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By Rute Caldeira[1]

Abstract

The present article examines the processes of inequality reproduced inside the MST-run rural encampments; specifically the ones affecting women the most, and in particular women heads of households. This examination leads to the related consideration of the relationship between the MST, its *lideranças*, and women settlers. Although women are the ones most affected by these processes of inequality, their disadvantaged position is ignored by the movement, in theory an organisation on the Left. This relationship between the MST and women or 'women's issues' mirrors the old question of the 'failed marriage' between women, feminism and the Left in Latin America. Finally, it is argued that two main obstacles prevent women who remain inside the MST-run encampments and settlements from organising autonomously: the lack of community and/or the institutional weight of the social movement. Hence, either the MST drops its reluctance to deal with 'women's issues' and acts upon them, or women will have to effectively join outside women's organisations that provide them the support and information needed to fight for their emancipation, against inequality, as well as against the social movement's phobia of approaching all things deemed class divisive.

Keywords: Brazil, women's movements, rural social movements, MST

Preamble

I got off the bus and looked around for a man wearing a red cap with the MST logo. Not a difficult task since the bus stop was in the middle of nowhere; any other human being on sight would have been hard to miss. Antônio approached me even before I realised that there were not just one but three men wearing the MST cap. Antônio and Luís were both *lideranças*, Januário, I was told, was the encampment's best rower. Why we needed a rower it puzzled me, but only until we had to jump on a tiny canoe to cross the river.

The Itatiaia encampment was just on the other side. The land which made up the occupied *fazenda*, or encampment, was set on a small mountain. From afar the makeshift shacks made from wood and rusted zinc blended with the intense green of the landscape. Already ashore, I was lead into the communitarian kitchen/canteen, which was still being built. It was lunch time. Men were having lunch. Women were nowhere to be seen. Over lunch and coffee, I was bombarded with questions: about Portugal, Europe, the world. When men went back to work, women finally came out of the communitarian kitchen. I realised then that it was there where they were 'hiding', in the kitchen. Before I could even engage in a conversation with them, Antônio came back for me to tour me around

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the encampment: the plots, the school, the planned irrigation system. After this informative guided tour I decided to just wander around the encampment, to see, feel and, talk to the people, the settlers. The designated communal area was deserted. Settlers were either ploughing the land or at home. Correction: male settlers were ploughing the land; female settlers were in or around their shacks.

Few days later I hit the road again to Campos de Goytacazes, where I spent some time in the occupied *fazendas* of Dores, Saquarema, and Mergulhao. Nelson picked me up at the bus station. We had the same arrangement: I would identify him from the MST cap. No canoe this time. Only an old red car equipped with powerful sound boxes blaring Lula's campaign songs, and literally wrapped in Lula's campaign posters. The *fazendas* were actually a complex rather than separate and individual landholdings. The sum of the three amounted to the land refereed to as the Oziel Alves encampment. The vastness of land was impressive. The land was so plain that in the horizon it met the sky in a perfectly horizontal straight line. It was sparse of trees and left brown/grey-coloured by the successive fires: cane fields are burnt in pre-harvest to remove the unnecessary green leaves, dead leaves, top growth, and to kill any vermin. In the three *fazendas*, the makeshift shacks were built close to the main entrance and to the most accessible road. In Mergulhao, as well as in Dores, most men either worked 'outside', in the nearest city, or in their plots. The majority of women spent their days in the built up area, in their shacks. They minded the children, cooked, cleaned and some also grew their own vegetable gardens right next to their shacks. In Saquarema on the other hand, women were a rare sight. This fazenda was the farthest away from a main road. There were no public lamp posts within reasonable distance to allow settlers to hack into the electricity lines. There was no water. Saquarema, I was told, was no place for women. 'Their' women, men told me, were left behind, in the city. They would move back once they, men, would be able to 'give' them a proper home.

Strong gales had battered the encampment over night. Fazenda das Dores was the most badly hit. Serena was inconsolable. Her shack's fragile structure, built from plastic bags and scavenged light wood, had been shattered by the strong winds. Half of what she called home had literally flown away. Liana tried to give her solace, whilst Liliana was walking around in a desperate bid to find any remains of what was once Serena's, and her two children's, home. 'I will not give up', she told me in distress, 'only because I have nowhere to go'. 'The others will give you a hand', I replied attempting to console her. '*Qui nada*! Here the big ones eat the little ones', said Liliana, while picking up a torn zinc sheet from the floor. In no time some other women were joining the conversation. Many of them were single mothers. They fitted the category which in sociology is commonly labelled as female-headed households. And what started off as a conversation about the previous night's strong gales, ended up in a torrent of complaints about life inside the encampment, the MST and its *lideranças*. This was to be the first of many conversations I would hold with these and other women living in MST-run encampments and settlements.

Introduction

In 2002 when I travelled to Brazil for the first time to do my fieldwork in Rio state's MST-run encampments, I had no intention to look specifically at 'women's issues'. My research objective was a different one; instead I aimed to uncover the internal

dynamics of a rural social movement in the complex context of globalised politics. Yet I stumbled into it inevitably: it was too much in my face, or in anybody's face for that matter. It was just there, in the interstices of the encampments' everyday life: in the gestures, faces, small talks, signs, undercurrent hierarchies, behaviours and language. The encampments were a men's world.

Notwithstanding my initial research objective, I could not simply ignore the fact that women, who actually animated daily life inside the encampment, were 'hidden' away in their shacks, absorbed in domestic chores. Yet whenever they 'came out', whenever they felt at ease to talk, they would expose the grievances which afflicted them, the lack of support and solidarity, their abandonment.

I set off on this journey with the view that the MST was a progressive left wing social movement, one which continuously tried to deconstruct Brazilian's conservative social structures. These conservative structures are deeply rooted in, and are supported by, the unequal distribution of land and consequent unequal distribution of economic, social and political power. The MST was forged in the peasant struggles for the democratised access to land in the backbone of Brazil's right wing military dictatorship. In its inception the movement was influenced by progressive Catholics, partisans of the Theology of Liberation, and left wing political opponents to the regime (on the emergence of the MST, and its struggles see, for instance, Strapazzon 1998; Fernandes 2000; Branford et al. 2003; Carter 2003; Caldeira 2008a). Since the mid 1980s the MST has frequently renewed its full commitment to a just and equalitarian society, the last time being in the fifth National Congress in 2007 (see Caldeira 2008a). Gender equality is, in principle, part of this social movement's progressive agenda. Indeed, the MST, in the description of its various yet integrated struggles, went as far as to state that the organisation of women is seminal for the undermining of the 'sexist capitalist model' which the movement purports to fight against. Concomitantly, and according to the MST's public official discourse, this dismantling of existing sexist relations that devaluate and subjugate women purposively undermines Brazilian's colonial and post-colonial conservative social structures since women's subjugation to the patriarchal family unit has been undoubtedly one of these structures' long-lasting and sustaining pillars (Saffioti 1969; Samara 1983; Bernardes 1989; Del Priore 1989 and 1997) (1).

Hence, and for the above reasons, in the movement's settlements and encampments I expected to find progressive microsocieties where land was either collectively owned or equally distributed, and where women were full members of the community, equal to their fellow male members. Instead I was close to find out that in these self-labelled progressive communities, processes of inequality are reproduced and in some cases exacerbated. In the course of this research I have identify in particular two processes of inequality which tended to be reproduced inside the MST-run communities: socio-economic and gender. In this article I examine the latter, the former having been examined elsewhere (see Caldeira 2008b). This examination leads to the reflection upon the relationship between the MST, its leaders, and women settlers. Although women were the ones most affected by these processes of inequality, their disadvantaged position was ignored by the movement, in theory an organisation on the Left. This relationship between the MST and women or 'gender issues' mirrors the old question of the 'failed marriage' between women, feminism and the Left in Latin America.

Interestingly, many contemporary academics would dismiss such problematic, while probably arguing that this dichotic relationship between the Left and women's rights and organisation is in fact outdated. Simply because academically this question is considered outdated, it does not make it disappear from reality. And the reality for women living inside the MST-run encampments is that discrimination is part of their daily lives greatly because attending to women's needs and boldly addressing their discrimination may potentially inflict damage to the unity of the 'class' in particular, and to the strength of the collective social movement in general. In addition, these women find themselves trapped since their ability to organise autonomously whilst 'married' to the MST is considerably weakened by the inexistence of a community and by the sheer institutional weight of the social movement. On the other hand, their social and economic vulnerability prevents them from dropping out - they feel they have nowhere to go back to. The fact that this happens in the MST-run encampments and settlements is greatly significant of the still ingrained discrimination of women in the Brazilian countryside where social movement is a major player. The MST, although indirectly, is greatly responsible for the selection of land reform beneficiaries, and for the organisation of land reform settlements. The Brazilian government traditionally keeps the MST-run encampments and settlements at arm's length, conceding the social movement a high degree of autonomy when it comes to the internal organisation of these sites (2).

Back to the old question: the Left, women's emancipation, feminisms, and 'failed marriages'

"This is a revolutionary period and we expect these things to happen. With time, they will be resolved because they reflect the contradictions of capitalism", Nelson, a national MST leader explained this to me when I interviewed him for the third time and inquired him about the processes of gender discrimination in the MST-run encampments. When unpacking his statement, one realises that the encampment, the stage which precedes the settlement, corresponds to the 'revolutionary period' and 'these things' are the processes of inequality, especially of gender inequality, with which I was most concerned about. 'These things' are also the women. Ultimately, his reply did not dissipate my concern that in the 'revolution' women were clearly being ignored. I doubted seriously about their possible change of status in aftermath of the revolutionary period, from 'things' to female humans, if ever they managed to actually stand rather than fall.

This discussion is not a new one. The difficulty of the Left to incorporate women's specific demands was the object of a heated academic debate in the 1970s further propelled by Hartmann's "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism". Hartmann recognised that socialist political structures subsumed feminism and women's specific demands in the struggle against capital, whereby the needs of the working class as a collective entity would inevitably take precedence over potentially class-divisive issues (Hartmann 1981). For the sake of the struggle, women's demands run the risk of not being addressed at all: the collective entity which is the working class is predominantly a masculine one. As a socialist feminist, Hartman did not advocate the separation or divorce between socialist parties or Marxist party structures and feminism. Instead, in an attempt at marital mediation, Hartmann hoped to "organize a practice" which addressed "both the struggle against patriarchy and the struggle against capitalism"

(Hartmann 1981, 33). Other feminists however argued that such marriage was beyond salvation. A patriarchal society would survive the fall of capitalist, the rise of socialism and thrive in any other political system, Left or Right. Socialist parties were patriarchal in themselves, and often argued that women's emancipation would 'naturally' develop from women's increasing and "fuller participation in the public, economic sphere" (Ray and Korteweg 1999, 60; see also Chinchilla 1991). Hence, autonomous organisation of feminist women was the only way forward. For the battle for women to be won, divorce was the only solution.

Wherever a gender and "feminist consciousness" developed (Klatch 2001) this discussion permeated the debate between women who integrated autonomous movements and women who decided to continue their feminist struggle from within party structures. In Latin America the development of this discussion is illustrated in the several debates which took place in the *Encontros*, a region wide biannual meeting that brings together feminists, women's movements' representatives, and activists (Sternbach et al. 1992; Alvarez et al. 2003). In the 1960s and 1970s the Latin American continent was plagued with populist and autocratic regimes. Women began to organise or more often than not began being organised by either the progressive Catholic Church organisations, or the Left, or both. Initially, dismantling and eradicating patriarchy altogether was not these women's conscious aim. Instead, women's participation in the public sphere was fuelled by women's increasing difficulty to ensure the reproduction of the household and the fulfilment of their duties as mothers, wives and housewives.

Economic pressures, accelerated urbanisation (Rodriguez 1994), migration, and the severing of fallback networks facilitated women's discontentment and propelled their mobilisation. As it complied with their traditionally and culturally ascribed roles, women's participation in the public sphere at this stage did not seem to threaten the established social order. Within Latin American cultural tradition "the subordination of women is anchored to the strongly cohesive family group that constitutes the base of the whole system of social relations" (Jelin 1990: 2). This 'whole system of social relations' apparently was not questioned, but reinforced, by women's mobilisation and public demands.

Women's preoccupations were not apolitical and through their participation in the public sphere, seen and felt as 'harmful' (Lovell 2000), women hoped to 'push' policies into other directions. Nevertheless, in many cases women began questioning their traditional and ascribed roles. Sexuality and reproductive rights were just some of the issues that many women began to address and which could potentially emancipate them from their 'nurturing' and 'mothering' roles. Hence, rather than reproducing and reinforcing women's traditional roles within the family and in society, women's participation on such basis allowed many to question tradition and to embrace new/different identities (Neuhouser 1995; Stephen 1992; Safa 1990; Caldeira 1990; Schirmer 1988). Women went from 'pushing' policies to 'doing' politics (see Molyneux 1986; and also Chinchilla 1991). Some broke from the religious or political groups which first harboured them, whilst others remained operating from within. Some would rather label themselves feminists whilst others avoided the category altogether in favour of the women's movements' designation. The decision to stay in or opt out, to be a feminist or a movement's women was a rational one. These differences paved the way for the cracking of the varnish in the *Encontros* (Sternbach et al. 1992; Alvarez et al. 2003). The *políticas*

asserted the viability of advancing with the struggle for women from within party structures, whereas the *autónomas* argued that sexism "was shaped by a relatively autonomous, patriarchal sex-gender system" (Sternbach et al. 1992, 712) rather than the consequence of capitalism, and that political parties were in themselves patriarchal institutions (Chinchilla 1977).

In Latin America this is still an open-ended discussion. The 1996 *Encontro* was especially confrontational and in some ways deepened the trench between the antagonist champs. The last *Encontro* of the Millennium in 1999 might have been construed as an attempt to find a common ground yet the different approaches as to how organise women and their struggle were not bridged (Alvarez et al. 2003). The anxiety to create harmony after the heated *Encontro* of 1996 led to the rushed leap into a possibly less contentious debate on 'cultural feminism' (Alvarez et al. 2003) centred around the feminist *self*. It ignored however that the avoidance of conflict, which can often be creative, and the non-debate on whether or not women can possibly deconstruct a sex-gender system from within party structures is actually counter-productive. Women, *autónomas* or *políticas*, ought to reflect upon their practices and to permanently assess the impact of their achievements. This particular conflict provides a sort of quality control assurance to those who, on whatever side of the barricade, struggle against patriarchy. Indeed, it is actually necessary to further the debate, no matter how painful it may turn out to be, in order to uncover the strengths and failures of working independently or from 'within'.

The MST's approach to gender issues may just prove the *autónomas* right. Some feminists discuss the ways in which feminism can operate from within party structures, advising them on how to build partnerships (Ávila 1997). All they have to do, it seems, is to devise "how to link practical (women's) interests derived from the existing gender division of labor and strategic (feminist) gender interest derived from a critique of the existing gender hierarchy" (Chinchilla 1991, 302). Others argue that Latin American feminism was too "severe in its criticism of the left" and that the real problem now lies with the 'NGOisation' and institutionalisation of women's movements instead (Castro 2001). However, why is the burden of resolving the conflict between the Left, party structures or social movements on the Left and the emancipation of women always on women themselves? If these structures have to be 'pushed' and pressured into dealing with women's and feminist issues, then perhaps dealing with such issues from within may not be such a great idea after all.

The old question in Brazil: the urban and the rural mobilisation of women

The progressive deepening of the economic situation in Brazil after the military coup in 1964 favoured women's increased participation in popular and social movements (Blay 1985; Corcoran-Nantes 1990; Wheeler 2003). The degradation of families' economic situation and the dilapidation of social rights and civil liberties pushed women to the forefront of social protest. This progressive move was nevertheless inspired by traditional values. As pointed above, women protested as mothers, as wives and as housewives. For many women the Catholic Church-inspired organizations were their platforms for protest.

In the late 1960s the Roman Catholic Church underwent a process of institutional 'reformation' (Alvarez 1990). Consequently, in Latin America the Church, a traditional ally of conservative and autocratic regimes, proclaimed its commitment to the poor.

Liberation theologians played an important role in the re-shaping of this 'reformed' Church. Comunidades Eclesiais de Base (Ecclesial Based Communities, CEBs), organised by local churches at the parishes' level, brought together the 'poor' and the local religious leaders. The faithful were invited to discuss the Church 'new social teachings' (Alvarez 1990; Hallum 2003) and to debate and share their more earthly concerns.

Women's participation in these gatherings was welcomed by the priests who now preached the equality of women according to the Bible (Alvarez 1990). CEBs allowed women to break through the isolation of the domestic sphere. Alternatively, women were now able to share and compare their experiences with each other and more importantly, they were able to voice their concerns. Nevertheless, their roles in this new public sphere were limited by their self and socially and religiously ascribed identities. In CEBs women's "roles seldom transcended the spheres of activity which "God" and "nature" assigned' to them and remained 'consistent with their traditionally defined "nurturing and mothering" roles" (Alvarez 1990, 386). Put differently, CEBs organised women "around a diffuse but effective ideology that identified them as mothers acting in the public sphere on behalf of children" (Drogus 1999) and the family.

Women's mobilisation and participation became especially important in the urban contexts where migrant families were crammed in shantytowns or peripheries (Neuhouser 1995) and where the provision of basic needs was a major concern (Sarti 1989; Corcoran-Nantes 1990). These women were soon waved as the mothers and wives of the 'popular classes'. Concomitantly, "[F]eminism began to find fertile ground among the urban middle sectors as a radical proposal to politicize the private, to rethink or reinvent the most fundamental relationships in the family, in daily life, in habits which had become 'natural'" (Sarti 1989, 76). Women's movements, feminists, the Left and the Church, despite the expected contradictions, worked together in opposition to the military regime. Yet, the severance between women and the Church was bound to happen (Drogus 1999 and 1997). The rigidity of the Church's moral principles, and the reluctance to bend its interests for the interests of women facilitated women's retreat (Sarti 1989; Ávila 1997). Some women's movements became autonomous. Others were incorporated in and developed under an autonomous feminist framing provided by urban middle-class women and former exiled women (Baldez 2003; Lovell 2000; Alvarez 1990; Hahner 1982). Social movements' on the Left as well as political parties, after the initial reaction of repugnancy for all things 'feminist', were also all too keen to harbour women's initiatives especially in the period of transition to democracy, or *abertura* (Drogus 1999, Schmink 1981).

In the countryside however, not all factors that affect the reproduction of the household in the urban settings are present. Whereas in the cities women's demands sit more easily with their traditional roles, in the countryside this might not be the case. In the countryside land is the most important resource for the survival of the family unit and the reproduction of the household. But land has always been regarded as an exclusively male mean of production, and landownership a male prerogative. Men own the land and work the land. In the countryside, a woman's role within the family unit is limited to her reproductive role (Deere and León 1986). Women are also the family carers and the men's 'helpers' (Spindel 1986). However, rural women did integrate collective struggles, especially struggles for rural workers' social and labour rights (Spindel 1986) despite the

social and material obstacles to their participation (Thayer 2001). Nevertheless, female landownership for instance remained a peripheral issue for quite some time. In a not so distant past, in Latin America women were not constituted as land reform beneficiaries because a plot was due to ensure the sustainability of the family unit. Instead, household heads, the representatives of the family unit who happened to be male, were (Deere and León 2001). In Brazil, women's equal rights to title of ownership and concession of use were only granted in the 1988 Constitution, Article 189 (Guivant 2003). Consequently, since 1988 rights to title of ownership and/or concession of use can be granted both to the men and the women in a couple when requested. Government institutions such as INCRA do not seem too engaged in enforcing this legal option (Guivant 2003) nor do, unfortunately, unions, the MST, political parties, and Church inspired rural organizations (Deere and León 1999). Moreover, until 2001 most rural women in Brazil wishing to become land reform beneficiaries hardly fitted INCRA's selection criteria. Particularly the criteria according to which priority should be given to larger families and to experienced candidates in agricultural work (Deere 2003). Female-headed households are usually and on average smaller than male-headed households, and women's experience of agricultural work is rarely recognised as 'work' and often devaluated (Deere 2003).

In 2001 the Brazilian government abolished most of these discriminatory criteria and introduced further rules to tackle gender inequality in the process of land reform. Yet, enforcing rules and laws in the Brazilian countryside has proven to be an almost insurmountable task, especially laws that enshrine women's rights to land. Inheritance rights to land are also and still a problem in the countryside, where women are systematically discriminated (see, for instance, Carneiro 2001 and Brumer 2004) since often male heirs are given precedence whilst women are left with two options: marriage or migration (see, for instance, Stropasolas 2004). However, in the countryside few parties or movement structures have taken women's struggle to heart.

The making of MST-encampments

Findings and observations presented in this article derive mostly from non-participant observation in Oziel Alves rural encampment in the Goytacazes region, in Rio de Janeiro state. Nevertheless, conclusions are also supported by further in-situ non-participant observations in other encampments I visited in 2002. Since the bulk of my ethnographic work took place in the MST-run encampments, as opposed to settlements, it is therefore necessary in this section to explain the difference between encampments and settlements as well as to disclose the process behind the formation of MST-run encampments and settlements. These are the spaces and places where the social movement trials the formation of what its leaders call the MST's progressive and revolutionary communities.

The MST is known for its land occupations or rather for the occupation of unproductive lands. The argument for the 'legitimacy' of the occupation is rooted in the Land Statutes, published by the military government in the mid 1960s. According to this bill those who own fallow (and socially unproductive) lands will be expropriated. This bill is still the backbone of the present legal corpus that regulates land reform in Brazil. The assessment of the productive status of the land and the on-site technical inspection (*vistoria*) is due to be carried out by INCRA's technicians (3). The *vistoria* is a decisive

and conclusive moment in this process. If, after the *vistoria*, the land is considered unproductive, INCRA initiates the negotiation of compensation with the landowner.

In 2001, under Cardoso's presidency, extra legal clauses were added to the existing legal corpus that regulates land reform in Brazil. According to one of these legal clauses land that is occupied before INCRA's productivity assessment will not be inspected at all by this government agency. In such cases, the process of negotiation with the landowner/expropriation cannot be initiated. Consequently, land can only be occupied after INCRA's productivity assessment. This has had wider implications for the MST. Before 2001 the MST occupied unproductive lands in order to force INCRA to carry out *vistorias*. Nowadays the MST is forced to collaborate with INCRA: usually MST regional leaders identify unproductive lands in a given area and report them to INCRA. INCRA then carries out a *vistoria*. Only after this productivity assessment the MST occupies the land and sets up an encampment. It can take some time before the land is legally sanctioned. The process of expropriation can take (and usually does take) several years. Presently the landowner has much more to gain when s/he decides either to negotiate compensation or to appeal in court. According to Law No. 8,629 published on the 25th of February of 1993 a fair (*justa*) compensation is one which fully reflects the land's market value. Several elements are taken into account when determining compensation, specifically: the property's geographical location; the land's agricultural (productivity) potential; the size of the property; the area of the property; the history of ownership and use; the functionality; and the state of conservation of the improvements made throughout the ownership years. The longer an appeal takes, the more likely it is that the landowner will be awarded interests on any, compensation paid.

Nevertheless, the MST settles its people on these lands because once the land is legally sanctioned those who are already living on the land will automatically earn the right to become land reform settlers/beneficiaries. That is, INCRA gives priority to those who are already living on the land, i.e., in the encampments. Encampments precede settlements. They designate the occupied lands prior to the completion of the legal process of adjudication after which encampments will then be designated of 'land reform settlements'.

The living conditions in these encampments are often very poor. In most cases there is no access to clean and safe water, sanitary infrastructures are nonexistent, and settlers usually have to coexist with rats and fleas in makeshift shacks. Shacks are built in strategic locations inside the occupied property. Built up areas in the encampments are often found within easy access to a main road as well as further away in order to prevent other squatters from settling in. While living in these encampments, there is not much settlers can do besides waiting for the determination of the process of expropriation, i.e., for the legal sanctioning of the encampments. They cannot yet plough and work on their plots and they are not in a position to apply for subsidies and/or loans.

However, in most cases, the MST leaders, assisted by INCRA technicians, divide the encampments' land area into individual plots. Settlers are then allowed to start ploughing their plots for future crops. This is nevertheless an informal arrangement since these encampments are not yet legally sanctioned. Moreover, the work settlers can do on their plots is very limited. Usually these are lands that were kept idle for many years for speculative gain. Huge investment is required to increase these lands productivity levels and bring them into use. Settlers are not in a position to invest: legally these plots do not

belong to them; consequently they cannot apply for loans/subsidies. But because the determination of the expropriation process can take years, the division of the plots is one of the MST leaders' strategies to boost settlers' moral and avoid an increase in the number of dropouts. Settlers cannot yet live off the land, but by having the property divided into plots they feel as if something has been achieved. In reality however, even after this informal division of the land into individual plots, life inside the encampments continues to be unduly harsh. Families struggle financially. Even the construction of makeshift shacks represents a huge cost. The Government no longer provides basic staple foods to those living 'inside'. Local Churches and catholic groups donate what they can: plastic and zinc sheets, light woods, clothes, occasionally food.

These material concerns are matched by more 'social' ones. In the encampments new communities are taking shape. People who did not know each other at all before are brought together in one place where their existence is put under pressure due to the poor or total lack of material living conditions. All is new. All is sometimes too hard to bear. Away from previous extended family, church or community associations networks, suspicion and fear are more likely to settle in than solidarity. Each own with their own. In the encampments communities are more likely to be atomised into relatively small family units than in Brazilian society in general. But it is with these communities that the MST is prepared to work. The movement hopes to shape a community that does not resemble the ones 'outside': one where solidarity and equality prevail over inequality and individualism. Yet that was not, it seemed to me, what was taking shape in Oziel Alves. The next section examines the process of reproduction of unequal social relations that in the encampment affected women the most, and especially women heads of households.

Processes of reproduction of unequal relationships in a 'community of strangers'

'Here I have eight kids with me, eight': heavily pregnant for the thirteenth time, Lilia was proudly telling me how she had raised her twelve children single-handily. 'Men come and go', she said with her arms folded across her chest, 'women are left with the children'. 'But in here' she added, 'life is harder for a woman with no man'. 'Personally I trust no-one', Veronica added, 'here we live in a community of strangers'.

Although women living in Oziel Alves felt they lived in a community of strangers, the leaders thought differently. In theory, the MST aims to create a different 'country' based on a different configuration of social relations rooted in equality, solidarity and more "humane values" (4). For this to happen, the movement takes the view that inside the encampments, communities have to be regulated. The MST is a highly structured social movement. Despite the somewhat public image of a fluid and informal organisational structure, the social movement has a tightly structured internal hierarchy. This structured approach to the organisation of the movement, at the national and regional levels, is reflected within the individual encampments where a more anarchic form of organisation would in fact be expected. Biding rules are the preferred mechanism of organisation in the encampments. Knowingly or unknowingly, settlers agree to a contractual relationship once they settle in the MST-run encampments. In sum: the MST represents them, fights for their rights; settlers contribute by taking part in the struggle, by demonstrating, and by obeying to a set of rules. Whether or not the actions of ones match the expectations of the others is a different matter (see Caldeira 2008b).

According to one MST's internal rule, often imposed in the encampments, settler families cannot be absent from the encampments for any substantial amount of time. Otherwise, when it comes to distributing the plots, non-abiding families will be penalized by getting the worst ones (5). Ultimately, these families may be expelled. This same rule applies to INCRA-run settlements. However, in theory in the settlements settlers are already able to live off the land whereas in the encampments they are not. In the encampments settlers cannot apply for any governmental subsidy/loan/support to start off their production. Hence, they are still economically dependent on a job. Inside the encampments there are no paid jobs. Sometimes settlers have to commute long distances to actually find one.

Holding a job is, in many respects, incompatible with the MST's internal rule on 'compulsory sedentary living'. This rule is very important for the MST. The strength of the MST comes from being a movement of the 'masses' and this rule ties the 'masses' to the movement. It is also a guarantee that squatters organised by the MST will become land reform settlers/beneficiaries once the land is legally sanctioned. Therefore MST's influence is perpetuated inside the settlements giving the social movement even greater political power.

For the large majority of settlers and their families it is inconceivable to survive without at least one paid job. This rule constrains their mobility. Hence, for many families the way around the rule was to have some family members working and often living 'outside', in the nearest town or city, whilst the others lived 'inside', in the encampments. The large majority of the families in Oziel Alves were composed of two adults (usually the couple) and their children. In these cases the husband/father would leave the encampment during the day to go to work for instance, while women and children stayed 'inside'. Still, most families were in fact forced to survive on one salary instead of two (6).

In Saquarema however women were the breadwinners. Because of poor or nonexistent infrastructures in this particular *fazenda*, female settlers stayed in the city with the children, where they were also able to keep their jobs. These families were not *de facto* female-headed households. Instead, they corresponded to female-maintained family units: all the decisions that affected the family members' lives were still taken by the male member of the family (often the husband/father). Women provided the incomes but men controlled the money. Men often decided to invest on farming tools, seeds and small animals to rear. Their wives were effectively physically and socially absent from the encampments. Alternatively, for these men having women as the main breadwinners was not felt as a humiliating condition since men stayed in the encampments alone for reasons seen as 'manly'. They were seen as better able to live in the encampments and to perform the few agricultural chores.

Yet whilst traditional family units were able to work around this particular rule, not all units were able to organize strategies of intra-familial labour division which would allow them to have at least one member working 'outside'. Female-headed households were particularly affected. In the encampments observed very few female heads of households were widowers. The large majority of them were separated from their husbands; a minority had had several partners, never married and kept the children. Almost all of them were born and bred in deprived urban neighbourhoods, shanty towns, and their decision to join the movement was theirs and theirs alone. In two specific cases

these women's extended families were so much against their decision to join that they severed contact. In most cases, extended families had never provided much material support, a factor which along with the promise of a plot of land also weighted in these women's decision to join a collective social movement. All female heads of households I encountered in the encampments visited argued that they were seduced by the promise of a plot of land because cultivating their own plot of land would allow them to 'work from home' and to closely care for their children. Likewise, they thought that their integration in a rural and cohesive community would provide a safer environment for their children to grow up in.

However, once in the encampments, these women were soon confronted with the need to keep their jobs (if they had one) or to look for a job 'outside' the home. Paradoxically they could not be absent from the encampment for any substantial amount of time or otherwise they would be breaking the rule. Under this condition, it was extremely difficult for them to keep their previous job or any job. They made no attempts to organise themselves collectively to share labour like childcare: the community was not as collective and as cohesive as they initially imagined it would be. Moreover, even if they did attempt to share childcare, this still meant that some of them would have to be absent from the encampment for a substantial amount of time.

Nevertheless, women heads of households did tried to bend the rule. In cases where they had more than two or three children living with them, they would officially register at least two of them in order to gain access to government benefits, and especially to become eligible for the *Programa Bolsa Escola* (7). These benefits, which are these women's social right, would secure them at least one source of income. Unregistered children (especially their oldest and male children) were often put to work. They were sent to the roadsides to sell wild fruits, picked from the surrounding forests, to drivers and passers-by. Other women would also sell wild and/or dry fruits/seeds at the roadsides at least twice a week. Others still would work one or two days a week for the few landowners in and around the area where the encampments were located as sugarcane cutters.

From the sociological point of view, this rule is very interesting due to the impacts of its implementation. On one hand, it deepens the reproduction of the processes which bring about inequality and that the MST purport eradicate and believe to be characteristic of the communities 'outside' only. On the other hand, it lays bare the MST-run encampments' immunodeficiency towards these processes. Unequal gender relations for instance, and women's position in the social geography of social relations in the encampment were mimicked, if not exacerbated. In fact, in the community of strangers of Oziel Alves women became ever more invisible. Husbands were reluctant to have them taking up leadership positions, or spending too much time chatting around or '*jogando conversa fora*'. Because most women gave up their jobs, women's domain and social space was confined to the home. This situation of relative isolation was in stark contrast to these women's previous lives 'outside' where the large majority of them used to work away from home, go to the church, community gatherings, live close to their extended family, and know 'their' community inside out.

Women heads of households led an even more isolated existence. Their social space of interaction was forcibly restricted to the encampment where they were often the subject of gossip amongst married women. Some married women tended to see 'women

with no men' as a threat to their own marital relationship. Also, 'man*less*' women were seen as a temptation to men in general, and to men whose wives were still living outside, in particular. Some married women took their role as moral guardians of the institution of marriage too seriously, to the point of ostracising other women, especially single women and female heads of households.

The process of reproduction of socio-economic inequalities is yet another process taking place inside the encampments, for which the rule of 'compulsory sedentary living' is of particular importance (Caldeira 2008b). Being the ones most affected by it, female heads of family complained that this rule was intrinsically unfair. Families who were able to obtain support from relatives living 'outside', who had any other sources of income (either a job, or a rented shack in a city's *favela* somewhere, or both), or who had savings, were less likely to drop out and more likely to survive through the harshness of the encampment. 'In the end', Veronica concluded in the course of an agitated conversation regarding women's situation inside the encampment, 'the ones who really need it, who really needed land in the first place because they have nothing, are the ones who will give up'. In the encampments, similar to what happens 'outside' female-headed households and their children were the visible face of poverty.

Nelson, a regional and national leader living in Oziel Alves brushed off such criticisms. I argued that inside the encampments the reproduction of the already unequal economic and social hierarchies which existed in the 'outside' was a reality. Women and especially female-headed households were perhaps its worst victims. Equality, I was then reassured, will be restored with time. Nelson, through his highly politicised discourse punctuated by countless political jargons, argued that the encampment embodied a 'revolutionary' period where although chaos seemed to be taking place order and equality would eventually be restored. The real question was, I thought, will these women stand or fall during this 'revolutionary' period?

Liana approached us women when she noticed Isabel was crying. Isabel, like Serena, had not yet been able to reconstruct her shack. She needed a job, she was telling me, but she could not leave the encampment and she would not leave her children at the care of the others. She trusted no one 'inside', she argued. 'Why don't you find a boyfriend?', Liana enquired, 'I got myself one and he helps me a lot'. He stayed over twice a week and helped her ploughing the land. She was lucky she said: he did not mind her being pregnant from another man.

Women and the MST: an uncomfortable and contentious marriage

Despite the MST's public commitment to gender equality as a strategy to undermine what the movement leaders call a 'sexist capitalist model', on the ground women's issues are still seen as devise. There is clear dissonance between what are the social movement's stated political stances and hence ideology, and what is the movement and its leaders' practices and hence praxis.

In practice the movement has developed a highly organised and hierarchic internal structure, which Guivant (2003) describes as patriarchal, and internally leaders are expected to abide by an iron disciplinary code. According to these leaders the MST is a class movement. Its geographical political domain par excellence is the countryside hence the MST's class members are the 'rural workers', or the *sem-terra*. The urban proletariat is the rural workers' twin brother. The poor, a category widely and commonly

used by the movement's leaders, are both: the urban and the rural working class. The needs of the working class, in the sense of *the poor*, take precedence over all other issues.

When confronted with the question of the reproduction of gender discrimination inside the encampments in my interviews the leaders would, more often than not, argue that women do not occupy a different class position. Within the movement women are, above all, *sem-terra* and the *sem-terra* form a class-in-itself (Wolford 2004). When women join the MST they become part of the *sem-terra* community, which equates to being part of a class-for-itself (8). Only the problems that clearly affect this community as a whole, as a collective or as a class-for-itself are given priority. Additionally to women's dilution in the class struggle, women are also diluted substance in the family cell. The family unit is central for the strategic struggle against the forces of neo-liberalism and imperialism. The MST does not separate women from the family unit.

According to Guivant "in spite of the collective perspective of the MST's political discourse and some community experiences in collective settlements, the family is still the "natural" unit of reference for discussing women's issues" (Guivant 2003, 26). Women's roles within the movement are still determined by women's attributed 'mothering' and 'nurturing' roles (Paulilo 2004; Guivant 2003) and women's discrimination and subordination is rarely acknowledged.

Family, I was told by one national leader, is also the most important variable in the making of a *sem-terra* community which also depends upon the sharing of common traditional and moral values. These values, conveyed within the family, are those "shattered by the foundations and development of the capitalist society" (9). Women ought not to rise above their ascribed roles within the family. In the encampments they remained tied to them and it was on this basis only that they were 'mobilised'. Alina a national and regional *liderança* living in Oziel Alves was adamant that women did have their 'spaces'. In the encampment there was a women's group which met regularly to talk about women's problems with 'their' men. In these meetings women were not there to discuss men in general, nor women's issues and patriarchy for that matter, but simply to complain about the one man they dealt with on a daily basis and within the family unit: their husband or partner.

At the national level, the constitution and development of the MST's Coletivo Nacional de Mulheres (National Women's Collective, CNM) has not been a peaceful one. In the mid 1980s the MST created the Comissão Nacional de Mulheres (National Commission of Women, CNM). The CNM was due to tackle the prevalence of *machismo* and other forms of discrimination; to create 'spaces' for the debate of women's problems; to increase women's participation in collective structures (i.e., trade unions and social movements); and to increase women's contribution for the conceptualization of the MST's policies (Deere 2003). In 1989 this Commission simply disengaged itself and women were advised to look for this kind of collective structures outside the social movement (Deere 2003). MST women had to wait seven years for gender issues to be again introduced into the social movement's agenda. In 1996 the MST CNM was re-established and consolidated as a sector of activity. According to Deere (2003), women's land rights, for instance, began to be directly addressed by this sector. This is indeed an issue that has deserved a lot of attention in Latin America, particularly in Brazil, where women were systematically discriminated against when it came to the legal titling of the land. However, though women's landownership was addressed, the MST CNM's major

focus continued to be on men and women's equal participation in the MST-run settlements' cooperatives.

Another of the principal tasks of the CNM is the organisation of women's collectives at the state and settlement levels. Yet, this has been a slow and rather unsuccessful process (Guivant 2003). On one hand, the national leaders in the National Leadership tend to show little interest and support for the CNM's activities. The CNM has always struggled to convince the national leaders in the National Leadership of the need for an institutional approach to gender-specific issues. On the other hand, female leaders themselves find it difficult to combine their leadership activities with their more traditional roles (Guivant 2003). Additionally, they are often the target of a twofold discrimination process: they are discriminated by the national leaders in the National Leadership as well as by other women within the movement (Guivant 2003).

At the encampment and settlement levels, the neglect of gender discrimination issues contributes for the reproduction of women's traditional social positioning in the countryside: one of subordination and vulnerability. What stroke me the most was that despite these women's disadvantageous position within the configuration of social relations in the encampment, and the common problems that they face, no attempts to organise an autonomous women's only group had been made so far. Nevertheless I would later realise that the non-emergence of an autonomous women's group inside the encampments, and to a certain extent inside the settlements, resulted mainly from two main factors which are explained in the next section.

The non-emergence of autonomous women's groups: trapped in the movement without a community

Because I was the one who frequently encouraged informal and causal meetings amongst women and doorstep conversations, I had the feeling that I was the link between them, especially between women heads of households. In the encampment women led an isolated existence: their domain was their shack, their family unit. Despite their common problems and grievances, despite the occasional meetings organised by Alina to discuss men's problems rather then women's, women remained atomised. Occasionally I would ask them why they would not get together in order to sought solutions to their common problems. I would get sarcastic smiles for an answer. From their other comments however I have established two possible reasons why women in the encampment did not attempt to form a common front to tackle the problems that affected them all. These reasons, I argue, work either, or, or together in preventing the formation of autonomous women-only groups inside the MST-run encampments and settlements.

The first reason is community. In the encampments communities are on the making. Encampments do not correspond to longstanding communities where family and friendship ties have developed over the years and neighbourhood relationships matured. In the encampments settlers do not know each other; they do not trust each other. Additionally the community on the making is not a vibrant one. Settlers live in a compass of wait for the legal sanctioning of the land. Time is painfully slow and the relative geographical isolation of the encampments contributes to the almost absolute isolation of those who spend most of their time 'inside'.

In Oziel Alves no social bonds were being formed. If one is to accept that women's mobilisation often "arises from the social bonds which are created via their

socioeconomic activities in the community" (Corcoran-Nantes 1990: 253; see also Hallum 2003; Singer and Brant 1980), one can understand why in Oziel Alves, after almost four years, women had not mobilised autonomously around the issues that affected them the most. Indeed, the existence of relational networks is essential to mobilisation (Melucci 2001). In the formation of women's movements, communities have proved especially important. As Corcoran-Nantes argued "women's lives are centred within the community; even if they undertake paid work outside it, women tend to build up a wide range of relationships with neighbours through their dealings with local commerce, schools and nurseries, health centres, the Church and local government" (1990, 255). In some encampments there might be a school, but there is rarely any other collective space conducive of collective interaction. In Itatiaia encampment for instance there was a community area, as well as a community kitchen. Nevertheless the community was strongly divided. In addition to the inherent difficulties in the making of a community, Catholics and Evangelists were finding it hard to live side by side (9). In Oziel Alves the community was a broken one, and in many aspects beyond repair. Competition for resources was fierce. Plots were being divided and there were settlers who used intimidation as a strategy to get a 'better plot'. In this context of distrust, intimidation and fear, families tended to become even more inward-looking and isolated.

Whereas in the encampments communities are at their most incipient stages, in the settlements the community of settlers is expected to have matured. Hence social bonds are expected to have emerged, providing women with the opportunities to network and to mobilise autonomously if needs be. However, this is not always the case. In Zumbi dos Palmares, with 508 families and the third largest encampment in the country, a 'community' was practically inexistent. Five years on since the legal adjudication of the land and settlers had not yet received any governmental subsidies or loans. There was no school inside and many settlers had abandoned their plots. In older settlements, even in the ones which are marketed by the MST as exemplary, and where some sort of a community has indeed taken shape, the post-revolution period did not revolutionise women's position within the geography of social and power relations. In Conquista da Fronteira (10), for instance, Silva (2004) concluded that leaders often blamed women themselves for the non-resolution of important gender inequalities which prevailed. Leaders argued that women had the power, yet for 'cultural reasons', would not use this power to act upon processes of inequality that still subdued them (Silva 2004; see also Salvaro 2003). Instead women would tend to naturalise and reproduce the existing relations of symbolic domination (Delgado and Caume 2004). By 'cultural reasons' leaders meant women's affection to the home and the family.

Hence whilst in encampments the lack of a mature community and networks seems to prevent women from bonding and organising themselves autonomously, in the settlements the existence of a community does not seem to foster women's mobilisation either. Yet a second possible reason for the non-formation of a women's group inside MST-run encampments and settlements is related to the sheer institutional weight of the MST. The MST is a highly structured and hierarchical social movement. There are very little things spontaneous about the movement. Its rational, hierarchical, and structured approached is replicated inside the encampments where some settlers who were groomed to leadership and who often hold regional and national leadership positions live inside.

No doubt they are treated differently by the other settlers. Their presence marks the presence of the movement in the encampment where they live. They are the permanent reminder of the overreaching influence of the MST that in effect organises the encampments and settlements and imposes rules that affect basic social interaction. Some of these rules go as far as regulating relationships between couples and punishment for those who transgress or hold 'immoral attitudes' such as adultery (Silva 2004).

The autonomous organisation of a group of women for instance is very likely to enter in collision route with the leaders who see no need to tackle gender issues in the first place and who arrogate to themselves the task of organising whomever for whatever. Women know they would readily be labelled as dissidents. As they told me countless times, they were now at a stage where they had nowhere else to go. Frequently they entertained thoughts of dropping out yet they could not envisage any other alternative to living in the encampment. They could not afford to be expelled. Hence their complaints about the movement and their leadership (and there were plenty of) was done in confidence. Also, especially as 'women with no men', another label was the last thing these women wanted. Silva (2004) argued that women's non-participation in the 'politics' of the settlement Conquista da Fronteira, despite their visible unequal position within the structure of social relations, could be understood as a form resistance. Women's everyday life was not conducive of participation: they were responsible for multiple domestic and nondomestic tasks which left them little time to engage in the politics of the settlement. However, their non-participation was also, according to Silva, a demonstration of their discontentment (Silva 2004). In Oziel Alves the same holds true: women heads of households especially showed little, if any interest, in collective meetings, activities, and/or initiatives. Since they were too afraid to verbalise their discontentment they expressed their contempt by being absent from most collective happenings. Their contempt was mostly towards leaders, but also the other settlers, by whom they felt let down. What kept them 'inside' was destitution, the same reason which had led them to the movement in the first place, and the feeling that in this revolutionary 'adventure' they had lost the little they had that potentially granted them some independence.

In sum, what prevents these women from organising in the communities observed is not the diversity of these women's status or the complexity of their needs and challenges (which are nevertheless complex). These encampments do not mirror the postmodern western urban society. These women's biographies are extremely similar. They are uneducated, illiterate or functionally illiterate. They come from a historically and structurally excluded social background: they are likely to descend from slaves and poor European settlers who escaped famine and poverty to encounter more poverty and famine. Their motivation to leave behind the shantytowns and deprived neighbourhoods where they grew up is also similar: they want the certainty of a mean of production with which to ensure their and their children's survival, they want to escape urban violence. These women's needs and challenges are indeed complex however they do not organise themselves collectively either because of the lack of a conductive communitarian and collective context or because of the institutional weight of the MST in the communities where these women live (in the cases where these communities do exist). In fact, the institutional weight of the MST is an indicator of how stratified and hierarchical these communities are likely to become. In the end, these women are not able to establish a dialogue between them; they are not able to share the verbalised version of their common

experiences inside the encampments, they are unable to materialise their common denominator. Instead they remain atomised and perhaps fixated in their residual differences, feeling isolated in the social geography of the power relations in the MST-run encampments. Interestingly this is not to say that these women do not resist, because they do. Their reluctance to take part in the leaders' imposed activities and meetings can and should be seen as these women's resistance to the possible ideological use the social movement might give to their participation, and their demonstration of discontentment for the inexistence of a clear and supportive gender-oriented policy.

Conclusion

The MST is the largest rural social movement in the world. It was forged in the opposition to a cruel right-wing military regime that ruled Brazil, the fifth largest country in the world in land area, for over 20 years. The movement forced the distribution of land in a time when land occupations were received with atrocious violence perpetrated by hired hit men and the military police. It took the streets to demonstrate against unjust agricultural policies despite police violence and repression. It forced the 'land question' in Brazil into the political agenda. Many of its activists died, murdered by the powers of be, in this fight for land distribution and reform. Women were there: in the front line of the occupations, in the front line of the protest marches. But women's role in this struggle stops here. In the encampments and settlements women seem to be relegated to a secondary position: that of carers and helpers, that of mothers and daughters, reproductive beings only. Their specific demands, needs, wishes, aspirations are often, very often, ignored: by the community and the leaders. They have no identity: it is diluted in the category of class. Their integration in new and fragile communities fosters their isolation and prevents the formation of social bonds and networks. In these circumstances, women rarely turn to each other. Yet, even when communities mature and social bonds are established, in the MST-settlements the institutional weight of the social movement is such that renders the organisation of autonomous women-only groups almost impossible. This is unfortunate because in my view at the encampments the autonomous and independent organisation of women is the only way forward to ensure that women's needs are addressed and that their structurally disadvantaged position in the geography of social relations in the encampments will not be carried through to the settlements. The social movement had over 20 years to develop a gender-oriented policy. This has not been done, and definitely it is not the will of the movement to develop one. It is vital that women in the MST-run encampments and settlements set up their own autonomous structures in order to finally implement change: in their status as women, in their status as farmers. Otherwise the countryside, the movement, as well as macro-agricultural policies will continue to ignore women, laden as they are with a patriarchy ideology.

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Notes

[1] Information which is publicly available on MST's website, www.mst.org.br .

[2] The MST occupies fallow lands and settles its people on these lands. In Rio de Janeiro state, where the fieldwork took place, MST's settlers are recruited by the so-called 'mass-front sector' that recruits people in the most deprived urban areas. Leaders working in the 'mass-front sector' organise talks in these communities where they propagate the movement's ideals and activities. Once occupied lands are legally sanctioned those who are already living on these lands will automatically earn the right to become land reform settlers/beneficiaries. That is, INCRA, the government body responsible for the implementation of the Central Government's agricultural policies, regarding those who are to become land reform settlers, gives priority to the ones who are already living in landed properties suitable for expropriation. Thus, selection of land reform beneficiaries is almost entirely left to the MST alone. Between 1999 and 2002 INCRA claims to have settled 286,370 families (see www.mda.gov.br/arquivos/PNRA-2004.pdf, in Portuguese). During this same period, the MST set up 1704 encampments, settling 285,502 families (see www.mst.org.br, in Portuguese). What INCRA's statistics do not reveal is how many of these 286,370 families were not already encamped and living on occupied land by the MST and/or other rural social movements. Because priority to become a beneficiary is given to those already living on the lands (considered suitable for expropriation) it can be concluded that the percentage of those who were not living on occupied properties and were settled by INCRA is indeed low. That is, the percentage of those who were actually selected by INCRA to become beneficiaries is probably very low.

[3] INCRA stands for the National Institute for Colonisation and Agricultural Reform.

[4] Interview with a regional and national male leader.

[5] The worst plots are the ones ill-suited for irrigation, or farer from the main roads and of more difficult access.

[6] In 2002 the minimum salary in Brazil was 200 reais (US$94). Most of the settlers who worked 'outside' earned the minimum salary. In some cases, even less.

[7] This social program was set up by the Distrito Federal (Federal District) and is managed by an Executive Commission coordinated by the Secretário da Educação (Secretariat of Education), in articulation with the Secretário do

Desenvolvimento Social (Secretariat of Social Development), the Secretário do Trabalho (Secretary of Labor), representatives of the Gabinete do Governador (Governor's Office), the Fundação de Serviço Social (Foundation for Social Service), the Fundação Educacional (Educational Foundation), of the Movimento de Meninos e Meninas de Rua (Movement Street Boys and Girls) and of the Conselho dos Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente (Council for the Rights of the Children and the Adolescents). This program pays the equivalent to one minimum salary to families whose income is not enough to provide the minimum standards of living (in Brazil this is measured by the *cesta básica*, the latter calculating the final cost of the basic goods and services needed to provide the basic living standards of a family unit).

[8] Becoming a class-for-itself implies living through the revolutionary experience of struggling not only for land but also of fighting against capitalist exploitation. According to the MST leaders, this fight against capitalism is not 'destructive'. It is instead a constructive struggle since it implies the setting up of a different, alternative model of production based on cooperative work and production in the rural *sem-terra* communities. This setting up of an alternative model of production is seen by the leaders as representing the embryo of a new political project, a new mode of organising the social alternative to capitalism and neoliberalism.

[9] Catholics deemed Evangelists 'fanatics' and 'fundamentalists', whereas Evangelists criticized Catholic families for drinking alcohol, smoking, and Catholic women for their 'liberal' dress code. Religion is another issue totally ignored by the MST: religious conflicts inside the encampment were not mentioned at all by the resident leaders.

[10] Conquista da Fronteira is one of the most visited MST settlements by researchers, journalists and activists alike.