented below:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Evolution of number of settled families in Brazil 1985-2013}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{25} In Brazilian Portuguese: Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (INCRA)
As can be noted, AR has slowed down in the last decade. In 2013 a total of 136 settlements were created in Brazil and 2 in Paraná (Dataluta 2014a: 23; Dataluta 2014b: 16). Generally, NICAR settlements are established in remote and poor areas, receive little State support and present “high levels of abandonment” (Carter & Carvalho 2010: 294-5; Sauer 2006 in USAID 2011: 09). According to research by Spavorek (2003 in Carter & Carvalho 2010), half the settlements present precarious living conditions. In turn, 1990s World Bank market-led AR in Brazil has not been much successful either.

Market-led AR has been criticized due to its blindness to the unequal bargain power the landless have in negotiations to purchase land, besides the high level of debt accruement to farmers, no substantial improvement in their income levels, lack of resources to make investments, little technical assistance, isolation from markets, low quality of acquired land, among others (Sauer 2006 in USAID 2011: 09; Medeiros 2007). In sum, “[i]later studies confirmed the reproduction of precariousness within the projects” (Medeiros 2007: 1513). Social movements such as MST have been vocal opponents to such initiatives.
The actor: MST

MST has turned 30 years old and is considered one of the most important, well-organized, effective and influential movements in Brazil and Latin America (Wolford 2010; Fernandes 2009; Karriem 2009; Rosset & Martínez-Torres 2012). It has been responsible for organizing the land struggle in Brazil, keeping the pressure on AR from the bottom-up, forcing governments to expropriate areas and establish settlements as well as influencing many organizations, including urban movements (Fernandes 2010; Sampaio 2010; Caldeira 2008; Petras & Veltmeyer 2001).

MST’s objectives are to fight for land and social change due to the high levels of land concentration and social inequality in Brazil (MST n.d.). The marginalization of the rural population, especially landless workers, has been an important concern, and land as a means to guarantee work, income and a dignified life has been part of MST’s discourse since its origins (Vergara-Camus 2009: 384). MST’s base is diverse, composed of people with peasant, landless rural worker and urban backgrounds (ibid.: 379). Estimates revolve around a membership of 2 million people, with more than 500 thousand families distributed in more than 700 municipalities (Welch 2006: 199).

The movement’s main tactics has been occupations of idle farms. An occupation takes place when MST members enter the land and set up the tents, later forming a camp. Camps vary in duration, and some last for more than a decade. When the State finally expropriates the occupied farm, the camp turns into a settlement. From 2000 to 2013, MST was the movement that most occupied land in Brazil: 2,861 occupations, mobilizing 464,034 families (Dataluta 2014a: 31). In Paraná, MST has mobilized 70% of the total number of families in occupations in the same period (ibid.: 38). In 2013, MST was responsible for 80 out of 257 occupations in Brazil; in Paraná, 2 out of 5 (ibid.: 15, 31). The following maps show the evolution of occupations in Brazil and Paraná:

26 This is the case of the José Lutzenberger camp in Antonina, Southern Paraná. The camp is 12 years old.
Fieldwork area (Paraná) is indicated in the map. Note that not all occupations are MST occupations.
Adapted from Dataluta (2014a: 13)
MST had its heyday in the 1990s, the period they conquered more land. It was an intense period of land occupations by different movements (Medeiros 2007: 1504). It was also in the 1990s that MST became one of the founding members of Via Campesina. In the
2000s, the movement started to discuss changes in the productive matrix, acknowledging problems with growing conventional crops\textsuperscript{27}. The discussion touched upon the use of agrochemicals and the lack of support to settlements. These and other concerns led to the understanding that settlements needed to become more than just conquered land: people needed access to good healthcare, education, quality of life. Over the years, MST has broadened its initial focus from AR to other concerns such as environmental questions (Petras & Veltmeyer 2001; Caldeira 2008).

**Methodology and Ethical Concerns**

**Epistemological points of departure**

*Constructionism*

Constructionism is an epistemological position which presupposes that the researcher must understand and interpret subjective meanings of social phenomena, assuming that reality is socially constructed by participants who actively develop these meanings out of lived experiences. Such meanings are “negotiated socially and historically. …/ they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others /…/ and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (Creswell 2007: 20-1). Thus I view the constructionist position of this study as one that, besides acknowledging social facts as constructs derived out of people’s lived experiences and interactions, also acknowledges that historical conditions as well as culture shape such constructions. It also assumes that the economic, political and social contexts shape how these meanings are negotiated. Drawing on constructionism allows researchers to understand the construction of naturalized ideas, which is partly the thrust of this study.

A qualitative research design is chosen over a quantitative approach due to its inherent trait of allowing the researcher to understand the complexity of social phenomena in depth, with all the nuanced meanings that people attach to them. In addition, it is more

\textsuperscript{27} MST members refer to cash crops which are not produced according to agroecological principles as “convencional” - conventional agriculture. In their lingo, the two existing options are “convencional” (conventional) and agroecological (many times expressed as organic, since the terms organic and agroecological are employed interchangeably due to the lack of clarity regarding the difference between organic and agroecological production).
flexible when compared to quantitative inquiry (Creswell 2007; Brockington & Sullivan 2003: 57-9). The nature of qualitative research has been evolving over time and cannot be so easily defined. Qualitative inquiry has also evolved towards situating research “within the political, social, and cultural context of the researchers, the participants, and the readers of a study” (Creswell 2007: 37). My background as a Brazilian national, a communications graduate and being a woman with an interest in questions of social justice and exclusion have influence the framing of the study and which questions I thought should be asked.

I have chosen to conduct a case study and constructed a conceptual framework drawing on peasant/agrarian studies, critical geography and political ecology. My task is not to apply a historical materialist framework, or an agrarian political economy analysis, as I am working from a constructionist perspective. Although I draw heavily on the latter, the task is rather to understand how ideas are assembled and reassembled by interested actors such as social movements in the legitimization of their own agenda. This is not a purely deductive study; the conceptual framework was delineated from a literature review prior to fieldwork, but much refined afterwards.

**Research design**

In light of these theoretical debates and empirical context, I conducted a case study of a social process: how a “peasant” movement understands processes of agrarian change and constructs a response to it. If many petty small-scale/peasant farmers have been made redundant by processes of agrarian change as Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010a) have suggested, then understanding such responses, or how “former peasants resist the logic and imperatives of their marginalization”, is key for “understanding the prospects for capitalist accumulation and anti-systemic movements on a world-scale” (ibid.: 180). Rural politics both shape and is shaped by agrarian change processes, and that is why research in agrarian studies has also dealt with rural politics (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010b: 256).
Moreover, researching PAR directly touches upon rural development concerns, as it is an alternative proposal to the mainstream model of rural development in Brazil. It demands changes to the overall model of Brazilian development by opposing the export-oriented agribusiness sector. Investigating such projects can, consequently, add to a better understanding of movements’ demands, rationale and the contemporary currency of agrarian populism. This case study is hopefully a small contribution to building these understandings. Thus the aim of this study is to understand how MST interprets the AQ in the Brazilian context and constructs a response to it. Consequently, the unit of analysis is MST, whereas the object of analysis is the response constructed by MST, as represented by PAR. The following research questions guide the study:

• How does MST understand the AQ in the Brazilian context?
• How does it construct a response (AR) to such understanding in regards to the politics of land occupations/camps, settlements and agroecology across scales?

A case study is a suitable qualitative methodology since it is epistemologically flexible and useful to “develop as full an understanding of that case as possible” (Punch 1998: 150 in Silverman 2013: 142). However, “a limited research problem must be established that is geared to specific features of the case” for the sake of establishing focus (Silverman 2013: 142). Therefore, I focus on how MST understands the nature of agrarian change, how this understanding legitimizes the construction of their response and limited features within PAR. Consequently, I do not address other PAR elements, such as its call for feminism or proposals for education in the countryside. This study does not address other aspects of MST as a movement either, such as its history and organization. The timeframe of the study dates from the 1980s onwards, a period of structural adjustment, trade liberalization and transition to democracy in Brazil.

This is an instrumental case study, “examined mainly to provide insight into an issue, or to revise a generalization” (Stake 2000: 437-8 in ibid.: 143). The study is designed as a single-case holistic study, having only one unit of analysis, since I examine “the global nature of an organization or of a program” (Yin 2014: 55), producing a “holistic analysis
of the whole case” (Creswell 2007: 75). A critique of such holistic character is that analysis might become too general, detached from the facts on the ground. I have tried to avoid this pitfall by attaching the analysis to empirical examples from fieldwork. In single-case studies, it is also noteworthy that the boundaries between context and case are tenuous (Yin 2014: 50), and so an empirical context is provided in which the case is embedded. Despite all these choices, this study also has an emergent design. I developed a preliminary fieldwork plan, but adapted the design to the contingencies and new analytical insights while in the field.

**Sampling**

Purposive sampling is the suitable option for case studies such as this (Creswell 2007: 75) as “it allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested” (Silverman 2013: 148). Since the sample is not representative of populations, as is the case with statistical studies, the number of cases is not an issue in such design. Rather, it is not individuals that are sampled, but *interactive units* such as social relations and organizations (Silverman 2013: 145-6). A fundamental implication is that generalizations based on findings, or better, *extrapolations*, will refer to theoretical concerns rather than to universes/populations (ibid.; Creswell 2007: 118). Marshall & Rossman (2006 in Creswell 2007: 126) suggest four levels of sampling, “settings”, “events”, “actors” and “artifacts”. The following map presents the settings where I conducted fieldwork during the months of January and February 2015 in Paraná, Brazil.
Table 13. Fieldwork settings in Paraná

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Northern Paraná</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Porecatu (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herdeiros da Luta de Porecatu Camp* (The Inheritors of the Porecatu Fight Camp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centenário do Sul (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dois de Dezembro Camp (Second of December Camp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Lara Settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florestópolis (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manoel Jacinto Correia Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zilda Arns Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arapongas (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorcelina Folador Settlement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curitiba metropolitan area (southeastern PR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lapa (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contestado Settlement*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonina (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Lutzenberger Camp*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Camps and settlements marked with * represent settings where I lived.
Paraná is a state located in the South, where idle lands are supposedly drying up (Carter 2010: 67), and the agribusiness is highly consolidated. Paraná presents areas where PAR is being implemented or, at least, discussed, and is home to new MST occupations. Therefore, it is a relevant choice to investigate the construction of PAR and the politics of occupations. Most of MST's efforts to disseminate the practice of agroecology have also taken place in Paraná, where educational centers were created to promote it (Borsatto & Carmo 2013: 656-7), and where many families have been experiencing an “agroecological transition” in settlements (Valadão & Moreira 2009: 2844). Questions of accessibility, time and resources also influenced sampling. I do not have any supporting organization backing the research and no funds rather than my own. Paraná was a viable option since it is close to my home state, São Paulo, and accessible by bus.

I initially planned to conduct fieldwork in Western Paraná, in the “Herdeiros da Luta de 1° de Maio” camp29, a recent occupation with around 2.500 families. The land is Araupel’s property, a Brazilian multinational specialized in the production of wood products. The “Ireno Alves dos Santos” settlement would also be sampled, located in proximity to the camp (MST 2014b). My key informant endorsed this plan and suggested other areas as well: the Central Northern Paraná and Lapa (Southeastern Paraná).

Fieldwork settings in the Central Northern area are located in the midst of soy and sugarcane monocultures where land disputes are heated. The Porecatu region presents high conflict potential with the Atalla family, who owns 40.000 Ha, mostly sugar cane monocultures. There are around 4000 landless families in this area (Gouvea 2014). Fieldwork settings are located on or around Atalla family’s lands. It is where, in 2014, the first MST occupation took place after a three-year vacuum: the occupation of an Atalla farm in Florestópolis (Luciano 2014). This occupation generated the Zilda Arns camp, where I also conducted fieldwork. Central Northern Paraná is, consequently, a strategic choice for studying MST’s politics of land occupations/camps. In turn, Southeastern Paraná is home to MST spaces where there are more established agroecological practices, such as in the Contestado settlement, where the Latin American School of Agroecology

29 In English: “The Inheritors of the First of May Struggle Camp”
(LASA)\textsuperscript{30} is located and where families are going through an “agroecological transition” (Valadão 2009: 2844).

However, the preliminary strategy could not be followed through completely. I had to adapt site sampling during fieldwork due to issues of access, time and for most, safety. Brutal killings in the “Ireno Alves dos Santos” settlement made me change my mind\textsuperscript{31}, not only due to personal safety, but also out of respect for the families. My key informant suggested I headed to José Lutzenberger camp instead. The final sampling strategy was, consequently, a mix of my initial theoretical concerns, contingencies and my key informant’s suggestions. In a study like this, in which a stranger asks for access to isolated communities and whose focus is on the strategy of a movement that has been criminalized by mainstream media, I am surely subjected to the will of gatekeepers. I understand this and believe it is fair. Pictures 1 to 6 show some of the fieldwork settings.

\textbf{Picture 1. Herdeiros da Luta de Porecatu camp, Porecatu, Paraná}

\textsuperscript{30} In Brazilian Portuguese: Escola Latino-Americana de Agroecologia (ELAA)

\textsuperscript{31} A couple and their grandchild were kidnapped and murdered after having their house invaded by criminals in January 2015. The family lived in the “Ireno Alves dos Santos” settlement. Paraná has ranked 6th in number or murders related to rural conflict from 1988 to 2005 (Fernandes 2010: 181)
Picture 2. Herdeiros camp school. Saying on the wall: "Labor and consciousness determines the freeing of the class. I'd rather die fighting than die of hunger"

Picture 3. Manoel Jacinto Correia camp, Florestópolis, Paraná

Picture 4. LASA headquarters, Contestado settlement, Paraná
Picture 5. Zilda Arns camp, Florestópolis, Paraná

Picture 6. Dois de Dezembro camp, Centenário do Sul, Paraná
São Paulo

I relied on key informants’ and participants’ knowledge to sample events in Paraná and São Paulo. The rationale for conducting fieldwork at MST’s Florestan Fernandes National School (FFNS) in Guararema (São Paulo) was to participate at the National Coordination Meeting, MST’s main forum for reflection, where more than 300 leaders from all over Brazil gather to discuss relevant issues. There were two full days devoted to discussions on PAR, its definition, scope and implementation. I was granted exclusive access to this event, usually off-bounds to non-MST people. MST’s Struggle for Land Awards also took place during the event and was open to other visitors – social movements and key actors in the land conflict scenario in Brazil. Overall participation in the meeting proved key to understand the politics of construction of PAR across scales: debates were held at the national and local level.

![Picture 7. Struggle for Land Awards on the last day of MST’s National Coordination Meeting](image)

The study’s participants are mostly, but not exclusively, national, regional and local camp and settlement leaders. Initially, I relied on key informants to identify interesting participants and then proceeded to following up on tips by other participants (snowball sampling) and also approaching people spontaneously. Finally, sampling at the artifact

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32 In Brazilian Portuguese: Prêmio Luta pela Terra. This event was organized by MST in order to pay homage to important personalities in the history of struggle for land in Brazil.
level entailed choosing the Agrarian Program as a source of primary data, the document where all PAR’s proposals and rationale are presented.

**Data collection methods**

To obtain informed consent, I provided full information on the research focus and my contact details. I also assured that participation was voluntary and participants would have the right to withdraw at any given moment. Furthermore, I explained that the collected information was confidential, used for the sole purpose of this thesis, and that participants’ identities would remain anonymous. I employed an ethnographic approach to data collection, making use of the following methods to construct primary data:

*Interviews*

I conducted 13 individual in-depth semi-structured interviews and one group interview with three participants. I documented all the interviews in a simple interview register. Documentation of every research step is important as it helps keep track of the process (Schutt 2009: 326), ensuring reliability. The interviews were conducted following pre-designed interview guides, which can be found in Annex A. I adapted the questions in a conversational manner while making sure I covered the same questions in every interview to ensure consistence. I also probed answers frequently. The interviews were recorded with a digital recorder. At first, I handed in written consent forms to be signed by the parties. However, I had to throw away such forms, for signing papers was seen with suspicion. Oral consent was given instead, upon guarantee of the destruction of audio files after completion of thesis.

*Participant observations*

I conducted participant observations in all the settings, especially where I lived: Herdeiros da Luta de Porecatu camp, Contestado settlement and José Lutzenberger camp. I tried to become close with the participants and other people living in the settings, participating in ordinary activities. The following table presents some events in which I
participated, in no way exhaustive of the multiple interactions, conversations, narrative walks and other instances that filled my fieldwork:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visit to “Campesino Union” Commercialization and Agrarian Reform Cooperative³³ (Cucarc)</td>
<td>Dorcelina Folador settlement, Arapongas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly to organize the occupation and destruction of sugar cane monoculture adjacent to Dois de Dezembro camp</td>
<td>Herdeiros da Luta de Porecatu camp, Porecatu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation in the occupation and destruction of an Atalla family’s sugar cane monoculture</td>
<td>Dois de Dezembro camp, Centenário do Sul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation at full-day National Food Supply Agency (NFSA) meeting with Free Land Cooperative members, MST and non-MST members³⁴ as well as other actors involved in the production/commercialization of family agriculture</td>
<td>Contestado settlement, Lapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit to family plots</td>
<td>Contestado settlement, Lapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation on a workday at agroindustry manufacturing produce</td>
<td>José Lutzenberger camp, Antonina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation at National Coordination Meeting</td>
<td>FFNS, Guararema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation at MST’s Struggle for Land Awards</td>
<td>FFNS, Guararema</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. Observations

Here it is fundamental to draw some ethical considerations on conducting “participant” observations in the assembly and destruction of a sugarcane monoculture. When I was invited by my key informants to participate in such events, I pondered whether this would be appropriate. According to one of my key informants, the destruction is perhaps the most important moment in the whole occupation process. So I knew, right then, that observing such event would contribute much to my understanding of the politics of

³³ In Brazilian Portuguese: Cooperativa de Comercialização e Reforma Agrária União Camponesa (Copran).
³⁴ This meeting was organized by the NFSA (Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento - Conab) in the Contestado settlement in order to inform small peasant/family agriculture producers, not only MST PR members, on the new rules to assess the Food Acquisition Programme (FAP) (Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos - PAA). Managed by an inter-ministerial group, FAP is financed by the Ministry of Agrarian Development (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário) and the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome) (Conab n.d.; IPC-IG & UNDP 2013). NFSA was the main actor responsible for the meeting, since it is the agency that operationalizes FAP.
occupations in PAR. Yet the doubt persisted. I asked for further information on how the destruction happens, and it did not sound dangerous. Creswell (2007: 139) affirms that the challenges that might surface during an observation are directly connected to the role of the researcher as a “participant, nonparticipant, or middle-ground position”. In order to reconcile my desire as a researcher to take part in an event that is highly relevant to understanding the research problem and at the same time avoid aforementioned challenges, I took a nonparticipant role in these events. As much as I am aware that the boundaries of participation and non-participation are blurry, I consider non-participation here as the observing, taking notes and having informal conversations with people, but not engaging in the actual destruction – keeping neutrality. I believe that it is not inherently problematic to conduct fieldwork in these circumstances as long as ethical principles are upheld. Any meaningful, “participatory” research on MST would be rendered impossible otherwise.

Data was recorded through fieldnotes. Analytical thoughts were written in one notebook, while personal thoughts and feelings were recorded in a diary. I adopted Miles & Huberman’s (1984 in Silverman 2013: 245) contact summary sheets as a convention for writing expanded fieldnotes. It is an effective way of kick-starting the analytical process while in the field, since it forces the researcher to make sense of the recently collected data and document the process. The content of the form is presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What people, events or situations were involved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the main themes or issues in the contact?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which research questions did the contact bear most centrally on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What new hypotheses, speculations or guesses about the field situations were suggested by the contact?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35 A note on the MST’s relations with the Law and the State is of necessity here. The legality of occupations is actually a contingent matter. Occupations in the last decades have produced new legal understandings: that what is questioned by an occupation is not “the legality of land property, but mostly its legitimacy” once the land’s productive function is not fulfilled (Medeiros 2010: 128). Today, the Justice system ponders that the end of such activity is not to dispossess the landowner, but rather “press the government to implement AR” (Sampaio 2010: 404). In conclusion, my point here is that what at first sounds problematic is actually complex, and MST has a more symbiotic relationship with governments and the law (Sigaud 2010).
Where should the fieldworker place most energy during the next contact, and what sorts of information should be sought?

Adapted from Miles & Huberman’s (1984 in Silverman 2013: 245)

Document analysis

MST’s Agrarian Program was the document chosen as a source of primary data. The method of analysis is presented in the next section.

I also use secondary quantitative data in the Empirical Context chapter, but only for descriptive purposes. The collected data is inherently partial, and my interpretations are directly connected to the level of access to information, sites, events and participants during fieldwork. The cross-scale nature of the study provided me with information at the national and local level, but this information surely cannot apprehend the full picture at these scales. As I have constructed the data from the information collected, including interview data as “actively constructed narratives” (Silverman 2013: 202), this construction also warrants the partial character of interpretations.

Data analysis

I employed Braun & Clarke’s (2013; 2006) thematic analysis, an established method in order to ensure validity. This method is epistemologically flexible and can be used within a wide range of theoretical perspectives (ibid.). It is based on the development of codes and themes. Codes are smaller units of meaning that resemble tags applied to small bits of data. Themes are broader patterns within the data and capture “something important about the data in relation to the research question” (Braun & Clarke 2006: 10). The method presents 6 steps:
In this case study, step one involved reading the data and thinking about possible meanings and codes. Also part of this phase is the transcription of interviews. In step two, I coded and collated the data, developing a codebook. The scholars (2006: 18) affirm that coding already involves analysis, and I could not agree more. In the process of coding, certain subtle relationships started to take shape and I developed a much more thorough understanding of the data, making connections that had previously gone unnoticed. Step three entailed creating preliminary themes out of identified patterns, collating codes under each theme. In step four I reviewed the themes, re-evaluating the consistency of codes in relation to themes; some themes became sub-themes. I could not carry out this step fully due to time constraints; it was impossible to actually review each theme against the whole data set. I also did not produce a theme map, but rather organized the themes in electronic folders. In step five I settled for the definitive themes and went back to the collated data in order to select data extracts for the final account. Hereby I present the themes and sub-themes generated through analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
<td>The problems of agribusiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agroecology</td>
<td>Environmental discourse in the Popular Agrarian Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructing territories</td>
<td>Agrarian reform settlements; Occupations-camps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Agrarian Reform</td>
<td>Agrarian Reform; Hard life in the countryside; MST dilemma; New agrarian question for MST; Popular Agrarian Reform rationale;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transcripts are in Brazilian Portuguese, and only the excerpts quoted in the Analysis chapter have been translated into English.
The research questions underlie the rationale for the disposition of the Analysis chapter in subsections. Themes and sub-themes are dealt with fluidly in each subsection. The analysis is also cross-scale; it bounces back and forth the national and local levels in the subsections.

Analysis

MST, the agrarian question and the Popular Agrarian Reform

PAR is under construction and building alliances with society, specifically with the urban working class, is a key element in the strategy, a clear pattern across the data. As a leader from Herdeiros camp explains[^37], PAR is not just about MST; the word “popular” means that society should endorse PAR as the best AR project, as it is also connected to the interests of the urban population. The understanding of the “popular” character is, nevertheless, not consistent across the participants. PAR can also be interpreted as a result of reflections on the isolation of settlements, as research has shown settlements present a high degree of abandonment (see Empirical Context), and even the president Dilma has stated she does not want settlements to be rural slums any longer[^38]. As a Maria Lara settlement resident explains[^39], “popular” is something that stretches beyond the individual, and PAR affects more than just the campesino or the landless, it integrates society.

Why have MST members felt the need to build alliances with society? Why has MST devised an alternative AR project? MST launched the Agrarian Program in 2014, which

[^37]: Interview with leader from Herdeiros de Porecatu camp. Translation: “We should implement PAR and that it involves society, that Brazilian society will defend this AR project that is the best, the bes, and it has to do with themselves, with the people that are in the city”. For original, see Annex B, item 1.


[^39]: Interview with MST PR production sector member: “So popular for me is in building something that already is beyond the individual, that it is impossible for somebody to say… that there is isolation. Everything is connected. So if we want to build an AR, so it does not belong to the campesino, it does not belong to the landless, it is an AR that integrates, that affects the other”. For original, see Annex B, item 2.
contains the proposals to implement PAR, based on the movement’s readings of the current socio-economic and political context (MST 2014). The first part in the Agrarian Program document reflects MST’s analysis of the process of the development of capitalism in the countryside (AQ). Its emphasis lies on the rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s, the consolidation of transnational agrifood corporations and the effects of this new conjuncture on Brazilian agriculture, land concentration, labor and income. Such interpretation is aligned to arguments’ such as McMichael’s (2006) on the existence of a new AQ due to globalization and the rise of the corporate food regime; Akram-Lodhi & Kay’s (2010b) “neoliberal agricultural export bias”; Delgado’s (2010) and Martins’ (2000) land as a speculative tool in the economy; and Carter’s (2010) and Sampaio’s (2010) view that AR is a means of fighting inequality. The second part of the document entails an account of different types of AR, reducing a historical period starting in the 19th century in Brazil to a single history of struggle for land that reaches the neoliberal era in agriculture, “a new model of capital’s domination in the countryside, to meet the demands of the external market” (MST 2014: 29). Such is MST’s reading, in a summarized fashion, of the countryside context and nature of AR. The following table presents a summary of proposals that I produced based on the program:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Key Proposals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democratizing land</td>
<td>Democratize land access, use and property, natural resources and agricultural means of production to all campesinos; expropriate all land that does not meet its social function, including land owned by foreign companies and the industry/services sectors; establish a maximum size for rural landholdings; eliminate land rent and leasing; de-bureaucratize access to land by the camped landless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>No private ownership of water sources. Demand from the State: conservation, drinking water supply in all rural communities and towns, adequate access and use by campesinos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing production</td>
<td>Organize production/commercialization through all forms of cooperation; organize agroindustry; demand public policy for energy consumption/production for the rural population; irrigation; “prioritize the production of healthy foods for all the Brazilian people, guaranteeing the principle of food sovereignty, free from agrochemicals and transgenic seeds” (MST 2014: 42)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
New productive matrix (agroecology) | Demand from the State: credit, financing and research for agroecological production; organizing the production of agroecological farming inputs and “to combat the production and commercialization of agrochemicals and transgenic seeds” (ibid.: 44). Fight intellectual property rights and patents over seeds, productive systems and others.

Agricultural policy | Demand from the State: price guarantees; anticipated purchase of all production; rural credit; rural insurance; technological assistance; access to the means of production by all campesinos; restructuring of agricultural research towards agroecology and campesino agriculture

Education in rural areas | Meet the new educational demands to construct PAR. Demand from the State: policies for youth and adult literacy program; universal access to primary and secondary education through, among others, the construction and maintenance of schools in AR areas; promote access to professional education tailored to PAR; access to higher education

Social infra-structure in rural areas | Develop a program to build and renovate housing, with access to alternative energy, drinking water, sanitation, public health, transportation and roads

The nature of the State | Concretizing PAR is only possible with changes to the nature of the “anti-democratic” “bourgeois State”, a bureaucratic State that prevents public policy favorable to the working class” (ibid.: 48) from taking place. PAR can only be carried out with a truly popular government.

Source: MST 2014

Upon careful analysis of the data, PAR seems to have come to existence due to a key realization by the movement - the disenchantment with the possibility of a massive redistributive AR in Brazil, as articulated by many interviewees and also leaders at the National Coordination meeting. One leader explains that MST needs to build PAR in order to accumulate strength in a moment when the classic AR is “blocked” due to a context in which there is no will by the State or elites to conduct such reform as well as no “objective conditions” to advance towards a radical AR. I argue that such disenchantment regarding the “classic AR” and the effects of the transformation of idle lands into productive areas configure a new understanding of the AQ by MST. According

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40 Interview with MST leader: “This is why we are saying that for us to accumulate strength in a period that the classic AR is blocked and there are no objective conditions to advance towards /.../ a radical AR, we need to build what we call PAR”. For original, see Annex B, item 3.
to MST’s reading of reality, the new AQ is agribusiness hegemony in agriculture, a strong pattern across the data. This is a view somewhat aligned to Akram-Lodhi & Kay’s (2010b) and Vergara-Camus’ (2009) argument regarding the neoliberal restructuring of agriculture as an important element in contemporary processes of agrarian change and peasant responses to it. In the Brazilian case, the changed nature of large landholdings has meant the end of possibilities of a massive redistributive AR as argued by Martins (2000: 114). As idle lands turn into productive areas (Carter 2010; Rosset & Martínez-Torres 2012), MST’s previous legitimizing claim for land occupations has been delegitimized by agribusiness, which led the movement to reframe its claims, as explained by a resident at Herdeiros camp:

*Our enemy is strong. From the 80s occupations until now we had a struggle for unproductive land. And today, in Brazil, it is rare that you find unproductive land, so our dispute on land occupation is going to be direct with the agribusiness, which is the productive farms. That is why we have this role of building AR because the dispute with them is going to be arduous. /.../ And for us to organize the movement, it is given that it is reclaiming the settlements, /.../ implementing PAR*

The same has happened in Paraná, according to an MST Paraná member, who states that the Northern area is a large, “green carpet” covered with only four or five different crops. Consequently, it has become more difficult for MST to uphold the contention that land is unproductive and does not meet its social function in comparison to some decades ago.

The understanding of a new AQ by MST seems to entail a process of gradually assembling classic Marxist readings that have informed much of the movement’s thinking before and newer agrarian populist positions. As much as the classic alliance of the peasantry and the urban working class is a weighty element in PAR – Engels’ “political agency of labor” (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010a) – other equally important frames are shaping it too. These include the virtuous role of the peasantry in food production, the detrimental effects of the corporate food regime, among other agrarian

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41 For original, see Annex B, item 4.

42 Interview with MST PR member: “The advancement of agriculture in this region where... that agenda that we were able to have in the past for 15, 20 years ago that the land did not meet its function, it is not productive /---/ We have a little more difficulty in legally proving that because this is a large green carpet here, right, with four, five kinds of crops”. For original, see Annex B, item 5.
populist views of the likes of McMichael (2006). This is exemplified by statements from a resident at Manoel Jacinto camp, who affirms that small producers are the ones who grow beans, corn and rice (staples) whereas large landholders grow soy and cane “for the world”, which is not for eating. Moreover, the participant explains that Brazil ends up solely investing in international companies that would rule the country. The poor is, then, left on a corner: “but we are not going to let that happen”\textsuperscript{43}. There is also the concern with capital’s natural resource appropriation as explained by a leader from José Lutzenberger camp\textsuperscript{44}, who says they feel there will be more tensions in areas where biodiversity is more concentrated, such as the region where the camp is located, amidst the rich and endangered Atlantic Forest. The leader also says that they used to struggle against the large landholder in the past, and now they do not know whom they are fighting any longer – in my view, a sign of agrarian capital’s contemporary depersonalization.

If the AQ is a dynamic, non-linear process (Akram-Lodhi & Kay 2010a/b) with its own “temporality” (Martins 2000), then I argue this is exactly what allows the constant construction and reconstruction of interpretations of AQs as the socio-economic and political landscape changes. In the Herdeiros camp resident statement further above, regarding agribusiness productiveness and reclaiming the settlements, one can see a hint of how MST is reconstructing their discourse on the AQ: a territorial question as in Fernandes (2012; 2009; 2008a). It is my contention that MST is appropriating the “peasant territory/identity” discourse as a way of constructing their own territories out of conquered spaces in order to regain strength through PAR. MST’s spaces/territories are occupations/camps and settlements.

**Constructing the response**

\textsuperscript{43} Interview with Manoel Jacinto camp resident: “Because you see, what do small producers grow? Beans, corn, rice, this produce. And the large landholders, soy, cane, for the world. It does not reach the table. /.../ So then where does Brazil end up investing? Only in capitalism. International firms, right. What for? To rule Brazil. And we, who are poor, are left on a corner, but we are not going to let that happen”. For original, see Annex B, item 6.

\textsuperscript{44} Interview with José Lutzenberger camp leader: “In the past, we used to fight a lot with the large landholder. Today we do not know with whom we fight. /.../ We feel today that where there is biodiversity, usually concentrated in traditional territories, settlements /.../ the areas that have to do with a more protected biodiversity are the ones that will mostly have tensions, right. And since we live here on the coast with abundant forest, right, today we already start to feel a bit of the tension, right, from these other groups that have interest in dominating these areas”. For original, see Annex B, item 7.
The politics of occupations/camps in PAR

There are two key arguments in order to understand the politics of occupations/camps in PAR. The first argument, regarding land occupations, is that now they assume a different character beyond than just access to land. As Rosset & Martínez-Torres (2012) have argued, movements are reformulating their claims by opposing the socio-environmental degradation of agribusiness. I argue that in MST’s case, it goes beyond mere opposing. Occupations/camps have now a denouncing character in MST’s project, denouncing perceived agribusiness flaws, especially environmental degradation due to the overuse of agrochemicals, modern-day slavery and others, in the hopes that society would endorse the view that the agribusiness is not a suitable agricultural model. This implies a different politics for choosing which lands to occupy. In Northern Paraná, this happens by denouncing the Atalla Group, which produces sugar and ethanol out of sugar cane and owns 40,000 Ha.

As explained by a camp leader, the Atalla Group does not obey the legislation; it has had 11,000 Ha of unproductive land expropriated by NICAR. The leader affirms that modern-day slavery has been found in Atalla’s lands with 228 workers being rescued by the Federal Police, and points out the environmental degradation caused by the sugar cane monocultures owned by the group. MST camps in this area are located on Atalla’s lands. The destruction of the Atalla sugar cane monoculture adjacent to Dois de Dezembro camp is part of this politics of denouncing agribusiness. On the day of the destruction, a leader throws a speech and states that they had come there to “work, produce and acquire land for agrarian reform settlements.” On the way to the fields, I hear from a group of youth: “the first cane straw will be chopped by us. I will jump on

45 Interview with a camp leader in Northern PR: “These properties in Porecatu that belong to the Atalla Group, that is the sugar cane, they... they have not been obeying the legislation. First, land unproductivity, there are 11 thousand ha classified by NICAR /.../ They present environmental and labor crimes, here the Federal Police and the Office of the Public Attorney in 2008 rescued 228 workers [in a state of employment] analogous to modern-day slavery, /.../ the Federal Police found slavery in the Atalla areas, so this is another crime”. For original, see Annex B, item 8.

46 From fieldnotes. For original, see Annex B, item 9.
the top of a tractor. I will make history”\textsuperscript{47}. I remember what one of my key informants, another camp leader, had told me before: the destruction is possibly “the most important moment in the whole occupation process”\textsuperscript{48}.

This is a tactics to advance over agribusiness territories literally and metaphorically, over agribusiness geographic and discursive terrains – de-territorialization of agribusiness and re-territorialization of MST. It can be read as a manifestation of the state of permanent tension between “peasantry” and capital as in Fernandes (2012; 2008a). “Peasant” movements, in struggling for land, advance over agribusiness territories, de-territorializing agribusiness and re-territorializing themselves, securing their own social reproduction. In this context, stressing the principle of the social function of the land\textsuperscript{49} becomes even more crucial for MST. In a sense, it seems MST is aligned with Delgado’s (2014) view that the Brazilian AQ entails a tension between the full commoditization of land and the social function principle. Thus the Agrarian Programme (MST 2014: 40) demands the immediate expropriation of all land that does not meet its social function regarding productivity as well as labor and environmental conditions as guaranteed by the Constitution.

Furthermore, occupations/camps are also a strategic learning process because it is there that the families acquire MST’s political formation and where important decisions take place. A José Lutzenberger camp leader\textsuperscript{50} explains that it is while still in the camp, before turning into a settlement, that people will define how to organize production/commercialization, housing, whether to build schools and others. Thus the second argument is that occupations/camps are also MST’s learning territories for PAR. By being so, they become strategic spaces where PAR can be disseminated and constructed among MST’s members. It is the territory where the legitimization of PAR first occurs, since it is where people get in touch with PAR ideas, experiment its

\textsuperscript{47} From fieldnotes. For original, see Annex B, item 10.
\textsuperscript{48} From fieldnotes. For original, see Annex B, item 11.
\textsuperscript{49} See Empirical Context chapter.
\textsuperscript{50} Interview with José Lutzenberger camp leader: “The camp is about deciding how the house will be, how the production will be, in which way you are going to develop the agroindustry, how you are going to commercialize, right, if you are going to build schools”. For original, see Annex B, item 12.
productive model in practice and where there is more cohesion as a collective group, a preparation for life in the settlement:

*I had heard about organic products /.../ I said, ‘but these people are all crazy. How am I going to grow a product that is full of insects without agrochemicals?’ Then I said ‘I am going to test it at home’. I planted a small garden with no poison [agrochemicals]. I saw that it grew. /.../ But this is not for today. Right, you will get this knowledge, and then when you get your plot, then you will say ‘now I will implement it’.*

**The politics of settlements in PAR**

Settlements are the main space where PAR is to be implemented, although occupations/camps also have a key role to play in this project. Implementing PAR in a settlement means organizing production and commercialization, generating income, and turning such spaces into territories where people can enjoy access to health, culture, education, infrastructure and others. However, besides aiming at reorganizing settlements so that people can live with dignity, I argue that the politics of PAR in settlements has another strategic meaning: counteracting the detrimental effects that the selling/leasing of plots has to the movement.

Settlers might sell their plots due to difficulties in securing their reproduction and/or due to the wish to increase their income, among other complex factors. As Akram-Lodhi & Kay (2010a) have argued, despite petty-commodity producers having a role in capital accumulation in agriculture, many end up made redundant to the needs of capital. For Delgado (2010), in turn, such agribusiness hegemony, with its rentier mentality, reintroduces an AQ of the challenge to the development of peasant/family agriculture and settlements, an interesting twist on classic readings of the AQ. As an MST Paraná member explains*, MST has a contention with NICAR on a very delicate matter: land titling. This participant explains that when NICAR provides the settlers with a legal title

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51 Interview with Manoel Jacinto camp resident. For original, see Annex B, item 13.
52 Interview with an MST PR member: “Today we have a contention on a very delicate point regarding NICAR, that is land titling /.../ After 10 years of NICAR’s investment there [in a settlement], NICAR provides you with the legal title to the land, it becomes your property and not the Union’s anymore. And then, this means that you can do whatever you want with it. And to us, many say, “but yeah, this is a victory”’/—/The family spent 20 years in a shack and now he can see that he owns property. All right, as long as this guy is fully aware that he is not going to hand it to the enemy again, all right. But what is going to happen is that there will be a moment when this guy is so ruined, so ensnared or coopted, that we are going to loose, understand, and loose it legally, he is going to sell it’. For original, see Annex B, item 14.
to the land 10 years after having being settled, the plot becomes the settler’s legal property, not the Federal Union’s any longer\(^{53}\). The participant affirms that people might think, generally, that this is a great victory, especially when the ones who received the title have spent so many years in camps. However, this is only a victory for the movement “as long as this guy [any person] is fully aware that he is not going to hand it to the enemy again”. However, it happens that settlers might face a rough time to secure their livelihoods and end up selling their plots: “we are going to loose, /.../ and loose it legally”.

In my view, this is an example of what Martins (2000) argued is the cyclic character of the Brazilian AQ: many join and rejoin the ranks that claim land, a constant cycle of demanding AR. The author believes, consequently, that this is a question of a “profound transformation” of rural livelihoods much more than a historical challenge that demands a revolution (ibid.: 125). It seems MST has understood that. Although still committed to a socialist future, PAR is clearly focused on improving the livelihoods of its members. Fundamentally, MST understands that when settlers sell or lease their plots to agribusiness, the movement looses strength and territory - power, a process of de-territorialization as in Fernandes (2012; 2008a). The Agrarian Programme (MST 2014: 41), interestingly, forbids the selling and leasing of plots in AR settlements\(^{54}\).

The territorial dispute in settlements gets to the individual plot level either when agribusiness tries to lease plots, or when settlers themselves make use of agribusiness’ symbolic territory, “agribusiness technology”, inside their own plots. During a group interview, for instance, residents at Contestado settlement tell me that agribusiness has tried to lease land in order to grow onions and tobacco. They explain that companies offer a complete technological package and that settlers could produce under the company’s terms, selling most of the produce. Some plots are “parallel”, as they call it: people grow

\(^{53}\) Law 8629/93 regulates the AR process and states that the three modalities through which land is distributed in the agrarian reform process by NICRA - Land Title, Use Concession or Concession of Real Rights of Use are not negotiable for 10 years. This means that plots in settlements cannot be leased or sold for 10 years after the beneficiary has been settled on the land.

\(^{54}\) The Agrarian Programme reads: “All the AR beneficiary families will only receive titles to the concession of use rights, with the right to family inheritance, with joint titling including the woman, being forbidden the selling of parcels of AR land” (MST 2014: 41). For original, see Annex B, item 15.
both conventional and agroecological crops. Thus, there is a key tension between this individual character and the collective project of constructing a different kind of community in settlements, tension exacerbated by the constant agribusiness advancement on MST’s territory. Picture 8 presents an example of such process:

![Territorial dispute: soy plantation in the distance; perspective from Contestado settlement.](image-url)

PAR implementation is a key challenge for MST now. The process of organizing production/commercialization is still not totally clear. Yet one thing is a pattern in the data: the expected strong role of the State in supporting it through public policy. Assessing family agriculture public policy is surely very important for the families, which became more evident when I attended the NFSA meeting in the Contestado settlement. The meeting took place in order to inform small peasant/family agriculture producers on the new rules to assess FAP, one of the most important public policies for the commercialization of peasant/family agriculture produce.

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55 See Methodology and Ethical Concerns chapter, section Data collection methods, sub-section Participant observation
In the meeting, I learned that production/commercialization in the Contestado settlement is organized through the Free Land Cooperative\textsuperscript{56}, open to MST and non-MST members alike. The cooperative has 266 members today and assesses FAP. This year, the cooperative expects to sell 863,000 Kg through FAP only, with an expected total revenue of around R$ 1,500,000\textsuperscript{57}. Organizing production/commercialization through the cooperative and assessing public policies are seen as a good opportunity to generate income, especially for the youth.

\textit{The politics of agroecology in PAR}

One of the many aspects of the politics of agroecology in PAR is to keep people in the rural countryside, with an eye on the youth. In the Contestado settlement, around half the plots are certified\textsuperscript{58} out of a total of 108, but not all of them are fully agroecological. The “parallel” plots can be seen as an experience, a way of convincing settlers that agroecological produce is viable, as explained by a cooperative member during the group interview. Around 38 plots still grow conventional, which they affirm are also in the process of transition, and the cooperative will not be accepting non-agroecological produce from 2015. As much as the agroecological revolution in Brazil (Altieri & Toledo 2011) is likely an exaggerated claim, there are surely fruitful initiatives. Yet an agroecological transition takes time and there is tension between this project and the immediate need of generating income. More details on the tensions in the agroecological transition in the Contestado settlement can be read in Box 1. Pictures 9 to 11 show a fully agroecological plot in the same settlement.

\textsuperscript{56} In Brazilian Portuguese: “Cooperativa Terra Livre”.
\textsuperscript{57} This amounts to a little more than US$ 500,000, based on the rate on 27th April 2015.
\textsuperscript{58} The settlement is part of a network of participative, bottom-up agroecological certification conducted by groups of families themselves called Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia (“Ecolife Agroecology Network”). The network aggregates non-MST families as well. An account on the emergence of the network can be read in Byé et.al. (2002 in Wezel et.al. 2009: 507).
Organizing the new mode of production took place through a transition. Supported by other MST cooperatives, families would have 5 years to fully transition from conventional to agroecological. However, there were tensions, since the vanguard group (nine families) pushing for these changes did not have full legitimacy to obligate families to produce only agroecological produce. Part of the disagreement also revolved around how quick the transition should happen and whether they would be forced to stop growing conventional after five years. They wanted to ditch the internal code of rules. Whereas some rules were acceptable, such as the ones related with environmental preservation and no hunting, “not using poison” any longer was the crux of the concerns. Read more in Annex C.

**Picture 9.** Family house and garden in a fully agroecological plot in the Contestado settlement. This is the settlement’s postcard as it is a well-developed plot.

**Picture 10.** Agroecological field in the plot. The produce is commercialized through the Free Land Cooperative and sold to the FAP and National School Feeding Program (NSFP). The owner of the plot is satisfied with the prices paid by these government programs.

**Picture 11.** Strawberry is one of the main crops grown. The family also grows lettuce, zucchini and other kinds of vegetables.
The politics of agroecology can be understood as a counter-politics by MST to deal with what they see as the livelihood but also environmental effects of an existing AQ. MST’s environmental discourse is projected through the discourse on agroecology and the degradation caused by agribusiness as can be noted in MST PR members’ statements below:

*Agroecology is about rescuing some human principles like understanding that nature, she has her cycles, that respecting them is necessary.*

*The role of agroecology, she... speaks to... organic production, one of agroecology’s aspects is to detoxify the Brazilian countryside. This thing about not using poison, intoxicating the environment, destroying it.*

However, MST’s understanding of agroecology is still evolving, and it is not homogenously defined. Beyond a populist view of a peasant rationality connected to land and nature, the politics of agroecology in PAR has a more strategic character: it becomes a new way of justifying and legitimizing the need to have an AR. As explained by an MST PR member, agroecology cannot be fully developed in vast tracts of land; i.e. monocultures. Even if it could, agroecology demands people to work the land, in contrast to the little demand for human labor in the highly mechanized agribusiness model. Thus this discursive tactics justifies the need for the end of monocultures - the end of large landholdings – and, therefore, the need for an AR:

*For us, the agribusiness does not fit. Right, we are here proposing another way of organizing. And agroecology does not fit this agribusiness model because the agribusiness is viable in large land tracts as are the organics. And for agroecology you need to carry out land redistribution.*

**Connecting the dots**

Indeed, implementing agroecology can be a challenge due to the inherent contradiction of the more individual character of a settlement. As Altieri & Toledo (2011) have pointed

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59 Interview with MST PR member. For original, see Annex B, item 16.
60 Interview with a camp leader in Northern PR. For original, see Annex B, item 17.
61 Interview with MST PR member. For original, see Annex B, item 18.
out, however, agroecology demands farmers’ participation, which is interesting for MST to keep the movement’s cohesion in settlements. Moreover, agroecology constitutes an important means by which to propel their territorial project in camps as well, as land occupations are people’s entry-door to PAR, agroecology and to the very movement. José Lutzenberger camp, on Paraná’s coast, is a case in point. According to my key informant, the production is fully agroecological. There is a small agroindustry unit to manufacture simple products such as fruit pulp. At a local level, PAR is about involving the surrounding “communities”, which is also a way of spreading the word about agroecology. This involvement happens, in the camp, through participation in an association - the Small Rural Producers Association for the Sustainability of the Atlantic Forest – Children of the Earth. Through selling the produce at the open market in Antonina town and working with non-MST members in the association, they can show the communities around the feasibility of working with agroecology. In Box 2 the reader can find out a little more on how PAR is being implemented in the camp. Picture 12 shows the new agroindustry.

**Box 2. The José Lutzenberger camp**

An agroindustry unit is being built in the camp in order to comply with demands from the Health Surveillance Agency (HSA), but also expand production. They already have a small temporary unit, which they feel has become too small, and it is also being adapted to the demands of the same agency. They see much opportunity in further developing their agroindustry, especially fruit pulp production. Most of their produce is sold through FAP and NSFP now, and they plan on establishing a fully agroecological cooperative this year with the participation of neighboring indigenous communities. Read more in Annex D.

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62 In Brazilian Portuguese: “Associação de Pequenos Agricultores Rurais para a Sustentabilidade da Mata Atlântica – Filhos da Terra”.

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Generating income is vital for families both in camps and settlements. Among other reasons, Altieri & Toledo (2011) believe that social movements adopt agroecology due to its economic viability and low reliance on external inputs, and MST seems to agree with that. As an LASA member explains\(^6\), from an economic point of view agroecology is welcome because it broadens the members’ “economic resistance”. However, agroecology is not a panacea to fix all troubles, and income from agroecological produce is not generated overnight. An agroecological transition takes time and, despite a supposedly lower dependence on external inputs as argued by Altieri & Toledo (ibid.: 2011), people who have very few resources to kick-start such agroecological process need external inputs, such as seeds, seedlings and others. When pressed against the immediate need to generate income, especially in camps, people might choose to grow conventional crops, such as the case of Northern Paraná camps. As an MST Paraná member from the Production Sector\(^6\) explains, many people in camps have no options –

\(^6\) Interview with LASA member: “It broadens our economic resistance. I am talking about the economic factor, so, you broaden your economic resistance. If you broaden it, agroecology is welcome”. For original, see Annex B, item 19.

\(^6\) Interview with MST PR member from the Production Sector: “But in the reality of the camps, the crops we mostly have today are corn, soy and cassava. So they are three crops that, the way that is structured, it is really like that, the way you structure it will determine the form, the technological difficulty of the conventional production. So naturally, it uses poison, it is all conventional management [---] So for survival, that is what gives you a concrete answer and that
few resources. So in order to survive and guarantee some income at short and medium terms, camp residents in Northern Paraná grow conventional crops. In such camps the main crops grown are corn, soy and cassava. The participant explains that the way these crop cultures are structured in such difficult camp circumstances demands conventional management and also the use of agrochemicals.

Yet, as Rosset & Martínez-Torres (2012) have argued, agroecology can be a means for movements to organize spaces as peasant territories. In MST’s case, promoting agroecology as PAR’s productive matrix is a way the movement has found to struggle against the process of de-territorialization and also to re-territorialize itself, advancing onto agribusiness territories. Agroecology would be an alternative to reproducing the same agribusiness productive logic inside the settlements and, to some extent, camps, which MST believes is contradictory. This is the dimension of the politics of agroecology as a strategy of struggle, as explained by an MST leader:

*There is a whole process of struggle by the families, a local impact, the establishment of the settlement /.../ after the creation of the settlement, the families start to reproduce /.../ the same agribusiness production process. We can say, like, that we conduct a whole process of struggle, all this confrontation, in the economic, political and cultural spheres /.../ then in the field of production, we end up being a vehicle for a project that is not ours, that is the agribusiness project.*

In conclusion, it seems PAR is a power dispute in the terrain of ideas. I argue that it was partly born due to I call the MST’s dilemma, composed of:

- the *disenchantment regarding the classic AR*
- the *de-legitimization of previous land occupation claims* due to the transformation of idle lands into productive areas by agribusiness
- MST’s *de-territorialization in settlements*, with the selling and leasing of plots and the reproduction of the same agribusiness productive model and rationality both in camps and settlements

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*can guarantee some income at the short and medium terms, that’s it. And for example, an option does not exist, there is no option*. For original, see Annex B, item 20.

65 Interview with MST leader. For original, see Annex B, item 21.
• Settlements’ more individualized character in comparison to camps

It is within a *dispute of territories and power* that the politics of camps/occupations, settlements and agroecology can be understood in relation to PAR, all *strictly interconnected* and *dependent* on each other. As an MST leader explains⁶⁶, “if our settlements, these territories, do not provide a political answer, you will not even have political conditions to carry out new occupations”. Thus PAR in settlements does not become more important than carrying out occupations. It is the other way round: PAR in settlements “is the possibility of creating political conditions for the new occupations to take place. This is how we have to see this aspect”.

**Conclusions**

It seems the *popular character* of MST’s AR project reflects the understanding of a new AQ by the movement: a process of connecting classic Marxist readings and newer agrarian populist positions as well as territorial interpretations. This would be due to a disenchantment regarding the feasibility of a classic redistributive AR and the effects of the transformation of idle lands into productive areas by agribusiness. MST has been gradually appropriating the “peasant territory/identity” discourse as a way of turning their conquered spaces into their territories, something to be achieved through PAR. In PAR, the politics of occupations assume a slightly new character, that of denouncing the flaws of the agribusiness model. Camps become learning territories where the legitimization of PAR first occurs and where people can get in touch with new ideas, including agroecology.

The politics of settlements, in turn, involve organizing production/commercialization, with the expectation that the State should have a strong role supporting it. The politics of settlements in PAR also has another strategic meaning: counteracting the selling/leasing

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⁶⁶ Interview with MST leader: “The given issue is if our settlements, these territories, do not provide a political answer, you will not even have political conditions to carry out new occupations. So PAR in the settlements, it... it is not that it, it supersedes the occupation. It [PAR in the settlements] is the other way round. It [PAR in the settlements] is the possibility of creating political conditions for the new occupations to take place. This is how we have to see this aspect”. For original, see Annex B, item 22.
of AR plots, loss of territory to agribusiness. The territorial dispute is also played inside the plots when settlers make use of agribusiness technology. Finally, agroecology entails a counter-politics by MST to deal with the livelihood and environmental effects of an AQ, legitimizing the need for an AR. I argue that PAR was partly born due to an MST dilemma: the disenchantment regarding the classic AR; the de-legitimization of previous land occupation claims; MST’s de-territorialization in settlements/camps and settlements’ more individualized character in comparison to camps. It is within a dispute of territories and power that the politics of camps/occupations, settlements and agroecology can be understood in relation to PAR. In conclusion, it seems PAR is born as a strategy for the movement to regain strength in times of agribusiness hegemony, a strategy to conquer land, keep it and gain ground.

At the basic level, PAR is clearly a response that demands policies that support “peasant”/family farmers and improve their living as well as working conditions in MST’s terms. Agrarian populist positions, and PAR seems to be embedded in this kind of discourse, are grounded on views on the value of the peasant way for rural development, which is surely of value when it represents the voices of those who have been on the margin - the extent to whether such groups represent these voices (see Martins 2000) is a matter for another discussion. Yet whether such demands stand the test of viability is something that warrants further investigation. However, beyond the consideration of viability and the calculations of political and economic rationality within the possibilities of today, it is mandatory to take heed of their demands as ones that count if the Brazilian State is to do something about these economically, politically and socially excluded groups. This is not to say that the last Brazilian governments have been ignoring “peasant”/family agriculture; much support previously cut during the 1990s neoliberal administrations has found a way back to official budgets (Fernandes 2010: 190). Yet evidence has suggested67 that settlements are precarious, and land concentration - wealth concentration, as land is store of value in Brazil - has not changed in the last 20 years. Even if one does not subscribe to moral arguments on the unfairness of such inequality, or more populist arguments on the value of a peasant way, there are economicist

67 See Empirical Context chapter.
arguments on the effects of inequality on growth, poverty reduction and liberal democracy (see Carter 2010: 42-6).

Agrarian populism is also grounded on views of exploitation of “peasants” by globalized capital, impersonated by transnational and regional/local agribusiness companies. This is certainly another relevant point, and as much as claims that millions of small producers are being dispossessed of their lands globally sound exaggerated (Bernstein 2014: 1035), the amount of political and economic power that corporate capital enacts and what that means regarding international trade deals, intellectual property rights, legislative capture through lobbying and democracy is the true, utter “exaggeration” of the present time. However, the following points cannot be stressed enough. It is important to acknowledge that the rise of such positions is, again, natural when high levels of socio-economic inequality persist. Brazil is home to both a very strong capitalist agricultural sector and MST. Why is there such harsh polarization, to the point that PAR does not concede to co-existence of models? Harsh inequality produces harsh answers, in my view. In actuality, MST’s earlier Marxist views on how to organize agriculture in settlements were favorable to large-scale, mechanized agriculture with agrochemical use (Borsatto & Carmo 2013), which points to the fact that MST did not dismiss this kind of agriculture as inherently “anti-peasant” or environmentally damaging in its old days. As time passes, other understandings and frames come to be constructed as well as agribusiness economic and political hegemony. We can speculate that the more the effects of such exclusionary system are felt by MST members and the rural populations involved in small-scale farming, the more they are likely to draw radical opposition to the mainstream model of agriculture. Moreover, it is only logical to conclude that interventions geared at societies with highly unequal socio-economic and political relations will likely present skewed outcomes, such as market-led AR in Brazil.

Personally, I like to think in the following terms. MST is a very pragmatic, sharp, seasoned movement that understands its own external and internal challenges and adapts to them. I believe MST understands the spirit of our times in agrarian matters - “celebrations of agrarian resistance” carried out by essentialized “people of the land” -
and appropriates this discourse due to its potential to deal with its external and internal challenges. It seems such appropriation is useful in dealing with external challenges – the unmatched battle against agribusiness hegemony – because it provides a more contemporary, gripping discourse on rural people’s destitution. When speaking of rural marginalization has lost some of its traction in Brazil in the face of a sector that is considered productive and profitable, appropriating a discourse that brings back bucolic times of plentiful is an interesting resort, dichotomizing agribusiness and “peasants”, *capital and the other* (see Bernstein 2014). Such discourse is also interesting in dealing with internal challenges the movement faces, keeping cohesion and an active membership. This is, of course, not to deny that many surely believe and live such “peasant” ideals.

This is also not to deny the importance of “peasant” cultural difference through a reductionist argument on inequality. It is the other way round, so that issues of inequality and marginalization are not reduced to only a question of politics of culture and identity. A complex view of such questions is of necessity, and romanticizing peasant movements, an attitude that seems common in the Western environment and in the “global South” as well, is not a productive way to understand these movements’ rationale and demands. In my view, the fact that movements themselves, such as MST, develop a more populist-leaning discourse is not problematic in itself; it is understandable and it only shows their astute reading of the historical, social and political moment. The concern is that romanticized views of movements by scholars and activists, especially from the “developed” world, hide a moralist view on “peasants” and other multiple categories. These ideas can function as a disciplining world-view, a moralist view on being a “peasant” that necessarily involves small-scale farming and a non-instrumental relationship to nature.

Moreover, such moralizing discourse and romanticizing of peasant movements might actually hide an attitude that underestimates and diminishes the other when believing doing the opposite. It is through engaging with critical thinking and having a critical stance that we engage movements such as MST as equals in a substantial way. As much
as these critiques sound dated, they must be repeated. Above all, these are reflections by a Brazilian master student upon embarking on a personal endeavor into empirical research in my own country, into fields of peasant/agrarian studies and the politics of movements that has spurred much thought and has produced, more than the few provisional answers presented here, multiple questions left to be answered.

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**Annex A: Interview Guide**

- Personal presentation: who I am
- Oral consent: explaining the research, guarantee of anonymity, confidentiality, permission to record, destruction of files
- Breaking the ice, small talk
1) Tell me a little bit of your history. How did you get into MST, how did you come to being where you are now?
2) How do you see MST’s current moment? What is MST’s main struggle?
3) What is the meaning of land struggle for you?
4) And what about land occupations, what is the meaning for you? How do you see land occupations now in the present moment?
5) Have you ever participated in a land occupation? How is it to occupy land? Explore difficulties, views…
6) How is life in the camp/settlement?
7) Have you ever heard of the Popular Agrarian Reform? What is it for you? Explore opinions, understandings, contradictions, local aspects…
8) Do you know agroecology? Have you had any contact with it? What is it?
9) How do you see the future of life in the rural countryside? And MST’s future?
10) Do you have anything else you would like to add, to explain…?

• Thanking the interviewee, contact information

Annex B. Original data extracts used in the Analysis chapter in Brazilian Portuguese

1) “Implementar a Reforma Agrária Popular e que vai para o meio da sociedade, que a sociedade brasileira vai defender esse projeto da reforma agrária que é o melhor, o melhor e tem a ver com eles mesmo, quem está na cidade”.

2) “Então o popular pra mim está nisso, a gente construir uma coisa que já está além do indivíduo, que é impossível alguém falar... não existe o isolamento em si. Tudo está conectado entre si. Então se a gente quer construir uma reforma agrária, logo ela não é do camponês, ela não é do sem-terra, é uma reforma agrária que integra, que afeta o outro”.

3)“É por isso que nós estamos dizendo que pra nós acumularmos força num período em que a reforma agrária clássica tá bloqueada e não há condições objetivas para avançarmos na /…/ âh, na reforma agrária radical, nós precisamos construir o que nós vamos chamar de Reforma Agrária Popular”.

4) “Então o nosso inimigo é forte. As ocupações de terra dos anos 80 até agora nós tivemos uma luta pela terra improdutiva. E hoje no Brasil é raro tu encontrar terra improdutiva, então o embate nosso na ocupação de terra vai ser direto com o agronegócio que é as fazenda produtiva. Por isso que nós temos esse papel de contruir a reforma
agrária porque o embate vai ser árduo com eles. /.../ e pra nós organizar o movimento está colocado, é, retomar os assentamentos, /.../ implementar a Reforma Agrária Popular”.

5) “Avanço da agricultura nessa região onde... aquela pauta que a gente conseguia no passado há 15, 20 anos atrás que a terra não cumpria a sua função, não é produtiva /.../ a gente tem um pouco mais de dificuldades de... legalmente comprovar porque é um grande tapetão isso aqui tudo, ne, com quatro ou cinco tipos de cultivo”

6) Por que tu vê, os pequenos agricultores plantam o quê? Feijão, milho, arroz, esses produtos. E os latifundiários, soja, cana, pro mundo afora. Não vem pra mesa. /---/ Então aonde que o Brasil acaba (investindo) só nos capitalismo. Firma internacionais, ne. Pra que? Pra toma conta do Brasil. E nós que somos pobres fica num canto, só que isso nós não vai deixar acontecer”.

7) “Anteriormente a gente brigava muito com o fazendeiro. Hoje a gente já não sabe com quem a gente briga /.../ a gente sente hoje que aonde que tá a biodiversidade, concentrada geralmente em territórios tradicionais, em assentamentos. /.../ as áreas de... que tem a ver com uma biodiversidade mais protegida é são as áreas que mais terão tensões, assim, né. E como nós vive aqui no litoral, com uma floresta abundante, né, hoje a gente já começa a sentir um pouco da tensão, né, desses outros grupos, que tem interesse em ter domínio dessas áreas”

8) “Essas propriedade de Porecatu do Grupo Atalla que é a cana-de-açúcar, é eles... é não tão cumprindo a legislação, é... primeiro, improdutividade de terra, tem 11 mil hectare de terra crassificad pelo INCRA /.../. Eles tem crime ambiental, trabalhista, que aqui a Polícia Federal e o Ministério Público em 2008 resgatou 228 trabalhadores em análogo ao trabalho escravo, /.../, a Polícia Federal encontrou trabalho escravo nas áreas dos Atalla, então é o outro crime”

9) “... nós viemos aqui pra trabalhar, produzir e conseguir terra pra assentamento da reforma agrária”.

10) “... a primeira cana quem vai corta é a gente. Eu vou pular em cima do trator. Eu vou fazer história”.

11) “... é o momento mais importante nesse processo todo de ocupação”

12) “O acampamento é decidir de que forma vai ser as casa, de que forma vai ser a produção, de que forma, de que maneira você vai industrializar, de como vai comercializar, né, se você vai construir escola”.

13) “Dai que onde eu ouvi falar produto orgânico /.../ Eu falei, mas esse pessoal tá tudo meio louco. Como é que eu vou produzir um produto que tá cheio de inseto sem agrotóxico? Aí eu falei vou fazer um teste em casa. Fui e plantei um pedacinho de horta
sem veneno. Eu vi que surgiu. /.../ Que isso não é pra hoje. Ne, que você vai pegar esse conhecimento, daí quanto tu pegar o teu lote, aí vai dizer agora vou implantar”

14) “Hoje nós temos uma luta num ponto muito... muito delicado, junto ao INCRA, que é a titularização das terras. /.../ passados 10 anos depois do investimento do INCRA ali, o INCRA titulariza você e te dá título de proprietário, passa a ser propriedade tua e não mais da União. E aí, isso significa que você faz dela o que você quiser. E pra nós, muitos dizem, ‘ai, mas ne, é uma, um ganho’ /---/ A família ficou 20 ano debaixo da lona e agora ele pode ver que ele tem um, ne, uma propriedade. Beleza, desde que o cara tenha plena consciência de que não vai poder entregar isso pro inimigo outra vez, beleza. Mas o que vai acontecer é que vai chegar um momento que o cara tá tão lascado, tão cercado ou cooptado, que nós vamos perder, entende, e vamos perder legalmente assim, vai vender”.

15) “Todas as famílias beneficiadas da reforma agrária receberão apenas títulos de concessão de uso, com direito a (sic) herança familiar, com dupla titularidade incluindo a mulher, estando proibida a venda das parcelas de terra de reforma agrária” (MST 2014: 41).

16) “A agroecologia é você resgatar alguns, alguns, alguns princípios humanos assim de entender que a natureza, ela tem seu ciclo, e é preciso respeitá-lo”

17) “O papel da agroecologia, ela... () fala... é... produção orgânica, um aspecto da agroecologia é desintoxicar o campo brasileiro. Essa coisa é... de não usar veneno, entoxicar o meio-ambiente, destruir”

18) “Para nós, o agronegócio, não cabe. Ne, estamos aqui propondo outra forma de organizar. E a agroecologia não cabe no modelo do agronegócio porque o agronegócio é viável nas grandes extensões de terra com o orgânico também é. E pra agroecologia você precisa fazer a redistribuição de terra”

19) “Ela amplia a nossa resistência econômica, estou citando dentro do fator econômico, então, você amplia a sua resistência econômica. Se você amplia, a agroecologia é bem-vinda”

20) “Então pra sobreviver é o que dá resposta concreta e que pode garantir alguma renda a médio e curto prazo é isso. E por exemplo, não existe opção, não tem opção” [---] Mas nessa realidade dos acampamentos o que a gente tem muita roça hoje é de milho, soja e mandioca. Então são três culturas que do jeito como está estruturado aquilo, é o tal negócio, o jeito como você estrutura a coisa vai determinar a forma, a dificuldade tecnológica de produção convencional. Então naturalmente o veneno usa, o manejo todo é convencional”

21) “Tem todo um processo de luta das família, um impacto local, a chegada do assentamento /.../ após a criação do assentamento, as famílias passam a reproduzir /.../ o mesmo processo de produção do agronegócio. Nós podemos dizer assim que, que nós fazemos todo um processo de luta, todo um enfrentamento, na esfera econômica, política,
cultural /.../ daí no campo da produção, é nós acabamo sendo uma correia de transmissão dum projeto que não é um projeto nosso, que é o projeto do agronegócio”

22) “A questão colocada é se os nossos assentamentos, esses territórios, não dão a resposta política, você não tem nem condições políticas de fazer novas ocupações. Então a Reforma Agrária Popular nos assentamentos, ela... não é que ela, ela se sobrepõe à ocupação. Ela é o contrário. Ela é a possibilidade de criar condições políticas para as novas ocupações ocorrerem. É assim que nós temos que enxergar esse aspecto”.

Annex C: Tensions in the agroecological transition in Contestado

The area was occupied in 1999. People heard that the farm would be soon expropriated. The company that exploited those lands for the production of ceramics had contracted a large amount of debt, and the present government had decided to expropriate all indebted large estates for the purposes of agrarian reform. Most people who joined the occupation were from the Curitiba area, Paraná’s capital. A historical area, it staged the Contestado battle, from which the settlement borrows its name.

The process did not flow smoothly. Neighboring farmers, mostly cattle ranchers, felt threatened by the MST enclave that was formed, assuming that MST’s presence would have a rippling effect. There was pressure for expelling the occupiers. MST indeed tried to occupy the neighboring landholdings in the same year, but they were expelled.

By the time the area was occupied, MST had already been debating a new way of organizing production. When the camp was formed, its members began to discuss environmental concerns, such the effects of fires, garbage disposal and the pollution of rivers. An internal code was created in the camp, with such rules as the prohibition of agrochemical use, the establishment of family assemblies, and others. The old-timers I talked to affirmed that there was no proper mention of organics or agroecological production at first; the debate rather centered on the use or non-use of agrochemicals.

Families were in a state of complete destitution. The movement’s general realization of the problems of conventional crops ran counter to the families’ backgrounds and local
agricultural vocation: families had no previous experience with growing vegetables, legumes or fruits. Their experience involved conventional crops such as corn and beans. The families initially believed the terrain was perfect for these crops, which my key informant has confirmed it actually is. “Having a political decision and having the practice is different”\textsuperscript{68}, as one of the pioneer settlers tells me. The participant is referring to the later decision taken in the camp: that the productive matrix would be agroecology. “A change in the way you produce is not smooth”\textsuperscript{69}, and apparently not yet completely understood by all.

The organization of the new mode of production took place through a transition. Supported by other MST cooperatives, families would have 5 years to fully transition from standard to agroecological. However, there were tensions, since the vanguard group of settlers (nine families) pushing for these changes did not have full legitimacy to obligate families to produce only agroecological produce. Part of the disagreement also revolved around how quick the transition should happen and whether they would be forced to stop growing conventional crops after five years. They wanted to ditch the internal code of rules. Whereas some rules were ok, such as the ones related with environmental preservation and hunting, the transition to fully agroecological was the crux of the concerns – “not using poison”\textsuperscript{70}.

When the time came for people to transition, some still wanted to cling to conventional crops. They would say they did not wish to go back to the past. My group of participants says the tensions linger until today. I could feel that myself. One evening, after participating in an event with non-MST health students in LASA, young settlers parked their cars by the school and played loud music for a couple of hours in the middle of the night, while students and other guests slept in the accommodations. Whereas it is difficult to establish a direct connection between this event and the general tension regarding the

\textsuperscript{68} Group interview with Contestado settlement residents and members of the Free Land Cooperative. Original in Brazilian Portuguese: “Você ter uma decisão política, e ter a prática é diferente”.

\textsuperscript{69} Group interview with Contestado settlement residents and members of the Free Land Cooperative. Original in Brazilian Portuguese: “Uma troca de jeito de produzir não é tranquilo”.

\textsuperscript{70} Group interview with Contestado settlement residents and members of the Free Land Cooperative. Original in Brazilian Portuguese: “... não usar veneno”.

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productive model, one of my key informants in the settlement seemed to believe there was such a link.

Today the settlement has 3,230 Ha, with 108 individual plots, 10 Ha each. Around 140 families live there, between 600 to 700 people. Around 33% of the area is legal reserve. Contestado was officially considered an agrarian reform settlement in 2002, which amounts to very little time given the realities of other occupations. In the present, there are 52 certified plots, but not all of them are fully agroecological. Some are “parallel”. Around 38 plots still grow conventional, which they affirm are also in the process of transition. The production is organized through a cooperative, open to MST and non-MST members alike: the Free Land Cooperative. The cooperative was founded in 2010 and has 266 members today, among Contestado settlers and other non-MST communities from the surrounding areas: 68% from settlements, 28% other small producers and 4% quilombolas. Around 100 members are agroecologically certified. Next year they wish to have all the members certified.

Annex D: The José Lutzenberger Camp

The camp is 12 years old, 228 Ha large and home to 20 families. It is a small agro-village located in the Antonina municipality. The town is located on Paraná’s coast, but the camp has no access to the sea. High mountains lock it in a beautiful green valley. Pico do Paraná, the highest mountain in Southern Brazil, is a daily sight. Most days are sunny with a blue sky. Due to the proximity to the coast, the weather is hot and humid, and many kinds of insects, reptiles and amphibians thrive.

Around my host family’s home, hens and chickens roam freely. Jacú birds, typical in this area, steal the chickens’ feed. Once in a while dogs kill the chickens, which upsets the elder in the house. Big lizards also kill them; it is rough competition, but the dogs also

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71 The Brazilian Forest Code establishes rates within landed estates where the forests must be kept permanently intact. These are called legal reserves (“reservas legais”).

72 “Quilombolas” are the afro-descendants of the people subjected to slavery during the colonial era in Brazil.
happen to destroy the lizards. Insects are everywhere, and mosquitoes bite day and night.
On a bright sunny day, sitting in the porch, the elders of the family, a friendly couple, tell me the story of the occupation.

There were five farms in the valley, and MST occupied one: São Rafael farm, a buffalo ranch. People arrived with just a few clothes. The occupiers would find shelter in the couple’s home. The couple already lived in the area and did not belong to MST, as still true today. “It is all the same thing, we are all mixed up”\(^{73}\), they explain. There has been police in the occupation, and the beginning was very difficult. People would sleep wherever they would find a free spot in the couple’s house, even in the sugar cane mill in the back of the property. They explain to me that a buffalo farm is very damaging to the nearby lands; the buffalos would leave their premises and advanced on people’s fields, their hooves stomping on every crop.

One can only tell where the camp starts and the neighboring land ends by a hanging MST flag. There is nothing else that signals the difference. The camp has had its rules since the occupation. Families must agree with the existing set of rules before joining the camp. The fields are collective. There has been trouble with some families, who do not follow the production rules. Yet my key informant in the camp assures me that all 20 families work with agroecology. The camp is part of the Small Rural Producers Association for the Sustainability of the Atlantic Forest – Children of the Earth.

They are building an agroindustry unit in order to comply with demands from NHSA, but also expand production. They already have a small temporary unit, which they feel has become too small and is also being adapted to the demands of the same agency. They see much opportunity in further developing their agroindustry, especially fruit pulp production. Most of their produce is sold through FAP and NSFP now, and they plan on establishing a fully agroecological cooperative this year with the participation of neighboring indigenous communities. They also have plans on investing in tourism, and the agroindustry would provide manufactured products to be sold to tourists.

\(^{73}\) Original in Brazilian Portuguese: “É tudo a mesma coisa, tá tudo misturado”.
The politics of agrarian reform in Brazil is a matter of much extra-official negotiation according to my key informant, who is positive that the camp will turn into a settlement pretty soon. NICAR has already been there in order to conduct the geo-referencing, mandatory step in the process of becoming a settlement. However, the situation does not sound so positive when I hear about the threat of expulsion that happened in October 2014. Local politics have changed and some new actors in the legal sphere seem to believe that the families could be moved without finding a place to resettle them, according to my informant. It is the owner of the farmer who is still trying to drive MST out of the land, and much negotiation ensued among the parts.