

Abstract

This study is about the relations between the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers Movement MST and a purposive sample of its members. After several land occupations in the South of Brazil, in 1984 MST was founded. Today it is present all over the nation and Agrarian Reform beneficiaries make for an increasing share of MST's members. The empirical study in the Northeastern state Ceará focused on MST's interaction with Agrarian Reform settlers. Literature review, semi-structured interviews and participant observation provided the base for the qualitative analysis. It revealed that the collective identity of members and MST's ideology are key concepts to understand MST and its relations with the settlers. Providing access to land by land occupations, fetching back a sense of dignity and shared values create a strong collective identity and explain MST's ability to mobilize masses and external support. MST has a bearing on the settlement communities through teaching activities of movement activists, literacy education and political awareness creation. This results in institutions for collective production and social organization. The anti-capitalist ideology can be explained by historical experiences. Yet with regard to problem solving in the settlements and in relation to MST's goal to have a liberating character, the role of ideology is problematic.

Ideologia, eu quero uma pra viver
Cazuza

Ideology, I want one to live
Cazuza

Usando e abusando
da nossa liberdade de expressao,
um dos poucos direitos que o jovem negro
ainda tem neste pais
Racionais MCs

Using and abusing
our freedom of expression,
one of the few rights that the black youth
still has in this country
Racionais MCs

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Abbreviations

ABRA Brazilian Association for the Agricultural Reform
ANCA National Association of Agrarian Reform Cooperatives
AR Agrarian Reform
ARS Agrarian Reform Settlement
Braz. In Brazilian language
CEACOOB Specialization Course for Extension and Administration of Cooperatives
CEB Ecclesiastical Base Community
CONCRAB Federation of Agrarian Reform Cooperatives
CPT Land Pastoral Commission
DNOCS National Department for Works against Drought
EMATER Technical Assistance and Agricultural Extension Agency
EMBRAPA Brazilian Agricultural Research Company
ha Hectare
IBGE Brazilian Institute of Statistics and Geography
IMF International Monetary Fund
INCRA National Agrarian Reform Institute
ITERRA Technical Institute for Capacitaion and Research of the Agrarian Reform
ITR Rural Land Tax
MST Landless Rural Workers Movement
NEAD Research Center for Agrarian and development Studies
NERA Nucleus for Studies of the Agrarian Reform
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
PNRA National Agrarian Reform Plan
PROCERA Family Farm Credit for Land Reform Beneficiaries, now replaced by PRONAF
PRONAF Family Farm Credit
SUDENE Superintendence for the Development of the Northeast
UNIB University of Brasilia
UNICAMP State University of Campinas
UNESP State University of Sao Paulo
UFC Federal University of Fortaleza