

## Recognition for Fight between Landless Peasants in Backlands of Brazil - Environmental Conflict as Land Policy Possession

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### Abstract

This article examines the environmental conflicts as a political category of land claims from the experiences of MST settlements on the high backcountry (Sertão) of Alagoas, in Delmiro Gouveia. We tried to relate this environmental interaction mode with the literature on environmental conflicts (BURSZTYN, 2001, 2008; Little, 2001 Zhouri, 2006, 2008), held perspective of land, conflicts of views and practice on the land as environment of subsistence, material production, culture and other senses. We interviewed some actors among rural workers and made a survey through questionnaires with a portion of the company not involved in the MST in order to draw a picture about what is the land as environmental means and the struggle for land as policy ecological (Little, 2006) in its aspects of social and environmental policy.

**Keywords:** socio-environmental conflicts; MST; environmental policy; Human Ecology.

### Introduction

“And to inhabit the place we are inhabited by the responses that this territory offers. And when comparing the realities of the plains of the *Alentejo*, the savannas of Mozambique or the Northeastern *caatinga*, find themselves patchwork of *incognitae terrae*, the most subjective seats of the House”. Feliciano de Mira

Some municipalities of Delmiro Gouveia<sup>1</sup>, in Alagoas hinterland, is the focus of intense social and environmental political conflicts of land type, where the source of the conflict is the land in its dimension of place to dwell and source of disputes<sup>2</sup>. In addition to conflicts involving the demarcation of traditional communities lands as Indians and Maroons, the region has been the scene of protests and occupations promoted by the *Movement of Landless Rural Workers* (MST) and other organizations fighting for land reform, as a *kind of characteristic population*<sup>3</sup> of these claims. From the type of claim of the Landless Rural Workers seek to relate it to the study of environmental conflicts, considering the land as geo-ecological base housing production, and socio-cultural meanings of existence and the focus of political, social and environmental claims of this social group. In many ways the case of MST, we have what Little (2006) called political ecology, a field that is the result of an intensive dialogue between the disciplines of biology, anthropology, geography, history and political science (p. 86).

The region of the northeastern semiarid in *Alagoas* is dominated politically and socially by large landowners, *landowners and farmers monoculture*<sup>4</sup> - some used to keep their fields under the yoke of the use of force, although the political and administrative forces corroborate benefit estates (BURSZTYN, 2008, p. 32). The episodes of violence, with significant balance of deaths and injuries among activists of social movements, are frequent and are combined with arbitrary actions of local authorities and the impunity of the authors and representatives of the attacks, identifying the high level of *intensity of conflicts*<sup>5</sup>. Violence and arbitrariness on the one hand and on the other, the precariousness of the settlements end up creating conditions for the spread of

<sup>1</sup> On 06 May, about 200 families settled in the high backcountry *Alagoas* occupied the headquarters of the *Energy Company of Alagoas* (CEAL), in *Delmiro Gouveia*.

<sup>2</sup> Try to follow here the model EJATLAS, reproducing some of its subtopics and adapting them to the reality studied.

<sup>3</sup> EJATLAS. *Type Of Population*. See references.

<sup>4</sup> EJATLAS. *Type of Conflict - 1st level*.

<sup>5</sup> EJATLAS. *Intensity of Conflict (at highest level)*.

diseases that impact directly on the health of farm *workers and their families*<sup>1</sup>. In the midst of all this, we know, there is a proper way to settle the land and produce it, live, exist. This own way is, say, determined by both the environment on man as its sustainable attempts and successful experiences on the environment, what is configured as “technology” of coexistence with the semi-arid - properly northeastern biome under a determining factor ( a phenomenon characteristic of the interior of *Alagoas*, in the city of *Delmiro Gouveia*), that is, the human ecology of rural communities in the villages located in the bush, but near the *São Francisco* river<sup>2</sup> requires a new approach in the face of environmental conflicts that there are configured.

### Search Route

A “human ecology” applies the methods of ecology to human societies (HAWLEY, 1950). In our case, taking it within the meaning of Moran (1999, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011), as “the man interactions/nature”, human ecology of the *Landless Rural Workers in Brazil* is the ecology of conflict and claim land policy as essential ecosystem to sustain their way of interacting with the environment. In this respect, the very environmental conflicts of this multifaceted group of rural workers - with their different ways of *interacting with the environment*<sup>3</sup> looking for subsistence and production (family farms) - requires a differentiated and cautious approach to distance itself from generalizations and simplifications policies. In this attempt, were interviewed certain actors among rural workers and made a survey through questionnaires with a portion of the company not involved in the MST in order to draw a picture about what is the land as a means environmental and the struggle for land as ecological policy (Little, 2006) in its aspects of social and environmental policy.

### The environmental conflict in question

The concept of “environmental” defines the existence of deep ties in time and space, between man and the environment, through assignments ecological significance and living practices and various interactions at various levels and with the place, and yet, its articulation. From this perspective, too, “the environmental concept encompasses three basic dimensions: the biophysical world and its many natural cycles, the human world and its social structures, and the dynamic and interdependent relationship between these two worlds.” (Little, 2001, p 107). In a less philosophical sense, for political, social and cultural<sup>4</sup> way the environmental is a characteristic of this interaction man/environment what is configured as “what the different social subjects sustained on the common spaces of resources” (Zhou, 2008, p. 98).

Thus, under the environmental, conflict is raised when the stay or maintenance of ties with the environment by communities are threatened; this can occur from a possible lack of peaceful coexistence between groups, that is, between shocks arising from *alterities* concerns about the environment, especially when a view opposite to each other world means one or more instances of the ecosystem (water, soil, vegetation, fauna, etc.) and from this significance, says his own interests and ways of interacting with the environment - to the detriment of other subjects with their respective world views and features actions on the environment.

A fact that has motivated new struggles and demands is the increasing scarcity and/or depletion of natural resources (Little, 2006, p.87; Little, 2001, p 112; Acsegrad 2004: 7-8; Zhou 2006 , p. 143). In the case of *MST*, we would have two different views on ecosystem services, *i.e.* on the use of land and its *telos* in the face of the above listed problems.

First, however, you must understand that in the context of complex environmental issues are

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<sup>1</sup> Between 2005 and 2006 the *Alagoas* MST suffered two major losses. On 29 November 2005, the militant Jaelson Melquiades was murdered. In August 2007, the landless *Iranildo Manoel*, known as *Nininho*, 37 years old, was shot with five bullets as it approached a settlement in the city of *Delmiro Gouveia*. In February 2008, nine militants of the MST left seriously injured in a clash with gunmen in the service of the owner of the *Fazenda Lagoa Long* in Piranhas, during a property's occupancy attempt. At the time, twelve armed men broke into the camp José Faustino and left sixteen people injured. The case was referred to the *Delmiro Gouveia* police station. Source. CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTAL / ICICT / FIOCRUZ.

The *São Francisco* River is one of the most important waterways in Brazil and throughout South America. The river passes through five states and 521 municipalities, with its source in the *Canastra* mountain range, in *São Roque de Minas*, center - west of *Minas Gerais*. Its route crosses the state of Bahia, with its motto north *Pernambuco*, as well as being the natural border between the states of *Sergipe* and *Alagoas*, and finally flows into the Atlantic Ocean, draining an area of approximately 641,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Its length measured from the historical source is 2814 km, but reaches 2863 km when measured along the geographical stretch. His *Indigenous name* is *Opará* or *Pirapitinga* and is also affectionately called *Old Chico*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> And in this regard focuses environmental justice right of land ownership as an ecological resource. View: *EJATLAS - Environmental Justice Atlas*.

<sup>4</sup> When we talk about culture, we want to first of all say that this is a process of human interaction with the environment in which the community has developed successful processes of adaptation. Thus, we believe that the greater the adaptability of a community to the place of living, the higher your culturality. In the case of rural landless workers, the current general condition of claim and not generated tenure, their culture is characterized by the struggle of the “communist” peasant and not yet established as ethnic - is finally possible to be experience among workers without land settlers

intrinsically linked, from the point of view of environmental conflicts: how discourses guide the use of resources; which intersubjective meanings they have for the community; as *modern forms*<sup>1</sup> of interaction with the environment (Da Silva, 2011, p. 11-12), in view of capitalist production and extraction of resources not only triggers its degradation, but threatens entire communities in their way of life and sustainability processes.

According Acselrad (2004, p.7),

The objects that constitute the "environment" are not reducible to mere amounts of matter and energy as they are cultural and historical: the rivers to the indigenous communities do not have the same meaning as for companies generating hydroelectricity; biodiversity cultivated by small farmers does not translate the same logic that valued biodiversity from biotech capital, etc.

Because of this, Little (2001) tells us that environmental conflicts are defined as "disputes between social groups derived from different types of relationship they have with their environment" (ibid, p. 107). And are these "different types of relationship with the environment" which raises a set of meanings and ways of interacting which we call traditional - as are the fruit of sustainable interactions such as the environment, developed by the community in view of maintaining its existence as methods shared by community members through generations.

These disputes are born roughly the clash of interests and opposing worldviews directed to a given socio-geographical space, in view of its ability to provide forms of housing, nature's services and socio-emotional bond characterized by tradition. Now, "all objects in the environment, all social practices developed in the territories and all the uses and meanings attributed to the environment, interact and connect physically and socially is through the water, soil or airspace" (Acselrad, 2004 p. 7).

A framework of Human Ecology, which is concerned with analyzing environmental problems in the socio-political context, focusing on the identification of environmental actors and their specific interests. The analysis includes the interdependencies and differences among actors at different levels in the global-local axis as well as the different rationalities that guide their actions and, finally, the impact of such actions on the environment configuration in place (Laschefski and Costa, 2008, p. 308).

In the case of MST in view of its social and environmental discourse and, above all in defense of sustainable agriculture, agroecology, De 'Carli (2013, p. 106) notes, therefore, that this discourse and the adoption of a practice aimed at creating "[...] an overview favorable to the implementation of alternative models of agricultural crops in areas of agrarian reform".

### The political nature of the land in the face of environmental conflicts

According to MST data, this movement "is organized in 24 states in the five regions of the country. In total, about 350 thousand families get the land through the struggle and organization of rural workers". This phenomenon can be interpreted to determine, almost no margin of error, the size of the environmental exclusion in Brazil.

Thus, according Zhouri, (2008, p. 103), "the arbitrariness of decisions breaks this supposed consensus and results in works that cause serious social and environmental conflicts." In the Northeast, the fight is also significant is that the state of *Pernambuco* is where successful actions occur, with the Bahia, *Alagoas* and *Sergipe*<sup>2</sup> in descending order by percentage numbers of occupations and settled families (Table 01).

**Table 01** - Number of occupations and families for State and Macroregions 1988-2004

Região/UF	Nº Occupations	%	Nº Families	%
NORTHEAST	1704	38,71	247.396	37,04
AL	184	4,18	29.527	4,42
BA	275	6,25	48.784	7,30
FOOT	755	17,15	100.923	15,11
IF	69	1,57	14.369	2,15

**Source:** Data bases of the Fight for the Land (*Dataluta*); NERA - Nucleus of Studies, Research and Projects of the Agrarian Reformation

In 2002, in *Alagoas*, twenty eight settlements<sup>3</sup> with 2,897 families settled<sup>1</sup>; and in 2004, seventeen

<sup>1</sup> Positive forms (Comtean) relationship with the environment directed by a techno-scientific use of epistemology of funds is the Cartesian paradigm worldview, especially in its inexhaustibility.

<sup>2</sup> *Pernambuco*, *Alagoas* and *Sergipe* are name of the States (Districts) of Northeast from Brazil.

<sup>3</sup> According Electronic Dictionary Houaiss (2004), settlement is a "settlement nucleus of peasants and rural workers". At first, a space of transition, place of resistance, recovery of a previously established way of life. The success of a settlement supports for processing rather than definitive live as what happened to the 07 villages in the municipality of *Delmiro Gouveia*.

settlements with 3,029 families settled. The *Alagoas* Mata is 6th in number of occupations, such as 88 occupations and 17 766 families settled, according to CPT data-*Pastoral Land Commission* - 1988-2004.

From these data it is possible to measure about the need of the land by a belittles portion of *Alagoas* aware of their social ties, cultural and especially economic with the environment. Understanding this internal dynamics, conflict, includes identifying the polarization of positions and the mapping of alliances and coalitions (...) (Little, 2006, p. 92).

When relating environmental conflict and MST, is to understand the meanings of land under the category representing the environment as a whole for rural workers. You can take this category two necessary dimensions, namely, the place of living (Da Silva et *ali.*, 2015, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2011) and services of nature (Gretchen, 1997) for the land as protected area the existence of the community and the ecosystem itself where they are. According to Borges (2014, p. 131), "land is a concept that is defined contextually. Hence the importance of observing what attributes accompany the term land to understand their meanings throughout history and the different wording in the present". The senses of land for MST are not the same for other groups. However, the way the place of living, that is, the land is so richer meanings greater awareness of community about survival relations, identity and sense copertença resulting from it *terrae mater* what are we. In other words:

[...] The work of defining the term land we are called to put ourselves as active makers of meaning in a situation in which the determination of the concept, we ourselves are as or more important than the thing itself or phenomenon to which the word allegedly evoke a univocal or spontaneously. (Borges, 2014, p. 131)

Therefore, the land as a place of living where nature's services are available are inseparable dimensions for survival, for identity achievement and belonging defended through the struggle (fight with the land, with the other, to himself) as a political conflict characteristic under the social and environmental - Fight required.Thus:

[...] Environmental conflicts are important for the formulation of policies and guidelines involving the construction management and management of protected areas, because ultimately the conflicts reflect the historical process of social struggles and economic change in the building of geographical areas (Brito, 2008, p.3).

The vindictive fight for land rights by rural workers is in addition to its authenticity, what claim and the way they do, a social and environmental political conflict typically Brazilian, in what regards the economic and social inequality is closely linked to ethnic dimensions characteristics of *Alagoas*. An example of this is that at the end of the 90s, according Lages and Ramos (1999, p.43):

[...] 10% of the wealthiest in this state has 7.9 times more income than the poorest 40%. These poorest 40% hold only 6.88% of total income, while the richest 10% hold 54.03%. This means, of course, one of the worst income distributions in the country and even the world (p.43).

In this sense, environmental conflicts can be defined as a political action of a certain group, sometimes ethnic<sup>2</sup>, on the type of use of the environment in view of the maintenance of the social, cultural, economic and existential life.

Fernandes (2000, p 281.):

[...] Most of the land is a form of workers' intervention in the political and economic process of expropriation [...] Criminalizing occupations [...] is to condemn landless families fighting for recreation of their existence as workers. And accept the interests of landlords and the process of intensification of concentrated land.

The region encompassing the villages of the municipality of *Delmiro Gouveia* also presents types of environmental conflicts - central element of political ecology recognized by Little (2006, p 88.). For example, in 2007, 1600 rural workers settled in *Delmiro Gouveia* (and still in the *Olho D'Água do Casado* and *Piranhas*<sup>3</sup>) were adversely affected by the interruption of the work of installation of a pipeline that would take multiple use drinking water for their settlements.

The objectives agreed between the rural workers were based on an investment in family farming that is, as it were, the basis of the subsistence economy and, why not, solidarity economy - demonstrated by the production, trading and sale of agro-ecological products - speech and praxis very defended by Movement (MST,

<sup>1</sup> Data provided by the MST, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> It is generally said that the ethnic group is the attribute characterized by specific culture; also typifies, first of all, by the types of links that man has with the land - these links prior to culture that, in turn, is a process of human interaction with the localized environment. It is also understood that such traditional ethnic communities and groups, so to speak, existentially and operatively connected to land. Thus, the land is the ethnic background of a type of culture.

<sup>3</sup> *Olho D'Água do Casado* and *Piranhas* are municipalities near *Delmiro Gouveia Delmiro Gouveia*.



2015; AGENDA BRAZIL, 2014; DE 'CARLI, 2013;). For example, according to De 'Carli (2013, p. 106), “in Brazil, the Movement of Rural Workers Without Land (MST) established in his speech agroecology as a political flag in order to counter the hegemonic model of agriculture and also as an opportunity to integrate the global debates on sustainable development”.

In Alagoas, a result of this environmental conflict is that on November 12, 2008, about 300 settlers occupied the Central Supply and Sanitation Alagoas (DOUBLE) in Delmiro Gouveia, demanding the regularization of the water supply to the settlements of the region. Thus, below, in *Table 01*, we see eight villages of rural workers that even the geographical proximity to the San Francisco River, the difficulty of obtaining drinking water is presented.

**Table 02** - *Nestings in the towns of the city of Delmiro Gouveia*

Nome	Capacity	Seated families	Area	Creation	Phase
Povoado Peba	09	08	10	01/01/1989	Estruturação
Genivaldo Moura	90	81	1948.7685	10/09/2007	Created
Bom Jesus/Talhado	85	85	1119.7778	27/04/2005	Created
Xingozinho	30	30	495.4545	28/12/2004	In Installation
Jurema	48	46	252.3327	05/02/2001	In Installation
Lameirão	46	38	1633	19/10/1992	Consolidation
Bezerras	70	66	1032.9834	17/11/2004	In Installation

**Source:** INCRA - National institute of the Agrarian Reformation, 2015

The case of water as the hit factor of socio-environmental conflicts in the blast backwoods of *Alagoas* is a typical case, both the lack of resources for capitation own ways of river water as the total absence of springs near the villages studied here as well as the presence of small tanks that even occurring, it is not sufficient to supply water pair family farming. Another measure with the same focus claim was an occupying an area the *Sertão Canal*<sup>1</sup> margins by about 1,500 of the *Movement of Landless Rural Workers* (MST), in order to pressure the state and federal governments for land expropriation and charge a position to use the water more democratically channel.

It is said that is the MST is a political and social movement - and it forget the basis of their objective, which is the land. The social conquest of the land is set by the desire for land reform and the social use of land, call the socio-environmental relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to see the MST not only as a socio-political movement - and this does not characterize as clearly - but as a socio-environmental political movement. Even if not constantly hear a direct and purely ecological discourse on the part of this movement, its *telos* is characterized by the appreciation of the land, that is, as the environment in its possibilities of use; understanding of ecosystem service availability within the possibilities developed the semi-arid northeast in *Alagoas*. Indeed, the coexistence of processes and successful experiences in this biome demonstrate the environmental and ecological aspect in nuce in this Policy Movement, while highlighting the "ignorance" of some officials and institutions.

### **Gears of MST environmental conflicts by some prisms<sup>2</sup>**

As stated, the socio-environmental conflicts in which rural workers are engaged requires a differentiated and cautious approach to distance itself from generalizations and simplifications policies. In this attempt, the interviews took as questioning, what is your opinion on the peasant struggle of the MST. *Alagoas* a university professor said:

*The struggle for agrarian reform is needed. This is to solve the food issue in Brazil, it is the family farm that produces food that reaches the Brazilian table. The large estates producing for export commodities. Unfortunately Brazil is lagging behind in this aspect. The major capitalist economies in the world have already made land reform. In Brazil, a handful of families control all the land. Thus, the MST struggle becomes completely fair.*

You can understand this statement the deep and intricate social, environmental and political aspects, considering, through family farming (which is perhaps the most genuine expression of social and environmental) the various ways of interacting with the environment looking for their livelihood and production. According to the account of a teacher in the city of *Delmiro Gouveia*.

*The peasant struggle in Brazil should mean the search for a true agrarian reform. Worthwhile and that encourages the "man of the field", that would improve all types of culture, which included programs to support agriculture, including training and reduced waste. But unfortunately it is not so ...*

<sup>1</sup> This occurred on 28 November 2013. Source: TV Gazeta.

<sup>2</sup> Here we would like to give a small sample of people's perception of the relevant topic. Secondly research, we intend to expand the field sampling and data research.

So when it comes to "land reform" does not say only political division of a piece of ground, a *topos*, but also favorable conditions for a group of people culturally landed develop its social and environmental mode of existence, develop their territorialities socio-ecological. For a teacher in the city of *Delmiro Gouveia*, he said, "understands the dilemmas, hardships and MST staff achievements in *Delmiro Gouveia*", says:

*Honestly if it were not for movements only exist such thing as "resistance" and "resistance", not to mention political parties. I think that movements like the MST, has the courage to speak and show you what's wrong in Brazil. Takes the guy to beat, the movement also unmasks.*

In speaking up, the teacher has the perception of movement with counter-hegemonic action anti powers established in Brazil. We understand well the concept of resistance to an instance of forces seeking to remain in their ideological state action on the defensive against the offensive of speculative capital landowner, the agroeconomia, among others. Thus, the social movements in Brazil coalesce force, not only of more direct action resistance with visible vindicating performance.

**Table 03** – Descriptions of the pupils and pupils of the E.J.A.

Age	Sex	Description
19	M	They are workers who occupy land for the productivity.
40	M	Proper cause and land to live.
19	F	Person who if congregates to invade land to make houses for they deferred payment.
30	F	They are People without ceiling the land search to construct its houses.
20	M	... I find wrong that they make as to steal wants takes the things of the others, etc.
38	F	One forms [...] to be able to fight for what really they know to make.
23	F	Movement that has as objective to gain a space where they can plant and spoon and thus to survive.
52	F	It is the movement without land where the people search housing to live.
19	F	MST of more the words that the people imagines.
30	M	I do not find a part certain, because they enter in the territories of the others. Another good side because it has much people that have others and others needing when they lodge themselves for they are a victory have arranged where to live.
19	F	The MST is a group of land occupation stops without production and there the workers start to produce the farming in the land and start to make of the land a new scene of life with new plantations.
26	F	People who need housing and land for to plant.
24	F	A movement that never starts with the projects but has resulted because the aids are very little that makes force to help the ones that is part.
41	M	For me the people, if use to advantage of this to make struggle and mess.

**Source:** Data of the authors.

In the case of some students think about it, *Table 03* presents descriptions made by volunteer students<sup>1</sup> about the MST in the *State School Watson Clementino de Gusmão Silva* (2nd EJA<sup>2</sup>); and 3 EJA), a range in art class that teaches one of the authors.

From the table of descriptions 03, you can understand various social levels of discussion where opinions permeate common sense arising from shallower formulations of public opinion, and on the other hand, a discourse that has line with the proposals of workers' movements rural.

All conceived the land category as a place to live, "house to live", place "to build houses for them to live", "land to build their homes" - always with a living purpose, but always keeping in mind the group of workers rural and landless. Still, the land is conceived as a space, ground, place marked by fair measure of achievement, such as food production for subsistence.

Figures 01 and 02, shows in percentage, the most repeated words to describe the way the peasants' struggle for land and the importance of land as the environment. Data were collected in geography class between boys and girls in grades 6 to 9 of the *Basic Education School José Bezerra da Silva*, in the neighborhood *Pedra Velha*<sup>3</sup>. Login or students who answered the questionnaire, were among them, teen *Peba Village, Lameirão* and *Jurema*<sup>4</sup>. The issues presented were: what are the words that define for you the meaning of the land (**Graphs 01**) and land senses as environment:

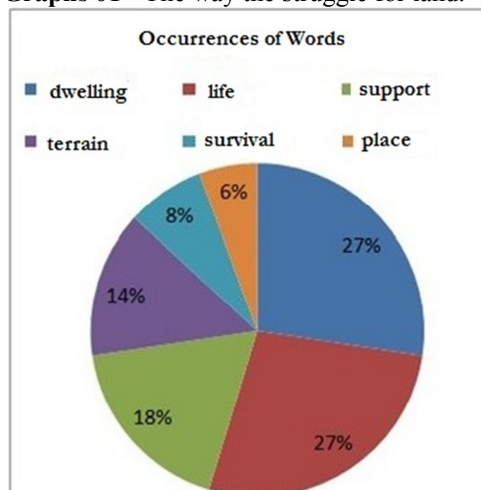
<sup>1</sup> In a room with 32 students (2nd E. J. A.); and another with 27 students (3 EJA) obviously was not the desire of all (the) answer the questionnaire, and a total of only 14 of both rooms.

<sup>2</sup> Youth and Adult Education

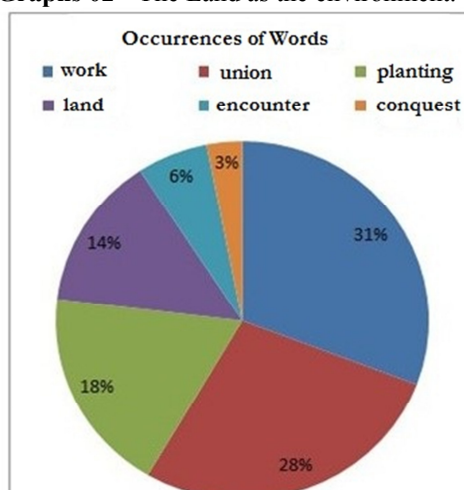
<sup>3</sup> *Pedra Velha* is an old neighborhood in Delmiro Gouveia.

<sup>4</sup> *Peba Village, Lameirão* and *Jurema* are villages belonging to the city of *Delmiro Gouveia*.

**Graphs 01 - The way the struggle for land.**



**Graphs 02 - The Land as the environment.**



**Source:** the authors Source: authors

You can understand in the context of the data collected from the graphs 01 and 02 above, that the senses of struggle for land and the importance of land as the environment are, as it were synonymous. To infer the tables, we see that the relationship between work and housing for members of the movement of landless workers, is significant; for students involved in research, there is always a strong relationship between such categories as well as between “survival” and “encounter”, “life” and “union”, “support”, and “planting”, “terrain” and “place” “dweller” and “word”. However, to relate “terrain” and “land”, we see a homology when the sense is conquest and possession of a place to live and where most perspective would be land reform - too complex issue as environmental conflict and which requires a time greater discussion.

### Final Thoughts

The concept of "environmental" makes us understand the inseparable condition between man and environment and also its articulation by political, social and cultural routes as a characteristic of this interaction man/environment - the fight, encounter, and struggle.

We raised the discussion about the contemporary configuration of environmental conflicts, bringing together studies on the different forms of perception, access, domain and nature management, considering the power relations resulting, in the struggle for the land and senses that this would raise for the landless rural workers and for a portion of society.

The relationship between environmental and territorial legislation and her public policies arising from environmental conflicts is the affirmation of new territoriality (struggle for agrarian reform, land *quilombos*, Extractive Reserves, Sustainable Development Reserves etc.) and social actors closely linked to the environment. In this sense the *MST* and agrarian reform provide major challenges to the field of study of environmental conflicts.

In this context, we understand to some extent that the struggle for land meanings are related to the senses that subjects give the land and this is an issue that should be considered when it comes to environmental conflict. To better understand these issues, just know that the struggle for land in the context of semi-arid northeast, in *Alagoas*, in the villages of *Delmiro Gouveia* municipality, faces two challenging forces: a) the "policy of the colonels" and the denial of society (a social problem of environmental ownership and other social legitimation of ownership); b): the nature (a challenge for environmentally sustainable living). In this respect, dealing with environmental conflicts from the perspective of high-backlands (Sertão) of *Alagoas* in the face of its semi-arid as political and ecological category, urge an investigation and unique contextual discussion and, so to speak, still underdeveloped. Here we try to sketch just such a proposal in order to cause the inspiration of other more authoritative researchers.

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