Social Movement as a Geographic Category

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Abstract: This text is a theoretical essay that I present as a contribution to geographers that focus on social movements as their objects of study. It is a reflection I have been developing with the objective of proposing analyses of social movements from two geographic processes: spatialization and territorialization.

In this study, I analyze the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST). However, the elements and reflections developed here are references by which to research other social movements. A theoretical elaboration on the social movement as a geographic category is essential, considering the growth of geographic studies on rural and urban social movements. The theoretical references used in these studies are largely from other areas of knowledge. Thus, we are beginning a fundamental reflection in order to understand social movements not only by their forms of organization, but also through the processes they develop, the spaces they construct, and the territories they dominate. Our goal is to identify elements of these processes that will serve as references for a geographic theory of social movements.

Keywords: MST; social movement; socio-territorial movement; spatialization; territorialization.

Introduction

This text is a theoretical essay that I present as a contribution to geographers that focus on social movements as their objects of study. It is a reflection that I have been developing with the objective of proposing analyses of social movements from the perspective of two geographic processes: spatialization and territorialization.

In this study, I analyze the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST). However, the elements and reflections developed here are references by which to research other social movements. A theoretical elaboration on the social movement as a geographic category is essential. Categories are key-concepts of a science (Freire-Maia, 1998, p.38). They are fundamental concepts constructed from the analysis of experiences developed in reality as well as logical endeavors for the elaboration of readings and the construction of theoretical essays. I understand that it is not possible to develop a geographic reading of social movements using only categories from other areas of knowledge. According to Santos: "Concepts in a discipline are frequently only metaphors in others, regardless of their
proximity. Metaphors are isolated flashes, they do not result in systems and they do not permit theorizations." (1996, p.70)

Social movements can be categories of different areas of knowledge, so long as the scientists construct the respective theoretical references. This is our challenge in Geography. Social movements build their structures, develop processes, organize and dominate territories in a variety of ways. Movements are forms of social organization and, in general, sociologists, historians, and political scientists have been dedicated to their study much longer than have geographers. In these areas there exist important and actual theoretical studies, including: Ghon (1997); Sztompka (1998); Tarrow (1994). In Geography, this area is more recent. One reference is the work of Oliveira (1991, p.9), that refers to the studies of Orlando Valverde and Manuel Correia de Andrade on the agrarian question and peasant movements in the 1950s and 1960s. Still, since the 1980s, the number of geographic studies of social movements has increased. There are a number of theses and dissertations in Geography on this subject.

Today, this research on urban and rural social movements is diverse. However, the theoretical references are in large part from other areas of knowledge. We are initiating a fundamental reflection in order to understand social movements not only by their forms of organization, but also through the processes they develop, the spaces they construct, and the territories they dominate. Thus, our goal is to elaborate essays that serve as references for theoretical constructions.

One effort to undertake this project is present in Fernandes (1996, 1999) and Martin (1997, 1998), when we develop a dialogue on the subject-space relationship. The references that permitted this debate were our studies on the MST. From these discussions, the concept of socio-spatial movement was coined, used to designate movements that have space as their trump card (trunfo) (Martin, 1997, p.26). In the development of research, readings, and reflections, I continued the analysis of the MST not only as a form, but also as process and of the meanings of its dimensions and actions, principally by the transformations of the land tenure structure and in social relationships, in the conquest of fractions of territory.

The concept of socio-spatial movement is broad because it involves different dimensions of geographic space: social, political, economic, etc. With the objective of deepening this reflection, I analyzed the actions of the MST in the 22 states where it is
organized. I attempted to analyze its practices from the construction of its form, having as its place of materialization some fractions of territory. Social movements that have space or territory as their trumps organize their forms and dimensions from this reference point. In a debate on these ideas at Unesp, in Presidente Prudente, Professor Maria Encarnação Beltrão Spósito suggested to me the term, socio-territorial movement. In the following, I present a more profound development of the reflections, analyzing different actions and elements resulting from the geographic processes developed by different social movements that I've denominated as isolated and territorialized.

In this text, I analyze the meanings of concepts such as occupation, grassroots work, encampment, political negotiation, organicity, spatialization, and territorialization. They are essential elements for an understanding of the processes developed by and constitutive of socio-territorial movements, from the perspective of interaction, considering territory and space as conditions for the formation of the social movement. We begin with the premise that socio-territorial movements are those that have territory as their trump. However, many movements do not have this objective, but struggle for dimensions, resources or structures of geographic space, such that they can be coherently designated as socio-spatial movements.

**Grassworks Work — Constructing Spaces of Political Socialization**

A socio-territorial movement such as the MST has as one of its principle objectives the conquest of "land for work". And it achieves this through the action denominated as land occupation. The occupation is a complex socio-spatial and political process that must be understood as a form of popular struggle of peasant resistance, for it re-creation and creation. The occupation is developed in the processes of spatialization and territorialization, as the experiences of resistance of the landless are created and re-created. In this sense, I intend to discuss some of the principle notions and concepts learned or constructed from bibliographic readings and the studied reality.

First, it is necessary to state that the occupation is an action resulting from necessities and expectations that inaugurates questions, creates facts and reveals situations. It is evident that this combination of elements modifies reality, increasing the flu of social relationships. They are workers challenging the State that always has represented the interests of the
agrarian bourgeoisie and capitalists in general. For this reason, the state only presents policies to attenuate the processes of expropriation and exploitation under intense pressure from the workers. The occupation is, then, part of a movement of resistance to these processes, in defense of the interests of workers, that is, the disappropriation of the latifundio, the settlement of families, the production and reproduction of family labor, cooperation, the creation of agricultural policies directed at the development of peasant agriculture, the generation of public policies destined for the basic rights of the citizenry.

The organization of an occupation results from the necessity of survival. It occurs by the consciousness constructed in the reality in which one lives. It is, thus, an apprenticeship in an historical process of the construction of experiences of resistance. When a group of families begins to organize with the goal of occupying land, it develops a set of procedures that that takes form, defining a methodology of popular struggle. This experience has its logic constructed in praxis. This logic has as constitutive components indignation and revolt, necessity and interest, consciousness and identity, experience and resistance, the concept of land for work versus commercial or exploitable land, movement and overcoming.

In the formation of the MST, the landless created distinct methodologies of struggle. They are procedures of resistance developed in the trajectory of the struggle. These actions are differentiated throughout Brazil. In the spatialization of the struggle for land, the spaces of political socialization can occur in distinct moments, with greater or lesser frequency. The encampments are of diverse types: permanent or determined by a group of families. The forms of pressure are distinct, according to political circumstances as well as negotiations. These practices are the result of knowledge of experiences, of exchanges and reflections on them, as well as of the political situations in which are located the fractions of territory to be occupied, in different regions of Brazil. The elements that compose the methodologies are the formation, organization, tactics of struggle and negotiations with the State and the landlords that have as their starting point grassroots work. The Base Ecclesiastical Communities (CEBs), the Rural Workers Unions, Schools and even homes are the principle sites and social spaces where grassroots meetings are held.

The grassroots efforts may be the results of the spatialization and/or spatiality of the struggle for land. They are always born of the very necessity of the communities. Spatialization is a process of the concrete movement of the action in its reproduction in space
and territory. Thus, the grassroots efforts may be organized by people that came from somewhere else, where they constructed their experiences. For example: one or more landless from one state that move to other regions of the country in order to organize landless families. And, in this manner, they create the Movement in its territorialization. Spatiality is a continuous process of an action in reality. It is the dimensioning of the meaning of an action. Thus, people from that very place begin a grassroots effort because they heard of, saw or read about land occupations. That is, they became aware of them through a variety of means: spoken, written, televised, etc. And thus, they initiate their struggle for land, constructing their experiences.

Thus, grassroots efforts are realized in different places and in distinct conditions. They occur by means of the construction of the space of political socialization. This space possesses three dimensions. One is the communicative space, constructed from the first meetings. It is the moment of the meeting and knowing each other and of the definition of the objectives. They know the reason for being in that place. The motives are the necessity and interests that, along with revolt and indignation, represent attitudes and feelings that determine the time to occupy. It is the beginning of an experience of transformation of their realities. Another dimension is the interactive space. This, depending on the methodology, is realized before, during or after the land occupation. In the development of these practices and this logic, they construct a form of social organization.

The interactive space is a continuous process of apprenticeship. The meaning of the interaction is in the exchange of experiences, in the knowing of life trajectories, in the conscientization of the condition of expropriated and exploited, in the construction of the landless identity. The content of the grassroots meetings is the recuperation of life histories associated with the development of the agrarian question. Thus, life is experienced as a producer of interactions. They make their analyses of the set of and relations among political forces, of the formation of articulations and alliances for political and economic support. In this way, they develop the subjective conditions by means of interests and will, recognizing their rights and participation in the construction of their destinies. They confront the objective conditions of the struggle against the landlords and their hired guns, of the confrontation with the police, with the State.
This is a process of political formation, generating the militancy that strengthens the social organization. All of these processes, practices, and procedures put the people in movement, in the construction of the consciousness of their rights, in search for the overcoming of the condition of expropriation and exploited. The overcoming of their realities begins with the deliberation on the participation in the land occupation. This decision has as its premise that only through this action will they be able to find a solution to the state of misery in which they live. They must decide as well which land to occupy, where to occupy. The latifúndios are many. There is no difficulty to find them. There are various sources of information on the location of lands that do not fulfill their social function. From the knowledge that the communities have of the countless latifúndios, by which they are often surrounded, to information accessed through diverse governmental and non-governmental institutions that deal with the agrarian question. Once the land is identified, the only decision left is when to occupy. Occupying, by which the landless workers present themselves to the public, they dimension a space of political socialization, intervening in the reality, constructing the space of struggles and resistance, whether occupying the land or encamped on the margins of highways.

Participation in an occupation is not a simple decision, given that beyond experience it signifies the transformation of one's very life. For this reason, often, for some families, there is a great deal of indecision or fear. In order to overcome fear it is necessary to trust in the people that make up an coordinate the Movement. Thus, the leadership is responsible, in defending the occupation, for introducing ideas and references that allow an overcoming of doubts. These are the arguments developed in the grassroots meetings, in the dimensioning of the space of political socialization. Hence, the coordinators become important references for the indecisive workers. Another form of reassurance is the visit to encampments and settlements, or when settled individuals give testimony of their struggles. Still, many remain watchful, and go to the encampment only after the occupation has already taken place. These attitudes end up generating an internal debate, as many families complain about the fact that they feel like cannon fodder. There are also those that are know as swallows, that only appear once in a while at the encampment. They are an expression of indecision or opportunism. There are, as well, those that participate in various groups of families, assisting in the realization of various occupations, until they decide themselves to occupy.
The grassroots meetings are spaces that generate subjects constructing their own existences. These meetings may last from one, three or six months to years, depending on the group. They might involve a municipality, various municipalities of a micro-region, various municipalities of various micro-regions, or even more than one state in border areas. With the territorialization of the struggle and the growth of participation of families, these meetings are multiplied, and instead of involving dozens of families they end up including hundreds of families. This growth also brings problems. Police and private security end up infiltrating the meetings in order to spy on developments or to interrupt the struggle. Often these spies are never discovered and the occupation ends up being frustrated. In order to avoid this, the leadership began to inform the coordinators of the groups of families of the day and place of occupations only hours before their realization. On the other hand, the growth of the occupations is due not only to the organization of the landless, but also to the expansion of forms of support. Increasingly, the families that participate in these meetings receive support from urban communities and settled populations, as well as from prefects that provide transportation for participants, even for occupations. The support of communities, with food or financial resources, is the result of the grassroots work of the MST as well as the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT). It is within these communities that groups of families are formed to participate in occupations. Equally, many already settled families contribute to an occupation, donating foods that they've cultivated, lending their trucks for the transport of families or their tractors for the first plantings of occupied lands. These actions result in the understanding that the struggle for land does not end with the conquest of land, but continues with the formation of new groups of families and in the struggle against the latifúndio. The support of prefects means the possibility of transforming a latifúndio into a settlement, where excluded families will together re-socialize, working, generating income, housing, conquering land and basic rights such as education and health care.

Throughout this process they attempt to negotiate with the State the settlement of the families. Promises and compromises that, for the most part, are never realized are always the answer they receive. With the wisdom of experience they've learned that they must construct the necessary conditions for the conquest of land, participating in the formation in the Movement, comprised by the creation of commissions, nucleos, sectors, coordinations. They are parts of the form of the organization in movement. Each one is composed of groups of
people responsible for the various needs of the families. Beginning with food and the provision of school for the children, adolescents and adults. They create negotiation commissions to accompany the progression of the issues with the institutions and to inform the society of their actions; nucleos and coordinations to maintain the encampment informed and organized; sectors of education and health, among others. In the MST, these tasks are realized by diverse sectors, with the Front of Masses (Frente de Massas) responsible for the grassworks work and the development of actions.

The landless workers are the principle subjects of this process. Since the beginning of the struggle, they have received support of different institutions, through alliances that form a political articulation. The institutions involved defend the occupation as a form of access to the land. In the twenty years of its formation, in different combinations, the MST received or continues to receive support from the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), the Rural Workers Union, the Unified Labor Central (CUT), the Workers Party (PT), and other political parties and diverse organizations. Still, the relationship in the articulation always has led to political tensions, because of the different conceptions of the roles that the parts of the alliance have in the development of the struggle for the land. Some of the points of contention regard the autonomy of the workers. Often the organizations attempt to interfere in the decisions of the workers, without discerning respective competencies. This occurs, for example, when they have attempted to coordinate the struggles, trying to represent the workers, asserting that the MST should only support the workers when, in truth, it is the landless that are and comprise the Movement.

The conflict also occurs because of differing conceptions of the struggle. These are extremely differentiated in all regions of the country. There are conceptions favorable to defensive postures, and others that defend offensive postures in the realization of the occupations, understood as different forms of resistance to the action of police and gunmen. The more defensive postures support a non-confrontation, opting only for negotiation, while the offensive positions support negotiations and confrontation. The overcoming of this tension is achieved through recognition of the autonomy of the workers and the competencies or expertise of each institution. In the MST, this was only achieved after breaking and re-establishing of relationships, by means of lessons constructed in the struggles. In different
forms, the conception that occupation is the solution has always persisted. This was, for all the organizations involved in the struggle, a learning process.

After years of tension, the institutions have recognized the experiences and autonomy of the landless. Thus, these landless peasants speak their own languages, gaining the respect and admiration of some and the aversion of others. It was a constant struggle for political autonomy that greatly contributed to the spatialization and territorialization of the MST throughout Brazil. In this sense, the MST is not the result of a political proposal of a party, nor is it the fruit of a proposal of the Church, nor a labor movement. Although it has received the support of the conjugation of these political forces, the MST is a reality that emerged from the unequal logic of the capitalist mode of production. The Movement is the result of this reality and not of institutions.

The process of spatialization is not always developed in all of its dimensions in the experiences of the landless. What determines the realization of all of the procedures for the dimensioning of the space of political socialization is the alliance. These experiences have been studies by researchers that have analyzed the practices of diverse social movements.iii There are also movements that mobilize families without the construction of a space of political socialization, as is the case of MAST (Movement of Landless Farmers), studied by Feliciano (1999, p.125).iv

Processes of Occupation: Types and Forms -- Spatialization and Territorialization

The occupation, as a form of struggle and access to the land, is a continuity in the history of the Brazilian peasantry. Since the beginning of their formation, peasants, in their process of creation and re-creation, occupied land. In the last four decades, the tenant-farmers and the landless have been the principle subjects of this struggle. Still, it is fundamental to differentiate between tenant-farmers and the landless. In one interview I did in Goiás, I asked a landless what was the difference between him and a squatter (posseiro), and he responded: "The squatters occupy land at the ends of the earth, we occupy here, on the sides of the national highways." This response is significant because it points to different spaces and distinct actions. The tenants occupy lands predominantly on the edges of the fronts of expansion, in frontier areas. With the advancement of the pioneer front, there occurs a
process of expropriation of these peasants, developed principally with the landgrabbing of landlords and businessmen. The landless occupy lands predominantly in regions where capital has already territorialized. They occupy latifúndios -- capitalist landholdings -- lands of commerce and exploitation -- land ceded or illegally appropriated. The struggles for fractions of territory -- the settlements -- represent a process of territorialization in the conquest of land for work against land for commerce and exploitation. This difference is fundamental because the landgrabber, the landlord, the businessman arrive where the squatter is. The landless are or arrive where the landgrabber, the landlord, the businessman are.

Since the mid-1980s, when the MST began to territorialize throughout Brazil, the landless workers, together with the squatters, the small farmers, sharecroppers, tenants and contracted laborers, intensified the process of formation of the Brazilian peasantry. The intensification of the land occupations had a large political impact, such that the landless ended up as the principle interlocuters in the confrontation with the State, in the struggle for land and for agrarian reform. These workers, of both rural and urban origins, are struggling for land in all regions of the country. In order to better understand this process, I analyze the types and forms of occupations undertaken by the landless.

Taking as a reference the analytical approach in Eric Hobsbawm's *Peasant Land Occupations*, I intend to reflect on the question of occupations. In this work, the author, using the above expression, points to the component, *land*. In this essay, I utilize other components, such as *family* and *experiences*. In this manner, the types of occupation are related to the ownership of land: public, capitalist, by non-governmental organizations; to the forms of organization of the *families* and to the types of experiences they construct. I work with the expressions, types and forms, attempting to understand the processes of development of the land occupation. In this context, I also attempt to deepen my reflections with respect to the processes of spatialization and territorialization of the struggle for land.

Hobsbawm points to three types of occupations: a.) *re recuperation* or reconquered lands for work -- lands that were occupied for decades by peasants but ended up as contested due to the territorialization of capital in the expropriation of peasant families; b.) *forfeited* lands, when the peasants occupy lands pertaining to the state, in frontier areas and that ended up grabbed by landlords; and c.) *occupation of latifúndios*. In this study, Hobsbawm is primarily concerned with occupations of the first type, which are also relevant in Brazil, especially in
the Amazon region where part of the squatters' lands were appropriated and grabbed by landlords and businessmen. Nevertheless, in Brazil predominate the occupation of forfeited and/or public lands and the occupations of latifúndios. These have been important forms of access to the land.

With respect to the form of organization of the groups of families, there are two types: isolated movements and territorialized movements. The territorialized movements are constructed by different categories and their structures can take two forms: social movement or labor movement. These movements, together or separately, receive support from different institutions. The forms of support are political and economic and result through articulations or alliances. The social movement may receive support and/or be vinculated with a pastoral of the Catholic Church (Pastoral Land Commission or the Rural Pastoral). Similarly, it may receive support of labor unions, parties or NGOs. These are the institutions that have supported the struggle for land, principally the occupations. The labor movement, equally, may receive support from these institutions through articulations and/or alliances.

The meanings of the isolated movements and the territorialized movements have as a reference the social organization and the geographic space. I understand as an isolated movement a social organization that is realized in a determined territorial base, that has its territory of actuation defined by circumstances inherent to the movements. That is, they are born in different points of geographic space, in struggles of resistance. They spring up in latifúndio lands through the spatiality of the struggle. Constructing in this way its territoriality, understood as a process of reproduction of characteristic actions of a determined territory. The territorialized or socio-territorial movement is organized and acts in different places at the same time, made possible by its form of organization that permits the spatialization of the struggle to conquer new fractions of territory, multiplying itself in the process of territorialization. An example of a socio-territorial movement is the MST. The unions of rural workers affiliated with federations and with CONTAG (Confederation of Agricultural Workers) are also examples of territorialized movements.

The isolated social movements are those that are organized in a municipality or a small group of municipalities in order to carry out an occupation. These movements receive support from one or more parishes, through pastorals or not, from unions, parties, politicians, prefects, etc. They also may be the result of dissent within the socio-territorial movements. However,
their base of action is limited by the action of the movement. Overcoming this condition, it may become a territorialized movement, organizing actions beyond its original territorial base, or it may attach itself to a territorialized organization. It was in this way that recent social movements of the struggle for land developed.

*Failing to overcome these circumstances, the isolated movements are extinguished.*

The perspective of territorialization is related to its form of socio-political organization. When the movements are the result of immediate interests of the community, defended by personalist leaders and populist practices that create relationships of dependency, the tendency is the exhaustion of the movement. When movements contemplate broader objectives that aren't only to resolve their own problems but that insert themselves in the process of struggle, and the leaders promote spaces of political socialization, for the formation of new leaderships and experiences, the tendency is the development of the form of organization, spatialization and territorialization. In this manner, frequently, they work not only on their own problems, but also carry forward the dimension of the struggle for land, organizing new groups of families, inaugurating new places, spatializing and territorializing the movement and the struggle. Every socio-territorial movement is born of one or more isolated social movements.

**Socio-Territorial or Territorialized Movements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>State(s)</th>
<th>Beg.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comissão Pastoral da Terra – CPT</td>
<td>BA e PB</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento de Luta pela Terra – MLT</td>
<td>BA – PA</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento Sem-Terra do Sul do Mato Grosso – MST-SMT</td>
<td>MT</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura – Pernambuco – FETAPE</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>1995*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura do Estado do Mato Grosso do Sul – FETAGRI – MS</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>1996*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordenação de Associação de Assentados do Mato Grosso do Sul – COAMS</td>
<td>MS</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento da Terra – MT</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento de Comissões de Luta – MCL</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura do</td>
<td>MG</td>
<td>1996*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The isolated movements are difficult to register due to the rapidity of their actions and the ephemerality inherent to this type of social organization. I've selected a few isolated movements that emerged in the region of the Pontal de Paranapanema between 1995 and 1998. The majority of these movements no longer exist. A number of them united and formed a socio-territorial movement. Others were extinguished.

**Isolated Social Movements -- Pontal de Paranapanema/SP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Municipality(ies)</th>
<th>Beg.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movimento Sem-Terra de Rosana</td>
<td>Rosana</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasileiros Unidos Querendo Terra</td>
<td>Pres. Epitácio</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento Esperança Viva*</td>
<td>Mirante do Paranapanema</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento da Paz</td>
<td>Regente Feijó</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento Terra Brasil**</td>
<td>Pres. Venceslau</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento Unidos pela Paz</td>
<td>Tarabai</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento da Paz Sem-Terra***</td>
<td>Taciba</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento Terra e Pão</td>
<td>Santo Anastácio</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movimento Sem-Terra do Pontal</td>
<td>Teodoro Sampaio</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Research and organization of data: BMF, 1998.

*Dissent of MST -- **Dissent of United Brazilians Wanting Land -- ***Dissent of United for Peace

Observations: Among the changes in the trajectories of these movements, the Movement of United Brazilians Wanting Land expanded, eventually realizing occupations in other municipalities and becoming the United Movement of the Landless. With regard to the Movement of Landless Farmers (MAST), it was formed by the fusion of other social movements, or at least dissidents of those movements.

The occupations realized by these movements may be developed by means of the following types of experiences: *spontaneous and isolated, organized and isolated, organized and spatialized*. The experiences are always forms of struggle and resistance because they
inaugurate a space, in the struggle for land, that is the encampment. With respect to the number of families involved, they can be small groups or massive. There is no very precise reference with respect to the number of families in order to distinguish a massive occupation from an occupation by small groups. However, the massive occupations are determined as such when they involve hundreds or even thousands of families.

The isolated and spontaneous occupations occur primarily by small groups in a singular action of survival when some families occupy an area without configuring a form of social organization. They enter the land in groups and then, by necessity, begin to constitute a social movement. The characteristic of spontaneity is located in the fact of not having a prior concern with the construction of a form of organization, which ends up happening or not in the process of occupation. These occupations may result in an isolated social movement.

The isolated and organized occupations are realized by isolated social movements from one or more municipalities. The predominance is the formation of small groups, but massive occupations have also occurred. The families form the movement before occupying the land. They organize at the grassroots level, realizing various meetings until the consumation of the fact. The tendencies of these movements are the following: they end after the conquest of the land or they transform into territorialized movements. These two types of occupation are fruits of the spatiality and territoriality of the land struggle.

These types differ from occupations realized by socio-territorial movements that execute organized and spatialized occupations. These are experiences of struggle that result from experiences brought from other places. They are contained within a broader political project and can make up part of an agenda of struggles. The meaning of spatialization has as a reference the participation of workers that have already lived the experience of occupation in diverse places and regions, and as militants they spatialize these experiences, working with the organization of new occupations, territorializing the struggle and the movement in the conquest of new fractions of territory -- the settlement -- the land for work. It is within this process that they are educated, in a constant remaking, or, to use the expression of Thompson (1987), making oneself in social movements, constucting their spaces and their times, transforming their realities.

With the diagram below, I attempt to illustrate the ideas presented in this analysis.
The socio-territorial movements realize the occupation through the development of the process of spatialization and territorialization of the struggle for land. While spatializing the movement, they territorialize the struggle and the movement. These processes are interactive, such that spatialization creates territorialization and is reproduced by the latter.\textsuperscript{x}

The experience of the occupation in the process of territorialization is an apprenticeship. It is in the construction of knowledge of the realities of the groups of families and referential struggles that they learn to make their own struggle. \textit{Referential struggles} are those that they have been told about or that they've known. The socio-territorial movements, in their processes of formation, multiply their actions and begin to undertake various occupations in a short period of time or at the same time. In the meantime, during the negotiation process of these occupations -- to establish settlements -- they undertake new occupations, in a continuous spatialization and territorialization. Because of this, we define the \textit{meantime (entretanto) as an important interval of time, when during the meantime of the struggle another begins to be born}. Thus, it is possible to intensify the number of occupations, mobilizing and organizing more and more families. In this sense, the occupation is a socio-spatial process, it is a collective action, it is a socio-political investment of the workers in the construction of their consciousness of resistance to the process of exclusion. And, in this way, the occupations and the number of participants are multiplied.

The process of territorialization strengthened the movements because it permitted the spatialization of experiences that contributed greatly to the advance of the struggle in other
states and regions. Spatialized experiences speed up the organization because the groups of families work from these lived and evaluated experiences. In this sense, the beginning of a struggle has as references other struggles and conquests. And so, upon achieving their conquests, territorializing themselves, they will have their struggles related in the spatialization of the movement. Thus, they continue constructing their histories, their existences.

In the course of their experiences, the landless end up combining various forms of struggle. These occur separate from or simultaneous with land occupations. They include marches or demonstrations, occupations of public buildings and protests in front of credit agencies. These acts intensify the struggles and increase the power or pressure of the landless in negotiations with different government organs. Equally, they expose their realities, receiving support and criticisms of public opinion and diverse sectors of society. The marches and demonstrations are forms of political protest produced in spatialization and producers of spatialities.

Through the development of the procedures of activist practices, in the process of spatialization and territorialization, it is possible to define two types of occupation: occupation of a determined area and mass occupation. The principle difference between these types is in the fact that, in the first, the size of the area may be an occupation of small groups or even larger groups, massifying the struggle. In the second, the mobilization and organization have as a goal the settlement of all the landless families, occupying as many areas as necessary.

In the first type, the occupation is realized with the objective of acquiring only the occupied land. Thus, the families are mobilized and organized to demand the occupied land. If there are more families than can be settled in that area, they begin a new action to gain access to another area. Each occupation results in the establishment of a settlement. The logic of the organization of the families is to mobilize according to the areas demanded. This logic changes with mass occupations. In this case, the landless overcome the condition of remaining constrained by the size of the demanded area. The meaning of the occupation is no longer only the conquest of a determined area and becomes the settlement of all the families, such that the occupation may result in various settlements. This form of occupation intensified and territorialized the struggle. The principle criteria for the settlement of families
is no longer the territorial limit, but instead the time and the forms in which the families participate in the struggle. Thus, as they conquer fractions of territory, more families are joined with the groups of remaining families.

An occupation of a determined area may transform into a mass occupation, not only by the number of families that participate, but also by the unfolding of the struggle. This happens when, after winning access to the demanded land, they become aware of other groups of areas that can be demanded and also consider the possibility of joining diverse groups of families in the same occupation. Thus, it is important to point out that massification does not only involve quantity, but also quality. This is determined by the dimensioning of the space of political socialization, principally in the strengthening of interactive space that happens by means of diffusion of nucleos, sectors, and commissions, as a way of strengthening the movement. In these spaces, the families begin to work more intensely on their needs and perspectives, such as food, health, education, negotiation, etc.

With these practices, the landless meet with each other in movement. They overcome territorial bases and official borders. In the organization of the mass occupations, families from various municipalities and from more than one state in border areas join together. In this manner, they break with localisms and other strategies based in interests which they see as impeding or making more difficult the development of the workers’ struggle. Thus, the criteria for selection of the families to be settled cannot remain restricted to the origins of the families. The people who make up the selection commissions need to consider as criteria, among those determined by the government, the history of the struggle.

In the execution of the occupations, the landless may realize different forms of establishing themselves on the land. There are cases in which they occupy a strip of land and begin with the negotiations, demanding the disappropriation of the area. There are other experiences in which they occupy the land, divide it into lots and begin to work. In others, they demarcate a single area and plant collectively. These practices are the result of the development of the organization of the landless. They are forms of resistance that assert the notion of land for work versus land for exploitation.

The processes of spatialization and territorialization diminish and may end when the landless families conquer all of the latifúndios of one or more municipalities. Thus is
brought to a close what we call the cycle of the occupations. This cycle begins with the first occupations and lasts as long as there exists land to be conquered.

No matter how much one plans, the spatialization of the struggle through the occupation of land is always a necessity. It contains the meaning of all the possible, incessant transformations, when the constructed conjunctures are dissolved or connected, forming new conjunctures, expanding or retreating. Nevertheless, no matter how much the landless have constructed diverse experiences, the spatialization of an occupation is never a completely known fact, nor is it unknown.

The Encampments: Spaces of Struggle and Resistance

The experiences in the encampments mark the life histories of the landless, as exemplified in the description in the following verses:

In these simple verses, I want to relate
Details of the tools of an encampment
Already worn out from so much use
But for me, they represent so much
Because they helped me conquer land
A good axe and machete that I won't give up
A sack of nails, a hammer and a black tarp
A pen and a small notebook for scribblings
Whenever the group in this hard struggle moved
I had to register it.

Tools of a Camper
Lyrics: Clodoveu Ferraz Campos
Music: Amilton Almeida
First National Festival of Agrarian Reform
Palmeiras das Missões, RS, Feb. 4-7, 1999

To be encamped is to be landless. To be in an encampment is the result of decisions based upon desires and interests, objectifying the transformation of reality. The camper is the
landless that has an objective to be resettled. They are two categories of an identity in formation.

The encampments are spaces and times of transition in the struggle for land. They are, consequently, realities in transformation. They are a form of materialization of the organization of the landless, and they embody the principle organizational elements of the movement. Predominantly, they are the result of occupations. They are, thus, spaces of struggle and resistance. And as such, they demarcate within the latifúndios the first moments of the process of territorialization of the struggle. The actions of occupation and encampment integrate processes of spatialization and territorialization. They may be located within a latifúndio or on the margins of a highway, according to the combination and correlation of political forces. They may be the first actions of the families, or they may be the repeated reproduction of this action. There are experiences in which the encampment is the place of mobilization to pressure the government in the disappropriation of lands. Still, in their experiences, the landless understand that camping without occupying will only rarely result in the conquest of land. The occupation of the land is the trump card in the negotiations. Many campers remain for years on the margins of the highways without ever being settled. Only with the occupation have they achieved success in the struggle.

At first glance, the encampments appear to be disorganized groupings of shacks. However, they reveal certain arrangements according to the topography of the site and the conditions of development of resistance to expulsion and the prospect of confrontation with gunmen. They may be located in valley bottoms or on ridges. The arrangements of the encampments are predominantly circular or linear. In these spaces there exist spaces where, often, the landless plant their gardens, establish a "school" and "pharmacy", as well as the place for assemblies. An outside observer only with difficulty will recognize the organization existing within this apparent disorder.

Upon organizing an encampment, the landless create diverse commissions or teams that give form to the organization. Entire families or some of their members participate, creating the basic conditions for meeting their necessities: health, education, security, negotiation, work, etc. In this manner, the encampments frequently have schools or, that is, tarp-covered shacks in which classes are held, primarily the first four grades of primary education; they have a tent or shack that functions as an improvised "pharmacy", and, when
located in a latifúndio, they plant collectively in order to guarantee part of the foods they need. When on the side of a highway, they plant between the road and the fence. When next to settlements, the encamped work on the lots of the already settled, as daily wage laborers or in different forms of sharecropping. They also sell their labor as migrant workers to sugar or alcohol mills or other capitalist enterprises, or to ranchers.

During the 1980s, the encamped received food, clothing, and medicine principally from the communities and institutions supporting the struggle. Since the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, with the growth of the number of settlements, these as well began to contribute to the struggle in various ways. Many loaned trucks for the realization of occupations, tractors for the preparation of the land, and food for the encamped population. This support is more significant when the settled families are joined together in a cooperative. This is a sign of the organicity of the MST.

With the growth of support from communities, institutions, and settlements, and with the consolidation of the MST, the landless have been able to intensify the number of occupations and develop the resistance so as to be able to carry out dozens of simultaneous occupations.

In the second half of the 1990s, in some states, the MST began to experience what it called the permanent or open encampment. This encampment is established in a region where many latifúndios exist. It is a space of struggle and resistance where many families from diverse municipalities are directed and organized. From this permanent encampment, the landless leave for various occupations, where they may be able to settle, or, in the case of expulsion, from which they can return to the encampment. Also, as they continue to gain title to land, they continue to mobilize and organize new families that then make up the encampment. As we've affirmed, the encampment takes place in the process of spatialization of the struggle, inaugurating the territorialization. When organizing the land occupation, the landless promote a concrete action of immediate repercussion. This action is political and is effected as an act of resistance, as a condition for negotiation, the unfolding of which is conditioned by the establishment of the fact. The occupation places in question capitalist ownership of the land, in the process of the creation of family property.

The encampment is a place of constant mobilization. Apart from a space of struggle and resistance, it is an interactive and communicative space. These three dimensions of space
of political socialization are developed in the encampment in different situations. At the beginning of the process of formation of the MST, in the 1980s, during different experiences of encampments, the families left for an occupation only after months of grassroots preparation. During this period, the landless visited communities, related their experiences, provoked debate and intensely developed the space of political socialization in its communicative and interactive dimensions. This procedure makes possible the establishment of a better organized space of struggle and resistance, since the families are aware of the types of confrontations of the struggle. During its process of formation, through the very demands of the struggle, the MST constructed other experiences. Thus, during the grassroots efforts, the interactive dimensions were not developed and ended up developing in the space of struggle and resistance. Moreover, when there is a permanent or open encampment, the families can begin the struggle inaugurating the communicative space, developing the interactive space in the space of struggle and resistance. This is the case when the landless are struggling to win various estates and the families arrive at the encampment as others are being settled.

In the encampment, the landless periodically analyze the political circumstances of the struggle. This political reading is facilitated for the socio-territorial movements because they are in permanent contact with their coordinating offices, so that they are able to make analyses from broad political references such as, for example, the negotiations that are occurring in the state capitals and Brasília. Thus, they associate forms of local struggle with that in the capitals. They occupy land many times as a form of pressure to open negotiations, and they stage marches to the cities, occupy public buildings, organize protests and meetings, etc. Through the correspondence between these spaces of activism in the countryside and the city, there is always a determination of one over the other. The local realities are very diverse, such that the realities of the families that are engaged in the struggle tend to predominate in the final decisions. Thus, the political lines of actuation are constructed from these parameters. And the representative moments of the MST carry this spatiality and this logic, since a member of the coordination or national directory participates in the process from the encampment to the broader scales: regional, state and national.

With these actions, that count with the support of political articulations, the landless seek to change the circumstances in order to stimulate the process of negotiation. Still, they
are not always able to change the situation. When negotiations arrive at an impasse, violent confrontations can take place, such as, for example: the Praça da Matriz in Porto Alegre and the massacre at Eldorado dos Carajás.

All of the encampments have their histories in the struggles of the landless families. It is worth highlighting at least two of the historic encampments in the process of formation and territorialization of the MST: the encampment of Encruzilhada Natalino, in Ronda Alta, Rio Grande do Sul, and the encampment of the Capuchins, in Itamaraju, Bahia.\textsuperscript{xiv} Guaranteeing the existence of the encampment by means of resistance, impeding the dispersion caused by different forms of violence, is fundamental for the success of the struggle for land reform. This was the first concern of the MST-MT in its first occupation in the state, as it is a concern of all the landless in each new occupation.

Saving the occupation, with the transferal of families out of the latifúndio, always guaranteed a place for the encampment, makes up part of the logic of resistance. When an expulsion takes place -- this word, expulsion (\textit{despejo}), also means to free oneself from impediments, so that people are treated like things, in an act of violence legitimated by relegation of the struggle for land reform to the power of the judiciary (Fernandes, 1997; Moreyra, 1998) -- the families transfer the encampment to other areas such as, for example, the margins of highways or to lands ceded by city governments or other institutions. When they are expelled from the margins of highways, they mount encampments within nearby settlements, those landless territories which are the expression of the conquest of land and resistance.

Sustaining the encampment is a form of pressure to demand the settlement. And this is a practice of the MST, to guarantee the encampment until all of the families are settled. For the other movements, this practice is not as permanent. Often they negotiate a settlement with the government and, believing in the promises, the families return to their municipalities. Such that, evidently, the majority of settlements are not realized. It is not uncommon, as well, that many families that remain encamped end up giving up for a number of reasons, principally for a lack of perspective and because of the violence of expulsions and gunmen.

For the federal government's politics on implantation of rural settlements, the encamped (and the families that are mobilizing to occupy, participating in grassroots work) are also a form pressure and a contribution of the landless to the realization of the registration
of the benifitted families, as well as to the intensification of the assessment of areas. This is undisputable proof that the actions of the federal and state governments derive from the actions of the social movements. The encampment is the space of struggle and resistance in the process of spatialization and territorialization of the struggle for land. Between the time of the encampment and the conquest of the settlement (that configures the territorialization), spatialization is developed. One form is through pilgrimages and/or marches.

The march is a necessity in order to expand the possibilities of negotiation, to establish new facts. In their teachings and lessons learned, through their experiences, the landless have had diverse historical references. Some examples used in the "mística" (collective acts or rituals of meaning and identity production) are: the migration of the Jewish people to the promised land, in the struggle against slavery in Egypt; the march of Ghandi and the Hindus to the sea, in the struggle against British imperialism; the marches of the Mexican and Chinese revolutions, among others. In this manner, the landless occupy land, public buildings, and transform them into political spaces from which to denounce exploitation and expropriation, struggling to change their realities. Or, as the filmmaker Paulo Rufino was able to express in a manner as poetic as objective:

> From the countrysides, from the cities, from in front of palaces, the Landless, this people from the margins of nearly everything, take their lessons from the seed and from history. Thus expressed in the type of lost geography that remains between the highway, by which travel the people with someplace to go, and the fences, where those people are that have someplace to be, the Landless know what to do: they plant. And they plant because they know that they will only have the meal that they are able to harvest, just as they know that they will only have the country that they are able to conquer. (Paulo Rufino, *The Song of the Earth*, 1991)

**Organicity and Vinculation**

An important condition for the advancement of the struggle for land is the *organicity* of the social movements. This is represented by the interaction between the distinct activities
of the social movement and by the expression of the accumulation of forces, in the
spatialization and territorialization that according to Bogo is:

[. . .] the conquest of social and geographic spaces, and their maintainence through
organized intervention of individuals or a mass movement, elevating the level of
consciousness through the pursuit of objectives to be achieved in the short, medium,
and long term [. . .] The accumulation of forces is measured not only by the quantity
of people that participate in the activities, but also the level of efficiency and the
diversity of activities that involve more and more people, that participate directly and
the influence that they have on others. (Bogo, 1999, p.138-40)

The organicity is a characteristic of socio-territorial movements. It is represented in
the manifestation of political power and pressure that the landless possess in the development
of the struggle, as much for access to land as for other struggles that unfold during this
process. The separation of struggles for access to land from the struggles to resist expulsion
from that land is a way to weaken the movements. Thus, the consciousness of the realities in
which they live is fundamental to the construction of organicity in the process of formation of
the identity of the subjects of the struggle. And this condition is associated with the
vinculation of the families with the movements. As Bogo describes, quantity only serves as a
reference in order to understand organicity if it is associated with the participation of the
people in diverse activities of the organization, in their different scales: local, regional, state
and national, according to, clearly, the extension of the actions of the social movements.

The vinculation of the families with the movements is a component of the dimension
of organicity. And, in this sense, it is a qualitative component. As it is a quantitative
component as well. Thus it is quite laborious to calculate the degrees of vinculation of the
families to the movements, as it is a qualitative attribute of identification, whose dimensions
are difficult to measure. Still, the vinculation expresses identity of the members with the
movement they construct. The greater the vinculation, the more organic is the movement, a
fundamental condition for its consolidation.

**Conclusion**
This text represents a continuous reflection. My objective is to amplify this theoretical essay through debate with colleagues researching social movements so that we may combine references that facilitate theoretical construction through the elaboration of a conceptual body that helps us to realize different geographic readings of social movements.

Translation: Malcolm K. McNee

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1 An excellent theoretical work on this theme is *Sujeitos irreverentes* by Nogueira, 1993.
2 With respect to the construction of this concept, see Fernandes (1996, p.225 et seq.).
4 See as well Mitidiero Jr. (1999) and Lima (1999).
7 Labor movements, by their very structure, are territorialized movements, even though they are not social movements.
8 The concept of mass occupation has as its significant elements: quantity and extension. Thus, the large number of families involved is considered as well as the practice of unfolding of the struggle, when the occupation is organized not to conquer a determined area but instead to conquer determined areas for all of the families.
9 A good example is the social movements in the state of Paraná during the first half of the 1980s: MASTRO, MASTES, MASTEN, MASTRECO, and MASTEL, that formed the MST-PR.
10 A first theoretical essay on the processes of spatialization and territorialization can be found in Fernandes, 1996.
11 An example of this is the Decree 35.852 of the state government of São Paulo. In its article 1, §1 determines that families not resident for at least two years in the region cannot be settled.
12 Among the criteria determined by the government are: to be a rural worker, not to be landowner, nor a public employee, etc.
13 Rare examples include the municipalities of Mirante do Paranapanema, SP, Ronda Alta, RS and Pontão, RS, where the landless conquered the greater part of the latifúndios.

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Works Cited


