

And in My Dreams the Visions Cleared: Hegemony and struggle for land in Brazil

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to use the experience of the Landless Farmworkers Movement (MST) in the state of Ceará to identify the consequences of political mediation in the lives of subjects involved in the struggle for land, especially for their world view, indicating the contradictions and impasses in the construction of a new hegemony. It is an analytical and qualitative study supported by bibliographic research, field observation, document analysis and semi-structured interviews. The theoretical-methodological procedures were conducted with a critical analysis and the results obtained represent an attempt to approach the historical and procedural reality.

Keywords: Hegemony. Politics. MST.

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Introduction

Capitalist development is permeated by contradictions that (re)produce the hegemonic conditions of capital as well as fissures that can point to its overcoming. In this way, “the question of hegemony (...) on one hand signifies the practical-theoretical criticism of the organization of the forms of domination and on the other the condition of opportunity to change the given rules” (DIAS, 2006, p. 23). Brazil’s social formation took place under these circumstances, in which “the passage to capitalism occurred without alterations in the agrarian structure. Instead of an authentic revolution, from bottom to top, arrangements of the leadership were made from top down” (IANNI, 2004, p. 231), through the unchecked exploitation of the working class combining “two calculating tactics by owners: paternalism and repression”. (GORENDER, 1982, p. 49). The constitution of capitalist hegemony in Brazil is linked to the agrarian question, and has acquired particular dimensions, especially in relation to recent transformations in the standard of accumulation underway, including territorial and productive restructuring (HARVEY, 2013). The expulsion of salaried workers from the fields and the increased population density of urban centers and their peripheral regions also has repercussions on the intensity of conflicts, which routinely involve violence, which in some cases is directed against political organizations in the rural and urban regions. Contestado, Canudos, Caldeirão, Anoni, Eldorado dos Carajás, and other conflicts indicate how the history of Brazil includes many resistances by popular rural sectors, demonstrating “the great weight of the agrarian world on the social formation of capitalist Brazil, and the persistence of complex and drastic antagonisms in the field” (IANNI, 2004, p. 92). In contrast, “the old agrarian oligarchy has been economically recomposed and modernized, rebuilding alliances to remain in the block of power, decisively influencing the conservative bases of the bourgeois domination of Brazil” (IAMAMOTO, 2007, p. 135). In this process, organizations that represent the interests of the sector have been created, such as the Brazilian Agribusiness Association (ABAG) which even serves as a party for agribusiness, to enhance and promote its image and insert “its organic intellectuals in the interior of political society, occupying spaces in ministries, secretariats, commissions, agencies and public research institutions” (SILVA, 2014).

The sociospatial conditions directly influence the relations of (re)production, stimulating and regionalizing the class struggle (HARVEY, 2013). This dynamic has been reshaped in a period in which capital has expanded its financial face, deepening the economic, social and regional disparities to the degree to which it favors the concentration of wealth. These conditions are naturalized by strategies for the maintenance of hegemony. This takes place in a particular form in rural regions, intensifying the agrarian question as an expression of the social question. According to the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT, 2015), the recent period is marked by the dismantling of public agencies responsible for “agrarian reform policy”, by the increasing private appropriation of natural resources – while Brazil is even global leader in consumption of agricultural pesticides and herbicides – by the rising violence in the fields and by the continued existence of working conditions analogous to slave labor. Nevertheless, there is political resistance by organizations of farmworkers and indigenous peoples. The Brazilian Northeast especially stands out because of the redefinition of the regional division of labor in the country, which reinforces the region’s role as an “industrial reserve army” (OLIVEIRA, 2008), historically influencing the migratory process. The region now has the largest number of agrarian conflicts and the reality in Ceará in particular continues to be marked by the social and geographic phenomenon of drought. “Despite the important reduction in human mortality, hunger and looting, due to public programs demanded by the people of the sertão [the semi-arid interior of Brazil’s Northeast], residents of the Northeast continue to suffer severe impacts from the priority given by governments to large projects and landowners”. Despite this situation, the migration to other regions declined in the past year, which many affirm is related to the little that has been achieved by actions aimed at conviviality in the semi-arid region and to the areas considered for agrarian reform. “Moreover, these initiatives suffered drastic cuts in 2015” (CPT, 2015).

Therefore, in this article¹ we focus on the reality of rural Brazil and Ceará with a focus on the country’s largest social movement, the Landless Farmworkers Movement (MST), selecting one of its settlements that is a model in productive and political organization in Ceará: the Lagoa do Mineiro, located in the northern part of the state, and which was officially founded in 1986 with the granting of right to possession of land by the National Institute for Agrarian Settlement and Reform (INCRA). The region of the settlement was expropriated for purposes of agrarian reform where at first 153 families were registered. The land is highly valued, suffering strong consequences of real estate speculation and development of agribusiness due in part to its location and the highly productive land, especially for production of coconuts, manioc and cashews, the main crops.

To analyze the mediation of the political organization in the life of the workers and reveal its implication for the conception of the world of these subjects as well as its reflections in the construction of a new hegemony at the limits of capitalist sociability, we conducted bibliographic research, constructed in dialog with the empiric reality by using data and information collected in field observations, document analysis and semi-structured

interviews.² Interviews were performed with representatives of the settlement and with state directors of the MST of Ceará, with consent and approval from the ethics committee and signing of the Free and Informed Consent Agreement by those interviewed, observing and respecting the ethical parameters for research with human beings, according to current norms. The theoretical-methodological procedures were guided by critical analysis, to overcome the dual relationship between subject and object in the construction of knowledge. The results represent an attempt to approximate the reality that is historical and procedural.

1 Between benevolence and insurgence: paths of struggle for land in the reality of Brazil and Ceará

Given the particularities of the formation of Brazilian and Ceará society, the MST's trajectory is marked by a series of changes that are not understandable without recognizing the deep relationship between the conjunctural and structural conditions of the unequal and combined development of capitalism (TROTSKY, 1977). In Ceará, rural workers joined the struggle of the MST in 1988 and began efforts to establish the entity in the state. Until that time, rural unionism had been the largest and central political force in the fields, even with various problems. Perhaps for this reason, alliances with rural unions had considerable importance in the early history of the MST in Ceará. Diniz (2008, p. 58; 178) emphasizes that the "conquest of most of the settlements mainly involved resistance by residents against expulsion from their lands and for its massive occupation". This reflected a not so distant past in the sertão of Ceará predominated by social relations based on patronage and the exchange of favors, "as protection (...) and on gratitude, respect and fidelity by the part of the peasant farmers [...]. This relationship (...) concealed diverging and antagonistic influences, as a relationship marked by affection". In this context, family and tradition were closely entwined with political power and the relationship between classes in a unique method based on support. Nevertheless, the insufficiency of the paternalistic protection and the other transformations in the Ceará and global economy, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, caused the degradation of living conditions for rural workers, including widespread food scarcity, forcing thousands of families to migrate to the cities, intensifying social conflicts and scarcity, consecrating the drought and its affliction as an expression of the social question in Ceará. This situation began to demand more incisive action by the state, including regional development and planning policies and the creation of institutions such as the Superintendency of Development of the Northeast (SUDENE) which, incorporated "to the power relations in the semiarid region" were controlled by sectors characterized by a fusion between the "old" oligarchy and the "new" entrepreneurial elite (NEVES, 2004, p. 97). A fruit of this process was the intensification of the social questions in their regional dimension, expressed in various episodes in different periods of Ceará history, such as: the phenomenon of the *cangaço* [social bandits], messianic movements and other experiences. The monopoly on land ownership and the need for collective struggle over land shaped the internal conditions of these movements, which included the Caldeirão de Santa Cruz do Deserto (FACÓ, 1963); the rise of organizations linked to the Catholic Church, such as the Catholic Workers Circles, in alliance with Masonic Lodges; the struggle for basic reforms, including agrarian reform; business initiatives and "mudancistas" [supporters of change] among the local bourgeoisie that marked the "Tasso Jereissate Era" and influenced the configuration of Ceará policies until today (TEIXEIRA, 1995).

Given this reality, it is possible to indicate two different processes that characterize the conquest of land in the state: the first is motivated by the demand for a just income or by a resistance to leave the land when ordered by the owner and that, with the intensification of the conflict, the union, church and or social movement exercises an important role. Meanwhile the second process is characterized as the fruit of a political organization, the MST, passing through various steps in the process of organization and struggle. In this case, the space of struggle and resistance is the land settlement itself and is constructed when the movement makes the situation public, by occupying a latifundio (DINIZ, 2008). The settlements come to be instituted by a political proposal for organization with the intent of guaranteeing the "control of territory, defense of biodiversity and natural resources, and contribute to the organic character of the families" (MST, 2009, p. 20).

In the realm of the strategies and organization of the MST, quite important transformations took place, mainly since 1990, driven by the Brazilian state's adoption of a market-based model of agrarian reform. It was a period in which, according to Fernandes & Stédile (2005, p. 36-54), the Landless had to go back within the organization, leading to advances especially in the realm of conception of struggle and political strategy:

We know that we are not struggling against a grileiro [illegal land dealer]. We are struggling against a class (...). Our enemies are the latifundiários and the state, which does not democratize the social relations in the

field (...). There is a growing conviction within us that the agrarian reform will only advance if there is occupation, mass struggle (...) it was not possible to keep waiting for the good will of the authorities.

Internally, the movement created a differentiated political practice. The political practice, organizational structure,³ the demands and the very concept of social movement were also built through organizational and educational procedures, with national meetings and congresses as central spaces for collective deliberations. This process, since its genesis, has involved various economic, cultural, political and other factors that cannot and should not be separated from the given correlation of social forces of each period of Brazilian and global politics. The transformations in rural Brazil, with the advance of agribusiness, especially since the first decade of this century, combined with changes in the standard of production, required rural workers to “try to resist in the field and seek other forms of struggle for land in the regions where they live” (FERNANDES; STÉDILE, 2005, p. 22).

Another important aspect is that the political and ideological direction of the Movement is formed by organizations that were (or still are) part of its history, some with more involvement than others. These include the pastoral work of the Catholic and Lutheran churches, in particular the Pastoral Land Commission of the Catholic Church. Another political force that exercises a central role, directly influencing the political direction not only of the MST but also of various popular organizations from the 1980s was the Workers Party (PT). Since then, even when establishing some alliances with rural unions, such as the National Confederation of Agriculture Workers (CONTAG), the MST has distinguished itself from unions by its organizational methods and its political nature. According to Fernandes & Stédile (2005), the differences between these political instruments, since the 1990s, deepened because of both the growth of a union bureaucracy and because of the repercussions in the more recent Brazilian reality of processes related to organizations such as the Workers Party (PT) that are very similar to Gramsci's (2007) characterization of the phenomenon of “transformism”. In recent years the Brazilian seen a redefinition of the politics of class composition, still under the mark of families, like that of Ferreira Gomes in Ceará. This process, according to Nobre (2010), is linked to conditions under which politics is also conditioned by the current needs of capital, which requires greater flexibility, control over the labor force and new mechanisms for establishing consensus. In these circumstances it is important to reiterate politics as a fundamental mediation for the conformation of strategies of different subjects who, in the dispute for projects, can open the way for the construction of a new hegemony. After all, to “refuse the current forms of making politics is” to point to the “possibility for construction of a new *civilidade*. To remain on its horizons is to accept the subalternity of the working classes as its “manifest destiny” (DIAS, 2006, p. 23). Given this context, the concept was adopted that the MST should be independent and maintain its autonomy, which does not fail to imply (as it could not) that is strongly influenced by political organizations that through renovations and continuity operate in the Brazilian state and reality as a whole, expressing the range that currently composes the political alliances of the MST and the constant struggle of its militants, which is also institutional. In this way, it is a conjuncture that points to the new unfavorable composition of capital in its advanced neoliberal phase under the organization of these sectors, weakening the MST's political project and favoring the rearticulation of antipopular and antidemocratic sectors, revealing the still dynamic historic foundations of the social formation of Brazil.

Public policies for rural areas continue to present characteristics specific to the counter-reform with enormous disparities between the financing provided to agribusiness, to the commodities market and to family farming and other initiatives in the realm of agrarian reform, although family farms are responsible for nearly 70% of the food consumed in Brazil (MDA, 2015). This is not to mention the market character of the politics of access to credit that does not provide workers sustainable conditions, leaving them in debt:

As a consequence of this situation, the land appropriations were drastically harmed with the 15.1% cutback [...]. The Ministry of Agrarian Development suffered an absolute reduction of 49% of the total amount initially called for in the Annual Budget Law of 2015. INCRA, which was to have a R\$ 1,65 billion budget for the year, operated in 2015 with half this amount: R\$ 874,37 million (CPT, 2015).

It should also be emphasized that the appropriated areas are incorporated to the state assets, until their emancipation, which is the denomination for the situation granted to settlements that achieve self-sufficiency under INCRA's Program for Consolidation and Emancipation of Settlements. Even with the process of granting title to land, there is subjection and direct control by the state, with priority given to the legal regulations for land use and occupation that refer to the division of individual lots based on private property and family, which is not in keeping with the MST's proposal for a more collective division of land from the perspective of agricultural cooperation (MST, 2008). All of this has influenced the autonomy of the settled farmworkers in the settlements, whose very name refers to this intention.

The development of capitalism in the country has indicated to the MST some important changes that have had repercussions for its strategies. The Movement understands that contrary to what has occurred in other countries, there is no historic viability for the realization of classic agrarian reform in Brazil, which would require a struggle for a popular agrarian reform (MST, 2009). This process has also had repercussions on the level of understanding of reality, favoring both a combination between the economic agenda and the political struggle, such as the expansion of the range of alliances that go beyond sectors linked to agricultural land. This is all part of an effort to establish dialog with the heterogeneous and particular sectors of the Brazilian working class and their historic demands, without losing sight of internationalism and the relationship of these agendas with a revolutionary perspective, through unity around a broader political class project, known as: the Popular Project for Brazil. For this reason it is understood that Agrarian Reform today no longer depends on the MST, it depends on a debate in Brazilian society and is not separate from the struggle against the logic of capitalism (MAURO, 2011).

2 MST and the hegemony of capital: projects in dispute and challenges in the construction of a new worldview

The construction of hegemony in capitalist society represents the capacity of a class to be simultaneously dominant and the leader. We must consider that a political organization process that seeks a new class hegemony requires changes not only in the economic structure, but a consequent transformation in the political sphere and “on the level of morals, knowledge and philosophy”, thus “an intellectual and moral reform cannot fail to be linked to a program of economic reform” (GRAMSCI, 2007, p. 19). Nevertheless, these transformations do not take place by decree. It is from the bowels of the old that the new can rise. As a process of continuity and discontinuity, Freire (1981, p. 31-32) warns of the following mistake:

Working on the structure of the latifundio, transforming it, into something else, transitory, that of the “settlement”, agrarian reform requires permanent critical thinking about transformative action [...]. One of these mistakes, for example, can be that of reducing the transformative action to a mechanical act, through which the structure of the latifundio would give space to that of the “asentamiento”, as when someone, mechanically, substitutes one chair for another.

In the realm of the MST, the crucial mark that solidifies the adhesion to a political project and a collective identity, of class – that of the Landless – influencing the world view of those workers is precisely the appropriation of land and the entire process of political organization and resistance required at the time of struggle for land. In relation to this, we see the following statement: “The main changes that took place (...) were at the level of awareness of people. The people were aware of the struggle. They had the courage to fight for that piece of land. And after this struggle, they are also aware that it is not enough to only struggle for land” (Interviewee 3). The differing interests come to give a new self-image to people, who until then only identified themselves as “residents”. The character of the boss and of the company on one side, and that of the farmers on the other, makes viable the formation of classes with irreconcilable interests. It is, therefore, at the intensification of the social struggles, to the degree that the antagonistic classes try to defend their interests, which the political element expands. This is also because “the struggle for land is transformed into the struggle for agrarian reform and therefore into a political project of the workers if they, in their struggle, acquire social awareness to change society” (FERNANDES; STÉDILE, 2005, p. 119). Although there are still many difficulties, it is unanimous among those interviewed that after expropriation, extremely important positive changes occur for the quality of life in the communities, such as: greater proximity among the workers themselves; access to the benefits and programs from public policies, even if scarce, and to infrastructure, such as roads and housing; a greater role in decision making and political participation, previously nonexistent and unthinkable; advances in the exercise of community practices, of organization and collective management. In this regard, we observe the explanation in the statement below about the intrinsic relationship between the economic and political dimension for effective changes in people’s lives:

Every time that we invest in training, and schooling people, they learn, speak, participate and everything else. But at election time the people voted in the coronels, right? They voted in the guy who was a big farmer in the region and I asked “but why?” And they responded: “Its like this, if I don’t vote for him, he will kick me out, I am his resident, so I am obliged”. So it’s no use to think of people’s awareness if they have no reason to liberate themselves. So, for me, this story of the MST of attaining land frees people (...) the Movement gave me another view about this (Interviewee 01).

The objective conditions provide greater autonomy and less personal dependence: “politics crosses all spheres of the social being, making it synonymous with ‘catharsis’, a process by which a certain class is raised to a universal dimension, by overcoming its economic-corporatist interests” (COUTINHO *apud* RAMOS, 2005, p. 48-49). Therefore, it involves a very close relationship between the direct conflict over land, concrete needs and the changes conceived in the world view. According to Gramsci (2006, p. 93), it is necessary “to demonstrate that all men are ‘philosophers’, defining the limits and the characteristics of this ‘spontaneous philosophy’”, which is contained in common sense, in good sense, “in the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing and acting”. Nevertheless, it is necessary to pass to a second moment, that of criticism, which implies reflecting on the following: “is it preferable to ‘think’ without having critical consciousness, in a way that is disaggregated and occasional [...] or [...] to develop a conception of the world in a conscious and critical manner (...) participate actively in the production of the history of the world?” Politics is the elementary form of assuring the relationship between higher philosophy and common sense. It involves making an already existing activity critical. Common sense, religion and philosophy are connected, however, they cannot be confused, considering that “philosophy is the criticism and overcoming of religion and of common sense and in this sense, coincides with ‘good sense’” (GRAMSCI, 2006, p. 96).

... in the settlements under the influence of MST, the experiences that are unleashed after the expropriation of land, the breaking of the domination of the old boss and of the subjection he imposed, provokes changes that unanimously favor the construction of a relative autonomy and of a more critical conception of the world.

In this realm, the concept of the fence, of the latifundio, expands. There is also a fencing in of knowledge, of the condition of the historical subject, sustained on barriers that impede the socialization of politics (NETTO, 1990). Contradictorily, the workers linked to the MST, together with a group of professionals, have developed some important experiences in the sphere of education of the Landless Farmworkers with the objective of also “breaking the fences of knowledge” and educating professionals from the perspective of Education of the Fields (CALDART, 2012). Even given the permanent challenge of facing low literacy levels and school abandonment that is still latent in the country, especially in rural areas, initiatives such as the National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform (PRONERA), created in 1998, despite constant threats and difficulties, represents an important conquest of the rural social movements. According to the II National Study of Education in Agrarian Reform (PACHECO, 2015), the program attended 164,894 residents of settlements from its creation until 2011, which, for many, combined with other initiatives, proves that the MST has contributed to a moral and intellectual reform, also educating its organic intellectuals, and “for this constructs the hegemony of the rural class fraction and not the entire working class” (MILITÃO, 2010, p. 215). Nevertheless, the dominant class has triggered mechanisms, specific to the function of hegemony, to criminalize and remove the legitimacy of the struggles of the subaltern classes.

According to Neves (2005, p. 16), we consider that, “as a strategy of social legitimation of bourgeois hegemony, the Brazilian state, as an educator state, redefines its practices, establishing, by means of a pedagogy of hegemony, a new relationship between state apparatus and civil society.”⁴ On the other hand, the state also acts through policies for cultural promotion, production, commercialization etc., and “finds it is obliged, under pressure from the subaltern classes, to incorporate, even if subordinately, some of its interests” (IAMAMOTO, 2009, p. 81).

These initiatives are supported and made legitimate through the intermediation of a group of agencies vulgarly designated as private in Brazil, or as private apparatuses of hegemony (GRAMSCI, 2007), which becomes more aggravated given the monopolization of the communication media by dominant sectors. Although there are counter-hegemonic mechanisms, such as community radio stations, newspapers, magazines etc., linked to the MST and to other workers’ organizations, they face many difficulties and their scope is infinitely smaller than the major media, even in the regions where the movements are active. This means that the main information sources for the workers continue to be the hegemonic media, which has a strong influence on the world view of this public and thus in the cohesion of a collective project, as the statements below indicate:

To tell the truth, here at the settlement there is a division. In this case, there are people who support the struggle of the MST, right. And there are people who do not want to be MST (...). So, they don’t participate,

they don't understand (...). The people really don't want the name 'landless' to apply to them (...). So, there is a part who think of the name 'landless' like that of 'Indian', because no one wants to be an Indian (...). So for you to see, the rural school that they are building there, our struggle, right (...) when we talk about this, they say: 'you think that it was the MST that got the school? It was the mayor' (Interviewee 16).

Individualism often separates people from the collective, right? (...) that is, he does not see the collective as if it was his and this leaves me dissatisfied, here inside, you know? (...) The guy does not leave his tasks for the collective, right. Because on the day you are in the collective, you are not doing your work (Interviewee 2).

Although the settlements and encampments are territories of resistance, they are predominantly spaces for reproduction of the dominant hegemony that builds a stigmatized concept of being in the Landless Movement; it also imposes a law of value sustained by commercial relations and based on private property, creating difficulties for production and circulation guided by another perspective and principles. The presence of agribusiness, of other corporations and of their representatives is felt in the areas of agrarian reform in various ways, as in the example of the proposals to lease lands, establish integration contracts, for induction, via rural credit, in a technological matrix that is capital dependent, with implications of various orders that strongly influence the capacity of resistance and political direction (MST, 2006). That is, in the logic of production of use value and exchange value, the farmers in the settlements are also part of the broad circuit of the social division of labor. Thus, "the relationship of the worker with the objective conditions of his work is that of property" (MARX, 2008, p. 65). About this, the MST (2006, s/p) formulated the following analysis:

These workers understand that their liberation involves access to private ownership of land, to be able to have, for the first time in their lives, complete and free control of their destiny and autonomously manage their lives. The consciousness of these workers does not establish a break with these conditions of exploitation, through the collectivization of land (...). This individualized and individualizing relationship with property would determine the form of acting and thinking (...). And become increasingly rigid the greater the length of time of this relationship (...) Its awareness develops around the aspect of land ownership, of goods and of the interests of the family.

These objective and subjective conditions directly influence the world view and the form of participation in social life of these workers who tendentiously recognize the existing order as the only one possible, which favors the adoption of values compatible with this way of life, decharacterizing the collective identity of workers, discouraging them in relation to the possibility of attaining a collective organization that truly meets the interests of all. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the property relations in the expropriated areas demonstrate differences with the predominant relations, because at the local level, especially in the territories with a stronger role of the MST, there is still a coexistence of collective work - conducted in the areas instituted among the workers themselves as that for collective use - with the individual or family. According to Militão (2010, p. 220), the limits to the construction of intellectual and moral reform based on the experiences of the MST and the popular rural sectors "reveals the need to construct a broad alliance of classes (...) shows through its political praxis, that it is possible to construct (...) a new historic block (...) capable of (...) recovering the value of political action and of man as a builder and transformer of his history". After all, the gains of one class or another depend on concrete conditions together with these classes' capacity to mobilize and organize their interests.

Final Considerations

Amid the dispute between the existing projects in the settlements, particularly in the settlement of Lagoa do Mineiro, these territories continue to be under the hegemony of capital, which in rural areas today has its largest expression in agribusiness. This process has demonstrated that the primitive accumulation of capital (MARX, 2008) is not a phenomenon of the distant past, but pertains to the nature of capitalist development, especially in Brazil. This reality falls directly on the life of these farmers, after all the state, although it is not monolithic, and in some way must consider the set of demands from workers, tends to deny them or fit them into its order.

To avoid idealism and fatalism, it is possible to observe that in the settlements under the influence of MST, the experiences that are unleashed after the expropriation of land, the breaking of the domination of the old boss and of the subjection he imposed, provokes changes that unanimously favor the construction of a relative autonomy and of a more critical conception of the world. Nevertheless, "in the common thinking [there is a predominance] of the 'realist' materialist elements, that is, the immediate product of the raw sensation"

(GRAMSCI, 2006, p.115). The necessary mediation of the political organization has demonstrated that this reality is not irreducible, but historic. These territories are the object of a constant, intense and disproportional dispute on political, cultural, economic and ideological grounds. In Ceará, this mediation is represented by the MST which, although there is recognition by the part of the farmers, acts amid a set of quite heterogeneous forces that influence the experiences of the settlements and the encampments, as in the specific instances that compose the Movement in question. The construction of the political direction, is, therefore, fundamentally dynamic, we begin with the perspective that this history of class society is not linear, but procedural and permeated “by correlations of forces, among different collective subjects, who construct alliances around common objectives that join them in the consolidation of hegemonic projects that maintain ties with the defense of social projects” (RAMOS, 2005, p. 50). According to Dias (1997, p. 35), one of the primordial elements in the construction and consolidation of bourgeois hegemony is the “naturalization/de-historicization of social life”. This process is accompanied by disguising political domination, making it difficult for the subaltern classes to become aware of this domination. The strategies for consensus have been reshaping under a permanent effort to maintain their subservience and dependence. The very legal legitimacy incorporated in the person of the settled person is quite telling of this. This term, which is strictly institutional, which concerns that person who is registered with the responsible agencies and who therefore is a legal representative of the family, interferes in the subjectivity of these subjects, given that, “even in the most simple manifestation of any intellectual activity, in ‘language’, a certain conception of the world is contained” (GRAMSCI, 2006, p. 93).

Another aspect that contributes to the perpetuation of these relations in rural areas in Brazil is the still predominant situation of the lack of access to quality public services, especially education and to healthcare, even after the expropriation of the land. This means that workers most often make daily trips to the closest urban center or even to a distant state capital. This creates a need that has been raised by the rural social movements to struggle not only against the latifúndio of land, but also for the needs required for to the sustainability of the communities in the broad sense. For this reason, we emphasize, with Netto (1990, p. 82), that: “the structural social transformations of our time can only be advanced through interventions organized by large masses”, because the possibilities given by history do not represent an equilibrium of social forces. Men and women make their history not according to their will, but according to the circumstances. The intensification of contradictions and capitalist tendencies, typical to periods of crisis, can limit or favor conditions for a period of transition. It is necessary that workers strive to develop other forms of production and of living that represent the construction of political strength and point to a new hegemony, given that “the decisive element of each situation is the permanently organized force that has long been prepared” (GRAMSCI, 2007, p. 46). This involves strengthening the processes that raise the challenge of the future in the present, which polarize society, raising the need to expand the world view of the subaltern and the spaces for political participation of these subjects in the life of society.

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Notas

- 1 This article uses some of the reflections and conclusions presented in the master's dissertation, *Cooperação e hegemonia na dinâmica do capitalismo contemporâneo: a cooperação agrícola e organização política dos trabalhadores rurais na Lagoa do Mineiro/Ceará*, [Cooperation and Hegemony in the Dynamics of Contemporary Capitalism: Agricultural cooperation and political organization of rural workers in the Lagoa do Mineiro of Ceará] supervised by professor Zélia Maria Pereira da Silva, and presented to the graduate program in social service at UFPE in 2011. The title – And in My Dreams the Visions Cleared, was taken from the song “Disparada”, written by Geraldo Vandré and Théo de Barros in 1966.
- 2 The interviews were conducted with a sample of the population selected with the following criteria: participation in the collective activities of the political and productive organization in the settlement and within the MST in Ceará; connection to one of the seven locations within the settlement, which were given equal consideration in the study; men and women, youth, adults and the elderly, to maintain parity in the approach. These criteria were applied to all of the eighteen people interviewed.
- 3 Since the 1990s, the MST has been discussing and implementing a set of organizational mechanisms and principles in the settlements and encampments. The proposal consists in creating base nuclei, formed by approximately 10 families, each with a man and woman coordinator who will compose the coordination of a brigade. The objectives include: “to give greater organic strength to the Movement and to the settlement/encampment; to strengthen the internal democracy; to create spaces for education; create spaces for cooperation (...). The discussions about the settlement are not conducted in general assemblies with the presence of all the families in the encampment or the settlement in the nucleus. The general coordination of the settlement proposes the points for the agenda. This coordination is constituted by the direction of the residents' association, by the male and female coordinators of the nuclei, as well as the coordinators of the sectors that the settlement has (education, gender, healthcare etc.). The coordinators of the nuclei in turn, return to the nuclei with the points of the agenda to be discussed with the 10 families, At the time of the general assembly, each nuclei expresses its decision in relation to the issues discussed, having considered the position of the majority of the families. In this way, the decision of the majority of the nuclei is that which defines if the previously discussed proposals are approved or not” (MELO, 2007, p.62-63).
- 4 One example of this was the initiative by the judiciary to criminalize the MST in an attempt to charge its leaders under the National Security Law. Meanwhile in the national congress, a parliamentary investigative commission (CPI) was established to investigate and punish popular organizations, at the same time as it assured “total impunity to the company organizations” (MST, 2009). This goes beyond the more recent mechanisms such as the “antiterrorism” bill proposed to the national congress, supporting Wacquant's (2013) concept about the expansion of the

penal role of the state in consonance with welfare-type actions. Another example of this strategy is found in the realm of the legal instruments created to deal with land conflicts, such as Law 8.629, of February 25, 1993, which in article 2 characterizes as a crime participation in organizations that promote “conflicts over land ownership” through actions such as occupation of public land and buildings (an act denominated as “invasion” and “plunder”), which, according to the law, should be severely punished.

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