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# Agrarian Change, Gender and Land Rights

## *A Brazilian Case Study*

*Julia S. Guivant*

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AIMTR-Sul | *Articulação das Instâncias de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais-Sul* (Movement of Organizations of Rural Women Workers-South) |
| ANMTR | *Articulação Nacional de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais* (National Movement of Rural Women Workers) |
| CEB | *Conselho Eclesial de Base* (Grassroots Church Council) |
| CEBRAP | *Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento* (Brazilian Centre for Analysis and Planning) |
| CLOC | Co-ordination of Women of the Southern Cone within the Latin American Co-ordination of Rural Organizations |
| CNDM | *Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher* (National Council for the Rights of Women) |
| CONCRAB | *Confederação Nacional das Cooperativas da Reforma Agrária Brasileira* (Confederation of the Brazilian Agrarian Reform Co-operatives) |
| CONCUT | *Congresso Nacional da Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (National Congress of the Workers' United Union) |
| CONTAG | *Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Agricultura* (National Confederation of Agricultural Workers) |
| COOPAJOTA | *Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária Padre Jósimo Tavares* (Co-operative of Agricultural Production Padre Jósimo Tavares) |
| CPF | *Cadastro de pessoa física* (personal registration number) |
| CPJ | *Comissão Pastoral da Juventude* (Pastoral Commission on Youth) |
| CPT | *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (Pastoral Commission on Land) |
| CUT | *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' United Union) |
| FAO | United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization |
| Fase | *Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional* (Federation of Agencies for Social Assistance and Education) |
| FETAGs | *Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura* (Rural Trade Unions) |
| IBGE | *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (Brazilian Institute of National Statistics and Geography) |
| IBRA | *Instituto Brasileiro de Reforma Agrária* (Brazilian Institute for Agrarian Reform) |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| INCRA | *Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária* (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform) |
| ITESP | *Instituto de Terras do Estado de São Paulo* (Land Institute of the State of São Paulo) |
| MAB | *Movimento dos Afetados por Barragens* (Movement of Those Affected by Dams) |
| MDA | *Ministério de Desenvolvimento Agrário* (Ministry of Agrarian Development) |
| MIRAD | *Ministério de Reforma Agrária e Desenvolvimento* (Ministry of Agrarian Reform and Development) |
| MMA | *Movimento de Mulheres Agricultoras de Santa Catarina* (Peasant Women's Movement of Santa Catarina) |
| MMTR | *Movimento de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais* (Rural Women Workers Movement) |
| MPA | *Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores* (Small Farmers' Movement) |
| MST | *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra* (Landless Rural Workers Movement) |
| PNAD | *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostras de Domicílios* (National Household Sample Research) |
| PROCERA | *Programa de Crédito Especial para a Reforma Agrária* (Special Agrarian Reform Credit Programme) |
| PRONAF | *Programa Nacional de Agricultura Familiar* (National Family Farming Programme) |
| PT | *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party) |
| SNCR | *Serviço Nacional de Crédito Rural* (National Rural Credit Service) |
| SOF | *Sempre-viva Organização Feminista* (Sempre-viva Feminist Organization) |
| SUS | *Sistema Único de Saúde* (Single Health System) |
| UDR | *União Democrática Rural* (Rural Democratic Union) |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |

## Summary/Résumé/Resumen


### *Summary*

The main objective of this paper is to contribute to the analysis of the marginalization of women's land rights in Brazil by governmental institutions and rural women's movements. In order to contextualize this analysis, the first section of the paper presents the broader transformations of the Brazilian rural economy, principally over the last two decades, and the major changes that have occurred in the position of rural women as a result of agricultural modernization. The paper then describes the challenges posed by women's land rights from the perspectives of (i) the Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (INCRA); (ii) the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST), which does not have a separate organizational structure for women; (iii) rural trade unionism represented by the Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Agricultura (CONTAG), which does have a separate structure with a quota system for women's participation in the rural unions; and (iv) the Articulação das Instâncias de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais-Sul and Articulação Nacional de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais, which has a formally autonomous structure for women. These sections are based on qualitative analysis of documents and pamphlets both from the government and the various movements, and on field research carried out between July and September 2000.

Rural women in Brazil began organizing in the early 1970s, parallel to the rural social movement demanding land, especially in the south of the country. The key period in the struggle and national mobilization for Brazilian rural women's social and labour rights coincided with the reform of the Constitution in 1988, which guaranteed equality between rural and urban men and women with respect to labour legislation and social rights. The fight for the social and labour rights of peasant women brought together—at different levels of participation—several rural movements, which agreed that the struggle for the implementation of these rights was fundamental for allowing rural women to participate in meetings, to enjoy an active off-farm life and to have their work recognized as a profession. Nevertheless, the title or joint title issue in agrarian reform was not given prominence. The inclusion in the 1988 Constitution of the possibility of joint adjudication and land entitlement to couples or women with regard to land ownership did not mean, however, that government bodies implemented these rights or that they established them as a goal. According to the first census of the agrarian reform organized by INCRA in 1996, only 12.62 per cent of the beneficiaries were women.

Given a number of important problems faced by women—guaranteeing and implementing social and labour rights; occupying positions of power within the leading organs of the movements; stimulating the identity of rural women among women; and guaranteeing economic conditions for the survival of family farming and settlements—the issue of land titles or joint titles for women has still not received its due attention among rural women's movements. It remains one legal issue among others, and there is little evidence of strong expectations as to the benefits it might bring.

Another important factor discussed in the paper refers to the new consideration, in the 1990s, of family farms, sometimes on the basis of old arguments in relation to the supply of basic foodstuffs, but increasingly in terms of new concepts of rural development. Governmental agencies, social movements and academic researchers see family farms as the ideal model for rural organization, which tends to obscure power differences within the family structure. Policies aimed at strengthening family farming mainly benefit men, still regarded as the heads of the family.

The empowerment of women within agrarian reform, however, is occurring in an unpremeditated way and parallel to demands raised by the leadership of rural movements. The influence of the active role played by women in the encampments of occupied land, as research has shown, may be diluted in the return to traditional gender relations as settlements are established, or may even generate frustrations that cannot be vented. Other opportunities may be emerging for settled women as they become increasingly involved in a variety of productive activities, whether in women's associations, participating in and even presiding over co-operatives, or working outside the settlement. These new options may well present ways for empowerment.

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***Résumé***

Cette étude entend principalement apporter sa contribution à l'analyse de la marginalisation, par les institutions gouvernementales et les mouvements des femmes rurales, des droits fonciers des femmes au Brésil. Pour situer le contexte de cette analyse, l'auteur présente dans la première section les grands changements qui se sont produits, surtout au cours des 20 dernières années, dans l'économie rurale au Brésil et dans la condition des femmes rurales à la suite de la modernisation de l'agriculture. Elle décrit ensuite les problèmes que posent les droits fonciers des femmes du point de vue de (i) l'Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (INCRA), (ii) du Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST), qui n'a pas de structure organique séparée pour les femmes, (iii) du syndicalisme rural représenté par la Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Agricultura (CONTAG), qui a une structure séparée ainsi qu'un système de quota pour assurer la participation des femmes aux activités des syndicats ruraux et (iv) de l'Articulação das Instâncias de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais-Sul et de l'Articulação Nacional de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais, qui ont une structure officiellement autonome pour les femmes. Ces sections reposent sur l'analyse qualitative de documents et de brochures émanant tant du gouvernement que des divers mouvements, et sur les recherches menées sur le terrain entre juillet et septembre 2000.

Les femmes rurales ont commencé à s'organiser au Brésil au début des années 70, au moment où le mouvement social rural s'est mis à réclamer des terres, en particulier dans le sud du pays.

La période cruciale de la lutte et de la mobilisation en faveur des droits sociaux et syndicaux des femmes rurales brésiliennes a coïncidé avec la réforme de la Constitution en 1988, qui a garanti l'égalité entre hommes et femmes, ruraux et citadins, en matière de législation du travail et de droits du travail. La lutte pour les droits sociaux et les droits du travail des paysannes a rassemblé—avec des niveaux de participation divers—plusieurs mouvements ruraux qui étaient d'accord pour estimer que la lutte pour la réalisation de ces droits était essentielle pour que les femmes rurales puissent participer aux réunions, mener une vie active hors de la ferme et voient leur travail reconnu comme profession. Néanmoins, la question du titre de propriété, propre ou conjoint, dans la réforme agraire n'a pas été mise en vedette. La Constitution de 1988 prévoyait la possibilité d'attribuer des terres à des couples de femmes et de leur ouvrir le droit à la propriété foncière mais les organes gouvernementaux n'ont pas pour autant réalisé ces droits et fait de cette réalisation leur but. Selon le premier recensement de la réforme agraire organisé par l'INCRA en 1996, seuls 12,62 pour cent des bénéficiaires étaient des femmes.

Etant donné le nombre des enjeux pour les femmes—garantie et mise en œuvre des droits sociaux et syndicaux, occupation de postes clés dans les organes directeurs des mouvements, nécessité d'encourager les femmes rurales à trouver leur identité propre parmi les femmes et garantie de conditions économiques permettant la survie de l'agriculture familiale et des colonies—la question de droits propres ou conjoints à la propriété foncière pour les femmes n'a toujours pas reçu des mouvements ruraux féminins l'attention qu'elle mérite. Elle reste une question de droit parmi d'autres et ne semble pas susciter de grandes attentes quant aux bénéfices à en retirer.

La considération nouvelle dont jouit dans les années 90 la ferme familiale, considération liée parfois à la production des aliments de base, avec les arguments anciens qui s'y rapportent, mais de plus en plus à des conceptions nouvelles du développement rural, est un autre facteur important traité dans l'étude. Des institutions gouvernementales, des mouvements sociaux et des chercheurs universitaires voient dans la ferme familiale le modèle idéal de l'organisation rurale, qui tend à occulter les différences de pouvoir dans la structure familiale. Les hommes, encore considérés comme les chefs de famille, sont les principaux bénéficiaires des politiques visant à renforcer l'agriculture familiale.

L'autonomisation des femmes dans le cadre de la réforme agraire est cependant en train de se réaliser de manière non préméditée, en parallèle avec les revendications formulées par les dirigeants des mouvements ruraux. Les femmes ont joué un rôle actif dans les campements installés sur les terres occupées, la recherche l'a montré, mais l'influence qu'elles y ont gagnée risque de se diluer lorsque les populations se seront établies et que les relations entre hommes et femmes redeviendront ce qu'elles ont toujours été, ou même de se transformer en un ressentiment qui ne pourra pas s'exprimer. A mesure qu'elles s'impliqueront dans diverses activités de production, que ce soit dans des associations féminines, en participant à des coopératives ou même en les présidant ou en travaillant en dehors des colonies, ces femmes pourront voir s'ouvrir d'autres possibilités. Ces options nouvelles pourraient concourir à leur autonomisation.

Julia S. Guivant est professeur de sociologie à l'université fédérale de Santa Catarina, Brésil, où elle coordonne le Groupe de recherche interdisciplinaire sur les réseaux s'intéressant au développement durable et à l'alimentation.

***Resumen***

El principal objetivo de este documento es contribuir al análisis tanto de la marginación de los derechos territoriales de las mujeres en Brasil por parte de las instituciones gubernamentales, como de los movimientos de las mujeres rurales. Al objeto de contextualizar este análisis, la primera sección del informe presenta las transformaciones más amplias experimentadas por la economía rural brasileña, fundamentalmente en los dos últimos decenios, y los principales cambios operados en la situación las mujeres rurales a consecuencia de la modernización de la agricultura. Por lo tanto, en estas páginas se describen los desafíos que plantean los derechos territoriales de las mujeres desde la perspectiva de: (i) el Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (INCRA); (ii) el Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST), que carece de una estructura organizativa aparte para las mujeres; (iii) el sindicalismo rural, representado por la Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Agricultura (CONTAG), que cuenta con una estructura aparte con un sistema de cuotas para la participación de las mujeres en los sindicatos rurales; y (iv) la Articulação das Instâncias de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais-Sul y la Articulação Nacional de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais, que tiene una estructura autónoma para las mujeres. Estas secciones se basan en el análisis cualitativo de documentos y prospectos tanto del gobierno como de diversos movimientos, y en las investigaciones realizadas en este ámbito entre julio y septiembre de 2000.

Las mujeres rurales en Brasil comenzaron a sindicarse a principios del decenio de 1970, paralelamente al movimiento social rural que reivindicaba tierras, en particular en el sur del país. El período clave de la lucha y la movilización nacional para reivindicar los derechos sociales y laborales de las mujeres rurales brasileñas coincidió con la reforma de la Constitución en 1988, que garantizaba la igualdad entre los hombres y las mujeres rurales con respecto a la legislación laboral y los derechos sociales. La lucha por los derechos sociales y laborales de las mujeres campesinas unió—con diferentes grados de participación—a varios movimientos rurales, que coincidían en que la lucha por la aplicación de estos derechos era fundamental para que las mujeres rurales pudieran participar en reuniones y disfrutar de una vida activa fuera del ámbito agrícola, y para que su trabajo fuera reconocido como profesión. El hecho de que la Constitución de 1988 contemplara la posibilidad de una adjudicación conjunta y de un derecho territorial a las parejas o a las mujeres con respecto a la propiedad de la tierra, no significó que los organismos gubernamentales aplicaran estos derechos o que los establecieran como objetivo. Según el primer censo de la reforma agraria organizado por el INCRA en 1996, sólo el 12,6 por ciento de los beneficiarios eran mujeres.

Habida cuenta de algunos problemas importantes a que se enfrentaron las mujeres—garantizar y aplicar los derechos sociales y laborales; ostentar cargos de responsabilidad en los principales órganos de los movimientos; estimular la identidad de las mujeres rurales entre las mujeres; y

garantizar las condiciones económicas para la supervivencia de las explotaciones familiares y asentamientos agrícolas—la cuestión de los derechos territoriales o de los derechos conjuntos todavía no ha recibido la atención que merece por parte de los movimientos de las mujeres rurales. Sigue siendo una de tantas cuestiones jurídicas, y apenas existen pruebas de que se abriguen grandes esperanzas con respecto a los beneficios que pueda aportar.

Otro factor importante que se aborda en estas páginas se refiere a la nueva consideración, en el decenio de 1990, de las explotaciones agrícolas familiares, en algunos casos sobre la base de viejos argumentos relacionados con la oferta de productos alimenticios básicos, pero cada vez más en términos de nuevos conceptos de desarrollo rural. Los organismos gubernamentales, los movimientos sociales y los investigadores académicos estiman que las explotaciones agrícolas familiares son el modelo ideal de organización rural, que tiende a reducir las diferencias de poder en la estructura familiar. Las políticas encaminadas al fortalecimiento de las explotaciones agrícolas familiares benefician fundamentalmente a los hombres, a quienes sigue considerándose cabezas de familia.

No obstante, el empoderamiento de las mujeres en la reforma agraria está produciéndose de forma improvisada y paralelamente a las reivindicaciones planteadas por los dirigentes de los movimientos rurales. La influencia del papel activo que desempeñan las mujeres en los campamentos de las tierras ocupadas, como han mostrado las investigaciones, puede atenuarse al volver a las relaciones de género tradicionales a medida se establecen los asentamientos, o incluso puede crear frustraciones que no pueden manifestarse abiertamente. Pueden surgir otras oportunidades para las mujeres asentadas, a medida participan más activamente en diversas actividades de producción, ya sea en asociaciones de mujeres, al participar y presidir cooperativas, o al trabajar fuera del asentamiento. Estas nuevas opciones pueden constituir formas de empoderamiento.

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## Introduction

The 1980s saw the emergence of new social and political movements in Brazil. One was the rebirth of militant trade unionism and the creation of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), based largely on the recently constituted industrial sectors, especially the automobile complex. At around the same time, the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST) was formed, uniting diverse rural movements, especially in the south of the country. A new students' movement also took shape during this period, stimulated by expanding higher education but extending also into the secondary schools. Also, the political organization of rural women was consolidated in various regions of the country through participation in political parties, the Catholic Church, the landless movement, rural unions and through autonomous forms of organization. All these developments led to a nation-wide campaign for democratic elections to replace the military regime.

By the 1980s, industry had replaced agriculture as the main export earner, and within agriculture, semi-processed agroindustrial products (fruit juice, soymeal and oil) began to push coffee grains into third place. The industrial economy of the late 1950s had been largely dominated by food, textiles and construction, with state investment in petroleum and steel. By the 1980s, through a strategy combining state, national and multinational capital, Brazil's industry had expanded into petrochemicals, electro-domestic products and a major automobile complex, and had an energy base which included a network of giant hydroelectric plants. While in 1960 Brazil's population was 70 million, with 57 per cent living in the countryside, by 1985 the total population had grown to 130 million, with the rural areas accounting for only 30 per cent of the population. The Agricultural Census of 1980 registered an active female population in agriculture of 11 per cent, with 88.9 per cent registered as unpaid members of the family. However, official statistics tend to underestimate women's work in the countryside (Lavinas and Carneiro 1987).

By this time, the military's industrial strategy was exhausted, and economic growth was paralyzed by foreign debt. As from the late 1970s, the military initiated a controlled and planned return to civilian rule. The popular movement, in its turn, coalesced around the demand for direct presidential elections and, while this was not successful, it was sufficient to create a broad-based opposition within the electoral college of Congress, which defeated the right-wing military candidate. This victory led to the formation of the New Republic in 1985 and the election of a moderate president—Tancredo Neves, who died before he took office—and then his replacement by the vice-presidential candidate who had been a long-time supporter of the military regime. In the New Republic—as this transition period is known—the issue of agrarian reform acquired an unexpectedly central position in the initial measures of the new government.

The process of the reform of the Constitution—finally approved in 1988—was a key period in the struggle and the national mobilization for Brazilian rural women's social and labour rights. In the text of the Constitution, equal rights between rural and urban men and women with respect to labour legislation and social rights were guaranteed. For the first time, it was

stipulated that such benefits were for permanent and temporary workers, for farmers and for unpaid family workers. An important gain for the rural women's movement was the inclusion of Article 189, which stated that "the title of ownership and the concession of use rights was to be conferred on the man and the woman or on both independently of their civil state, according to the terms and the provisions of the law".

The inclusion of the possibility of joint adjudication and titling of land to couples or women did not mean, however, that government bodies implemented this right nor that they established it as a goal to be achieved. According to the first Census of the Agrarian Reform organized by the Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária (INCRA) in 1996, only 12.62 per cent of the beneficiaries were women. Therefore, joint adjudication and titling of land to couples has not been taken into account in practice. The same situation can be observed with respect to other rights, where the process of implementation has been very slow, in spite of the active presence of the rural women's movement throughout the country during the 1990s.

But the obstacles to the implementation of Article 189 cannot be identified only at the level of governmental agencies. Deere and León (1999) observed that also among the unions, the MST, political parties and the Church, concern about the enforcement of this article has remained marginal when compared to the other demands. Nor has the relation between gender and land titling in Brazil received much attention in academic research, with the exception of Deere and León's (1999) working paper, which focuses on the issue of land rights in agrarian reform; the field research by Pereira et al. (1996) in a settlement in São Paulo; and the recently published research on gender in different agrarian reform settlements, co-ordinated by Rua and Abramovay (2000).

There is already an extensive international bibliography on the extent to which land entitlement has had an effective influence on the empowerment of women farmers within agrarian reform processes (Razavi 1999). A study by Agarwal (1995) has made an important contribution to this debate. Even though she questions purely legal arguments, Agarwal considers that access to land is central to women farmers' empowerment since this involves "a process that enhances the ability of disadvantaged ('powerless') individuals or groups to challenge and change (in their favour) existing power relationships that place them in subordinate economic, social, and political positions" (Agarwal 1995).[1]

Sen's approach (1999) can be understood along the same lines when he highlights the importance of feminist movements that go beyond the demands limited to the relative well-being of women—which places them in the position of receivers—to include demands that guarantee their position as agents of change: "dynamic promoters of social transformations which can alter the lives both of women *and* men" (p. 22, author's italics). Some of the variables that influence this role of agents as a central factor in development include the possibility of

[1] Pettersen and Solbakken (1998) analysed the problems involved in the concept of empowerment that has become fashionable in both research and development strategies and is now used by many different actors, who rarely define it.

generating one's own income, employment outside the home, being able to read, participation as informed people in decisions both within and outside the home, together with land rights in the case of women's participation in agricultural activities.

The main objective of this paper is to contribute to the analysis of the reasons for the marginalization of women's land rights by governmental institutions (mainly in the INCRA) and rural women's movements. In order to contextualize this analysis, the first section of the paper presents the broader transformations of the Brazilian rural economy, principally over the last two decades, and the major changes, classified by strata and regions, that have occurred in the position of rural women as a result of agricultural modernization. This section is based on a detailed analysis of major academic contributions and draws on official census and survey data as well as journalistic material and reports.

In the following sections, the paper describes the challenges posed by women's land rights within the context of negotiations on this issue from the perspectives of: (i) INCRA; (ii) the MST, which does not have a separate organizational structure for women; (iii) rural trade unionism represented by the Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Agricultura (CONTAG), which does have a separate structure together with a quota system for women's participation in the rural unions; and (iv) Articulação das Instâncias de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais-Sul and Articulação Nacional de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais, both of which have a formally autonomous structure for women.

These sections of the paper are based on qualitative analysis of documents/pamphlets both from the government and the different movements, and on field research carried out between July and September 2000. I interviewed the leaders of the rural women's movements selected on the basis of consultation with key informants,[2] with the aim of covering the different regional contexts.[3] The interviews were conducted on the basis of a list of open-ended questions dealing with personal history, the limits and opportunities of involvement in public life, and the way in which the organizations to which they belong regard gender and land rights questions.

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In-depth interviews were carried out with the following leadership groups: (i) the national leadership of the MST: Nina (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul) and Itelvina Masioli (Cuiabá, Mato Grosso); (ii) the national leadership of the CONTAG and the co-ordinator of the National Commission of Rural Women Workers, Raimunda Celestina de Mascena (Brasilia, Distrito Federal); (iii) the state leadership of the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT) in Paraná and the co-ordinator of the Agricultural Women's Commission, Maria Salete Escher (Curitba, Paraná); (iv) Luci Choinaski of the Movimento de Mulheres Agricultoras (MMA), and also national PT deputy for Santa Catarina, and the state leadership and representatives of the MMA and the Articulação Nacional de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais (ANMTR), Noemi and Idelia; (v) the state leadership of the Movimento de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais (MMTR), Loiva (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul); (vi) the person responsible at SOF for the rural question, Miriam Nobre (São Paulo); (vii) the co-ordinator of the Acrean Men and Women's Network, Mara Vidal (Rio Branco, Acre); and (viii), the president of INCRA, Orlando da Costa Muniz (Brasilia, DF).

[3] Given Brazil's continental dimensions and the limitations of this research, it was not possible to include a representative sample of all the country's regions (it was not possible, for instance to include leaders from the northeast).

## Agricultural Modernization, Agrarian Reform and Family Farming

The military coup of 1964 was the result of a coalition of forces, including the rural oligarchy, mobilized against the proposed "structural reforms" of the Goulart/Brizola government (1963–1964). Central among reforms was the land question. The repression of rural leaders diminished popular pressure on the land issue but did not impede the institutionalization of this question during the military regime through the creation of the Instituto Brasileiro de Reforma Agrária (IBRA) in 1965. A constitutional amendment sanctioned the payment of expropriations in public debt bonds, and the Land Statute, which was approved by the National Congress, adopted a discourse in favour of eliminating the *latifundio/minifundio* (large estate/smallholding) polarization through the promotion of rural enterprise, if necessary by means of agrarian reform.

Once the military regime was consolidated, however, the agrarian question became absorbed within a policy of land colonization (with the transformation of IBRA into INCRA), and both were subordinated to the strategy of agricultural modernization. Investment programmes supported the entry of multinational companies into the agricultural chemical inputs, equipment and machinery supply industries. Agroindustrial complexes based on national capital were similarly promoted, particularly in the white meats, sugarcane/alcohol, forestry/cellulose and orange juice sectors. Regional investment programmes, on the other hand, favoured traditional landholding interests, especially in the northeast and the northern regions, which attracted industrial capital from the centre-south and from foreign investors. A broad coalition emerged, ranging from the traditional *latifundio*, national and foreign agroindustrial capitals and centre-south industrial interests, to small and medium modernizing farmers in the centre-south and south, integrated into agroindustries and co-operatives. Traditional small farmers, all types of renters and indigenous populations were excluded, and rural workers effectively remained without the protection of labour and social legislation. Small-scale agroindustries also suffered from punitive sanitary legislation and market oligopolization.

The most decisive characteristic of agricultural modernization in Brazil was the creation and implantation of the Serviço Nacional de Crédito Rural (SNCR) in 1965–1967 (Sayad 1984; Delgado 1985; Beskow 1994; and Leite 1998b). Modernization, therefore, was clearly induced by public policies and was dubbed "conservative modernization" in academic circles at the time, since it used this highly subsidized new system of credit for the acquisition of inputs and machinery, and for the commercialization of production on the basis of the existing land structure.

Access to land also implied access to credit, which stimulated land grabs on a large scale and inflated the land market. With credit for the purchase of machinery subsidized, rural labour became relatively more expensive, provoking a rural exodus and regional migrations.[4] One

[4] Credit increased fourfold in volume during the 1970s, reaching $166.8 billion at an average negative interest rate of more than 20 per cent in the second half of the decade, which implied that investment credit was transformed into a donation (Muller 1989).

decisive impact of this credit, therefore, was the increase in the share of industrial inputs in total expenditure from 30 per cent to 57 per cent between 1959 and 1980, while the share of wage costs declined from 70 per cent to 38 per cent in the same period as a result of the massive adoption of tractors (Muller 1989; Chase 1999).

Table 1 summarizes the relative rates of growth of the urban and rural population in Brazil during the second half of the twentieth century. This rate is obviously influenced by the absolute size of the respective populations, but it emerges clearly that the urban-industrial axis of Brazilian economic growth was already consolidated in the Vargas era (1930–1945) and accelerated in the period of Kubitschek (1956–1961). Nevertheless, the decline in the rate of rural growth in the 1970s is notable (and would have been even greater if the calculation were exclusively rural, excluding small towns of up to 20,000 inhabitants) and captures the rural exodus unleashed by the model of agricultural modernization.

**Table 1: Percentage rate of growth of the urban, rural and total population (1940–1991)**

| Period | Urban | Rural | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1940–1950 | 4.6 | 1.7 | 2.3 |
| 1950–1960 | 6.2 | 1.8 | 3.0 |
| 1960–1970 | 5.4 | 1.5 | 2.9 |
| 1970–1980 | 4.9 | 0.4 | 2.5 |
| 1980–1991 | 2.6 | 0.6 | 1.9 |

**Source:** Censo Demográfico, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (1991); Martine (1994).

The migration of rural populations had an important impact on the redefinition of the social role of women (Teixeira et al. 1994). With the exception of the 1960s, women have predominated in migratory flows, a trend especially notable in the 1950s and 1980s, producing an increasing "masculinization" of the countryside. According to Camarano and Abramovay (1999:4), in the 1950s, "approximately 1.2 million more women than men (19 per cent more) left the countryside. In the 1980s the figure was 1.5 million (22 per cent more)". Young women and unmarried women began to make up an important part of the service sector (basically as domestics) and the urban informal markets. This tendency was reinforced by the traditional exclusion of women from land inheritance practices, which typically gave priority to male children, thereby confirming migration as women's most frequent destiny (Woortman 1994; Brumer 1993; Papma 1992).

On the other hand, in cases where the men emigrated, women began to assume new activities in the rural areas, frequently administering production alone or with the help of children and relatives. Between 1981 and 1989, the number of families in the countryside with the woman as their head increased from 787,042 to 1,051,788, an increase of some 33.64 per cent.[5] Data for the year 1984 show that the northeastern region had the highest proportion of families headed by

[5] This analysis is based on Texeira et al. (1994).

women (56.5 per cent). Thus male migration principally affected the most impoverished rural populations of the country during these years.

Such transformations, however, did not lead to significant changes in women farmers' traditional marginalization in terms of access to information, technical qualification, participation in rural development and access to rural credit (Panceri 1997; Lavinas and Magina 1994; Panzutti 1996). The growth in the number of rural families with women as head thus implied a worsening in the quality of life of these families. According to Teixeira et al. (1994:23), a comparison of the

> monthly per capita income of rural families headed by women with the total of rural families in the years 1981 and 1989 shows that there was a much higher proportion of the former in the category of families with up to half a minimum wage (80.48 per cent in 1981 and 80 per cent in 1989) than the percentage for the total number of families (67.42 per cent in 1981 and 60.83 per cent in 1989). In the income category of over half a minimum wage, on the other hand, the participation of families with women as head is much lower (19.52 per cent in 1981 and 20 per cent in 1989) than the average for all families (31.77 per cent in 1981 and 31.19 per cent in 1989).

In addition to long-distance and definitive migration, seasonal and intermittent migratory patterns are also important. Women suffer the greatest discrimination as rural labourers, both in terms of wages and sexual harassment (Stolke 1986). According to the Agricultural Census for 1980, some 17 per cent of women 10 years or older were migrant workers, a higher proportion than that for men.

In addition to the generalized process of urbanization, one of the most striking of the tendencies in the 1960s and 1970s was that of metropolitanization, especially in the southeast and particularly in São Paulo, which was stimulated by migratory flows within the region, and also from the south and the northeast. Important migratory flows were also directed to the states in the north—Rondônia, Roraima and Acre. At the same time, a wave of investment in the states that took advantage of the facilities provided by regional programmes threatened the survival of small farmers. Mass immigration, land conflicts and the promises of settlements transformed this region into one of the central axes of violent struggle for agrarian reform. The regime's reply was to create organs for the migration areas with para-state powers, directly subordinated to the National Security Council to deal with the land question (Martins 1984).

According to Hoffman and Kageyama (1998), the 1970s revealed an increase in income inequality among the economically active rural population, which was correlated with unequal access to land, although there was, at the same time, an increase in average income explained in part by the impact of the rural exodus whereby the poorest left the countryside. Table 2 presents the basic data on the evolution of the land structure by strata and area in this period.

**Table 2: Land structure (1970–1985)**

| Farm size (hectares) | Number of establishments | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1970 (per cent)* | | 1975 (per cent) | | 1980 (per cent) | | 1985 (per cent) | |
| <10 | 2,519,630 | (51) | 2,601,860 | (52) | 2,598,019 | (50) | 3,085,841 | (53) |
| 10–100 | 1,934,392 | (39) | 1,898,949 | (38) | 2,016,774 | (39) | 2,166,424 | (37) |
| 100–1,000 | 414,746 | (8) | 446,170 | (9) | 488,521 | (9) | 518,618 | (9) |
| 1,000–10,000 | 35,425 | (0.7) | 39,648 | (0.8) | 45,496 | (0.9) | 47,931 | (0.8) |
| >10,000 | 1,449 | (0.02) | 1,820 | (0.03) | 2,345 | (0.04) | 2,174 | (0.04) |
| Total | 4,924,019 | | 4,993,252 | | 5,159,851 | | 5,834,779 | |

| Farm size (hectares) | Total area (hectares) | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1970 (per cent) | | 1975 (per cent) | | 1980 (per cent) | | 1985 (per cent) | |
| <10 | 9,083,495 | (3) | 8,982,646 | (3) | 9,004,259 | (2) | 10,029,780 | (3) |
| 10–100 | 60,069,704 | (20) | 60,171,637 | (19) | 64,494,343 | (18) | 69,678,938 | (19) |
| 100–1,000 | 108,742,676 | (37) | 115,923,043 | (36) | 126,799,188 | (35) | 131,893,557 | (35) |
| 1,000–10,000 | 80,059,162 | (27) | 89,866,944 | (28) | 104,548,849 | (29) | 108,397,132 | (29) |
| >10,000 | 36,190,429 | (12) | 48,951,812 | (15) | 60,007,780 | (16) | 56,287,168 | (15) |
| Total | 294,145,466 | | 323,896,082 | | 363,854,421 | | 376,286,577 | |

**Source:** IBGE in Oliveira (1994).

* Percentages for farm sizes have been rounded up except for the last category under Number of establishments (> 10,000 hectares) where such a procedure would not allow participation to be identified.

Between 1970 and 1985, 82 million hectares were incorporated into the rural property structure and of these, only 1 million went to farms with under 10 hectares, which represent more than 50 per cent of all rural establishments and whose numbers increased by 20 per cent during this period. In 1985, 3 million establishments occupied 10 million hectares, an area less than that of the five largest *latifundios* registered by INCRA.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, the characterization of Brazilian agriculture as "feudal" predominated (Vinhas 1972). Some argued that agrarian reform was necessary both to create a domestic market for industry and to supply cheap foodstuffs for urban workers. Yet others, such as Caio Prado Jr., challenged this view both at the micro level (arguing that sharecropping was in fact a form of wage-labour) and sectorally (seeing the exporting *latifundio* as a capitalist enterprise).[6]

In the early 1970s, this debate was to be rerun in the contributions from the Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento (CEBRAP) school (F. de Oliveira 1972, 1977), which tried to show that basic food supplies for the cities and labour for export crops had been met fundamentally either from small farming plots within the *latifundio* (share-cropping, renting) or independently of it on the frontier (squatters). The domestic market was stimulated through the emergence of a new urban middle class and not through the transformation of the rural market for consumer

[6] See Santos 1998.

goods. On the contrary, the principal demand in the countryside was for intermediate goods in the form of inputs, equipment and machinery.

In the 1980s, typologies based primarily on the large capitalist landholding and rural wage labour were complemented by those of formal and informal contracting between small and medium modernizing farms and agroindustries (Sorj et al. 1982; Wilkinson 1986). This concept of agroindustry implied a different view of agricultural modernization, which was now seen to be led by firms that did not invest directly in agriculture but controlled the production processes and the quality of the final product through their control over technology, processing and marketing. Depending on the degree of technological complexity and the nature of the product, small and medium farmers were seen to be as efficient as the large-scale landholding—with the added advantage of having less bargaining power.

This agroindustrial perspective threw new light on the importance of the southern states for agricultural modernization and the consolidation of a new food system. In these three states—Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul—agricultural production was dominated by family farming based on waves of European immigration, principally German and Italian, from the end of the nineteenth century up until the Second World War. This region was responsible for the majority of products in the new urban diet. The dynamism of these markets in the 1960s and 1970s opened up the perspective of integration into the modernization process for the family farming sector of the south and suggested that conflicts would be less over land issues and more on the negotiation of the terms of this integration—credit, prices and crop insurance (Goodman et al. 1985).

By the end of the 1970s, inflation was reaching 100 per cent annually, international commodity prices were at a low and the foreign debt exploded. In 1982 the country became immersed in a profound recession and entered a long-term crisis which continues to the present day. In an initial round of reforms, the total volume of rural credit available suffered a reduction that has persisted (with the exception of the two stabilization plans in 1985–1987 and 1994–1995) and has been accompanied by a progressive elimination of negative real rates of interest, although the conditions continue to be more favourable than other credit lines. As a result of these measures, investment credit almost disappeared. It should be remembered, however, that the persistence of special programmes, particularly for wheat and sugarcane/alcohol continued to involve huge subsidies for large-scale farming.

Apart from the exceptional period of the beginning of the New Republic during the Sarney government (1985–1986), the persistence of industrial recession during the 1980s served as a break on emigration from the countryside. The end of credit subsidies also dried up options on the agricultural frontier in the northern region.

The importance agrarian reform has acquired since the 1980s is, therefore, the result of a multiplicity of social and political factors, particularly the way in which social movements and their representative or support organizations were incorporated into the institutionalization of

public policies. A Ministry for Agrarian Reform was created in 1985, and an ambitious programme of land expropriations adopted. The government's agrarian reform proposal aimed to settle 7 million families during a period of 15 years. While the first criticisms came from the left, the agrarian opposition was not slow to emerge and surprised people by its strength and good organization. As a result, the Agrarian Reform Plan—approved in October 1985—reduced the scope of the expropriations to unproductive *latifundios* and gave priority to the use of public lands for settlements. In the 1988 Constitution, this step backwards was confirmed with the approval of indemnities calculated on the basis of the market value of the rural properties. The implementation of expropriations depended on legal regulation in the form of an agrarian law that was approved five years later, in 1993.

It might be thought that the agrarian reform demands represented no more than a renewal of the traditional themes of the democratic agenda, which would be reformulated when confronted with the realities of agricultural modernization. This might certainly account for the initial acceptance of agrarian reform proposals even by the more conservative forces of the democratic front responsible for the first New Republic government. Two different types of reactions to these proposals, however, made it clear that agrarian reform was far from being a simple throwback to the demands of the past.

In the first place, in spite of the government's confident launching of the agrarian reform programme at the Rural Workers Congress in 1985, its targets were called into question by the trade union movement and the social movements active in the countryside (particularly the church, the Landless Movement, and the Rubber Tappers Movement in the Amazon), which had become consolidated precisely in the period of modernization (Medeiros 1999).

In 1975 the Church assumed a leading political position with the formation of a Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), which became a decisive force, both in the support of social movements and in the training of cadres responsible for the reinvigoration of land struggles.[7] In 1980 the Church hierarchy ratified the CPT's actions in a document entitled *The Church and the Land Problem*, which was captured in the adoption of the slogans: "land for those who work in it" and "land for work, not for business" (Stedile 1994).

In the south, especially in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, conflict and mobilization around the land question assumed great importance. Initially, the struggle in the south took the form of a reaction to the removal of populations for the construction of dams, which was broadened into a struggle for land in the affected localities. Agricultural modernization had also provoked a strong rural exodus from this region to the frontiers of the centre-west and the north (the Agrarian Reform Census of 1996 noted that those settled in the Amazon region came largely from the south and the southeast). These frontiers began to close by the late 1980s, and the centre-west became a major competitor in all of the typical products of the southern region.

[7] The CPT was created by a group of bishops, lay people, priests and religious members of the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession to denounce the advance of the large landholding and the violence in the countryside.

With the end of the military regime approaching, the different struggles became unified in the creation of the MST in 1984 in Rio Grande do Sul.

According to Bruno (1997), the new agrarian right wing of large landowners, who modernized on the basis of large subsidies and repeatedly rescheduled debts, gained political cohesion in the mobilization against the agrarian reform measures, creating the União Democrática Rural (UDR).

These blocs represented two major political forces that emerged during the long period of economic modernization in the context of what has recently been described as the "planned intervention" phase of the military regime, when investments obeyed relatively coherent national development plans.[8] At the same time, they could be seen as a radicalization of these forces in response to the crisis of the modernization model, which began in the late 1970s and exploded in the debt repayment crisis of 1982. Therefore for the UDR in the mid-1980s, it was no longer a question of rescheduling credits with the local bank manager, but rather of negotiating an amnesty for unpayable debts that required national political mobilization. On the other hand, the small farmers and rural workers who migrated to urban areas, whether because of expulsion, the collapse of income from traditional unsupported production systems or the appropriation of markets by medium and large-scale producers within the principal agroindustrial foodcrop chains, could no longer count on being absorbed into the labour market of the big cities where unemployment was rife.

While the re-emerging agrarian reform movement fed on continuities in the large landholding system and the traditional political agenda, it has acquired a new dimension in the very process of modernization during the last 30 years, exacerbated by the economic crisis that has characterized Brazil and a large part of Latin America since 1982 and, more recently, by the badly assimilated transformations in the global economy.

There was further setback for the agrarian reform during the Collor government (1990–1992), which adopted a policy of resolving land conflicts on the basis of juridical repression combined with the promotion of precarious forms of land access, most notably the (unsuccessful) promotion of rent contracts through the establishment of a centralized exchange to regulate supply and demand of rentable land. The violence that has always accompanied land conflicts persisted as a fundamental source of intimidation, and the Pastoral Land Commission registered 966 assassinations between 1985 and 1996. The struggles of rural women also suffered setbacks in this period. In 1991 legislation designed to guarantee maternity leave to rural women was vetoed. This right was finally approved by the National Congress in 1993 after pressure was brought to bear by the Articulação das Instâncias de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais-Sul (ANMTR-Sul), which represents the southern states.

Also in 1993, agrarian reform was reactivated through the passing of the Agricultural Law, and a little later the Law of Summary Rite, which made expropriations once again possible. Collor's

[8] An expression used by Buainain (1997) to characterize agricultural policy in the period 1967–1981.

impeachment in late 1992, and his replacement by the Itamar Franco government (1992–1994), created a favourable climate for popular mobilization, including that of rural women.

The first Cardoso government (1994–1998) never associated the notion of agrarian reform with food supply strategies or regional development, but saw the policy as one of providing minimum employment, housing and income for impoverished rural families. In this more favourable climate, the MST returned in force with its strategy of land occupations, and the government was forced to following the movement's initiatives. During this period, there was tacit collusion (to a certain extent) between the MST and the government, since the former was very efficient in mobilizing public support for settlement policies and was equally efficient in organizing the settlements. Where the MST, or other social movements (NGOs, Church, rural unions) were not active, it was very difficult to mobilize the rural poor for settlements and even more difficult to ensure minimum levels of economic performance within the settlements.

The Stabilization Plan (known as the *Plan Real* after the name of the new currency introduced) carried out by Cardoso in 1994, when he was the finance minister in the Itamar Franco government, gave him enormous popularity and led to his victory in the presidential elections of that year. This Plan, which eliminated years of uncontrollable inflation, led to a sharp increase in the real incomes of the poor and a consumer explosion, especially for basic goods such as food. By 1996, however, the euphoria had begun to pass, as the cost of reducing inflation resulted in economic slowdown and unemployment.

During the 1990s, the militant industrial unions (the Central Única dos Trabalhadores—CUT, [9] linked to the PT) were weakened due to automation, out-sourcing in the key automobile sectors and factory closures, as a result of liberalization and the wave of privatizations in the state sector. This collapse of an organized urban opposition at a time when unemployment was replacing inflation as the principal threat to worker security facilitated the acceptance of agrarian reform and its representative movement, the MST, by the urban population, and for a time the MST assumed the national leadership of popular movements in opposition to the Cardoso government.

In 1997, with its Programa Nacional de Agricultura Familiar (PRONAF), the Cardoso government initiated the first large-scale programme for small farmers as a distinct social category. The programme was implemented in relative autonomy from the policies of the major international organizations. With large resources for operational credit, investment and infrastructure, PRONAF went beyond agriculture and the individual holding and incorporated marketing, processing, associative action and regional rural development strategies. The programme was innovative in its incorporation of the term "family farmer", which came from academic debates whose leading exponents were involved in elaborating studies for policy formulation within the framework of a long-term co-operation project between the United

[9] CUT was created in 1983 by the current known as the new unionism. It comprises opposition unions and union leaders who challenged the state's control over trade unionism. CUT is an offspring of the PT, which was founded in 1980 and to which CUT is still attached. In 1997 2,570 organisations were affiliated to CUT, involving some 6 million workers, corresponding to 30 per cent of a total of 19.4 million unionized workers (Godinho Delgado 1998).

Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and INCRA. The programme has been through several evaluations and underwent a major reformulation in 2000 that threatens to severely limit its scope. One of the criticisms of the programme has been its inability to incorporate women as direct beneficiaries because of its refusal to confront the problems of discrimination which rural women face, or to provide alternatives that would allow them greater integration into the rural economy.

On the question of rural female out-migration, recent studies (Camarano and Abramovay 1999; Camarano et al. 1997; Bergamasco et al. 1999), which were based on information from the 1991 Census and the Agricultural Census of 1996, have shown that during the period 1991–1996, in relative terms, men remained a majority in the rural population throughout the country, although the percentage declined in the centre-west, the southeast and the south. The gender ratio increased from 1.04 men to 1 woman in 1950, to 1.09 in 1996. The northeast is the region which shows the least masculinization, with the ratio between the sexes being 1.05 in 1995, lower than the national average.[10] The south comes second, reproducing the national average. From the 1950s, the ratio between the sexes in the southeast has been superior to 1.00. In the north, there has been a recent tendency to a predominance of young people in the countryside, whereas the centre-west was the most male-dominated region of the country with a ratio of 1.21 in 1996.

To understand this greater rural exodus of young women, it should be taken into account that, according to the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) Census data for 1991 (Camarano et al. 1997), women have higher educational qualifications than their male counterparts (55 per cent of young men who live in the rural areas of the northeast have less than four years of schooling, while this proportion falls to 42 per cent in the case of women). This difference in schooling means that women are better qualified for the urban labour markets, particularly in the service sector.

The studies referred to above, which identified the subordinate insertion of agriculture into input and processing agroindustrial firms, were responsible for distinguishing between the traditional small-scale producer and the farmer able to modernize through agroindustrial integration (Sorj et al. 1982). While some authors emphasized aspects of subordination (Wanderley 1981), others saw a tendency toward increasing entrepreneurship (Muller 1989). A combination of different traditions of analysis with very varied starting points—rent theory in the case of Murray (1978), the limits to scale economies posed by the biological processes of agriculture (Dickinson and Mann 1978), the subordination of agriculture to oligopoly capital (Nakano 1981), the interests of macro-political regulation (Friedman 1982)—converged to confirm the family farmer as the privileged agricultural partner of the large agroindustrial firms and co-operatives (Wilkinson 1986). In the Brazilian context, however, this thesis was identified as a viewpoint that called into question the importance of agrarian reform, and the dominant

[10] This interpretation is controversial. According to Caramano (1997), the female population is larger in the major northeastern cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, whereas in the smaller cities with less than 30,000 they make up less than the male population. Of the 1,502 small towns in the region, 55 per cent have more men than women, whereas the opposite is the case in the larger cities.

position was that the small farmer integrated into agroindustry was an exception among the majority of small producers ground down by large landholders.

The importance of the technologically more advanced small farmer grew into the 1990s, on the basis of analyses that identified the prevalence of predominantly family farming in the major industrialized countries (Veiga 1991; Abramovay 1992; Guivant 1992). Politically, there was an approximation between activities specific to the promotion and management of the settlement areas, and policies directed more generally to family farming (Guivant 1999a).

The concept of family farming was incorporated by all the forces supporting agrarian reform (the Church, MST,[11] PT, NGOs and government). The same was true for the rural women's movements, which emerged in the 1970s, and 1980s (analysed in the following section).

The vision of Brazilian society as still in transition to a mass popular consumer economy underlies much of the defence of agriculture based on family farming. This view received partial confirmation during economic stabilization, which followed the *Plan Real* of 1994, when demand for basic foodstuffs exploded, especially for meat and dairy products (Wilkinson 1999). The participation of family farming in the expansion of these commodities, however, is increasingly marginal in Brazil, given their relocation to the centre-west where only the elite type of family farmer, in the style of the American mid-west, has a chance of competing due to the liberalization of these markets.

On the other hand, the family farm has acquired a renewed importance in the "quality" markets, organic produce, and activities related to agro- and eco-tourism (Guivant 1999b, 2000). Pluriactivity (or activities other than strict farming) is another key component of this new vision of family farming and the rural space (Graziano da Silva and del Grossi 1997;[12] Teixeira 1997; Carneiro 1997; Alentejano 1997). Through these markets, family farming assumes strong cultural overtones.

The family content of production was progressively diminished in the commodity modernization model, as can be seen in the expression "owner-operator". In a mechanized monocultural crop production system, there is little scope for employing all family members, who are therefore forced to look for non-agricultural and often non-rural occupations. At the same time, diversified crop production systems, which have been a traditional advantage of

[11] The MST has a preference for collective settlements, where the physical, productive and domestic spaces are the domain and responsibility of all the settlers. The means of production are acquired and the work is distributed also in collective way. This proposal, however, has shown limited results. There is a lot of resistance to collective settlements, which correspond to 5.38 per cent of the total settlements (83.59 per cent are individually exploited and 8.03 per cent involve mixed exploitations—Ministry of Agrarian Reform and Development 1996). The acknowledgement of this situation has stimulated the MST to think of new physical designs for the settlements, with a combination of individual allotments with houses located nearer each other to enable greater interaction and unity among settlers. This proposal is already underway in some states (Mato Grosso do Sul, Mato Grosso, Rondônia and Goias). The challenge is to convince settlers that this distribution might be better, since once they get their individual allotment, they normally prefer to maintain their individuality and distance from collective activities.

[12] The national research project Rurbano directed by Graziano da Silva using data from the Pesquisa Nacional por Amostras de Domicílios (PNAD) has produced a large number of studies throughout the country on the dynamic of non-agricultural activities in the countryside.

family farming, are replaced by single crops and the concomitant advantages of scale that favour the larger producers. In this context, although these units can still be referred to as family farms to the extent that remuneration is basically seen as income rather than profit and wage labour is absent, they share little in common with the family farm that is the object of agrarian reform and PRONAF proposals.

The Brazilian family farm is currently in a race against time, resisting the exclusionary effects of commodity market reorganization and adapting to the new emerging markets, which, however, are still underdeveloped and demanding in new skills. The future of agrarian reform is also beginning to be analysed in this light.

Agrarian reform policies changed radically in the second Cardoso government (1998-2002). Fiscal pressures on the programme itself (sunk costs amounting to $4 billion and rescheduling of the Programa de Crédito Especial para a Reforma Agrária, or PROCERA, credit line reaching $450 million), the interest in demobilizing the MST movement, and the impossibility of administering a reformed area of more than 2 million people increasing at a rate of 70,000 families per year, were all responsible for the adoption of a series of new policies whose aim was the speedy integration of the reformed sector into the family farming sector as a whole.

A new agrarian reform strategy was initiated with the backing of the World Bank, which was also an active participant in its elaboration. The identification of demands for settlements was to be made in a decentralized form by State and Municipal Councils for Sustainable Development. Litigious expropriations were to be replaced by negotiation with landowners, and new forms of individual access to land were tried through programmes inspired by the World Bank (land certificates, land bank). In turn, new settlements, with the exception of cases of conflict resolution, were to be defined on the basis of "explicit agreements by previously selected beneficiaries as to the price of the land and the conditions of the natural resources in the property" (INCRA 1999). The PROCERA credit was reduced to around $3,000, half of which would be used for infrastructural investment (water, roads, energy) and the other half for housing and the commencement of productive activities. This latter half would be added to the price of the land, which would be paid off on the same terms as the Land Bank Programme (20 years with three years grace before initiating payments and interest at 6 per cent a year). The most radical of all the changes, however, related to the land titles which would be conceded immediately after the topographical demarcation, and lead to the rapid reintegration of those settled in the broader family farming sector. It should be remembered that until 2000, legislation and operational procedures virtually excluded the handing over of land titles, and the settlements remained permanently under the tutelage of INCRA.

The MST did not remain passive in the face of this reaction by the government, and organized demonstrations and occupation of government buildings in various states and in the capital, Brasilia, which led on occasion to violent confrontations. On the other hand, there has been a coming together of the government and CONTAG, which is participating in the National Council on Agrarian Development. CONTAG, which has been affiliated with CUT since 1995,

maintains agrarian reform as a strategic objective but is more involved in the daily demands of small farmers and rural workers. The MST has managed progressively to position itself in the eyes of public opinion as the principal defender of agrarian reform, adopting a critical and less conciliatory stance with regard to the government, which has not, however, excluded negotiation. Mutual dissent between the MST and CONTAG keeps both organizations in a state of conflict. CONTAG criticizes the radical positions of the MST, and the latter characterizes CONTAG as collaborationist. The increasingly open conflict between the MST and the government has made repeated headlines in the national media. It is still not clear how the MST will redefine its political position nor what will be the effect of this government offensive on the support it has received from important sections of public opinion and on the political alliances it had managed to forge.

## Rural Women's Rights

The organization of rural women emerged alongside the rural social movement demanding land, especially in the south, in the early 1970s. Both CUT and CONTAG began to mobilize rural women for welfare and labour rights already conceded to urban workers. The Church, for its part, began to incorporate issues directly related to the situation of women workers.

The Conselho Eclesial de Base (CEBs) were created as groups for reflection, bringing together a number of families (generally around five) every two weeks, to discuss texts produced in the diocese or the parish in the form of didactic material to guide reflections on daily life. In the context of discussions on more general issues related to the family, the position of women was also raised. Although the Church encouraged the participation of women in extra-domestic activities, these generally represented an extension of women's traditional activities (catechists, church activists, liturgy groups, participants in church services) with little effective participation in decision making. Both in its documents and activities, the Church tended to adopt a discourse which left little room for discussion of power asymmetries in the family or questions of gender, and was also resistant to incorporating issues relating to women's health (family planning and abortion) into the activities of the CPTs (Navarro 1996; Daboit 1996). But this restrictive channelling of activities did not prevent the Church from raising the need for rural women to participate in the rural unions. Within each regional CPT, which worked closely with the MST, women's groups were formed to discuss questions such as access to land on a family basis, the family structure and issues relating to agricultural production (Stephen 1996).

As was mentioned in the introduction, the key period in the struggle and national mobilization for Brazilian rural women's social and labour rights coincided with the reform of the Constitution in 1988, which guaranteed equality between rural and urban men and women with respect to labour legislation and social rights. A number of regional meetings were promoted by rural women's organizations, which culminated in a national rally of some 12,000 women who went to Brasilia to exert pressure on the Constituent Congress.

In parallel and as a response to the increasing pressure of the urban feminist movement—which grew significantly in the 1980s and became one of the most expressive in Latin America (Guivant 1987; Alvarez 1990)—important initiatives were taken at the government level, such as the signing of the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the creation of the Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher (CNDM). Initiatives for rural women included: (i) the creation of an Action Programme for Rural Women within the Ministry of Agriculture; (ii) the creation of a Commission in Support of Rural Women Workers within the Ministry for Agrarian Reform; and (iii) the organization by the Ministry of Agriculture of the First National Congress of Women Workers.

For the first time, in the 1988 Constitution, it was stipulated that the rights possessed by urban workers should be extended to rural women, permanent and temporary workers, farmers and unpaid family workers. These rights included 120 days for maternity leave. The rural woman worker, who could only receive a widow's pension if her husband had been receiving a retirement pension or when she turned 70, now had access to such rights at 55 or after 30 years of work. Another important gain was included in Article 189, which stated that "the title of ownership and the concession of use rights was to be conferred on the man and the woman or on both independently of their civil state, according to the terms and the provisions of the law". This provision had been preceded by a directive of the Sarney government, instructing INCRA to choose agrarian reform beneficiaries independently of gender. The inclusion of the possibility of joint adjudication and land entitlement to couples or women with regard to land ownership did not mean, however, that government bodies implemented these rights in practice or that they established them as a goal to be achieved. According to the first census of the agrarian reform organized by INCRA in 1996, only 12.62 per cent of the beneficiaries were women.

Rural women's historic lack of basic documents has been very slow to change. A long list of documents is required to benefit from the rights of citizenship—retirement pension, maternity leave, co-entitlement—guaranteed through constitutional reform: identity card, registration number, voter's card, birth and marriage certificate, union membership card, rural workers' receipt book, INCRA receipt book, rent contract and work permit. The document that proves participation in agricultural production is the so-called producers pad, which registers farm product sales. A woman must have her name included as a participant in production if she is to benefit from her rights as a rural worker. To obtain the producer's pad, individually or jointly, the rural woman must be able to present other documents, such as identity card, registration number (CPF, or *cadastro de pessoa física*),[13] marriage certificate (in the case of a joint request), copy of the landownership certificate or rent contract (in the case of an individual request). It costs around $30 to obtain these documents, when one includes the transport costs to the urban centres where they are issued. The expense acts as disincentive for many women, who remain without documents and therefore without the rights of maternity leave and retirement pension.

[13] This is the document that identifies a person for tax purposes. The document can be solicited from the Federal Tax Office or from the post office of the Banco do Brasil.

In a survey carried out by the ANMTR in 1997, only 3 million rural women out of a total of 18.5 million had their professions recognized; the majority only had a voters' card and a birth certificate. It was calculated that in 1997 alone, some 500,000 women were not able to retire principally through lack of the required documentation. In response to this, the ANMTR took the initiative to press for a National Documentation Campaign. The PT's support was expressed in an amendment proposed by the then PT federal deputy, Marta Suplicy, which was approved within the federal budget, which gave money to the campaign: "No Rural Worker without Documentation". The MST also supported this campaign, and continues to distribute leaflets and organize courses on a national scale.

The results, however, have remained quite limited. In Rio Grande do Sul, for example, one of the states with the highest literacy rate, over 30 per cent of some 400,000 women rural workers do even not have an identity document. Recently, the state government, through the State Women's Co-ordination Center, began to organize documentation mobilizations as part of the Project for the Documentation and Valorization of Rural Women, an initiative which has still to be taken up in the rest of the country. Representatives of the bodies responsible for documentation go into the rural regions, and for four days they attend to rural women workers. In two years of campaigning, no more than 10 per cent of rural women have been attended to. In the first months of 2000, more than 8,800 documents were issued in six campaigns benefiting 5,521 women in 21 municipalities (Office of the Governor and the Women's State Co-ordination 2000).

In addition to being involved in documentation campaigns, the rural women's movements have maintained a state of alert to guarantee the regulation and maintenance of the provisions of the Constitution (Lavinas 1991). The existence of rural women without documentation is not the only preoccupation; those who have the necessary documents also face discrimination in access to credit and extension services (Nobre et al. 1998). In practice, agrarian policies still identify the man as the head of the family and the unchallenged representative of the interests of the other members of the family.

Access to maternity benefits, although included in law no. 8.861, required a regulatory decree, which was only passed in 1994 after a series of mobilizations on the part of rural women workers. This maternity benefit for rural women workers can be claimed up to 90 days after giving birth. A rural worker is eligible for this benefit if she can prove that she has worked in rural activities, although not necessarily continuously, during the 12 months prior to the request. The benefit is equal to one minimum wage during four months.

The organizations of rural women workers are currently demanding the immediate implementation of Convention 111 of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which establishes equality of opportunity and treatment in employment, and an increase in the monitoring of employers by the Labour Ministry (it is argued that only 15 per cent of rural women wage workers have a signed employment card). A further problem is that of guaranteeing that rural women are not laid off while they are benefiting from maternity leave.

Illness and retirement benefits became another focus of mobilization in 1996 in the effort to resist a government proposal to withdraw from the Constitution the principle of differentiated ages for retirement and lengths of working life for urban and rural workers. Pressure from these movements and from opposition parties, such as the PT, managed to win support for the law, guaranteeing that different treatment for rural workers would be maintained.

Struggles to guarantee these rights are at the same time implicitly struggles for rural women to see themselves as workers. The difficulties involved in such an objective can be illustrated with data from a recent analysis conducted by Melo and Sabbato (2000), on the basis of information drawn from the IBGE's Pesquisa Nacional por Amostras de Domicílios (PNAD) during the period 1993–1998. According to these researchers, 2.4 million Brazilian rural women workers do not see their farming activities as a real occupation, but as a part of their activities as housewives. Today eight out of 10 women who work in the countryside do not receive any wage payment. Even though the proportion of unpaid women workers is higher than men in almost all economic sectors, this phenomenon is highest in farming. In 1993, 27.38 per cent of men were unpaid, compared with 80.86 per cent of women, and in 1998 the figures were almost the same—27.38 per cent of men and 80.76 per cent of women. The percentage of women who declare themselves unpaid workers is therefore extremely high, indicating that they see their work as an extension of their role as mothers/wives/housekeepers. These activities are primarily developed by women and define a differentiation of the sexes in the rural world.

Melo and Sabbato note that women who work in the countryside carry out their farming activities within the context of family-based production. The majority of these unpaid workers (91.3 per cent) dedicate themselves to subsistence activities—basically horticulture, and the production of chickens and small animals—which integrate the kitchen and the backyard. A third of women occupied in the countryside work up to 10 hours a week and 11.59 per cent up to five hours. In the period from 1993 to 1998, the family situation for women remained the same: in 1998, 65 per cent were spouses, 19 per cent daughters and 13 per cent heads of family.

This study also points to the ageing and "masculinization" of the countryside, with the increasing exodus of young people because of the lack of work prospects and discrimination in inheritance practices. Fifty-two per cent of the rural population is within the 30–59 age group. The study also shows rural women's low level of schooling: 30 per cent are illiterate and 32.5 per cent have between one and three years schooling. These results coincide with those of other studies, particularly Abramovay et al. (1997). The latter study, based on research in a municipality in the western region of Santa Catarina, argues that young women tend to leave the countryside in greater proportions than young men, not necessarily due to the attraction of the urban labour market, but as a result of the precarious perspectives in the rural areas—lack of conditions for the formation of new family units—and the subordinate role they continue to play in their families of origin. From this perspective, not even a good agricultural income would necessarily reverse or slow down this migratory tendency. Intra-family relations play a key role in deciding the future of each family member.

These patterns of discrimination had already been identified by Woortman (1994), Brumer (1993) and Papma (1992) in studies of different regions in Brazil. Although weakened by lack of new lands and the declining productivity of existing lands, the *minorato* (the duty of the youngest son to take care of the parents and in compensation inherit the family plot, whereas girls are excluded) still predominates in some areas.[14] This system, however, does not exclude the remaining children from receiving other material benefits (for instance, help to buy land on the frontier).

If the number of women with joint adjudication and titling is still quite limited in the settlements, this is even more the case in regions of family farming outside the settlements, given the discriminatory inheritance practices.[15] Estimates put the figure at 1 per cent according to ANMTR data for 1997. There is also discrimination against women being placed as the principal name on the producer's pad.[16] The possibility of formal landownership for women is more viable in the agrarian reform areas precisely because the distribution of land plots implies the attribution of some kind of register or title. Within the broader family farming sector such a change in practices would not only confront family obstacles but would involve the costs of re-registering the property.

So rural women still have to confront great obstacles in their struggle for basic citizenship rights. These struggles depend on institutional changes over the long term, involving complex political negotiations and legal barriers.

## Government Policy

INCRA's mission is to expropriate and redistribute land, a process intensified in the 1990s. It is also in charge of the administrative and operational control of settlements. The first step toward being granted an allotment is the signature of the Settlement Contract, which stipulates responsibilities for both INCRA and the settler.[17] The settler gets a title of use for the concession, which grants access to specific agrarian reform benefits, such as special financial loans. INCRA is also in charge of delimiting land within the settlement and guaranteeing the necessary infrastructure for its working (electricity, water, schools, health centres, etc.). INCRA has already settled 413,616 families encompassing more than 2 million people (Schmidt et al. 1998). The IBGE Agricultural Census of 1996 shows that Brazil has 4.8 million farming units, of which

[14] Brazilian law never formally excluded women from inheritance rights.

[15] Further research is still necessary to see whether the same discriminatory inheritance tendencies are also at work in the settlements.

[16] Maria Salete Escher, one of those interviewed (Curitiba, Paraná, 8 August 2000), and a state member of the leadership of the Rural Department of CUT, recounts various problems which she had to face as a result of appearing as the principal person responsible on the producer's pad, which had been the idea of her husband, who was also a rural leader of CUT. In the first instance, she had difficulty in having her name accepted as the principal person responsible. The clerk in charge at the local council refused to accept this and only changed his attitude when his superior was called and ordered him to accept her name. Later, one of the banks where she asked for credit demanded that her husband also sign an extra clause—known as the marital clause—by which he authorized his wife to assume responsibility for the credit. Given the intransigence of the bank on this question, the husband finally signed. On another occasion, when Maria Salete requested credit at the Banco do Brasil, the bank demanded that the credit be released in the husband's name since he was the principal name on the account. In this case there was no demand that the wife also sign.

[17] The candidate for the land needs to have a complete list of identification documents.

more than 90 per cent fall into the category of family farms, with a land area of some 353 million hectares. The agrarian reform sector, therefore, currently accounts for 10 per cent of the total number of establishments in the country.

The settlements are rural spaces involving highly diverse processes and social actors, based on allotments demarcated by government bodies responsible for the land question (INCRA and the different state bodies). The situations vary greatly from state to state, with some settlements confronting quite adverse conditions for their installation, with obvious consequences for levels of production, forms of sociability and stability.

Some of the settlements were created to resolve long-standing conflicts benefiting workers who had established themselves in the area as sharecroppers or occupants (Mato Grosso, Acre and some in Rio de Janeiro). Other settlements were the result of occupations or workers' pressure in the face of sugar-factory bankruptcies (Araquara in São Paulo state, and Campos in Rio de Janeiro state), where those settled had been day-labourers or permanent workers. Settlements were also created on the basis of land occupations by populations of urban origin (Rio de Janeiro). Another type of settlement is that in which the workers, who were old occupants, were allowed to remain in the area, based on types of use-concession which combine the land issue with that of the environment (Acre).

Those demanding agrarian reform may be salaried workers, share-croppers, rubber-tappers or urban workers surviving on the basis of temporary occupations and on the margins of the formal labour market. In many cases, the settlement itself is preceded by a long period in which the would-be beneficiaries, organized by the MST, remain in encampments on the roadside near to the land that is the object of dispute.

There tends to be a long period between the registration and the final titling of the land. The governmental policy for titling the land is recent and directly related to the objectives of the new agrarian reform. To receive a title to the land means to be emancipated and therefore no longer eligible for the benefits of a settlement member, such as low interest credit, with survival now depending on the ability to deal directly with the market. Given the withdrawal of benefits involved in emancipation, the MST has maintained an oppositional policy and proposes in its place a new agrarian reform.

INCRA follows registration and selection norms that award points to candidates for the agrarian reform. Until 1988, INCRA applied different criteria to men and women when selecting candidates, but always favoured large families and continues to maintain this priority.[18] If widows, single or separated women score fewer points, so do men in these situations: that is, discrimination is not explicitly gender based.[19] As was mentioned before, according to the Constitution, a man, a woman or both members of a couple can apply for land.

[18] Score criteria confer more points for: (i) size of the family; (ii) size of family's work force; (iii) the age of the candidate; and (iv) agricultural experience.

[19] Interview with Maria de Oliveira, National Agrarian Ombudsman Secretary, Ministry of Agrarian Development (Brasília, DF, 11 August 2000).

The first document that must be filled in as part of the procedure to receive a plot is the registration form (*cadastro*). Once the candidate receives a plot he/she must sign a settlement contract. The final form is the land title. According to the officials interviewed, when a woman comes forward to register land in her name with her husband as dependent, there is a suspicion that the latter might have legal or personal problems (already married, health problems or alcoholism) to be the title holder. INCRA's interviewees pointed out that this does not happen because of prejudice.[20] If some of the officials responsible for filing the registration form do not present the alternatives for registration to the settlers, this is attributed to the presupposition that women, due to their domestic activities, do not have time to go to the bank, to the town, or to participate in meetings and training courses. Cappellin and Castro (1997:115) observed the same assumption among INCRA's officials: "The man is seen as having the power to organize and manage the plot, responsibility for controlling sources of income including those which derive from off-farm activities, in addition to the right to represent the family in contact with other institutions".

A similar situation occurs with one of the few titles which is distributed to those in the settlement—the registration form—which again does not include the woman's name. The lack of a critical posture with regard to this incentive to discrimination can be illustrated by one of the posters with which INCRA advertised the importance of the title: a reproduction of a filled-out form where there is space for only one title-holder, which is filled in with the name of the man, his ID number and tax identification number. Below this field there is a space for the dependent, filled in with the name of the wife and her ID number. The space for taxpayer identification number is left blank. Considering INCRA's campaign calling for full documentation for women, this poster reveals a double omission.

In the new agrarian reform, initially implemented in five northeastern states, until April 2001, little could be assessed about the possibilities of its granting joint titles. Unlike the situation in other countries (Razavi 1999; World Bank 2000), the World Bank, at the time of this research, was not backing a women's joint titling policy. INCRA documents about this programme also fail to mention anything about women, as they focus on benefiting family farming. Likewise, in the restructuring of technical assistance given to settlements—part of an internal restructuring of INCRA itself—nothing regarding the inclusion of women settlers is expressed or discussed.

The underlying idea on the privilege of the husband as the main holder was not considered by the interviewees from INCRA necessarily as discrimination, since it should not affect women's situation in case of separation, divorce or death, because the rights of married women are considered to be already guaranteed in the Civil Code.[21] According to this code, the property acquired during marriage or concubinage should legally belong jointly to the couple (except for

[20] Interviews with Division Head of the INCRA settlements, Rio Grande do Sul (Porto Alegre, 6 July 2000), Mato Grosso (Cuiabá, 12 July 2000) and Santa Catarina (Florianópolis, 5 June 2000).

[21] At the same time as the reform of the Constitution, the Civil Code, dating from 1916, was also subject to revision, determining equal rights and duties for couples, extending the rights of women and eliminating most of the discriminatory clauses. In 1962, the Statute of the Married Woman attenuated the superiority of men as heads of the family and the definition of married women as relatively incapable. In 1977, with the approval of the divorce law, more articles were modified.

property inherited by either spouse). In case of the death of one member of the couple, 50 per cent remains with the other member. In the case of the other 50 per cent, the children are the first in the line of succession, followed by parents of the dead person and finally the other member.

But the situation in the case of women in the settlements is not so simple. Women, who are not included in the Settlement Contract—which usually coincides with having no documents—have no access to credit, nor is their signature necessary when their husband requests a bank loan. On the basis of a broad study of the settlements, Rua and Abramovay (2000:201) explain that

> all the benefits of the agrarian reform policy are linked not to the individual beneficiary but to the plot of land identified with the titular. Legally, there is only one relationship, that between INCRA and the principal signatory to the land. As a dependent on the male registration form, the women does not even sign the terms of agreement in the case of credit assumed by the man, and has no authority, therefore, over the terms of credit commitment.

The ITESP Foundation (Instituto de Terras do Estado de São Paulo), the agency that plans and executes agrarian and agriculture policies for occupied government lands in that state, and deals with 123 settlements with 8,000 families, has shown more initiative toward settled women than INCRA. With the support of ITESP, women have already organized three state-level meetings of settled women. These meetings have called for an improvement of living condition in the settlements (ITESP 2000). The most recent brought together 330 settlement women in 2000. ITESP, understanding the need to implement actions to include women and their children in the decision-making process of the settlements, has set down measures to that effect in its guidelines to orient the work of its technicians.

The way these diverse legal procedures adopted by INCRA discriminate against women has recently been recognized by the INCRA leadership as a problem to be confronted and the Ministry for Agrarian Development (MDA) has begun to show an increased sensibility to gender issues. The minister has delegated the organization of INCRA's women functionaries to his special advisor, Lenita Norman, in order to open up the internal discussion about gender issues.[22] Along similar lines, but not directly connected to the above, a technical co-operation agreement was signed with FAO in June 2000 to survey discrimination and other gender-related problems involving women in settlements, so that gender-based policies and strategies might be formulated.[23] Also worth mentioning is the creation of special credit lines for women within the PROCERA, in response to "The Cry from the Land" (Grito da Terra, 1998), a

[22] According to Lenita Norman, in 1999 she started the organization of women officials working in the INCRA headquarters in Brasilia, aiming to create a better work environment (for example, demanding that the INCRA building improve its restaurant, open a beauty salon, collect used paper for recycling) but without any specifically feminist orientation. The Minister for Agrarian Development, Raul Jungmann, requested the association to stop dealing with minor questions and concern itself with political and strategic issues as a way of institutionalizing a gender perspective into INCRA's internal activities and into the settlements. At the time of the interview, Lenita was looking for advice on how to reorient her activities (Interview in Brasília, DF, 17 July 2000).

[23] Programme co-ordinated by Maria Alice Alves, INCRA (interview with Maria Alice Alves, Brasilia, DF, 17 July 2000).

CONTAG-organized mobilization (Nobre 1998). At the time of writing, though, no data are available to assess the scope of this measure.

## The Landless Workers Movement

As mentioned earlier, since the emergence of the MST women have played an important role in mobilizations, land invasions and encampments. Especially in the case of land occupations, women tend to assume organizational tasks, and in some cases they are more present in the encampments, while the men look for alternatives sources of income for the family. Various case studies have analysed how after the settlement has been won and set up, women's participation in general decisions and in the internal organization of the settlement tends to decline, and they return to their traditional roles (Gohn 1998; IICA and INCRA 1997; Lechat 1996; Capellini and Castro 1997; Pereira et al. 1996).[24]

Women leaders have emerged in the MST and assumed a dominant position in regional and national meetings of the movement, and, more recently, have raised the need for a change in gender relations in the settlements themselves. Initiation of these leaders into political participation has not always been planned or desired.[25] According to the accounts of those interviewed, it was especially between such meetings that the women exchanged ideas and shared experiences ("informal meetings where the women strengthened their resolve, let off steam on the problems of the movement, the question of children, etc."). In this way, they began to get together "in the backstage of the movement" and started to demand discussions on gender issues. The leaders of the movement recommended that they get in touch with the autonomous Movements of Rural Women to deal with questions specific to women, such as the documentation campaign.

Gradually women leaders assumed internal legitimacy and in 1996, the National Council of Landless Women (Stephen 1996) was created within the National Committee.[26] In 1998 the council became the National Gender Collective and was made up of three members (two women and one man). The collective did not constitute a separate sector within the MST

[24] Itelvina Masioli (interviewed in Cuiabá, Mato Gosso state, 13 July 2000) mentioned that "in the settlement the pressure of work returns. ... But women suffer more because they have acquired a new level of consciousness in the encampment phase".

[25] The entry into political activities was described as an "accident" by Nina (interviewed in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, 6 July 2000), one of the national leaders of the MST:

> Between 1988 and 1991 I stayed in an encampment...alone. I suffered a lot from hunger and repression. There were 800 families struggling for the occupation. I was involved in the encampment from the beginning and stayed with a group of religious women. This gave credibility to the idea that I was not 'after a man'. These women were there on the basis of their religion. From the beginning, I was part of the leadership, which happened partly by chance. At the time of the occupation, the police had set up a blockade of trucks, and I managed to get through and ring for the leadership of the movement in the next town. They sent me back with instructions. I managed to get through again and passed on the instructions. From then on I was identified as a leader, in spite of myself. I was the only woman in the leadership of the settlement, even though I was basically doing secretarial work and organizing the women. But I held back in the case of outside negotiations because of fear, and the criticisms and jealousies of the other women. If you participate alongside men you are looked down on. It was a big internal struggle to accept this type of exposure. And for women it is difficult to speak in public. They are used to speaking at home but not outside.

[26] This is the highest body of the organization, which meets three times a year.

structure, but rather, was supposed to be a vector cutting across diverse areas of the movement's activities. Although the MST does not adopt a policy of quotas, women's participation in leadership structures has increased. In 2001, the National Committee had nine women out of a total of 21 members. In 1999, a 50 per cent participation of women was set as an objective of the movement to exert pressure on state-level co-ordination which did not send women representatives to the meetings, and also so that the Grassroots Nucleus in the settlements should be made up of a male and a women co-ordinator.

The main tasks of the National Gender Collective were to discuss ways to expand women's participation in an egalitarian fashion with a view to changing gender relations in the movement and in the rural way of life, and to create and promote new values. These included solidarity, and aesthetic and lifestyle values, which extended from lessening dependence on agrochemicals to creating pleasant spaces for the development of daily activities and meetings.[27]

One of the goals of the National Gender Collective is to create gender collectives at the state and settlement levels to organize different activities that stimulate the discussion of gender issues, among both women and men. For example, the state commission of the MST at Rio Grande do Sul organized three-week-long couples meetings in that state in 2000, with leaders from all over the state, to debate gender relations. In 100 of the 150 settlements in that state, meetings have also been arranged with couples and young people to help overcome the disintegration of the bonds that once held encampments together. At these meetings, participants discuss the problems of individualism, consumerism and lack of solidarity, which are beginning to assume importance in the day-to-day life of the settlement. These meetings also offer an opportunity for couples to deal with the challenge of power relations in the family. The leadership, however, is careful not to provoke conflicts that cannot be solved or to challenge the family structure.

Those interviewed agree that the process of change is very slow and that the goals proposed by the Gender Collective are far from being realized. As Nina, an interviewee, affirmed, "even more difficult than the question of the land is that of dealing with men". To this could also be added the difficulty of advances in public practices, in spite of the initiative mentioned above. Women leaders in the MST have to confront two types of discrimination. One comes from women in the movement who do not easily accept that other women participate politically either inside or outside the settlements. This criticism emerges in the form of censure, jealousies and gossip about the honesty and faithfulness of the leaders. The other comes from the male colleagues within the movement, including some members of the National Leadership, who reject the relevance of discussing gender issues.[28]

[27] Interview with Nina (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, 6 July 2000), member of the collective.

[28] Discrimination against women leaders coincides with the observation of both the INCRA President, Orlando Muniz (interview in Brasilia, 9 August 200) and staff of ITESP (interview in São Paulo, 31 July 2000) on the lack of participation of women leaders in meetings on the negotiation of general questions facing the movement, contrasted with a greater presence when the issues under discussion were those traditionally related to women, such as education and health.

To these problems should be added the difficulties of getting women in the settlements involved in activities other than those which are an extension of their traditional roles, and of getting all members of a settlement community to attend scheduled meetings that address relations between men and women. In general, it is women who assume responsibility for organizing children's activities, whether in encampments, settlements or during meetings. The advances achieved in this area, however, are not to be dismissed. One proposal is to set up *cirandas* (creativity-oriented nurseries as an alternative to simply "minding the children") at events, courses and in the settlements themselves, so that children can be better taken care of while their mothers are free to take part in non-domestic activities. For these educational initiatives and for the work it is doing with 110,000 children in 1,000 settlements, the MST has been awarded a prize by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as various national prizes.

The tensions between advances and resistances on the gender issue are very generalized. Teixera et al. (1994), for instance, observed that although there are important advances in equity with regard to the economic returns for work undertaken, this did not mean that the gender division of labour was being challenged, or that the greater or exclusive responsibility of women for domestic work was being called into question. The same team of researchers also studied settlements in the northeast, where the situation was very different and where there was little valorization of women's work. This resulted in a greater economic dependence of women and their limited participation in public arenas, especially regarding decisions to be taken in the settlements and on political issues.

Due to the slow incorporation of the debate on the rights of settled women by the MST, it was only in 2000 that the first document detailing guidelines for a didactic orientation to the political formation of women was published. This document, *Landless Women*, compiled by the MST's National Gender Collective, can be considered the movement's official proposal for gender-related issues. In May 2000, the document was distributed to state leaderships, after being discussed by around 100 leaders (including 30 men) from different regions in the seminar on Building New Gender Relations, organized in São Paulo.[29]

The proposed activities in the above-mentioned document are divided up into eight meetings, to be held once a month. The topics are: women and class struggle; gender relations; educating without discriminating; values; culture and leisure in settlements and encampments; women and health; women and the construction of a popular project; and women and agrarian reform. All these meetings, according to the descriptions in the document, are to be opened by rites, as is customary with all activities of the movement (congresses, meetings, assemblies, demonstrations and courses). These rites, which serve to reinforce the ideological formation of members, involve acting, dancing and singing songs—written for the movement and distributed on compact discs (CDs), including an anthem—the parading of banners and the wearing of shirts with the movement's emblem.

[29] Phone interview with Ivone (23 August 2000), one of the three women out of 21 members of the state leadership of the MST in the state of Santa Catarina.

The debate in each session addresses the gender issue within capitalist society (defined as a set of social and cultural attributes differentiating men from women) and proposes new gender relations involving a different division of work and an increased participation of women in co-ordination activities within occupations, encampments and/or settlements, in the technical orientation of production, in co-operatives, and in party and trade union activities. The co-ordination committee of the encampments and settlements would expect to have 50 per cent women's representation. As far as productive activities are concerned, women are expected not only to have their work recognized but also to intensify their participation in planning, execution and training activities. The debate also acknowledges that some behaviour may be different between men and women but emphasizes the importance of equality within differences, especially within the family structure.

As for the health issue, the document focuses on orienting settled women to develop a political stance on the limits of the country's existing health system. More specific issues regarding women's health, or topics such as abortion, sexuality and domestic violence are not addressed. This silence—which can be attributed to the limits directly and indirectly imposed by alliances with the church, especially through the work of the CPT—hides serious problems that may be affecting settled women. For example, one interviewee mentioned a significant incidence of depression among women in the settlements, which, in part, was attributed to the fact that "women are the ones who suffer the most in a rural environment. They are the ones who care for the sick, who are responsible for education and also for telling their children they can't afford an exercise book for school. Add to this the lack of leisure. The most a woman can do is to go to town. Sex questions are also a cause for depression". According to the same interviewee, the movement also lacks a defined strategy for coping with health problems in the settlements, although she sees the government as the principal culprit for the lack of health services in rural areas.

The demand for joint titles is mentioned in the document, but this theme is not emphasized and is not articulated with more general political questions or those dealing with relations within the movement:

> In the struggle for the land, in occupations and mobilizations, the whole family takes part and therefore, the conquest of the land is an achievement of the family. It is just, therefore, that when INCRA carries out the registration, this should be done in the name of both the man and the woman. The same holds true for financial projects. It is very important that they be discussed by all the working members of the family, and that it be signed by both the man and the woman, since all will have to organize, work and pay when the repayment is due (MST 2000a:58).

As a general characterization, this document oscillates between the politicization of feminist issues and the attempt to boost women's self-esteem. The result, however, is that problems regarded as specifically related to women only seem to gain value when placed within broader economic and political struggles, and as demands on the state. Also, 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.

Problems faced by single women, widows or separated women in settlements, or in gaining access to land, for example, are not considered. The rights of women outside the family unit are not addressed, and the framework of family farming is the context within which women's demands are formulated.

Given the status attributed to women's issues, and the discrimination and obstacles for discussing power relations between men and women in the various spheres of the movement, it is not surprising that the general political discourse of MST is not permeated by a gender perspective and that it lacks references to the specific demands of settled women. This can be seen in the brochure, *Agrarian Reform: For a Brazil without Large Land Holdings* (MST 2000b), prepared for the Fourth National Congress of the MST, which took place in Brasilia in August 2000. Although sketches and posters reproduced in this publication focus on women, in the text written by several of the male leaders (56 pages) there is only a brief mention of women's participation in the organization of base units in the settlements.[30] The specific demands of women are not mentioned, and the discourse does not integrate gender-related issues.

The relevance of women's land rights in agrarian reform was discussed in the survey carried out by Pereira et al. (1996) for FAO and INCRA on the relations between men and women in settlements in the Pontal de Paranapanema, São Paulo (some of which have existed for more than 15 years since the initial invasion). The researchers demonstrated how the lack of a title in the name of women affected their lives, particularly those who became widowed, separated or were abandoned, and remained in the allotment. They had to go through a difficult period until their situation was regularized, with the passing of the title to their names. Pereira et al. (1996) noted that the issue of land titles was presented as a serious problem by women in a meeting of the Women's Association in one of the settlements, because there had been various cases of women and children being expelled from the allotments by their husbands who argued that the land was theirs. The women argued that the allotment should be in the name of those who were responsible for the children.

In relation to the problems that arise in the case of separation, Rua and Abramovay (2000) note that the first demand of the women is for the right to remain on the plot with their children since, they argue, they also participated in the struggle for the land. Those interviewed considered that the women and children would be in a difficult situation if they left their land, since the husband would not have an income to pay a pension for the children. The alternative of dividing up the lot is problematic since people in the settlements only have the right of possession, not the legal ownership of the land, and so it cannot be included in the normal division of belongings. In addition, given the size of these plots, any division would make production unviable.

[30] The reference is the following: "It should be a norm that every unit has a male and women co-ordinator. The figure of vice co-ordinator is abolished. So the co-ordination of the settlement will be carried out by the male and female co-ordinators of base units" (MST 2000b).

Lack of pressure exerted by the women in the settlements on the leadership can reinforce the exclusion of these questions on the MST's agenda. In addition to the strong patriarchal structure—which is also reproduced by the women—and in spite of the questionings within the movement itself, other factors are responsible for marginalizing the issue of land rights. Rua and Abramovay (2000:201) provide important information on the advantages of not having their names on the register from the perspective of the women themselves: "In the case of the death of the spouse, for example, the fact that the woman is the dependent means that she is spared all the costs of operational credit, which are written off. This would not be the case if the woman had co-entitlement." Another factor that may attenuate these demands is the general improvement in the living conditions of the families in settlements. Although the economic performance of the settlements has been the subject of considerable polemic, a survey conducted by Guanziroli and published in 1994 calculated average family income as 3.7 minimum wages (Romeiro et al. 1994; Medeiros and Leite 1999).

In synthesis, among the general demands of the MST, no reference to women's specific rights is to be found, nor does the political discourse integrate a gender perspective. Only recently have some activities, geared toward transforming gender relations in the settlements, been initiated as part of the activities of collectives. These initiatives must overcome diverse forms of resistance: the resistance of women to participate; the resistance of men to allow their women to participate, and the resistance of both to the existence a non-sexist division of productive or political/social work.

Nonetheless, the participation of women in the productive sector, taking over activities that are not an extension of their traditional roles, may permit them to gain positions of equality and challenge both the opposition and the rhythm with which gender issues are being introduced into the movement. According to the research by Pereira et al. (1996), in settlements in Rio Grande do Sul it is possible to observe the process through which the work of women ceases to be considered "complementary" and is identified as both productive and profitable. In this sense, significant advances can be observed in terms of equal economic return for work done. The authors, however, are cautious in concluding that this recognition necessarily implies a questioning of the gender division of work or of the greater and even exclusive responsibility of women in the case of housework. This research was also carried out in the northeast, where the low prestige of women's work was observed. This translates into a greater economic dependence of women and a more limited participation in public activities—the decisions and leadership with regard to activities to be carried out in the settlements and in political initiatives more generally.

In the past few years, it is possible that this situation has been changing. The number of women presidents in co-operatives is noteworthy. The activities of these co-operatives are varied, many dedicated to adding value to farming activities through agroindustrial processing of crops and the diversification of production. According to data compiled by the Confederação Nacional das Cooperativas da Reforma Agrária Brasileira, or CONCRAB (São Paulo head office), in 1996 there were 55 agroindustries concentrated in the south and the northeast. In 1997 and 1998, 56

more co-operatives were at different stages of construction or negotiation. In Pernambuco, for example, of the 20 existing productive co-operatives, eight are headed by women (Pasquetti 2000). In the state of São Paulo, the Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária Padre Jósimo Tavares (COOPAJOTA)—comprising 17 families, with a total of 86 people involved in horticulture, part of it organic—has twice been headed by women. One of the women, now a prominent national leader, also headed the Central Office of São Paulo Settlers Co-operatives (Pavan 2000). The 27-year-old current president, Maria José, has been in office for two years and is a member of CONCRAB's finance committee. She represents a new generation within MST: single and having lived in occupation camps since the age of 14 with her family, she studied business administration at a University in Lins, São Paulo (she was granted a scholarship by the CPT) and is now planning to go to graduate school.[31]

These examples in São Paulo may well be an exception. According to the analysis of Bergamasco and Ferrante (1998), individual production is completely dominant in the settlements of this state, and women have little participation in the productive activity of the allotments. For many it is a weekend activity. Also, for Bergamasco and Ferrante, in some situations women assume wage occupations as a way of escaping more or less hidden forms of gender violence or of avoiding work which is not given its due recognition.

But these observations do not necessarily exclude the relevance of the cases mentioned, or of other situations that may be occurring in other states. Although more data are needed to evaluate the level and quality of women's participation in co-operatives and in productive activities in agrarian reform settlements, it is clear that there are tensions between the creativity and initiatives of settled women to overcome discrimination, and the limited attention paid to gender perspectives in the debates, documents and practices of the MST. According to Martins (2000), "a good part of its allegedly alternative project is lost in the ideological reductionism which cancels out what is actually a wealth of alternative possibilities in its grassroots experience". Although Martins does not refer to the gender issue—without doubt a limitation in the author's approach—the argument can be extended to understanding the difficulties faced by women leaders and settled women in the construction of an egalitarian space within the MST where women's specific demands or the inclusion of a gender perspective into the political discourse can be formulated. The questions raised by the feminist movement in the 1970s and 1980s, regarding the resistance of left-wing parties to adopting this perspective as a priority rather than a minor goal secondary to class struggle, still have no echo in the MST. It can be observed, however, that in the agrarian reform settlements—and possibly not limited to those controlled by the MST, though no data is available in this case—some examples of the productive insertion of women, whether within or outside settlements, may lead to the consolidation of a women's empowerment process.

[31] Phone interview with Maria José, 30 August 2000.

## Union Organizations

Created in 1963, CONTAG brought together different rural sectors and union organizations around demands for the implementation of workers rights and the agrarian reform (Medeiros 2000). CONTAG currently groups together 9 million unionized workers from 3,670 trade unions (Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura, or FETAGs) in 25 states.[32] CONTAG members include temporary or permanent rural workers, farmers in varied family economy regimes (small farm owners, renters, and sharecroppers) landless workers or those about to be granted an allotment.

The First National Seminar of Rural Women, organized by CONTAG, took place in July 1998 in Brasilia with 168 participants (146 women and 22 men) from 18 states. The objectives of this seminar were initially formulated at the Fourth National Congress of Rural Workers, organized by CONTAG in May 1985, which included many demands specific to rural women in its final resolutions. The National Council of Women's Rights contributed actively to the organization of the first seminar and to publicizing its results, which were intended to influence the debates on constitutional reform. The orientation of the seminar was to stimulate the organization of women, not by creating a parallel movement, but by creating spaces within rural trade unions so that "rural women, historically discriminated and isolated, could express, inform and update themselves to participate in the debate on the problems that affect them as class and women" (CNDM 1988).

Parallel to the struggles of rural women within CONTAG, their problems and rights were also being discussed along with those of women urban workers at CUT. In 1986, the National Commission on the Woman Worker was created at the Second CONCUT (CUT's National Congress). This commission was attached at national, state and regional levels to the Secretariat for Trade Union Policy. CUT began offering courses for women on trade union formation and launched the "Nurseries for All" national campaign.

In 1988, the CUT's First National Meeting on the Woman Worker brought together representatives of several sectors and states. This meeting discussed and formulated a plan of action for women. The plan, which was presented and approved at the Third CONCUT, included the creation of the National Day of Struggle for Nurseries on 12 October, the discussion of abortion and the formulation of strategies to fight all kinds of discrimination against women in the workplace and society.[33] At the Second National Meeting on the Woman Worker in 1991, the first discussions on affirmative action, such as the adoption of participation quotas for women at management level and equal pay for equal work, were initiated. The quota of 30 per cent for women's participation in leadership positions was approved at the Sixth National Plenary (1993), along with the decision to fight for discriminalization and legalization of abortion[34]—an issue in relation to which the MST has no public position.

[32] For more information, see the CONTAG website, www.contag.org.br.
[33] For more information, see the CUT website, www.cut.org.br.
[34] The PT was one of the first organizations, back in 1991, to institute a 30 per cent quota system for women candidates, guaranteeing women's participation at national, state and municipal levels. This quota can be enlarged depending

The progress achieved in the discussions on different gender issues within CUT is reflected in the resolutions of the Seventh National Plenary of 1995, when the campaign "Citizenship: Equal Opportunities in Life, Work and in the Trade Union" was launched. The priorities for 1997–2000 were: (i) valorization of women's work, professional training in the context of productive restructuring and equal pay; and (ii) union organization of women in CUT: structuring of the National Commission on Women Workers, State Commissions on Women Workers, and the organization of women in the different branches of activity.

At the Fifth CONTAG Congress in 1990, the National Commission on the Woman Worker was made official and became attached to the Secretariat for Trade Union Formation and Organization, with a national co-ordination and a voice and vote in the deliberative council of CONTAG (see CONTAG's statute and internal regulations, www.contag.org.br).[35] Each state was to have its State Commission on the Rural Woman Worker, whose co-ordinator would be a member of the National Commission. Also, for the first time, women were included as deputies in the National Leadership.

CONTAG joined CUT at the Sixth CONTAG Congress in 1995. The emergence of social movements such as the MST and the National Department of Rural Workers of CUT, forced CONTAG to adopt a more critical position in regard to government policies for family farming and agrarian reform. As it became a CUT affiliate, CONTAG incorporated land occupations into its strategies as a means to consolidate the agrarian reform process (CUT and CONTAG 1999). The activities carried out by CUT's internal commission on behalf of rural women were delegated to CONTAG, although this did not necessarily mean that all the demands were taken over. For example, the legalization of abortion was never included by CONTAG.

One of the things that CONTAG did adopt was the quota policy. But up to the time of writing its implementation was not without problems. In spite of the advantages a quota system can represent to ensure equal participation for rural women, there are many concerns about how male leaders of rural trade unions use quotas to employ women they think they can pressure to maintain their political control, either emotionally through sexual harassment or even through physical violence. Some denunciations have already been made in training courses, but have never reached the public.[36] There is consensus that rural women must be represented at commissions and trade unions, but the way they are to be chosen and the potential pressures they may face have not really been discussed internally (Abramovay and Castro Garcia 1998:66–69).

One of the most outstanding national leaders in CONTAG on the struggle for rural women's rights is Raimunda Celestina de Mascena, whose experience in the union reveals the various obstacles that still must be overcome in the struggle to occupy spaces not exclusively concerned

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on the number of candidates. In the election of 1996, this quota was not fulfilled, as women represented 15 to 16 per cent of candidates. Again, in the 2000 municipal election, the number of women candidates did not reach 30 per cent.

35 The Executive Council is comprised of the delegations of affiliated federations.

36 Interview with Miriam Nobre (São Paulo, 31 August 200).

with questions relating to women.[37] According to her, there are still many obstacles and much resistance to the participation of women as union representatives: "Men think that it is a risk .... the higher the position the greater the resistance you have to face."

Since not all CONTAG federations supported the affiliation with CUT, the State Commission on Rural Women was maintained in some states. This was the case in Paraná, where the local commission has promoted studies, debates and training courses on the social roles of men and women in the execution and management of activities of family production units, and of associations and the problems faced by rural women when taking part in the decision-making processes both at family and organization levels. It is also developing a campaign for documentation. This is one of the objectives defined as more political than feminist and is aimed fundamentally at engaging with women workers in family farming regimes (CEMTR/Deser 2000; CEMTR 1998).[38]

The Seventh National Congress of CONTAG in 1998 was called "The Rural Men and Women's Congress", a title that started being used in documents and in the naming of congresses and meetings. Both the proposed model of sustainable rural development and agrarian reform include as "priorities to reverse the high levels of hunger and poverty in Brazil, and implement public policies to ensure the permanence of men, women and young people on the land".[39] The inclusion of the gender issue stands out in the recent *Platform for Development and Rural Unionism in Brazil*, published by CUT and CONTAG (May 2000).

The demand for land titles in the name of the couple is included in several documents produced by CONTAG, but not always with the same emphasis. The proceedings of the First Seminar in 1988 include the main problems faced by women in the agrarian reform process, among which are identified the refusal to grant access to land titles and discrimination against widows who, as sharecroppers, wage earners and settlers, could be evicted from the land (CNDM 1988).

This demand was added to the extensive list adopted by CONTAG. In the annals of the Seventh Congress (1998), the reports and proposals of 12 Theme Commissions were added, one of which was on Gender and Procreation. Among the 47 proposals, only one (number 38) mentions that INCRA should be required to register allotments in the couple's name, rather than only in the man's. The *Rural Workers' Bulletin* published in 2000 (INCRA and MDA 2000) reminds its readers of the joint adjudication of allotments in the agrarian reform. This demand also stood out among the most important ones debated during the organization of the March of the Margaridas. Given that this was one of the most important events organized by CONTAG, aiming at the specific mobilization of rural women, we shall analyse it in some detail.

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[37] Raimunda de Mascena comes from the state of Ceará in the northeast of the country. Her parents were rural workers. Raimunda received her political training in the CEBs. She began her union involvement in the organization of women who, like her, worked on the building of small dams in emergency programmes against the drought. Women earned half the wages paid to men for the same work. Initially, the union in the region would not accept them as members, but finally ceded in 1990. Raimunda began to participate on a full-time basis in union activities with a central concern for the rights of rural women workers. Since 1992 she entered CONTAG, occupying various positions at regional, state and national levels (interview in Brasilia, 18 July 2000).

[38] Interview with Maria Salete Escher (Curitiba, Paraná, 8 August 2000).

[39] Proceedings available at www.contag.org.br.

The march, which CONTAG women leaders started organizing in 1998 as part of the Women's World March, took place on 10 August 2000 in Brasília.[40] It was named The March of the Margaridas after the assassinated president of the Lagoa Grande Rural Workers Trade Union (Paraíba), Margarida Alves, who was murdered because she confronted the interests of local sugar mill owners and big landlords. The march was organized by CUT, the Women Coconut Breakers' Movement, the northeast Rural Women's Movement, the Struggle for the Land Movement, the Brazilian Women's Union and the Rubber Tappers' National Council, the Sempre-viva Organização Feminista (SOF), the Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional (Fase), and Oxfam.

The demands of the march were presented in a 14-page document calling for the establishment of the rights of women involved in both agrarian reform and family farming. It aimed at overcoming limitations in the existing legislation and in government programmes that hindered the access of women to the social and financial benefits of rural development, and called for the end of sexist violence in rural areas, more access to agrarian reform, rural credit, educational campaigns on gender, procreation and reproductive health, together with other demands. It also denounced the fact that in 32 years of agrarian reform, only 12 per cent of women have the registration form in their name and that agricultural credit, supplied by PRONAF, was granted to only 7 per cent of women since its creation in 1996.

In addition to the specific demands of rural women, the march incorporated a broad set of more general political demands: the non-payment of Brazil's external debt and an end to the country's subordination to the IMF; the struggle against racial and ethnic discrimination; opposition to genetically modified products; environmental policies; the opening of a parliamentary investigation commission to look into irregularities and corruption in the government; and so on (CONTAG et al. 2000). The emphasis on the general political demands was a way to obtain legitimacy within CONTAG directives and to demonstrate that women are not only concerned with specific issues but also with larger problems. The diversity of topics can also be explained by the need to maintain alliances with the different organizations supporting the march. The MST was not among these. The broader confrontation and differences between these organizations also extended to the issue of rural women's organization.

Before the delegations arrived in Brasília, rallies were organized in three places: Barreiras in Bahia, bringing together delegations from the northeast; Goiânia in Goias, with delegations from Goiás, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Rondônia and Acre; and Palmas in Tocantins, with the women from Tocantins and Pará. According to the organizers, around 20,000 women gathered in Brasília on 10 August. Although daily newspapers varied in their estimations, they all agreed that this was the biggest-ever demonstration by rural women.

[40] Raimunda de Mascena was one of the main leaders of the march. This was part of an international mobilization that took place between 8 March (International Women's Day) and 17 March. The objective of the march was to intensify local, national and world actions that reinforce women's demands against poverty and sexist violence. On 17 October, world demands were presented at the United Nations. This proposal was the idea of a Canadian (Quebec) women's movement and was backed by several feminist organizations, trade unions, popular movements and NGOs.

The march received broad coverage in the media and enabled the opening of negotiations between government and the organizers of the march. At the Land Development Ministry, the organizers called for the access of women to family farming credit and to agrarian reform. At the Labour and Employment Ministry, they discussed a national campaign against work accidents caused by pesticides and a survey to assess their influence on the reproductive health of women; access of women to jobs and income-generation programmes; and professional training. The federal government quickly agreed to increase welfare rights for women working in the agricultural sector in response to the demand that a Rural Workers Union's Declaration be established as proof of the recognition of women as rural workers. It was negotiated that, in the absence of any legal impediment, the directive should be applied in certain pilot states to assess its efficacy.

The above account reveals the tensions involving the transformation of discourse and actions of broader political themes through the incorporation of a gender perspective. It also discusses the difficulties in eliminating internal discrimination and harassment through affirmative action. Summing up the evolution of the debate on gender-related issues within the trade unions, we can say that it has achieved greater importance here than it has within the MST, although it is still only one issue on a wide-ranging list of demands. At the same time, the implication of quotas for the empowerment of women rural workers has yet to be fully evaluated.

## Articulação das Instâncias de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais-Sul

The Articulação das Instâncias de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais-Sul (AIMTR-Sul) was created in 1988 after a frustrated attempt to set up a national organization of rural women in a meeting that brought together representatives of 16 states in 1986 in São Paulo. The AIMTR-Sul comprises the autonomous movements of rural women in the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo and Mato Grosso do Sul. From the beginning of its activities until 1991, AIMTR-Sul tried to formulate common demands with the several state organizations of rural workers: basically the struggles to guarantee rights. In a second stage, AIMTR-Sul took over more general political banners without forsaking the more specific ones, such as the campaign for documentation.

One of the activities developed by AIMTR-Sul was the elaboration and publication of general purpose documents and pamphlets to orient meetings, which basically have a similar structure. For example, in the pamphlet *Women Building Citizenship* (AIMTR-Sul 1996), there is a discussion on the political conjuncture, with explanations and criticism of neoliberal policies, followed by a second part explaining the struggles and rights of rural women. A third part stimulates women to occupy public spaces (within movements, parties and trade unions).

In the following part of this section we analyse the trajectory of the Movimento de Mulheres Agricultoras de Santa Catarina (MMA), which came into existence at the same time and with the same demands as the Rio Grande do Sul movement (Navarro 1996; Stephen 1996). Although the movements in the south and in the northeast stem from the struggle to occupy spaces in the

trade unions, the ones in the northeast are still more attached to the unions and to CONTAG than the ones in the south. Another difference is that those from the south mobilize a more homogeneous group of family farm women, while the ones from the northeast mobilize different categories of rural workers.

The MMA is one of the first rural women's movements in Brazil. It was launched in 1981 in Chapecó, Santa Catarina, during the electoral campaign of the Rural Workers Trade Union. A group of rural women—belonging to family farming, the dominant structure in the southern states—with connections to the progressive wing of the Catholic Church, campaigned for the increased unionization of women, which they achieved after winning the election. In 1983, 28 women defined the principles of the MMA. The first important act took place on International Women's Day, 8 March 1984, when around 500 women workers of the region gathered together. The demands at that time were for more women's representation in rural trade unions and the MST, agrarian reform, changes in the constitution and women's rights.

The diocese of Chapecó, with its history of stimulating rural women's participation in the CEBs, CPT and the Comissão Pastoral da Juventude (CPJ), had a strong participation at the beginning of the movement. The bishop of Chapecó supported the registration of women as rural workers, rather than domestic workers. The key issue was class identity, not gender discussions (Daboit 1996). Once in the trade union, women started recognizing other obstacles to their participation. They had no connections with urban feminist movements—and in fact, at the beginning, they even opposed feminism, since the Catholic Church considered it a threat to family relations, a false liberation when compared to the real causes of social oppression.

The movement grew stronger between 1985 and 1986, reaching several more municipalities in the state. Luci Choinacki, who later followed a political career in the PT (state representative in 1986 and congresswoman in 1991),[41] was one of the first MMA co-ordinators. In 1986, a commission went to Brasília to meet the ministries of agrarian reform, agriculture, social welfare, labour, education and justice, and presented them with a list of demands drawn up at an assembly of 25,000 rural women of the western region of the state (Casagrande 1991). In that same year, 30,000 women rallied in Xanxeré to press ministers to meet their demands. Events were always accompanied by religious ceremonies. In 1998, a delegation of rural women went to Brasília to meet with representatives of other rural organizations and successfully pressured congress members to approve the new Constitution.

A discussion on the nature of the movement was organized in 1990, with the participation of 7,000 women from all over the state (nine regional groups). According to Casagrande (1991), there was a great preoccupation with internal democracy, something they questioned in the case of the PT, the party with which most of these women were associated. A high turnover in office positions was part of this policy. Among the topics chosen for discussion the following stood out: sexuality and emotional relations, family planning, feminism, violence against

[41] Choinacki was the first PT and MMA candidate elected for office at the Legislative Assembly of Santa Catarina.

women, alternative medicine, discrimination against women, agricultural co-operation and the rural work of women.

In 1994, there were 800 organized groups in Santa Catarina in 100 municipalities (MMA 1994). The objectives were re-evaluated at that time and an increased focus was given to the situation of women workers with regard to family farming. As of 2000, the MMA had a state executive leadership formed by nine women, three of whom belonged to the co-ordination of the AIMTR-Sul and one to the co-ordination of ANMTR. One of the problems they faced was the low participation rate of young women, which was set within a general context of dwindling participation. They attributed this to "the economic, structural, political and situational crisis small farms are going through" (ANMTR-Brasil 1997). However, more than 50 women representatives, many from the PT, came forward to present their names as candidates for mayor and councillors in the October 2000 municipal elections.

One peculiarity of the MMA is that it focuses more than the MST and CONTAG on the treatment of issues regarding women's health and sexuality. Several brochures on sexual education were produced to orient commission debates. But just like other organizations, it keeps silent about issues such as abortion and family violence, and takes for granted that married women are the target audience. There is no reference to problems of widows, single or separated women.

The autonomous identity of the movement does not hinder alliances with other organizations, be it with the Catholic Church, the MST, the Movimento dos Afetados por Barragens (MAB), or the PT—considered the only party to give a certain space for the demands of women rural workers and rural unions.[42] Points of convergence with other organizations are possible because the MMA identifies itself as a class movement struggling for the rights of rural women as workers. The movement situates itself within the proposal of a "popular project", with references to the "struggle for changing the capitalist society into a socialist society, fairer and more egalitarian", to environmental issues, and general demands about agrarian reform and agricultural policies that are favourable to family farming (MMA 1999). It is worth noting that it does not separate women's demands from the problems that affect rural workers.

These alliances do not seem to have threatened the survival of the MMA, nor to have made the movement lose its focus on demands regarding rural women. Indeed, compared to the MST and CONTAG, MMA has advanced in issues regarded as taboo by the other organizations, indicating an effort to distance itself from the Catholic Church. It should be pointed out that the MMA, even if it does have problems bringing women to the meetings and seminars, has contributed significantly to building the identity of rural women, enabling them to have the

[42] The MMA's more active leaders have had a history in the CEBs, where the work with couples presupposes the achievement and maintenance of equality in the heart of the family. The relation with the PT can be illustrated with the case of the MMTR, from Rio Grande do Sul, where the PT has now a state governor. Elenice, ex-militant of MMTR, is now a member of the Women's State Co-ordination, where she dedicates herself to the rights of rural women. The PT government has also provided financial support to the MMTR (interview in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, 5 July 2000).

means with which to face the struggle for equality of participation within parties, trade unions and for equality of rights.

## Articulação Nacional de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais

The Articulação Nacional de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais (ANMTR) was created during the First National Meeting of Brazil's Rural Women in 1995 in Jundiaí, São Paulo state, with representatives of several regions participating.[43] The intention was to bring together both autonomous groups and those affiliated with the MST and trade unions, and give a voice to rural women, coconut breakers, fisherwomen, indigenous peoples, those affected by dams, extractive workers, wage earners, share-croppers, settled women and landless women. This level of organization became a movement fighting "for a society where all have their rights guaranteed, with agrarian reform, health, education, welfare, agricultural policies, where men and women and children are treated with equality and justice. We fight for the recuperation of women's political participation in society" (ANMTR-Brasil 2000). In the pamphlets produced by the ANMTR, there is no differentiation of problems according to kind of rural worker or region. The combination of specific demands of women rural workers with those of rural workers in general is also a characteristic in the agenda of the ANMTR.

In the last three years, ANMTR has maintained as core demands the guarantee of a full and specific policy for health at national level, geared toward the solution of women's health problems; the release of resources for the health programme to be co-ordinated by rural women; the implementation of the Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS) to its full capacity; and above all the identity card registration of rural women. Since 1997, as mentioned before, ANMTR assumed an agreement with INCRA in the campaign "No Rural Women without Documents".[44] The brochure of this campaign explains that the Title of Ownership and Concession for the Use of Land may be in the name of the man, the woman or both, regardless of their marital status. The brochure also includes a drawing of two women talking, and one says to the other: "We have to put the name of the couple, that is, the name of the man and the name of the woman as agricultural workers."

These demands, along with class demands, were reinforced in the last national meeting that took place in Goiânia (Goiás), 1–5 February 1999, which brought together around 100 participants from all over the country. Women rural workers from Chile, Argentina and Paraguay, representing the Co-ordination of Women of the Southern Cone within the Latin-American Co-ordination of Rural Organizations (CLOC), also participated.

[43] Represented organizations: Agricultural Women's Movement of Santa Catarina, Rural Women's Movement of Rio Grande do Sul, Settled Women's Movement of São Paulo, Women's Popular Movement of Paraná, Women's State Commission of the Federation of Farm Workers of Rondonia, Northeast Rural Women's Movement, Rural Women's Association of Espirito Santo, Centre for Women Workers Association of Acre, National Rural Women's Commission of CUT, Southern Roraima Small Farmers Association and the Rural Women's Movement of Sergipe.

[44] ANMTR was awarded a prize by the Swiss-based World Women Summit Foundation for this campaign and the fight for women farmer workers' rights.

Another recent event with detailed and general demands was the First National Encampment of Rural Women that took place in Brasília in March 2000. A document defending the maintenance of welfare rights, quality public health, woman's health, more investment in land and agriculture policies, and the forgiveness of rural workers' debts was presented to the president, the ministers of health, agriculture and social welfare, and the presidents of the Senate and the Federal Chamber. During the five-day meeting many debates, lectures, workshops and street manifestations were organized. The meeting mobilized around 3,200 women representing the 26 states of the country. At least one of their more general demands was promptly met by the government: the withdrawal of Bill 1.733 of 1999, which fixed a minimum one-year contribution of R$ 37.00 for every rural worker

In the document, *Public Health: A Woman's Right* (1999), aimed at orienting group debates, ANMTR includes the discussion on document registration and health within a criticism of neoliberalism, which is blamed for the exclusion of "rights for most people (human rights such as the right to work, live, eat…and the rights of citizens to retirement, health…)"—and of the Cardoso government, which is seen as aiming at the implosion of the SUS.[45] As in other documents on health published by ANMTR or by AIMTR-Sul, there are few references to birth control, and abortion is not mentioned at all. These are difficult topics to be dealt with in women's meetings. Opposition, fears and taboos deriving from a strong religious formation and an oppressive culture make it hard for these issues to be discussed openly.

The emphasis on fighting neoliberalism and on broader political issues led ANMTR to participate in events and contribute to documents which seldom, if ever, mentioned the specific rights and demands of rural women. As mentioned in the section on the MST, the ANMTR is currently more linked to the MST and PT than to CONTAG. What implications do these alliances have for the positions defended by the ANMTR? The difficulties of integrating itself while maintaining both its specificity and representativeness in mobilizations and documents of a more general nature became more explicit with the statements of some activists taking part in the Popular March for Brazil in 1990. Eighty ANMTR members who participated in the march demanded more involvement in the organization. The MST organized this march to protest against the economic model of the government. It started on 26 July, with around 1,100 participants walking 981 miles from Niterói (Rio de Janeiro) to Brasília where they arrived on 14 August. ANMTR representatives complained of the prejudice existing against women, and stated that their organization fought not only for changes in the distribution of wealth but also for a change in the relations between men and women.

These difficulties, however, are not always made explicit. In the document, *Agriculture and Food Provision* (1999), published by the MST, MAB, the Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores (MPA) and the ANMTR, there is no reference to the problems faced by women rural workers. In another, more recent document (July 2000) titled, *Stand Up: Let's Fight*, to assist the political education of rural producers and drawn up by the National Movement of Rural Workers—which brings together ANMTR, MST, CPT among other movements—nothing is said about

[45] The publication of this brochure was supported by the government through INCRA.

rural women in its 30 pages. The topics focus on agriculture, "on the project of the dominating class for agriculture", "on the enemies we must face and defeat", on immediate demands and on "how we are going to struggle". The same omission can be seen in the document, *The Concentration and Idleness of Land in the FHC Period*, published in August 2000 by a technical team of the PT leadership at the Federal Chamber in conjunction with the ANMTR, which briefly analyses recent government data on the distribution and utilization of landed properties in Brazil in a clearly critical vein (Bancada Federal do Partido dos Trabalhadores and ANMTR 2000).

This silence about gender issues, within a movement which presents itself as autonomous precisely to defend the rights of rural women, may be explained by the way political conflicts on agrarian reform—between the MST, CONTAG and the government—permeate its practices. As seen before, at the same time that the MST has radicalized its actions (increases in public building invasions) and its discourse against the government in response to the new measures for agrarian reform (bank of the land, land certificate, emancipation of settlers), CONTAG has come closer to the government, without, however, wanting to be associated with it. In this political situation, ANMTR, which had managed to keep general political differences at bay, came to be more controlled by organizations affiliated with AIMTR-Sul, which strongly supports the activities of the MST, distancing itself from CONTAG's activities to which the women's movement of the northeast are more attached. This silence also shows that within the Autonomous Movement of Women Rural Workers there are tensions between issues considered important and decisive, and ones considered secondary. In the recent radicalization of conflicts between the MST and the government, the gender perspective seems to be losing momentum and becoming a secondary issue, no longer permeating the general political discourse of movements and parties such as the PT. It may even cease to be included as a demand, as is the case in the rural unions.

## A Difficult Road to Empowerment

In spite of women's strong political participation since its beginning, and although a number of national-level women leaders have emerged from the MST, discrimination is still strong within the movement; general political issues are formulated with the exclusion of women's specific demands, and a gendered perspective has not even been incorporated into the general discourse. The most important struggles to guarantee the rights of women have taken place without strong participation of the MST—in spite of the fact that it participated in the documentation campaign. The empowerment of women is associated with egalitarian relations within the family, the settlement and the movement, but it is not associated with actions that could enable its construction in a context where issues such as class struggle and the fight for land against the government and big landlords are the main demands.

There was a different situation with CONTAG, which adopted a quota policy to fill leading positions in trade unions and in its national leadership. Rural women in high positions at the national, state and municipal levels of trade unions are facing less resistance from leadership

bodies, which have now incorporated the specific demands of rural women in the documents of the Confederation, including the right to joint titles. This advance does not imply, however, a transformation of power relations between men and women within several decision-making spheres of CONTAG.

The MMA, along with CONTAG's women leaders and peasants, played an important role in the fight for their rights and for the regulation of their activities. The work developed by the MMA has been geared toward women in family farming and, except mentioning that it is necessary, makes no reference to agrarian reform. Issues related to sexuality, professionalization, and political and union participation were included with its demands calling for civil and labour rights of women in a context of increasing autonomy in regard to the influence of the Church.

The situation with ANMTR is different and here, in the last few years, specific issues relating to rural women have given way to broader political positions, which raise the risk of diluting both the gender perspective and the struggle for the rights of rural women. This is in part due to the fact that the autonomous movements of the south, more identified with the MST than with CONTAG, have gained more control over the ANMTR. The autonomous movements of the northeast, as could be seen in the network of alliances for the March of the Margaridas, remain more attached to CONTAG.

This reveals how the demands, both for the rights of rural women and changes in gender relations within the rural movements, have come to be influenced by the existing conflicts between the MST and CONTAG, with their different policies for negotiating with the government and different models for agrarian reform.

The fight for the social and labour rights of peasant women brought together—at different levels of participation—several rural movements, which agreed that the struggle for the implementation of these rights is fundamental for allowing rural women to participate in meetings, to enjoy an active off-farm life and to have their work recognized as a profession. Nevertheless, the title or joint title issue in agrarian reform has not been given prominence. How then can we understand its inclusion in the reform of the Constitution?

Rural women's movements demanded labour and social rights for women both in family farming regimes, which are more common in the south, and for wage earners, predominant in the north and northeast. The fight for unionization as a means to guarantee these rights was one of the central issues of these movements. Agrarian reform was also raised as a demand, but in a rather unclear way. Although rural women in the south exerted significant political pressure—given their higher organizational level and capacity of mobilization—Deere and Léon (1999) give particular importance to the intervention of the Brejo Movimento de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais (MMTR), from Paraíba in the northeast, calling for the distribution of land through the agrarian reform to the women heads of families and for joint titles. This may be explained by the "Drought Widows" syndrome caused by the high rate of men leaving the rural

areas during droughts. The need to guarantee rights to the property, under these conditions, may have been one of reasons for this demand.

Another variable to be considered is the need for the Brazilian government to be coherent in terms of legislation regarding international agreements and conventions it has ratified, and in extending universal rights to women. In addition to the CNDM, in 1985 the Programme in Support of Rural Women was created by the Ministry of Agriculture. In 1986, the government formed the Commission Supporting Peasant Women within the Ministry of Agrarian Reform and Development (MIRAD), and organized the First National Peasant Women's Congress. In this sense, the observation of Alvarez (1999) is very interesting with regard to the "gender-friendly" state discourses, which were translated into national and regional policies in the Latin American countries, as could have been the case of Brazil at the time of constitutional reform. She suggested that there is a widespread adoption of the category of gender by Latin American feminist policy advocates, which facilitates feminists' access to the state. On the other hand, state bureaucrats and neoliberal development planners have instrumentalized the gender concept. This has led to the adoption of a "tergiversated, depoliticised conception of gender", minimizing the political and contested character of relations between women and men.

For the reasons stated above, at the end of the 1980s some feminists, in addition to being part of the political and economic elite of the country, also became part of the government. Within the CNDM, they began to demand women's legal rights. Given the negotiations for constitutional reform at the time, the interests of urban feminist groups and peasant women came together on this issue. This alliance may have contributed to the negotiations leading to the approval of several measures in the constitutional reform process, and even for the inclusion of the joint title option.

During the 1990s, with the growth of feminist NGOs formed by experts to aid social movements and the government, the urban feminist movements in Brazil began to face a crisis regarding the grassroots character of the organizations and models of feminist and collective groups that had spread in the 1980s (Alvarez 1990:190). Rural women's movements have maintained both their demands and their orientation to grassroots mobilization, leading to a growing separation between urban and rural women's movements. Some feminist NGOs, however, maintain regular and influential contact with women's rural movements—more with CONTAG than MST—collaborating on training activities, establishing alliances to organize events but with a greater emphasis on the inclusion of sexuality and birth control rather than on legal issues.

Two examples are SOF, based in São Paulo, and the Acrean Women and Men's Network, based in Rio Branco, Acre. The latter was created in 1988, linked to the CPT, PT and the Union of Rural Workers. It brought together various entities and NGOs to promote the organization of women in the urban periphery and in the rural areas. Initially, a men's group had been formed to work on health and union questions with men from the periphery, but this group is no longer functioning. The network is currently involved in the formation of women's commissions in the periphery and rural areas (they have four urban and eight rural groups), developing projects for

production (artisan weaving, chicken production, etc.), and giving talks and courses. The network also has a weekly radio programme where they publicize their activities and discuss a variety of issues. Diverse partnerships have been developed to develop voluntary work, especially with international NGOs and the government. Relations with the CPT have worsened because of the latter's veto on the discussion of abortion. There is frequent collaboration with the PT. The network was one of the bodies that participated in the organization of the March of the Margaridas.[46]

The SOF is an NGO created in 1963 in São Paulo by a group of doctors and lawyers to provide guidance to families and general assistance to residents in the urban periphery. From the end of the 1980s there was a change in the internal organization of the SOF, with a greater participation of feminists. In 1993, the agronomist, Miriam Nobre, joined and the SOF began activities with rural women through assistance and courses given by the MST, CONTAG and rural extension organs.

The collaboration that the SOF and the Acrean Network of Women and Men may have with the rural women's movements does not dilute their differences on issues such as abortion, sexuality, violence, birth control and the role of women in the family. It is worth dwelling further on this question. In spite of the differences between rural movements regarding their demands and the approaches they choose on gender relations, they share the same focus on the family. Women's rights must not threaten or question family unity, but must lead to a greater harmony. The tacit model of a woman is that of being married. So much so that it is difficult to find any reference to widows, single or separated women within the encampments, settlements or in family farming in their documents and pamphlets.

This unanimity is strongly rooted in the past and present influence, both direct and indirect, of progressive sectors of the Catholic Church on the movements of rural women. Most of the women leaders of the these movements have gone through a social and political socialization within the Catholic Church, in the CEBs and the CPT. This sector of the Church legitimized—despite maintaining discriminations—women's initiative to leave the reclusion of domestic activities and to start participating socially, raising their awareness of the need to demand rights as rural workers. This influence is also direct through the financial and political support that the Church continues to give rural movements, and especially the MST.

This self-evident view of family structure has been reinforced in the last few years by the consensus around family farming—in academia, and more recently in the government—as the ideal model for rural organization. The new agrarian reform programme proposes that settled families, after an initial period of special credit, start to benefit from the same policies as family farming. The 1990s saw a new consideration of the category of family farming, sometimes on the basis of old arguments in relation to the supply of basic foodstuffs, but increasingly in terms of new concepts of rural development, local and regional, and in relation to new markets both

[46] Interviews conducted with the co-ordinator of the Network, Mara Vidal, the vice co-ordinator, Rosali Scalabrini and the treasurer Amine Carvalho (Rio Branco, Acre, 14 July 2000).

agricultural (artisan, organic) and non-agricultural (services, tourism, environment), which were also seen to represent an alternative to the rural exodus of young women from the family farming sector. This fact that family farms were taken for granted obscures the power differences within the family structure, and means that policies aimed at strengthening family farming mainly benefit men, still regarded as the heads of the family.

There is no discussion, either at the level of the movements or at the level of public policies and academia—with the exception of studies on rural women—on the way the benefits obtained by men, or controlled by them, from the work of the family are distributed in the family. According to Deere and León (2001) several studies show that women in the rural areas of developing countries tend to spend more of what they earn on the family than men. The demand for individual or joint land titles may even be avoided by women leaders, given the cautiousness with which they make their demands, since they tend to avoid creating or exposing conflicts in the context of the family.

Given all these difficulties—guaranteeing and implementing social and labour rights; occupying power positions within the leading organs of the movements; stimulating the identity of rural women among women; and guaranteeing economic conditions for the survival of family farming and settlements—the issue of individual or joint land titles for women has still not received its due attention. It remains one legal issue among others and there is little evidence of strong expectations as to the benefits it might bring.

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to analyse the understanding of rural women leaders and representatives in relation to demands considered important to guarantee the rights of women in the process of agrarian reform in Brazil. It has also examined the degree to which the debate on gender relations has advanced so as to guarantee the active role of women. Among the rural movements analysed, the MST is the only one to focus its actions exclusively on agrarian reform. CONTAG and the autonomous movements call for general rights for rural workers, including those in settlements and family farming structures. However, there are few specific demands regarding rural women in the settlements. If they do receive benefits, it is because they also fit into the general rural worker category; the specificity of their situation is not taken into account.

There is no doubt that in the last decade there have been important advances, especially after the social and labour rights of peasant women were recognized in the constitutional reform. Nevertheless, both within CONTAG and the MST, women continue to face significant internal difficulties to stand as leaders and bring the discussion about gender into their movements. Movements that include rural women—and the MST to a lesser extent—have dedicated themselves to making sure that basic social and labour rights, which are often under threat, are respected and extended to rural women, encouraging them to obtain and fill in the necessary documents. Rural women, including MST women leaders, have focused on the creation of

legitimate spaces for women within the movements and the political sphere, trying to avoid manipulations and discriminations. However, to guarantee this political legitimacy, groups of women rural workers—both autonomous and within CONTAG and MST—have always tried, in spite of their differences, to push for demands for rural women maintaining, to a lesser or greater extent, constant references to more general demands for family farming and agrarian reform.

Political alliances, such as the one with the Catholic Church, and fears that more importance would be given to gender issues than to class issues, explain why demands are cautiously presented. One must also consider how these movements and the autonomous movements of rural women perceive their specific rights within the family structure. In addition, there are few demands directed to the particular situation of landless and settled women when compared with women in family farming. The MST has given minimum space for discussion of these issues and does not include them in its list of principal demands. Therefore, the slow progress on the land title and joint title issue cannot be exclusively attributed to the resistance or indifference of the spheres of the government to incorporate a gender perspective in agrarian reform. This remains an important factor, but is not the only obstacle.

This observation does not exempt the government from the responsibility of granting women access to land property, which could cease to be optional and become mandatory. The title or joint title to the land does not automatically guarantee the agency of rural women, but it certainly is an important step in that direction. The formulation of non-discriminatory policies for rural women seems to be more important in the face of the actual conjuncture of stronger confrontation between the MST and the government, whereas CONTAG maintains proximity with the government. The political space conquered by women within these movements can be used instrumentally to legitimize and reinforce more general fights rather than the reverse. Even the specificity of ANMTR seems to be threatened as it participates in mobilizations and signs documents—which do not even mention its specific demands—backing the MST and questioning the government.

The empowerment of women within agrarian reform, however, is occurring in an unpremeditated way and in parallel with demands raised by the leadership of rural movements. The influence of the active role played by women in the encampments of occupied land, as research has shown, may be diluted in the return to traditional gender relations as settlements are established, or may even generate frustrations that cannot be vented. Other opportunities may be emerging for settled women as they become increasingly involved in a variety of productive activities, whether in women's associations, participating in and even presiding over co-operatives, or working outside the settlement. These new options may well present ways for empowerment.

We should not, therefore, limit our focus to the gap between what the legislation allows and the limited number of women actually holding allotment titles; the ambiguities which may promote favourable opportunities for women's empowerment in agrarian reform must also be

recognized. These ambiguities include those in the MST between, on the one hand, the pugnacious, anti-capitalist discourse which is discriminatory regarding women's rights and an effective gender perspective, and on the other, the modernizing productive practices—which are sometimes significantly creative—which the MST has introduced in the rural environment. Within these practices, settled women are probably constructing, notwithstanding obstacles and opposition, day-to-day spaces of equality and agency. Similar processes may also be occurring in settlements outside the influence of the MST.

These potentialities, together with the implementation of the rights to land titles, should also be reinforced by non-discriminatory public policies of credit and training to promote pluriactivity in the settlements, along with research to assess and promote possible transformations—within regional specificities—which may be occurring in the active role of settled women and in the gender relations of day-to-day life in the agrarian reform sector.

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