

EUROPEAN MASTER ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATISATION
Academic Year 2002-2003

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THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN THE PROMOTION OF THE RIGHT TO FOOD
AND THE AGRARIAN REFORM IN TODAY'S BRAZIL

*Freedom of expression and the media coverage of the MST
in the pre-Lula and post Lula election period*



Picture by Sebastião Salgado

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To my mother, and to her never-ending advices

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“The MST, or Landless Workers’ Movement, one of the strongest peasant movements in the whole of Latin America, has long been fighting for agrarian reform and right to land to enable people to feed themselves. This movement has emerged out of frustration at the extreme concentration of land in the huge estates of rich landowners (latifundios), the practice of grilhagem (land-grabbing), and the ongoing process of the modernisation and liberalisation of agriculture, which is pushing even more peasants off their land.”

(Jean Ziegler¹, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food)

¹ From the Report on the Mission to Brazil, submitted on January 3, 2003 in accordance with the Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/10, see <http://www.unhcr.org>

1 - INTRODUCTION

The basic assumption of this research is that one of the *rationales* of a consolidated democracy is the *de facto* realisation of freedom of expression. In particular, we will consider the level of respect for this right evaluating a specific parameter, which is the existence of a proportional correspondence between the role played by a political and social actor in the society and its effective visibility and representation in the “media arena”.

The “actor” in question is the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST, Landless Rural Workers’ Movement), which since 1984 has been the major and most active promoter of an effective program of agrarian reform in Brazil. We will try to clarify what is the level of this “correspondence” between society and media scenario in a country, such as Brazil, where democracy was officially introduced in 1985, yet where many socio-economic contradictions and internal tensions still represent a serious threat for its concrete and complete realisation.

What is the role of information and mass media regarding the implementation of art.11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)² and art. 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)³, which affirm *the right of everyone to adequate standards of living and right to food*? May free information and involvement of public opinion contribute to “accelerate” the realisation and the respect for social, cultural and economic rights (hereinafter ESC)? The issue has to be considered in the light of the crucial aspect of the justiciability of the ESC rights according to the interpretation included and well addressed in the General Comment n.12 to Art. 11 of the ICESCR, which defines the margin of effective state obligations for this category of rights. In particular, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, the UN monitor organ for the ICESCR, indicated the “right to be free from hunger” as being part of the minimum “core content” of the right to food. This definition is usually referred to in international law as the part of the law directly applicable and justiciable and that states shall ensure immediately and in all circumstances, “whatever the level of development the may have” and “if necessary with the help of international community”.

At the same time, it is interesting to interpret this topic according to the concept of indivisibility of human rights, as stated in the Vienna International Conference on Human Rights of 1993. In this sense, in fact, we can underline the importance of one of the key civil and political rights, such as freedom of speech and to express opinions (*art. 19 UDHR, art.19 ICCPR⁴, art. 13 of the American*

² ICESCR, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted 16 Dec. 1966, entered into force 3 Jan. 1976 [hereinafter ICESCR].

³ UDHR, Universal Declaration on Human Rights, adopted 10 Dec. 1948 [hereinafter UDHR].

⁴ ICCPR, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted 16 Dec. 1966, entered into force 23 May 1976 [hereinafter ICCPR].

Convention on Human Rights, art. IV of the American Declaration of the Rights and duties of the Man etc), in order to encourage the implementation and realisation of economic and social rights, traditionally considered as human rights of the “2nd generation”.

WHY THE CASE OF BRAZIL?

Brazil is an emblematic example of a country in order to conduct an “integrated discussion” on the right to food and freedom of expression. Essentially, because the situation of respect for both these categories of rights has recently raised international concern. But also because, in our view, the lack of implementation of a *de facto*, not merely formal freedom of expression in this state has often affected and compromised the effective realisation of right to food and right to land. This form of “damage” was possible through the exclusion and under-estimation of the agrarian reform from the top agenda of the media coverage, thus altering and misrepresenting the political priorities of the country.

1.1 RIGHT TO FOOD AND RIGHT TO LAND

Brazil is one of the countries with the highest rate of social and economic inequality in the world⁵, with enormous negative records in the field of education, health, hunger, malnutrition of children and working conditions of women. Although it signed the ICESCR in 1992, Brazil has never presented a report on the situation of the application of the Covenant before the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In this context, the only “monitoring initiative” has been concretely taken by the national civil society, which in 2000 produced a document on the main violations of ICESCR in the country.

Why has agrarian reform to be considered a priority for Brazil in terms of respect for ESC rights? First of all, it has to be underlined that, unlike the Western and developed countries standards, agriculture is still a key-voice in the Brazilian economy, equivalent to the 11% of the Gross National Product (GNP) and representing 16% of the current working class.⁶ According to a 2002 report by INCRA⁷, the executive office for the implementation of the agrarian reform, more than 13 millions people, that is 78,85% of the rural workers, are employed in the family agriculture system. However, they have less access to land and public funds than the big producers do.

⁵ According to the UNDP (United Nations Development Program), 20% of the richest population control more than 64% of the national income, while the 20% of the poorest population survive with less than 2,5% of the national income.

⁶ Source: IBGE, 2001. The EU average weight of agriculture is 2% of the GNP, while the US average is 1,1%.

⁷ INCRA, Institute of National Colonisation and Agrarian Reform.

According to the German Ngo FIAN⁸, today less than 3% of the landowners control more than 50% of the cultivable land. At the same time, more than 4 millions of families of rural workers do not own land and live in conditions of extreme poverty, that is, with less than \$80 per month. The IBGE⁹ census of 2000 established that only 18% of rural families have access to water and 9,5% have access to a sewer system. Moreover, illiteracy affects 32,6% of the 28 millions of children over 5 and 65% of people from 45 to 49 years old.

An intense process of land concentration, over the last 40 years, has provoked the progressive impoverishment of small producers and farmers, whose majority has been forced to abandon their lands and to migrate toward the biggest cities.

According to IBGE statistics, only between 1995 and 1999, 4,2 millions of Brazilians abandoned the rural areas. Between 1985 and 1996, 920,000 small properties, which are agrarian settlements inferior to 100 hectares, have disappeared. Simultaneously, there was a significant growth of large properties of more than 2,000 hectares. From 1992 to 1996 they passed to occupy from 16,6% to 22,7% of the total cultivable land (with an increase of 80,6 millions of hectares). Today, the big “fazendeiros” (landlords) and foreign multinational corporations control between 121 and 178 millions of hectares, which is 47% of the national cultivable land. In particular, 1030 landowners of properties, consisting of more than 20,000 hectares, control 15% of the total cultivable land.

This situation has frequently triggered violent land conflicts. According to the statistics of CPT (Pastoral Land Commission)¹⁰, just between the years of 1988 and 2000, 1517 rural workers and trade unionists were killed. This reality is also the result of state policies which explicitly supported big landowners (*latifundiarios*), particularly during the military regime and, to some extent, also since the “official” transition to democracy in 1985, when there were held the first free elections. Land concentration, thus, is one of the main causes of the violation of the right to adequate food and to adequate standards of living.

1.2 FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

But beyond the high concerns regarding the application of the right to adequate food, Brazil has recently raised international attention also within the context of freedom of expression, independency of media and right to receive impartial information. According to the International Federation of Journalists and the French NGO “Reporters without borders”, the most recently

⁸ FIAN, Foodfirst Information Action Network, based in Heidelberg, Germany, is one of the main NGOs committed toward the implementation of the right to get food and to feed oneself, which in 1999 has played a key-role in the elaboration of the General Comment n.12 to art. 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights.

⁹ IBGE, Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics, 2000.

¹⁰ CPT, a Catholic organisation which works with landless workers and that traditionally supported MST.

known case in this regard is that of Tim Lopes, a *TV Globo* journalist killed in June 2002 in Rio de Janeiro because of his investigations into the role of the powerful drug trafficking mafia. The same organisations claim that 15 journalists have been killed in Brazil since 1991, with the majority of the cases remaining completely unpunished.

In terms of the independence of media, the situation is particularly worrying especially concerning the broadcasting media system, where the national “giant” *TV Globo*, despite the proliferation of satellite and cables dishes, is still the only network received in many areas of the country¹¹. Two historical examples of political manipulation include: the biased manner in which *TV Globo* reported on the final presidential debate in 1989, where it was thought to have swayed some undecided voters away from Lula and toward Collor in the last days of the campaign; secondly, the case of Lidice da Mata, a left-wing candidate who surprisingly won the mayoralty of Salvador da Bahia in 1992, and against whom the political group of Antonio Carlos Magalhães, a long-time Governor of the State close to the big landowners of the region, used its local newspaper and the *Globo* affiliate television station in a smear campaign that undermined Mrs. da Mata’s ability to govern. Of course, in a free market economy, owners of the means of communication are free to behave as they wish – but when public airwaves are consistently used for private ends, the quality of political debate suffers. Non-elite actors, especially popular organisations and progressive movements, find it difficult to express alternative viewpoints.¹² According to the *Press Observatory of São Paulo*¹³, the Brazilian media system is basically dominated by 7 major groups, or “families”¹⁴, which also in the recent, democratic past demonstrated a strong convergence at the moment of isolating anti-government actors such as trade unions and social movements. “Times of state official dictatorships are gone, but today we are in presence of an evolution of forms of censorship. The media oligopoly works out in a very informal, subtle, but still very compacted way” (Luis Antonio Magalhães, *Press Observatory of São Paulo*).

1.3 WHY THE MST?

MST is a major actor of civil society in the promotion of social change lobbying to put the agrarian reform at the top of the political agenda. Born in 1979, but officially constituted in 1984, today it has become one of the most successful land movements of the world, emerging during the transition from the authoritarian rule to democracy and directly responsible for settling 350,000

¹¹ According to the UNDP the Globo group represents also one of the biggest media networks of the world.

¹² See Hochstetler K., Kingstone P. and Power T in *Democratic Brazil, actors, institutions and processes*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000, pp. 162- 182.

¹³ Luis Antonio Magalhães, of the *Press Observatory*, was interviewed in São Paulo by the author on 17/03/03.

¹⁴ They are: the group related to Roberto Marinho (TV Globo), and the families Mesquita (Estado de São Paulo), Abravanel (TV Network SBT, internet, radio), Frias (Folha de São Paulo), Sirotsky (RBS group), Nascimento de Brito (Jornal do Brasil) and Saat (TV Banderantes).

families in 7 millions hectares of land over the past 24 years. After the introduction of democracy in 1985, MST gradually gained more political impact, in opposition to the UDR¹⁵ movement, with the *double slogan* “land reform by law or by disorder”. It was in reference to its *double strategy* and conception about the State, typical of the post-85 social movements. On one side, in fact, MST supports dialogue with the State, the judicial system and the institutional channels (see the official meeting with President Cardoso after a two months march of protest in 1997). However on the other side, the movement coordinates formally illegal actions of land occupation, moving a cluster of families onto state-owned or unproductive private land.

1.4 THE PARTICULAR TIME REFERENCE

The present study will analyze a historical period for Brazil: the transition from the more conservative government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso towards the first¹⁶ left-progressive government of the former trade unionist Lula Ignacio da Silva, who came into office on 1st of January 2003. In our view, this represents a particularly significant period: the last presidential campaign of Lula, in fact, has created huge expectations in the public opinion in terms of social justice and, in particular, in terms of the effective realisation of the agrarian reform. The main challenge and slogan of his government, in fact, is the “Zero Hunger” program, aiming at eradicating hunger and malnutrition in the country, a problem which affects 44 millions of people according to 2002 FAO estimates¹⁷. During the government of Cardoso, there have been moments of high social tensions due to strong delays in implementing the land distribution program. Some of the most significant episodes include: the massacre of 19 rural workers in *Eldorado dos Carajás* in April 1996; the symbolic “invasion” of the Cardoso’s sons’ farm in 2002 by landless movements; and the approval of the controversial “anti-invasion” presidential decree in 2000 (see below).

In this context, the first 100 days of the Lula’s government in 2003 were characterized by the mass media *strict* attention toward the issues related to his “promises of social policy” during the electoral campaign. We have chosen not to consider the period after March 2003 in order to avoid the possible distorting effect in the media agenda resulting from the coverage of the war in Iraq.

For these reasons we will conduct a comparative analysis focusing on the first trimester of 2002 and the first trimester of 2003.

¹⁵ The *UDR (Rural Democratic Union)*, founded in 1985, is a social movement formed by a group of wealthy ranchers, widely viewed in Brazil as the modern reincarnation of the rural “coroneis”, or colonels. The UDR’s first victory was the announced Decree of Agrarian Reform of President José Sarney on Oct.10th 1985, a version of PNRA (National Plan for agrarian reform) on the slogan “There’s no fear for those who produce”. The consent of landholders was gained by the explicit assurance that productive *latifundias* could not be expropriated.

¹⁶ The first left-wing president since the return to democracy in 1985. The previous “experiment” in this sense, with the presidency of João Goulart in 1961-64, ended with a military *coupe d’état*.

¹⁷ See <http://www.fao.org>

1.5 METHODOLOGY: THE COVERAGE OF MST IN THE PRINTED MEDIA

The main objective is to identify whether there have been cases of censorship, under-representation or misrepresentation related to the agrarian reform major promoter by the national media. We will address possible news distortion leading to an erroneous, unclear or ambiguous understanding of the MST's claims and of the land reform issue in the public opinion.

Regarding the methodological instruments, the analysis will be conducted exclusively in the printed media. The inclusion of broadcasting media, in fact, would have required a more complex and longer classification of material, with the risk of not being exhaustive and sufficiently clear. Firstly, we will categorize the news covering MST in the 4 major national newspapers¹⁸ into eight main issues of analysis, which will be defined in chapter 3. Secondly, we will describe the attention and the attitude of the media toward the major “players”, or actors, of the *public debate* on the land reform. Thirdly, we will consider the so called “news frequency parameter”, that is, the association between the amount of news regarding MST and particular periods or events during the two trimesters. Then, we will try to focus on the language impact in the media coverage. Finally, we will discuss two significant recent cases, in which there could be claimed a violation of freedom of expression and of the right to receive impartial information on the issue of the agrarian reform.

¹⁸ The selection of the media was realized in order to include the first 4 newspapers (*Folha de São Paulo, Estado de São Paulo, O Globo, Jornal do Brasil*) in terms of national circulation data and in terms of representation of different political and cultural orientations.

2 - MEDIA AND MST

2.1 SOME RECENT KEY-EPISODES

The history of the relationship between mass media and the landless workers' movement in Brazil is undoubtedly a history of conflict, tension and reciprocal incomprehension. At the same time, we can say that thanks to the recent media attention MST was able, probably against its own expectations, to gain an increasing visibility and political force.

Especially during the 90s, there was an escalation of media events involving directly MST and the peasant's claims, in a way that, as the researcher Comparato said, is for many reasons absolutely surprising. According to Comparato, between the years 1993 and 2000 the movement progressively dominated the media social agenda traditionally monopolized by other actors, such as the CUT, for example, which is the main trade union of the country (Comparato, 2000).¹⁹ If 10 years ago the agrarian reform topic was associated also with other social entities, such as for example the rural trade union CONTAG and the progressive wing of the Catholic Church CPT, today it is almost completely identified with MST.

The first symbolic media event was the official meeting between some MST representatives and the Brazilian President Itamar Franco in 1993, 9 years after the MST's official creation in Cascavel, in the state of Paraná. This event represents somehow the "cornerstone" of the gradual process of legitimation of the movement which, even passing through alternative moments of social and political acceptance, comes up to February 13, 2003, when a MST national coordinator was formally invited to participate in the political program of the Lula government. But, significantly, this last episode, as we will see, received a scarce coverage compared to other, more "spectacular" facts involving MST, such as the land occupations.

This is the list of the most significant media events between 1993 and 2002:

- 1) The meeting with the President Itamar Franco in 1993
- 2) The massacre of Corumbiara in August 1995
- 3) The massacre of Eldorado dos Carajás in April 1996
- 4) The MST's march to Brasília in April 1997
- 5) The coordinated MST actions in 19 states in May 2000
- 6) The occupation of the Cardoso's sons' farm in Buritis in March 2002

¹⁹ Bruno Konder Comparato conducted a specific research calculating the number of editorials dedicated to the MST and to the CUT in the four main Brazilian newspapers (see supra note 18) during the Cardoso's era (1993-2000), showing the progressive growth of visibility of the MST compared to the decrease of attention toward the CUT. See Comparato, Konder B., *A Ação Política do MST*, São Paulo, Expressão Popular, 2003.

Among the episodes mentioned above, four deserve particular attention: the massacre of Eldorado dos Carajás in 1996; the march to Brasília in 1997; the action's intensification in May 2000; and the invasion of the Cardoso's family farm in March 2002. They represent the highest points of media coverage, which in some occasions coincide with attitudes of compliance and sympathy in the public opinion, and in other occasions are associated with very low level of popularity.

On April 17, 1996, the most shocking episode of human rights violations against rural workers took place: 19 landless peasants were killed by the federal police during a peaceful manifestation of protest against the government delays in the land distribution plan. That situation was highly covered by press, radio and TV channels, who for the first time gave space to the image of MST members as victims, not as "provocative subjects", as often had occurred in the past. The IBOPE²⁰ reports that, in 1996, 86% of the population supported the agrarian reform. The impact of the episode was so powerful that after some months President Cardoso created a new specific ministry for the agrarian reform, in order to "attenuate" internal critiques and international concern on the peasants' condition in Brazil.

One year later, MST organized the first national march towards the capital Brasília involving more than 100,000 people according to MST data, and 30,000 according to the police. The different regional groups of the movement, coming from 22 different states, met on April 17²¹ in front of Planalto square, the centre of the federal government. The following day three leaders of the movement were formally received by the President²². The march had been followed daily by the media for several weeks²³, and according to many experts, it increased the public opinion sympathy for MST claims, strongly affecting the popularity of President Cardoso. The IBOPE's statistics of 1997 report 94% of general support for the agrarian reform and 77% of support to MST as political actor, which is the highest level of compliance ever reached by the movement. However, as Comparato observes, this data does not necessarily indicate a real *understanding* of the Brazilian population about the concrete meaning of an agrarian reform, which often remains a more romantic, abstract concept. This happens for two fundamental reasons. First of all, the fact that today 80% of the Brazilian population is urban, that is mostly "disconnected" with the concrete and daily problems of the rural areas. Secondly, it has to be considered the poor tradition of technical, pragmatic, not ideological information produced by the media on the topic. In this sense, in our view, the role of the media is absolutely strategic as instrument of social contact and as mean to

²⁰ IBOPE, Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics.

²¹ April 17th 1997 was the first anniversary of the Carajás massacre.

²² The three MST national leaders José Rainha, João Pedro Stedile and Gilmar Mauro.

²³ Gohn reports that only the Folha de São Paulo dedicated 163 headlines to the MST during the month of March; see Gohn M.G., *Mídia, terceiro setor e MST*, São Paulo, Editora Vozes, 2000, p.138.

involve the urban people towards the enormous problems, contradictions and human rights violations of the rural areas.

The third moment of strong visibility was in the month of May 2000, when MST suddenly intensified its actions in 19 states out of the 27 in the Republic, challenging the authority and the credibility of the Cardoso government. On that occasion, there was a general convergence of the national and local media in depicting a very negative image of the protesters, often suggesting and justifying repressive measures by the government. In terms of public opinion, the support rate towards the agrarian reform was still high (91%), but much less associated with the MST's struggle (63% of support).

The fourth most dramatic moment for MST visibility was the episode of the invasion of the farm belonging the sons of President Cardoso on March 24, 2002. The fact will be broadly explained and referred to in the following pages. Suffice here to say, that undoubtedly it represented the most difficult political phase for MST, which had to defend itself not only from the criticism of the government and the conservative sectors, but also from the traditionally close party of Lula, from relevant components of civil society, intellectuals, experts, international activists, including even some members of the national coordination of the movement. Most of the newspapers not only openly condemned the action as such, but vigorously questioned the entire role of MST in society, prefiguring its possible definitive failure and disappearance. The level of ethical media polarisation, probably, has never been so strong, in the sense that MST's members were almost generally labelled as the "bad, violent, arrogant guys", while the Cardoso government became the authentic symbol of the "national pride" and the only guarantee of "public order".

Gohn²⁴ identified also a further emblematic moment of popular legitimation in the 90s: the broadcasting of the soap opera "*O rei do gado*" ("The cattle king") in the *Globo* network in 1996. In this particular "media context", for the first time fictional stories described landless peasants within a more romantic, peaceful, non violent or intimidating frame. The soap opera, which in Brazil often represents a moment of cultural and historical reflection, was an enormous success and the same MST national leader João Pedro Stedile admitted that it somehow contributed to getting people more involved with the rural worker's life. The journalist Arbex Junior, current director of the magazine *Brasil de Fato*, opposes this interpretation saying that most of the "*O rei do gado*" stories were "artificial, fake, only presenting an idyllic version of the rural life, with the beautiful women that you can see in the shopping centres"²⁵.

²⁴ Gohn M.G., *Os sem terra, ONGs e cidadania*, 2ª edição, São Paulo, Cortez editora, 2000, p.159.

²⁵ José Arbex Junior was interviewed by the author in São Paulo on 18/03/03.

2.2 HYPOTHESIS: ZERO HUNGER, AND NOW?

After closing this partial reconstruction of the recent political and media history of MST, we will try to undertake the hard but compelling challenge to evaluate the media consequences of the unprecedented attention given to the problem of the right to food in the political agenda of the current Lula administration, started on January 1, 2003. In this perspective, there are a number of questions to set out and to which we would like to answer in this study.

Firstly, is it possible to associate Lula's Hunger Zero Program with a significant change in the media's attitude toward the historically unsolved issue of the right to food and of an equal land distribution in the country? Can we observe a "transformation" in terms of media independency from the big interests of the historical elites who governed the country over the past two centuries?

Secondly, what are the possible political consequences of a major visibility, if any, of MST in the media agenda? Can we speak of a process of democratic growth? What role will the media actors play in this process?

Or more, what is the quality of information produced on the topic so far, and what the possible benefits or "damages" in terms of the citizen's awareness of the importance of the issues involved? How is it possible to conciliate the media approach toward the complex historical and juridical aspects of the agrarian reform with a human rights-oriented vision of the problem? Are the market interests and priorities of the newspapers compatible with more ethical claims in terms of implementation of social and economic rights?

In the not so remote past when Brazil was under military dictatorship (1964-1985), and to some extent even today, the Brazilian media has been often co-participant in the realisation of a form of symbolic violence. Violence intended as censorship. This alternative form of violence, but not less powerful, has many times served as a fundamental instrument for the justification of real, concrete violence by the elites.

Today, even if in a pretty consolidated democratic context, it is impossible to ignore the existence of 40,000 of deaths every year in the most violent and poorest parts of the country, that is, in the urban slums and in the rural areas. Jean Ziegler, the special UN Rapporteur for the right to food, defined the situation of Brazil as a "civil war" after his 18-days official visit in the country in March 2002. In fact, in accordance with the UN standards, a country with more than 15,000 killings per year is to be considered in a "war situation". Mr. Ziegler denounced that almost 1/3 of the Brazilian population is affected by under-nourishment, affirming that "this phenomenon is completely unacceptable in a country which is now one of the world's largest food exporters"²⁶.

²⁶ Ziegler, see supra note 1.

The Special Rapporteur also observed that “unlike a state as Niger, almost completely occupied by desert, and where poverty and lack of human development can have a natural explanation, Hunger in Brazil presents only social and economic responsibilities, as result of a totally unfair order”.

Mr. Ziegler stated that, “Hunger in Brazil should be regarded as genocide, and that people dying from Hunger are assassinated.” He indicated the *latifundium*²⁷ as the “first enemy of the Brazilian population”, exalting the role of MST and CPT for its “fantastic work in the struggle for the agrarian reform”. In its intervention, Mr. Ziegler said that Brazil was violating the international treaties which it ratified on the issue of the right to food and adequate standards of living (art. 11 of ICESCR, in particular), announcing to include specific recommendations on the government activity at this regard.

The UN representative’s position was strongly attacked by the *Estado de São Paulo*, which tried to minimize his critiques by referring to his remarks as talking about a “*too quick travel in a very complex country like Brazil*” and publishing an editorial titled ‘*These genius technicians and their poor reports*’.²⁸ Mr. Ziegler was generally introduced as a “socialist” because of his past experience as an MP for the Swiss Socialist Party, while his approach to the right to food was defined “superficial”. At the end of the article, the journalist Miguel Jorge affirmed that Mr. Ziegler would have produced “better results opting for a trip in other countries, such as those of the Sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Asia or other states of Latin America”. Definitely because, according to the newspaper, “right to food violations do not exist in Brazil”.

In January 2003, the Un Special Rapporteur presented his final document on the condition of the right to food in Brazil, addressing that “*the Government of Brazil has not fully met the obligation to spend ‘the maximum available resources’ on the progressive realisation of the right to food, and has not taken enough action to protect against violations of the right to food*”. In the report, it is underlined that landownership is extremely unequal - 2% of landowners own 56% of all available land while the smallest 80% of landowners own only 12%- with nearly 100 million hectares of uncultivated land.

²⁷ Large land property.

²⁸ Estado de São Paulo, 23/03/2003, article of Miguel Jorge.

3 - THE COVERAGE ANALYSIS

In this part we will focus on the news produced by the 4 main newspapers in Brazil in the first trimester of 2002 and the first trimester of 2003. The choice of the media is defined by two basic criteria: their average of daily circulation and the broadness of their political area. These newspapers are, in order of circulation, the *Folha de São Paulo*, *Estado de São Paulo*, *O Globo*, and the *Jornal do Brasil*. The first objective is to compare eventual differences of quantitative and qualitative coverage in the two periods, and to find out whether the advent of the Lula government may be associated with a significant change in the media approach to agrarian reform. Significant change is intended in terms of pluralism, quality of the debate and broader information provided. Also, we will try to evaluate whether the general conditions of access to mass media show a general improvement for MST. Thus, we want to analyze the level of complexity of the approach trying to consider what quality of information prevails in the topic and what is the possible consequential level of understanding of public opinion about the main human rights violations related to agrarian reform. Finally, we will contextualize the issue of freedom of expression and pluralism in the Brazilian printed media, trying to indicate if there are cases or situations which can be considered as a threat for these fundamental democratic rights.

Beyond the political significance of the change of government and the evaluation of the first 100 days of Lula in power, the first three months of the year in Brazil are in general particularly interesting because of the concentration of three key-events for MST and from different points of views: the World Social Forum of Porto Alegre in January, the *Carnaval* in February-March, and the sowing month of March for the peasants.

The first event represents the biggest international conference of civil society of the year, which for the first three editions, since 2001 to 2003, took place in the Southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre. In 2003, more than 5,000 organisations, groups, and associations and about 100,000 participants coming from 156 different countries met in the forum to discuss the main social emergencies related to the new context of economic, cultural and social globalisation. In this “frame”, MST has always gained particular attention from national and international media, participating in conferences, debates, pacifistic rallies, and being officially recognised as international interlocutor for the discussion of the right to land and the right to food.

The second event is Carnival which, besides being a tourist and folkloric manifestation, constitutes an enormous alternative cultural opportunity of representation of the Brazilian society

and a symbolic debate on national or international political and social topics²⁹. In particular, the most recent editions of Carnival in Rio de Janeiro were characterized from an increasing level of politicisation, with the participation of “samba schools” specialized in the representation of political themes, such as the “Vila Isabel”, often very provocative and stimulating. All the allegoric parades are usually covered by the most important national and regional TV networks, radio, newspapers and magazines, so every proposal and specific choice of a “samba school” is always also an input to discuss about the cultural, social and political agenda of the country.

Finally, we would like to suggest particular attention toward the sowing pre-rain period, which in Brazil represents a strategic moment for the peasants, particularly for those waiting for land assignation. In this part of the year, they intensify their protests and *actions* against the government and local authorities in order to push for a quicker and more efficient application of the agrarian program. Any assignation recognized after the sowing month and after the rain season, in fact, would be completely useless in order to improve their life conditions in the rural areas (see “adequate standards of living”). We will evaluate and discuss the coverage referring specifically to three general parameters: the issues covered, the actors and subjects involved in the media debate, and the news frequency of the coverage. For the first two criteria, we will consider both a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. On one side, in fact, we will pay attention to the total amount of news produced by the newspapers and to the mere distribution of news in different categories. On the other side, we will look at the so called “value” of the category, that is the general tendency toward a more positive, neutral or negative representation, or “frame”, of it in the media space. We define the value in terms of “advantage/disadvantage position” of the issue and of the actor. For the last criterion, the distribution of news in the two different periods will be presented, trying to isolate the key-days or moments with a higher level of coverage and those, on the contrary, which have been completely ignored or which did not gain much space in the media.

3.1 THE ISSUES

We have selected issues through 8 general categories, which represent the most important arguments of debate about MST as central social and political actor for the agrarian reform. These issues are as follows: the MST actions, the relationship with the government and the opposition, the reaction of the landlords’ movements, the active policy of MST, the reaction of civil society, the juridical aspects of the agrarian reform, the debate on the GMOs, and the educational initiatives of the movement. There will follow a brief description of each category.

²⁹ The famous Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal defined the carnival “*a possible mean of social education*”, in a interview released to A Folha de São Paulo on 04/03/03.

ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES IN THE MEDIA AGENDA

- a. The actions of MST
- b. The relationship with the government/opposition
- c. The reaction of landowners' movements (UDR)
- d. The active policy of MST
- e. Reactions and comments by civil society actors
- f. Reference of juridical aspect of the issue
- g. Transgenic agricultural products
- h. Educational initiatives of MST

3.1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE DIFFERENT PARAMETERS

According to the most classical methodology of content analysis in mass media studies, we will focus on the *level of legitimacy* of the subject considering the prevalence of elements of conflict or consensus (positive vs. negative or neutral representation). Regarding the first two parameters, for example, our hypothesis is that the context of the Lula government should trigger a more positive representation of the movement in the media, putting MST in the light more as an “effective political interlocutor” rather than a “radical protest movement”. In this sense, the space and the relevance given in the news to the first parameter (“actions of MST”, especially where depicted in a negative way as “invasions” instead of “occupations”) should present a decrease in the first trimester 2003, while the space dedicated to the second parameter (relationship with the government, in particular) should follow the opposite trend.

1) THE ACTIONS OF MST

In this section we will evaluate the relevance of the reference to the movement's direct action strategy, counting the amount of articles on this issue compared to the total amount of articles published on MST. Thus, we will focus on the presentation through some key-linguistic “marks” such as “invasion” as opposed to “occupation” (which MST claims to prefer in order to define this kind of initiative in the unproductive lands). Also, attention will be put on the possible disparity between the effective amount of land actions which took place in the first trimesters of 2002 and of 2003, and the correspondent coverage on printed media. Does a variation of land occupations correspond to a variation in the media's coverage of the issue?

2) THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT/OPPOSITION

In this section, we will analyze the presentation of the relationship between MST and members of the executive and legislative powers in order to evaluate what is the level of “political recognition” attributed to the movement in the media agenda.

3) THE REACTION OF LANDOWNERS’ MOVEMENTS (hereinafter “UDR”)

The third parameter is constituted by the relevance attributed to the declarations or initiatives of the major social movement representing the interests of the big landowners and producers, such as UDR, in opposition to the policy and the messages of MST.

4) THE ACTIVE POLICY OF MST

In this part, we will include all the effective proposals of the movement in the national political agenda, such as suggestions for the approval of law, manifestations or declarations for or against specific acts of the government, and any other political position officially taken by MST which was reported in the media.

5) REACTIONS AND COMMENTS BY CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Here, we will classify the choice of presenting opinions and comments on the MST’s initiatives expressed by different players of the Brazilian civil society. In particular, we will consider: the position of CPT, the main Trade Unions (especially the CUT and the rural Union CONTAG), other relevant churches and religious movements, experts, representatives of the academic world, and international human rights organisations (such as Amnesty International, Pax Christi, Human Rights Watch etc.).

6) REFERENCES TO JURIDICAL ASPECTS OF THE ISSUE

In this part, we will pay attention to the space dedicated to the clarification of the key juridical aspects of the MST’s claims, which, according to the main experts on the topic, are fundamental in order to have a rather objective understanding of the legal problem of the right to food and right to land. We have defined two elements of main concern.

First of all, we will focus on the juridical definition of “act of land occupation”, which represents the principal strategy used by MST in order to pressure the government. The “strongest point” for MST is the reference in a the Brazilian Supreme Court decision (*Superior Tribunal da Justiça*) in 1996, in which collective land occupations (conducted by a group of landless families) were not characterized as “crime against the right to property under the penal code”, which is guaranteed by art. 5 (22) of the National Constitution. Rather, the Court noted that the applicant’s intention, which

was to push for a quicker agrarian reform, was “substantively distinct”, especially because of the state’s inaction on the question of land reform, in contradiction to the “imperative for change” set forth in the Constitution. The main reason for this interpretation was that the land occupation, according to the Court, was aiming at realizing a fundamental principle protected by the Constitution, which is the “social function” of the property (art.184)³⁰. In this sense, unproductive property shall be expropriated and redistributed to the poorest landless people in order to provide their basic and elementary needs. Secondly, we will focus on the coverage of the issue of Cardoso’s “Anti-invasion temporary measure” (law 2027 of May 2000) and on the space given by the media to the clarification of its juridical and technical consequences for MST.

7) TRANSGENIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS (GMOs)

Denouncing of the cultivation of transgenic products, or GMOs, has recently become one of the most important aims of the movement, along with the Latin American NGOs assembly called *Via Campesina*. MST opposes the GMOs for two fundamental reasons: the lack of scientific evidence proving that these products are not toxic for human beings on a long-term, and the fact that the GMO’s trade is generally in the hands of few foreign multinational corporations, which would damage the family agricultural system in Brazil (small producers).

8) EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES OF MST

The last issue regards another important aspect of the social activities of MST in the rural areas. MST promotes the creation of schools in the settlements and organizes specific courses of management for small agricultural producers and workers. In 1995 MST also received a UNICEF prize for its educational work in the agrarian reform areas. “The struggle for education is so important as that for the land occupation. Then, it is crucial that media deals with this aspect as well, in order to let people know that MST does not care just about land, but also about schools and education” (Stedile, in Mançano, 1999³¹).

³⁰ In accordance with Article 184 of the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, the State has the obligation to expropriate for social interest, in view of the agrarian reform, the lands which can be considered unproductive. The most ambiguous aspect of this article, however, is that so far there no clear criteria to define the “productive property”, whose exact definition was left to subsequent laws, never approved.

³¹ See Mançano Fernandes B. and Stedile J.P., *Brava gente, a trajetória do MST e a luta pela terra no Brasil*, São Paulo, Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 1999.

3.1.2 THE RESEARCH DATA

3.1.3 The quantitative approach

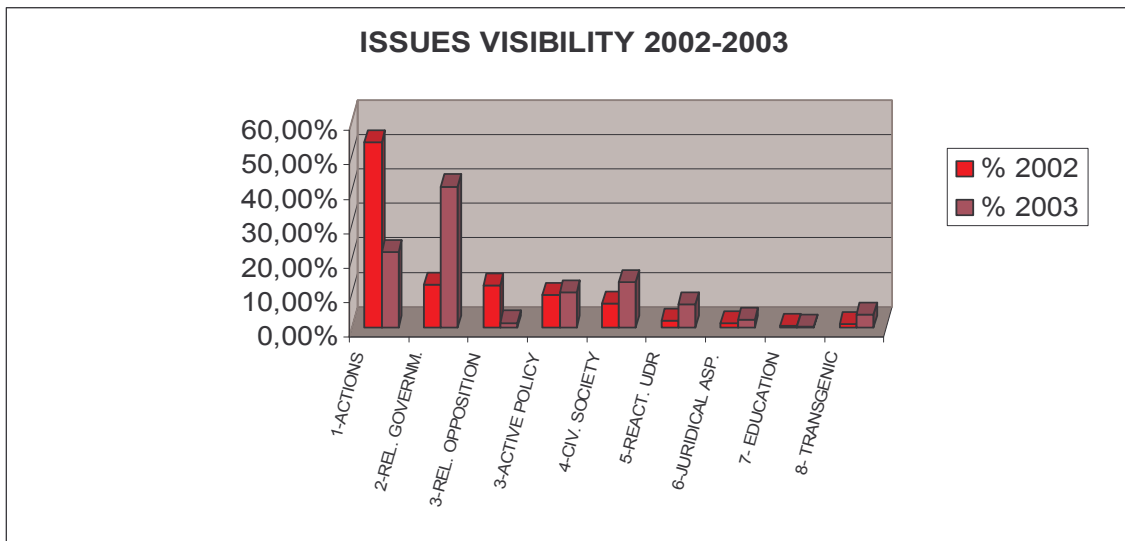
In 2002, media coverage showed a clear prevalence of the “actions” topic (53,94%), in which MST was mostly associated with invasions of land, occupations of public buildings, rallies and acts of violence, such as land conflicts and direct clashes with the landlords’ movements and police. In second place, there is news concerning the relationship with the national institutions (24,47%), which include two main interlocutors represented: the government (50,52%) and the opposition (49,48%), mostly shaped by the Lula’s Workers Party (PT, *Partido dos Trabalhadores*).

A particular episode that has had a strong influence in the coverage of this period was the invasion of the rural propriety owned by the sons of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in Buritis, in the South-East of Brazil (24th of March 2002). In the three days after the episode there was an incredible increase of media attention, with an average of 51 news stories per day compared to the average of 2.5 in the rest of the period. Hundreds of national and international journalists came into the small town of Buritis, 20 km from the President’s family farm (*fazenda*) to report the act of invasion, the strategies of the National intelligence, the Army and the Military Police in order to liberate the propriety. Moreover, they described step by step the negotiations of the Government’s envoys with MST leaders. The MST showed its “ingenuity”, in this case, when invited a famous photographer of the *O Globo* in order to report the “act of protest”. But with more than 300 people scattered about in the propriety, it quickly became extremely hard to control both reactions and abuses. Some MST members broke into the bedroom of the Presidential couple, took from the kitchen food, imported whiskies and various objects. Everything, in the meantime, was being filmed and showed by the media. The portrayal of the movement was very rough. Editorials in all of the newspapers, no matter the political orientation, depicted MST protesters as aggressive vandals and shameless thieves. Also the strongest and most active supporters of the MST’s social battle were extremely disappointed from that initiative. This disappointment spread from members of the Catholic Church to senators of the Lula party, as well as across various of activists, experts, and political leaders both national and international.

The attitude of the journalists, in this case, was fairly unilateral: the high majority of their comments was absolutely negative, and the episode represented a perfect opportunity for them to denigrate all other demands of MST, including the battle against transgenic soy cultivation, the juridical aspects concerning the application of the agrarian program, up to the MST support for small producers. Due to its “illegal” approach to the agrarian reform, MST was generally described

as a negative and even dangerous partner for Lula’s ambitions in the coming elections, which were to take place only 6 months later. Any analysis of the social and political emergencies and problems behind the initiative were completely “sacrificed”.

In our view, this constitutes a proof of the superficiality of the media debate on the role of MST. As consequence of the generalisation and over-estimation of the image as *violators*, not only of the right to property, but of the same mere privacy of the President of the Republic, the MST’s members were perceived in the public opinion exclusively as a group of invaders for all homes of the Brazilian citizens. And the TV, in this case, had a crucial responsibility.



GRAPH 3.1 – ISSUES VISIBILITY IN 2002 AND 2003

But the information on the movement, highly monopolized from the case of Buritis, especially from March 24 to March 31, also presented other kinds of tendencies. First of all, it is interesting to note that the news related to the civil society gained only the 7,1% of the total space. The political initiatives of MST, different from invasions, occupations, and manifestations, received the 8,68% of the coverage. The representation of the reaction of the landlords’ movement was generally low in 2002, with the 2,10% of the coverage, compared to the almost 7% of 2003. This phenomenon is also explicable in terms of the fear of the biggest landlords’ corporations to lose their influence on the political power with the Lula government. In 2003, most of the news associated with the landlords, in fact, regards the formal protests against the government by Luis Garcia, the national president of UDR, the principal social movement representing the interests of the landlords and biggest agricultural producers.

In 2003, in general, we have a completely different “panorama”. In this year, the news regarding the comments of civil society on the agrarian reform has jumped from 7,1% to 13,2%. Simultaneously, there is only a small increment of active policy news (from 8,68% to 10,27%), but,

in particular, articles concerning the relationship between MST and the government have tripled (from 12,63% to 39,62%) and there has been a radical decrease of action's coverage (from 53,84% to 22,01%). In 2003, unlike that of 2002, the relationship with the opposition is almost invisible (1,46% vs. 12,36%), so that all the "institutional news" is concentrated on the development of the dialogue between the Lula coalition and MST.

Even if in 2003 we do not have a so called "mediatic" powerful episode as the invasion of the President's family rural residence, it should be noted that, in the first trimester of 2003, there has been rather an increase of MST's actions, which pass from 10 to 41. Thus, the total amount of invasions of lands and public buildings in the first three months is very close to the average of 2000 (57) and 2001 (49), which were two of the tensest seasons, in terms of relationship between the government and MST.

How can we interpret these data? One way, in our view, can be found in the consideration of the enormous changes that occurred in the political sphere. In particular, there are three elements of interest in this perspective. First of all, there is the launching of the government program "Fome zero" (Zero Hunger), which represents the main objective of the Lula coalition. In many cases, the discussion about the program indirectly implied a reference to the MST's claims, in terms of the right to food and the right to feed oneself, as about the overall consideration of the agrarian reform measures. Although only in 8,59% of the news regarding MST there is an explicit mention of *Fome zero*, one should also consider a less direct and visible effect of the general "constructive political climate" that the program triggered, and that produced an higher interest toward the agrarian reform and MST.

In other cases, however, *Fome zero* has been criticized by some MST's leaders as a superficial and substantially "charitable" initiative, focusing more on collection of funds for food distribution, instead of promoting new mechanisms in order to make peasants economically and structurally independent. Anyway, from a strictly journalistic point of view, it is evident that the *Fome zero* revolutionized the media agenda, forcing the newspapers to take into account and to mention a higher number of relevant actors involved in the agrarian issue.

The second element of transformation is represented by the nomination of the former vice-governor of the Southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, Miguel Rossetto, as Minister of the Agrarian Development. Rossetto belongs to the left sector of the PT, the so-called DS wing (Social Democracy), with a tradition of close ties with social movements. In particular, during his 4-year activity as vice-governor in Rio Grande do Sul (where the capital is Porto Alegre), Rossetto realized a policy of open dialogue with MST, trying to involve its leaders in the most important decisions for the program of land distribution and for the creation of permanent settlements.

When Lula announced the nomination of Rossetto, in December 2002, the *Folha de São Paulo* significantly chose the title “*The Minister wanted by MST*”. The presence of Rossetto in the place previously occupied by Raul Jungmann, one of the worst “enemies” of MST in the Cardoso administration, represented a real revolution in the government’s attitude toward social movements. But Rossetto’s initiatives, as we will better discuss talking about the actors, have been often strongly opposed by the four newspapers.

The third decisive factor of change in the political scenario is the institution of the CEDES (Council for Economic and Social Development), a consultative organism created by the Government in order to involve different sectors of society in the implementation of the major political reforms. The CEDES is an instrument of application of the principle of “participative democracy”, one of the historical flags of the PT during his long opposition to the government of Collor (1989-1992), Itamar Franco (1992-1994), and Cardoso (1995-2002). The body has been created as a parallel organism to the Congress, even if without decisional and binding powers. Among the 92 members, Lula also indicated the name of Roberto Baggio, a regional coordinator of MST in the state of Paraná, which is one of the regions with the highest level of land conflict.

The choice of Roberto Baggio has a particular meaning in order to understand the transformation of the political arena still in progress. On May 10, 2000, during a manifestation organized by MST in order to protest against the delay in the State-promised actuation of land distribution, Baggio was attacked and wounded by the military police in the state of Paraná, then governed by the right-wing PFL member, Gustavo Lerner. At that time, most of the local and national media, including the first magazine *Veja* (with a weekly circulation of more than 1 million copies), described Roberto Baggio and the MST protesters as belonging to one of the worst species of vandals, members of a Stalinist and terrorist movement of Latin America. The killing of one of the demonstrators by the police, as well as the arrest and beating of children and women participating to the peaceful rally, did not call much attention in the media agenda.

On February 13, 2003, Roberto Baggio was invited to take part in the first meeting of the new government body. Some newspapers spoke ironically of the fact that the seats of the CEDES’s members had been attributed following an alphabetic order, so that the MST leader, without tie and looking like a “strange person in the wrong place”, was beside Roberto Setúbal, the director of the Bank Itaú, one of the main bank institutions of the country.

These three facts, in our view, are absolutely determinant in order to understand as media was somehow “forced” to mention MST in different categories of news as well, introducing the image of the movement as “official or semi-official interlocutor” of the agrarian reform and attenuating that of “radical and anti-democratic group”.

The three categories of news, which received the lowest level of coverage, are the issue of the juridical aspects, the GMOs debate and the MST's educational initiatives, which add up to 3,12% of the total visibility.

3.1.4 The qualitative approach

Once identifying the general presence and visibility of the main issues, it is interesting to point out their intrinsic value - that is, the typology of the media's attitude toward the topic. In order to establish the value of news, we have taken into account two general parameters, a direct and an indirect one. Firstly, there is the evaluation of the journalist toward the movement initiatives and politics, which can be considered direct when the he personally intervenes in the article, expressing its opinion. When the writer only limits himself to "report" a fact, like a manifestation or a mix of declarations of different subjects with different positions on the topic, we considered the journalist's intervention as neutral. A totally objective repartition of the attitudes is, however, not always possible. In some circumstances, the author intervenes with specific characterisations, with the use of adjectives, comparisons, and metaphors, which are evidently partial. In other circumstances, his point of view can derive from the simple wording of the headline. In this case, given the particular importance that the article headline has in a country with a so low newspapers reading rate³², most of the times, we have classified as positive or negative a news whose texts could represent an objective report of chronological facts, but whose headline or subtitle, instead, was trying rather to address a particular and specific political interpretation of the news.³³

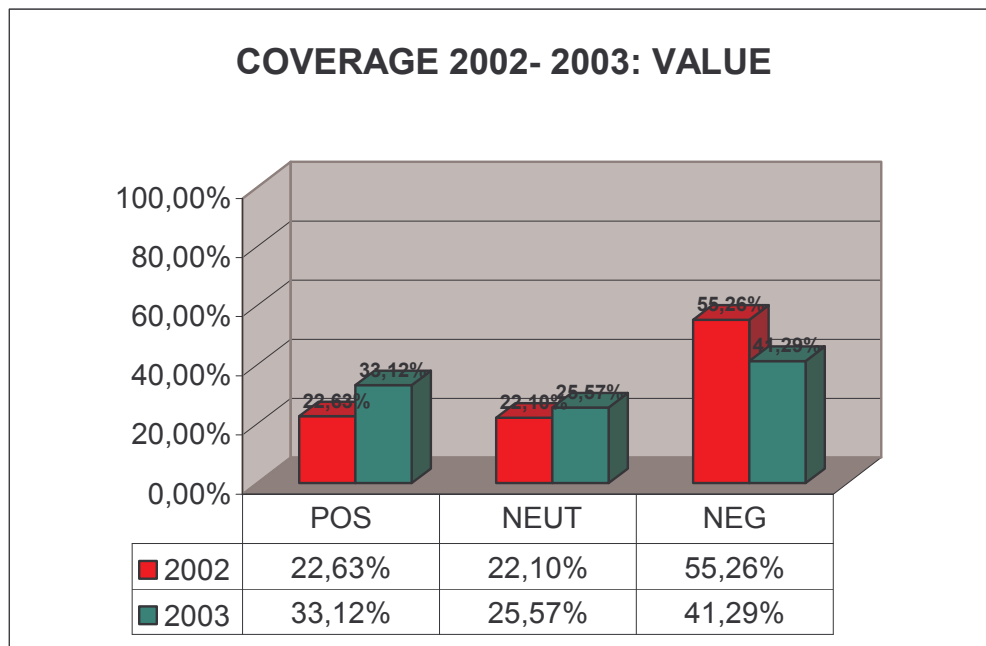
The second criterion of news evaluation is the indirect mention of only one part of the debate, with a specific position on both the topic and the role of MST. In this case, the exclusive interview with a MST leader has been generally considered "positive" to the extent that the journalist permits the expression of his particular point of view without strongly contesting it or intervening too much. Although it does not always mean that the newspaper completely agrees with every opinion and political position of the person mentioned or interviewed, we preferred to focus on the mere choice of one particular interlocutor of the *problematique* as a kind of evident signal of what perspective the reader should give priority to, according to the specific article, on that particular day, and in that

³² This disparity is best understood by comparing the circulation of daily newspapers in Brazil, which in 2000 was paltry 55 per 1,000 inhabitants (1 every 20) compared to 143 in Argentina, 147 in Chile, 205 in Venezuela, and 240 in Uruguay (UNESCO 2000). See Hochstetler K., Kingstone P. and Power T., *Democratic Brazil, actors, institutions and processes*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000, pp. 162- 182.

³³ On 27/03/02 *O Globo* published an article with the phrase "It is a act of peace", quoting a MST leader who was describing a peasant march in Brasilia, beside the headline "MST INVASIONS" in capital letters, which created a visual and conceptual association between the words "invasion" and "act of peace" against the MST's leader intentions. The movement's claims, in the overall perception of the text, resulted strongly discredited and somehow ridiculed.

particular spatial-temporal context. With such a so delicate question for the country, in our view, it is hard to believe in the naïve choice of an actor by a journalist, without taking into account all the following consequences in terms of perception of political orientation of the newspaper. The prevalence of a version of the issue is naturally something partial and subjective.

Given this short clarification, we can introduce the data. According to the research, in 2002, 55,26 % of the news, apart from the value of the single categories, can be classified as negative, 22,1% as neutral, and only 22,63% as positive. Moreover, most of the non-negativity trend (positive and neutral values) is concentrated in the week of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (71% of non-negativity average compared to the 44% of the entire trimester, and 32% of positivity vs. 22% of the entire trimester), whereas the negativity rate presents a general constant trend (a 55% average) with the top level during the occupation of the Cardoso's sons' farm in Buritis (a 70% negativity average from March 24 to March 31). The data are fairly different in 2003. Even if the negative news is always the most frequent, with 41,29% of the total coverage (but 14 points lesser than 2002), it is important to observe a relative growth of the neutral news (passing from 22,1% to 25,57%) and, above all, the significant change of the positive news, which represents 33,12% of the general coverage, compared to the 22,63% in 2002 (see the table below).



GRAPH 3.2 – GENERAL VALUE OF THE NEWS IN 2002 AND 2003

Considering all the single categories, it is possible to underline some important differences in the two periods. In 2002, there is a strong negative characterisation of the MST's actions (66,34% compared to 47,61% in 2003). Neutral news of this category represent only 23,90% compared to the

45,71% of 2003. Thus, invasions, occupations and manifestations were mostly seen as a double provocation against the government and against the opposition, which, according to the majority of the editorials of the trimester, should have isolated MST in order not to be damaged in the forthcoming October presidential elections. The movement and its claims for the implementation of the agrarian reform were generally described as radical, anti-historic and anti-democratic. The Minister of the Agrarian Reform Raul Jungmann constantly spoke about “acts of terrorism” referring to the MST’s occupations, while the government candidate for the presidency José Serra frequently defined the movement as “Bolshevik” and the Minister of Justice Aloysio Ferreira was often mentioned in order to comment the “crimes” of MST.

The episode of Buritis certainly accentuated this tendency, which, anyway is also present during the rest of the period. MST and the peasant movements are generally depicted as anti-government subjects, whereas ample space is dedicated to the government’s declaration on the big agrarian program successes during the 7-year Cardoso administration. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Raul Jungmann announce, at many occasions, that the government was able to settle more than 600,000 families (almost 3 millions people) expropriating something like 20 millions hectares. Even if with not irrelevant differences in terms of political support, the newspapers, with the only exception of the *Jornal do Brasil*³⁴, gave much emphasis to these data, celebrating the image of Cardoso as the first President in Brazilian history who actually actuated a real and strong agrarian reform. In this case, most of the civil society movements, led by MST and CPT, tried to respond presenting totally different and less “optimistic” statistics, based on the official ABRA³⁵ report published in January 2002, which indicated no more than 267,000 families settled and less than 11 million hectares expropriated. Also, the INCRA reported no more than 400,000 families, but specifying that it was just temporary and not confirmed information. Moreover, MST, CPT and CONTAG, the main rural workers trade union, denounced the flight from the rural areas of more than 800,000 families from 1994 to 2001 as result of the government policy, mostly in favour of the export agriculture (big properties, landlords’ interests), and penalizing the familiar dimension of production (small properties).

But this alternative version did not gain much attention, and the general image provided, especially through the headlines, was of peasants “never satisfied” and unable to appreciate the good and positive efforts of the President. A “statistics comparison” did never really find a real visibility, and the fact that one of the data sources of MST was an executive Institute such as the

³⁴ But it has to be considered that the *Jornal do Brasil* represents the last of the big national newspapers, with an average of daily circulation of 70,000 copies vs. 352,000 daily copies of the *Folha de São Paulo*, 281,000 of the *Estado de São Paulo* and 274,000 copies of *O Globo* (Source: IVC Institute, Brazil, 2002).

³⁵ ABRA, Brazilian Association for the Agrarian Reform, is one of the most reliable sources in term of agrarian statistics in the country.

INCRA, was not sufficient to change the media attitude. In this sense, the category of news called “relationship with the government”(at the second place in visibility) shows a predominance of elements of clear conflict and negativity (55%). The only partially open interlocutor of MST in 2002 seems to be the Lula party, main component of the opposition, who, however, is represented more in a negative light (56%) than as positive (13,72%) toward the movement, despite the strong historical and political ties between PT and MST. During the 80’s, in fact, MST had a crucial role in supporting many PT candidates in various local administrations, helping the party to organize its structure across the national territory.³⁶ PT and MST, moreover, were two of the most active political actors during the historical national campaign “*Diretas já*” (direct election) in 1985, whose main objective was to promote the organisation of the first and democratic elections in the country after the end of the dictatorship (1964-1985). From its origins, the Workers Party has always openly supported the social and political battle for an effective agrarian reform, so that, in many cases, some political experts defined them as “parts of the same coin”. Nevertheless, MST never gave up its outsider role, preferring to maintain its constituency as independent social movement instead of becoming an official political party.

The highest moment of tension between PT and MST in 2002, according to the media coverage, happened on February 26, when all the newspapers, with the only exception of the *Estado de São Paulo*, emphasised the declaration of José Alencar, member of the Liberal Party (PL) and pre-candidate to vice-president in the Lula coalition for the October elections. Mr. Alencar, commenting the last MST’s actions, defined “*incompatible the influence of MST toward PT with his possible participation in a Lula government*”. His position was somehow a reaction to previous strong critiques from many MST’s national leaders, such as João Paulo Rodrigues and Gilmar Mauro, about the alliance between PL and PT, who defined José Alencar a “representative of the reactionary class” of the country. Regarding the forth category, the “active policy” of the movement (with 8,68% of the visibility in 2002), it is worthy to focus on the 60,6% of positivity, which, in most cases, only means lack of evident condemnation by the media, and only 18,36% of negative news. In this section, we have considered the MST’s proposals in matters that vary from the approval or abolition of laws, manifestations and press releases against the creation of the ALCA³⁷, up to peaceful manifestations related to women rights (March 8th) and against the “American wars”.

³⁶ See Stedile J.P. in Stedile J.P., Mançano B., *Brava gente, a trajetória do MST e a luta pela terra no Brasil*, São Paulo, Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 1999, p.36.

³⁷ ALCA, Area of free trade in the American continent, is an economic project strongly supported by the US administration but rejected by many Latin American countries who, denouncing some parts of the plan as the maintenance of the export subsidies for the North American producers, see in the ALCA an instrument of economic colonialism.

This news, along with that focusing on the role and reaction of civil society (7,1% of visibility and 70% of positivity), represents the categories more “untouched” by journalists’ negative comments, and which provide a more objective, pluralist and open vision of the agrarian problem, and not only in relation to the role of MST. In fact, as we will better observe later, analyzing the specific actors involved, civil society is not a “compact, monolithic” pro-MST subject, but rather an assembly of different voices who vary from the Catholic Church to universities experts, and from the Trade Unions to the non-profit and NGOs dimension. But, in 2002, “active policy” and “civil society” stand together for just the 15,78% of the coverage, compared to the mostly negative-oriented “relationship with the government and opposition” (24,47%) and the “actions” (53,94%).

In terms of value, the positive attitude toward MST in the news, regarding the relationship with the government, passed from 24,21% in 2002 to 37,24% in 2003. The neutrality level rose from 14,73% to 18,87% and the conflict index dropped from 61,05% to 43,87%. Thus, even if the negative attitude is still the dominant one, it has to be observed a tendency of strong polarization of positions, with the difference between positive and negative news reducing from 36 to 6 points.

In both periods, the poor attention given to educational issues should be stressed, which, although presenting 100% of positivity, corresponds to only 0,50 % of the coverage in 2002 and 0,41% in 2003. According to José Arbex Junior, former journalist of the *Folha de São Paulo*³⁸, the scarce space given to education is further evidence of “bad faith” by the media toward the role of MST in the Brazilian society. “*The MST is characterized from a incredible level of organisation of schools for small agrarian producers in the settlements, with an original system of education, which, in many remote rural areas of the country, represents a real model and one of the few possibilities to reduce the phenomenon of illiteracy*” (José Arbex Junior). In this sense, many MST activists are frequently involved in seminars and lectures in the most important and prestigious universities of Brazil, such as the Unicamp of São Paulo and the Uerj of Rio de Janeiro, for example. The almost complete absence of such an issue from the “media arena”, in our view, contributes to create distorted information about the overall image of the movement in the public opinion, so occulting many of the economic and social emergencies of the country and the discussion about possible solutions. The right to receive impartial information, in this case, is simply ignored.

But another sad evidence of the partiality of communication is represented by the almost inexistent debate about the juridical issues and demands of MST (1,31% of visibility in 2002 and 2,30% in 2003). As said in the introduction of this chapter, the movement bases its legitimacy on two fundamental juridical facts: article 184 of the 1988 Constitution, on the right of expropriation to

³⁸ J.Arbex Junior, see supra note 20.

protect the social function of land, and the juridical lack of condemnation of the “act of occupation” of unproductive lands, in accordance with a sentence of the Brazilian Supreme Court in 1996 (see above). The two elements are mentioned only 2 times in the first trimester 2002 and 3 times in the first trimester 2003. On the contrary, most of the already scarce debate on the topic refers to sentences of eviction indicted by regional or local tribunals after an invasion of MST peasants. That of 2003 presents a rather different trend on this issue, with a higher level of negative comments (54,54% vs. 20% of 2002), a significant reduction of neutral attitude (27,27% vs. 80% in 2002) and the first “appearance” of pro-MST juridical references (18,18 in 2003, 0% in 2002). We intended “positive juridical references” for MST, for example, those related to the question of “*grilhagem*”, a Portuguese word, which indicates the practice of ancient and current landlords to falsify document of property in order to justify the possession of unproductive lands. The phenomenon is crucial, in order to understand the overall context of the peasant’s protests in the last two centuries of the Brazilian history, and it represents one of the key facts that the landless workers’ movement mentions in order to “justify” its formally illegal initiatives, such as invasions. The philosophy of many MST’s leaders at this regard is very simple and to the point: “who stole first is guiltier”.

Two other issues have a very scarce weight in the media in 2002, but for completely different reasons: the reaction of the landlords’ movement (2,1% of visibility) and the debate on GMOs (genetically modified organisms). In the first case, we can see that the general opposition to MST is almost completely monopolized by the government and by part of the opposition (especially during the “hot week” of Buritis). So, from one hand, the media, including those more conservative like the *Estado* and *O Globo*, seemed to have a “sufficient number” of MST “enemies” to refer to without being forced to consider UDR as reference. On the other hand, it is also probable that most of the landlords’ movements regarded to be sufficiently protected by the Cardoso and Jungmann initiatives and declarations, so that there was no pressure to gain visibility in the media. Most of the Latin American sociologists were also prefiguring the possible extinction of UDR as social movement after the big success of the 80’s, during the phase of transition from the military dictatorship to democracy. In that period, the UDR, leading most of the landlords’ claims, was able to get recognized as a powerful political interlocutor and it was officially involved in the elaboration work of the 1988 Constitution. According to George Meszaros³⁹, it was thanks to the UDR’s pressure that the final version of the Constitution limited the concrete possibilities of an agrarian reform in the following years. However, in 2003, the Lula win seems to “have resuscitated” the political importance of the landlords and their visibility increases from 2,1% to

³⁹ G. Mészáros, *Taking the Land into their Hands: The Landless Workers' Movement and the Brazilian State in* «Journal of Law and Society», vol. 27, no. 4, December 2000, pp. 517-541.

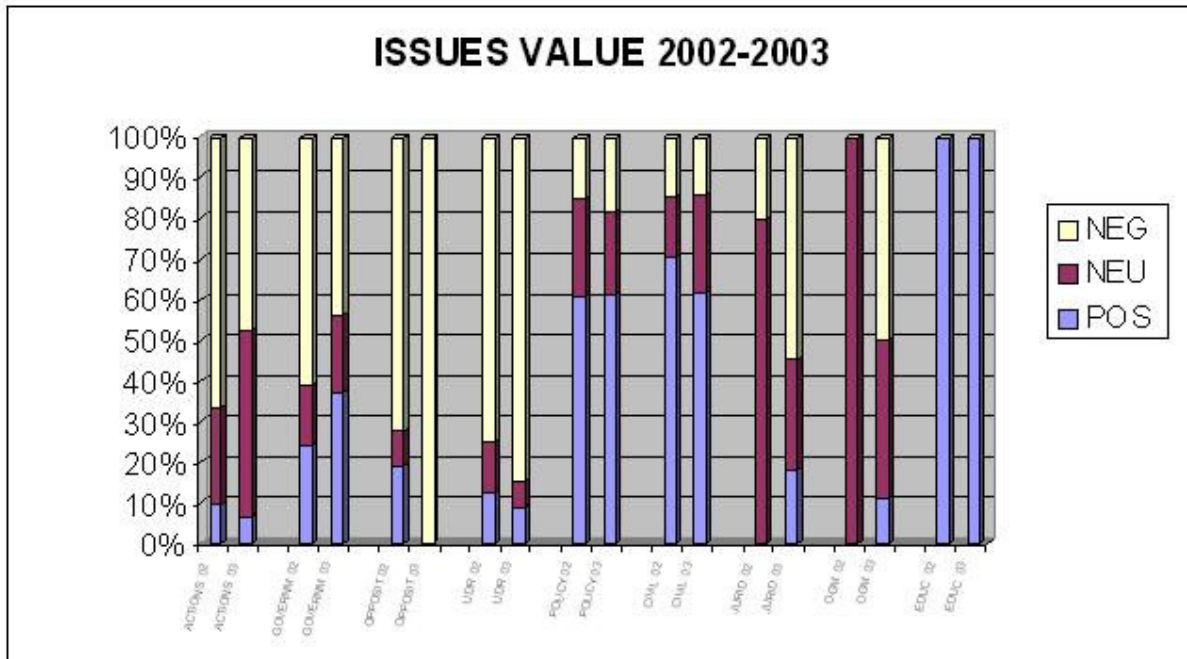
6,91% only in terms of news focusing on MST⁴⁰, very close to the level of coverage of the active policy of the landless workers (10,27%). Finally, some considerations have to be made about another MST crucial battle for the implementation of the right to food. It is the case of the campaign against the legalisation of transgenic agricultural products and, more specifically, of soy, for which Brazil is one the main producers in the world. Transgenic soy is prohibited in Brazil, but, during the last years of the Cardoso's administration, many parties of the coalition were in favour of the introduction of the product, which, in their view, would enhance the levels of production and exportation. In 2002, MST, many civil society groups and the Lula party declared to be contrary to this proposal, arguing that there was no scientific reliable study able to guarantee on the high level of health security of the modified soy. Moreover, rural workers opposed the measure, saying that it would have strongly affected the small producers, allowing large multinational corporations, such as the American Monsanto, to hold a monopoly on the market. The economic consequences on poor peasant families, according to them, would be catastrophic, creating more indigence and precariousness, and forcing more people to abandon rural areas, only to continuously flow into urban slums of large cities. In the media scenario, the debate on this topic had a very small space in 2002, with only 1,05% of the total visibility, and showed a weak increase in 2003, rising to 3,77% and becoming the 6th most covered issue. In qualitative terms, another significant change should be underscored: while the 2002 debate on GMOs only presented anti-MST positions (100%), opposing or censuring the MST's campaign, in 2003, the non-negativity index reaches 50% of the coverage (11,11% positive-oriented and 38,88% neutral-oriented). The negative attitude of 2003 is mostly the result of a specific campaign launched by *O Globo* in March, which wanted to demonstrate that some MST peasants of Southern Brazil were cultivating transgenic soy.

The journal, representing 40% of all coverage on the issue in the trimester, tried to discredit MST and its general role in the agrarian reform debate, accusing it to be incoherent and deceitful. The case, however, was never completely confirmed, since other official rural sources, different from MST, responded by saying that it was an isolated case of a small group of peasants who no longer belonged to the movement and who were not aware of cultivating genetically modified products.

⁴⁰ That is, considering the total amount of news exclusively dedicated to the reaction of landlords' movements to the MST role in the agrarian reform. The calculation is different from the number of times in which the landlords are mentioned as subjects and interlocutors among others.

TABLE 3.1 - ISSUES VALUE: COMPARISON 2002-2003

ISSUES	POS	NEU	NEG
ACTIONS 02	9,75%	23,90%	66,34%
ACTIONS 03	6,66%	45,71%	47,61%
GOVERNMENT 02	27,08%	22,91%	50%
GOVERNMENT 03	38,62%	18,57%	41,79%
OPPOSITION 02	19,14%	8,51%	72,34%
OPPOSITION 03	0%	0%	100%
UDR 02	12,50%	12,50%	75%
UDR 03	9%	6%	84,84%
POLICY 02	60,60%	24,24%	15,15%
POLICY 03	61,22%	20,40%	18,36%
CIVIL SOC. 02	70,37%	14,81%	14,81%
CIVIL SOC. 03	61,90%	23,80%	14,28%
JURID 02	0%	80%	20%
JURID 03	18,18%	27,27%	54,54%
GMO 02	0%	100%	0%
GMO 03	11,11%	38,88%	50,00%
EDUC 02	100%	0%	0%
EDUC 03	100%	0%	0%



GRAPH 3.3 – NEWS VALUE FOR CATEGORIES OF ISSUES IN 2002 AND 2003

3.2 THE ACTORS

After having analysed the distribution of visibility of the issues, we will present the data concerning the most relevant actors involved in the media debate. Firstly, it is necessary to make a methodological distinction between “actors” and “subjects”. We will mostly refer to “actors” as the categories of persons, groups or roles exercised by specific people in the “universe society” represented in the newspapers. The latter is the case, for example, of the actor-category “journalist” or “landlords”. Then, we will use the term “subjects” to indicate specific individuals who play a key-function in the discussion of agrarian reform, the right to food and the right to land.

In terms of visibility, we can notice a more evident “game change” than what emerged from the issues analysis. The most significant difference in 2003 is the stronger role of civil society members, who raise their presence in the media from 7,55% to 14,09%, becoming the third actor mentioned after MST (29,53%) and the government (21,58%)⁴¹. This fact is even more relevant, if

⁴¹ The MST and the government are the two leading actors of the debate in both periods, with 29,5% of visibility for the MST in 2002 and 2003, and with a short reduction of visibility for the government, passing from 25,21% of 2002 to 21,58% of 2003. Referring to the MST we have included different components varying from its more representative leaders to its regional committees and coordinators until the peasant affiliated with the movement which participate in land occupations or in manifestations. In the government category we have considered the president, the main mentioned minister, leaders of the party members of the coalition and, in 2002, the candidate for the presidential elections representing the Cardoso’s majority, that is the former Public Health Minister José Serra.

considered in conjunction with another interesting phenomenon: the reduction of the visibility of the police⁴² from 7,61% to 3,9%, passing from 4th to 8th place among the most present actors.

Then, according to the media representation, the police becomes less relevant than the INCRA (8,27%), the landlords (5,53%), the journalist (4,97%) and the opposition (4,80%). Again, we have to remember that, in 2003, the amount of MST actions against unproductive lands shows an increase of 400% (raising from 10 to 41), so we should have expected a more intense “media presence” of forces involved in the maintenance of public security in the rural conflicts. However, it is also possible to affirm that the Buritis’ episode generated an overestimation of the role of this actor during the Cardoso government.

In terms of perception of the information in the public opinion, the natural consequence of lesser visibility of the police is that the agrarian problem is less associated with concepts, such as “security” and “public danger”, and more with a concrete political and social discussion (see the new role of civil society and the INCRA, for example).

The landlords’ movements present a growth as interlocutors of the agrarian *problematique*, becoming the 5th actor mentioned in 2003 with 5,53% of coverage compared to the 10th place occupied in 2002 (3,16%). Thus, we can observe that the point of view of the big landowners on the topic is more represented than that of the local authorities (2,51%, including governors, mayors, or regional secretaries of agriculture charged for the implementation of the expropriation program), more than the position of the tribunals involved in land arbitrations and interpretation of the Constitution (2,01%), and more than the opposition itself (4,80%), which is basically shaped⁴³ by the party of the former president Cardoso (PSDB) and by the former Minister of the Agrarian Development Raul Jungmann.

The opposition, we can say, seems to be yet confused about how to manage the new role in political life. Moreover, it lacks a real “spokesperson”, as it was for Lula in 2002. The role of contrast against the MST’s pressures toward the government for an agrarian reform is then concentrated in the movements of landowners, interpreting the “counter-side” demands and, in particular, in the UDR’s president Luís Antônio Nabhan Garcia. Consequently, the arena of debate tends to move from the parliament toward other less official centres of political discussion, such as the “headquarters” of the landlords, their Unions and their associations. The quality of the language of discussion, thus presenting a higher polarisation among social movements rather than among

⁴² In the research the term “police” has been used to indicate four main forces responsible for public security: the military police, the federal police, the Army and the Intelligence (ABIN), which during the Cardoso government was involved in a monitoring mission of MST leaders suspected of “threatening the democratic order”.

⁴³ We are always referring to the media representation of the opposition, not to its formal and effective composition, which also presents other parties and political leaders.

parties and political leaders, is then more direct, informal, and also tends to be more characterized by insults, strong phrases, slogans, and less by references to political acts or measures.

Another notable change is the higher visibility of the INCRA representatives, who have started to assume a more active function, after the nomination of Marcelo Resende as its president. The INCRA, as executive institute dependent directly from the Ministry of the Agrarian Development, is charged for the realisation of the agrarian plan and for the concrete individuation of lands, which can be expropriated for social reasons. Resende, compared to the previous INCRA president, is known for his close ties with social movements and his political sympathy for MST. Thus, 30% of the news that mentions INCRA include a declaration or comment from Resende. Most of his interventions are about the possible abolition of the MP 2027, a temporary decree approved in May 2000 during the Cardoso administration, whose aim was to discourage MST's actions, prohibiting the registration of occupied lands for the agrarian program for a period of two years. In accordance with this measure, which indeed was able to reduce the number of invasions from 502, in 1999, to 158, in 2001, and 89, in 2002, all the participants to such illegal acts shall be punished with an immediate suspension of micro-credit programs and their names shall be cancelled from the list of peasants who can benefit from a land distribution plan. In different occasions, Resende defined the MP 2027 as an "anti-democratic" law responsible for the criminalisation of social movements. Social movements, such as MST, that Rossetto and the Lula coalition showed to consider, at least in the first 100 days of government, as fundamental political partners.

Given this contextual explanation, it is interesting to see how, in 25% of the cases⁴⁴, the newspapers try to put emphasis on possible "conflicts" between Resende and the government, or between Resende and MST's leaders, with the precise objective to isolate him as "radical" exponent toward the readers. The same strategy seems to be applied with the declarations of Rossetto, whose rare partial condemnations or disagreements with MST policy occupy more than 35% of his personal coverage. That is, the public perception is that MST is incapable to dialogue even with its closer and most reliable political allies, preferring "*the way of a sterile provocation instead of that of a wise collaboration*" as a journalist of the *Estado de São Paulo* wrote⁴⁵.

Regarding the evaluation of the actors, there are four elements that we would like to put in evidence. Firstly, there is the value of the movement presence, which shows a strong negative characterisation in 2002 (48,65% of negativity and 28,24% of positivity). As said a above, we have considered the mentions "positive", when the MST's members where free to express their versions or points of views without distorting interventions or comments by the journalists. In our view, the

⁴⁴ That is, 25% of the news in which Resende was mentioned or quoted in an article.

⁴⁵ *Estado de São Paulo*, 06/03/03.

simple fact that they “overcome the obstacle” represented by the so called “news gatekeeper” is sufficient in order to identify a free flow of their opinions. But it does not at all mean that the journalist would agree with their positions. We have, instead, classified “neutral” the so called “passive references”, that is those which do not present interviews or quotes of MST members, and which do not occupy sufficient space in order to clearly present MST’s opinion. Finally, the negative representation is characterized from the presence of explicit disapproving comments made by the journalist or by people interviewed by the journalist.

In 2003, there is an important counter-trend, in the sense that, in 38,25% of the cases, MST as actor is mentioned in positive terms (vs.28,24% in 2002), while the negative characterisation drops from 48,65% to 34,28%. The same phenomenon is visible in the government characterisation, whose negative index of evaluation toward MST drops from 70,77% to 32,38%, with an increase of the positive rate from 1,69% to 33,16%. Most of these data are explicable, considering the role of Rossetto, beyond the same president Lula, whose dialogue attitude toward MST completely replaced the challenge and conflict orientation of Raul Jungmann and President Cardoso.

The second consideration concerns the role journalists played, directly intervening in 75 out of the 380 articles in 2002 (19,73%) and 89 out of the 477 articles in 2003 (18,65%), mostly in editorial and opinion sections of newspapers⁴⁶. But if the intervention rate is almost identical, there is a considerable difference in terms of attitude, since, in the Lula trimester, the journalist shows only a scarce 3,37% of positive evaluation of MST, compared to 14,66% in the Cardoso trimester. The direct role of the journalist as “opinion former” is then much less positive and neutral in 2003, in a general climate of dialogue and collaboration between MST and the national institutions.

The third observation is about the characterisation of the police and security forces, whose index of represented neutrality passes from 8% in 2002 to 50% in 2003, so reducing the negative evaluation from 78,40% to 47,14%. In other words, that means media-operated references of the police tend to be more passive, less partial, portraying it as general observer and arbiter of the land conflicts. As consequence, we can observe a lesser criminalisation of only one of the “contenders” (in most cases peasants vs. landlords).

The fourth element of interest regards the role of the juridical actors, whose negative reference rises from 19,68% to 63,88%, with a considerable reduction in terms of positivity and neutrality. What happens is that, even in absence of big events that justify the intervention of justice in 2003 compared to that of 2002, judges and lawyers seem to be “searched” with much more frequency by media in order to enhance the image of illegality and anti-democratic character of MST.

⁴⁶ Editorials and opinion sections are crucial in order to define the political orientation of the journal and in order to address and select the readers.

The most classical mention of such actors, in fact, is about violations of the right to property committed by the peasants affiliated with the MST. Far less attention and emphasis are put on the questions regarding the bureaucratic and juridical delays in the realisation of the land distribution promised by the government. Even less attention is dedicated to cases involving the falsification of property documents by landlords (acts of *grilhagem*, see above). What is not visible does not exist.

THE LIST OF THE MOST VISIBLE SUBJECTS

The more detailed scope of the personalities and individuals involved in the debate presents some surprises and suggests some important reflections.

SUBJECTS 2002	N°of mentions	SUBJECTS 2003	N°of mentions
1. FHC- President	171	1. ROSSETTO- Min.	121
2. JUNGSMANN- Min.	82	2. JOURNALIST	89
3. JOURNALIST	75	3. LULA – President	80
4. <i>RAINHA</i> – MST	68	4. FHC- Former Pres.	61
5. LULA- Candid.	51	5. <i>STEDILE</i> – MST	55
6. FERREIRA- Min.	48	6. GARCIA – UDR	51
7. CARDOSO-Min.	40	7. RESENDE – INCRA	40
8. <i>RODRIGUES</i> –MST	24	8. BALDUINO – CPT	30
9. DIRCEU –Pt	22	9. <i>RODRIGUES</i> -MST	24
10. SERRA – Psdb	21	10. DIRCEU- Min.	19
11. <i>STEDILE</i> – MST	20	11. <i>MAURO</i> - MST	16
12. BALDUINO-CPT	15	12. RODRIGUES-Min.	11

TABLE 3.2 – THE MOST VISIBLE SUBJECTS IN THE NEWS 2002 AND 2003

Among the top ten subjects mentioned⁴⁷ in the news of 2002, 8 are characterized with a negative evaluation and attitude toward the MST's requests. These 8 are President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (53% of negativity), the Minister of the Agrarian Reform Raul Jungmann (83%), the journalist (77%), the opposition leader Lula (57%), the Minister of Justice Aloysio Ferreira (90%), the Minister of the Institutional Security Cardoso (92,5%), the President of the PT José Dirceu (54%), and the government candidate for presidency José Serra (67%).

⁴⁷ We have referred to active presences in the article, such as those where the subject expresses a particular opinion or is mentioned in the text as a relevant, not passive, voice. Usually we considered the citation for a total of 4 lines as the minimal reference required.

The only non-negative representatives are two national leaders of MST, José Rainha Junior and João Paulo Rodrigues. In these cases, the positive evaluation is respectively equal to 35 % for Rainha (with 38% of negativity) and 37% for Rodrigues (with 28% of negativity). In the particular case of Rainha, we have to say that most of his visibility is linked to an attempt of mortal outrage on January 21, when he was shot by a landlord in the tense area of the Pontal of Paranapanema, in the state of São Paulo. In that situation, the MST's leader was mostly depicted as a victim, despite some attempts of the *Estado de São Paulo* to define the case as an “accident” due to the aggressive attitude of Rainha, and considering it as a consequence of the continuous tensions created by the peasants. The landowner Raul Junqueira was immediately arrested and his propriety, whose juridical order of expropriation was hanging out since many years, was one more time registered by the local centre of the INCRA.

The most “non-criticized” defender of the MST's approach to the right to land and the right to food, according to the media representation, is the catholic priest Don Tomaso Balduino (80% of positivity), founder and president of CPT in 1975 and representative of the most progressive sector of the Catholic Church in Latin America (liberation theology).

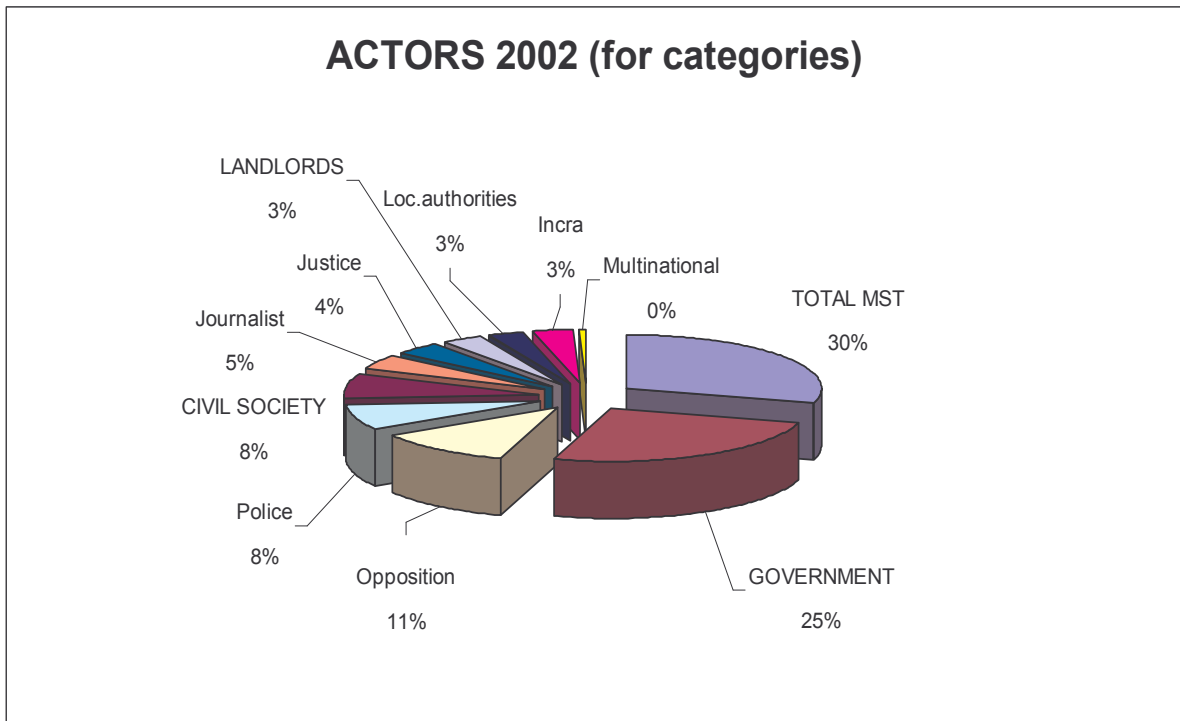
The picture of 2003 is pretty different, in the sense that it presents a more equal and pluralist distribution of perspectives. Among the top ten subjects, there are 4 more critical toward the movement (journalist, the former president Cardoso, the PT Minister José Dirceu and the UDR's president Luis Garcia), 4 subjects closer to the MST's position (Rossetto, Stedile, Resende, Balduino) and 2 mostly represented in a neutral way (President Lula and the MST's leader Rodrigues).

In particular, we can say that the media attention is completely dominated by the Minister Rossetto, whose declarations of “a new constructive dialogue with social movements” are intensely quoted, debated and also criticized (40% of positive representation, 25% neutral, 35% negative). The second most relevant subject is the journalist, mostly negative oriented (81%), while the most noteworthy changes come from the growth of visibility of the MST's ideologist João Pedro Stedile (from 20 to 55 citations), the UDR's president Luis Garcia (from 10 to 51 citations) and the INCRA “MST-oriented” president Marcelo Resende (40 citations, not present in 2002). Also Don Tomaso Balduino and the catholic approach to the agrarian reform show a considerable growth (from 15 to 30).

In general, we can observe an important process in 2003: the personalisation of the media debate and the higher presence of specific figures of social movements (Stedile, Garcia, Balduino, Rodrigues). Stedile is not a “random” representative of MST: with a university economics degree in Rio Grande do Sul and a post-graduation in rural economy obtained in

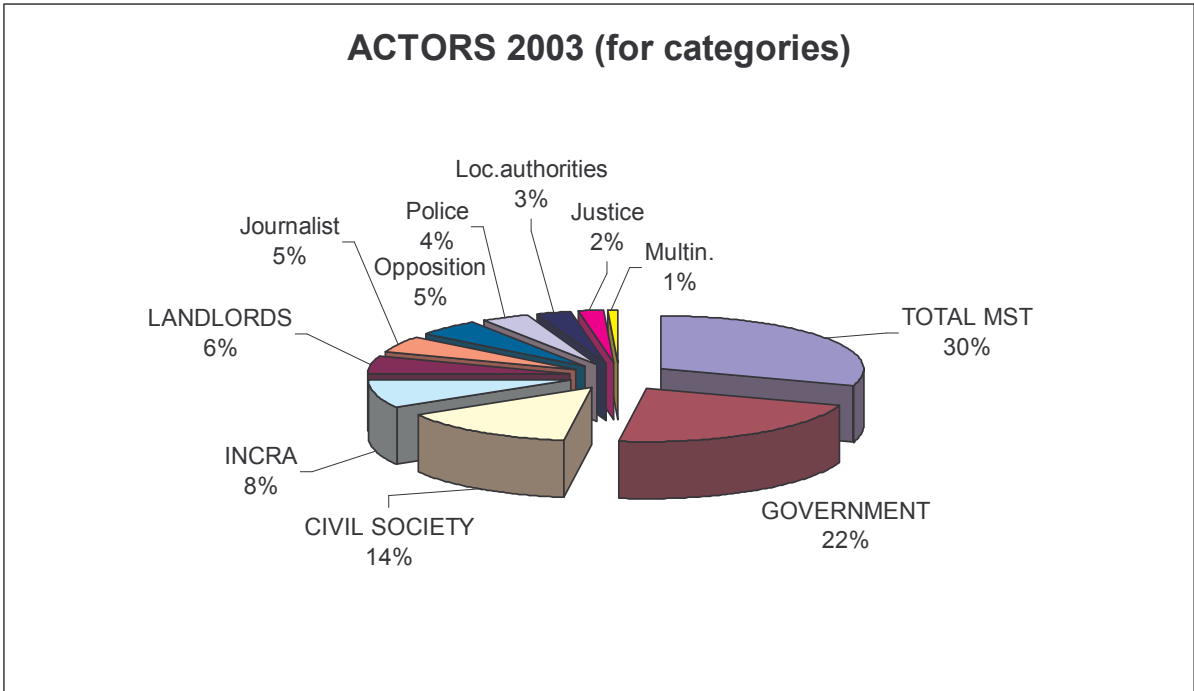
Mexico, he is the most intellectual actor of the movement, who is often searched by the media in order to provide historical, technical and more pragmatic explanations of the agrarian problem. He is not “a slogan man” as Rainha, and more diplomatic and charismatic than Rodrigues, Gilmar Mauro and Roberto Baggio. Thus, his higher visibility in the newspapers is undoubtedly a signal of a more complete representation of the peasant movement claims.

Another surprising element is the still strong visibility of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC), whose passive influence on the debate is still very relevant, despite his “physical” absence from the political scenario.⁴⁸ The majority of references to Cardoso concerns his temporary anti-invasion decree of May 2000, suddenly come back in the political agenda after the nomination of Rossetto and Resende. In some cases, he is also mentioned in reference to the episode of the Buritis’ invasion in 2002.

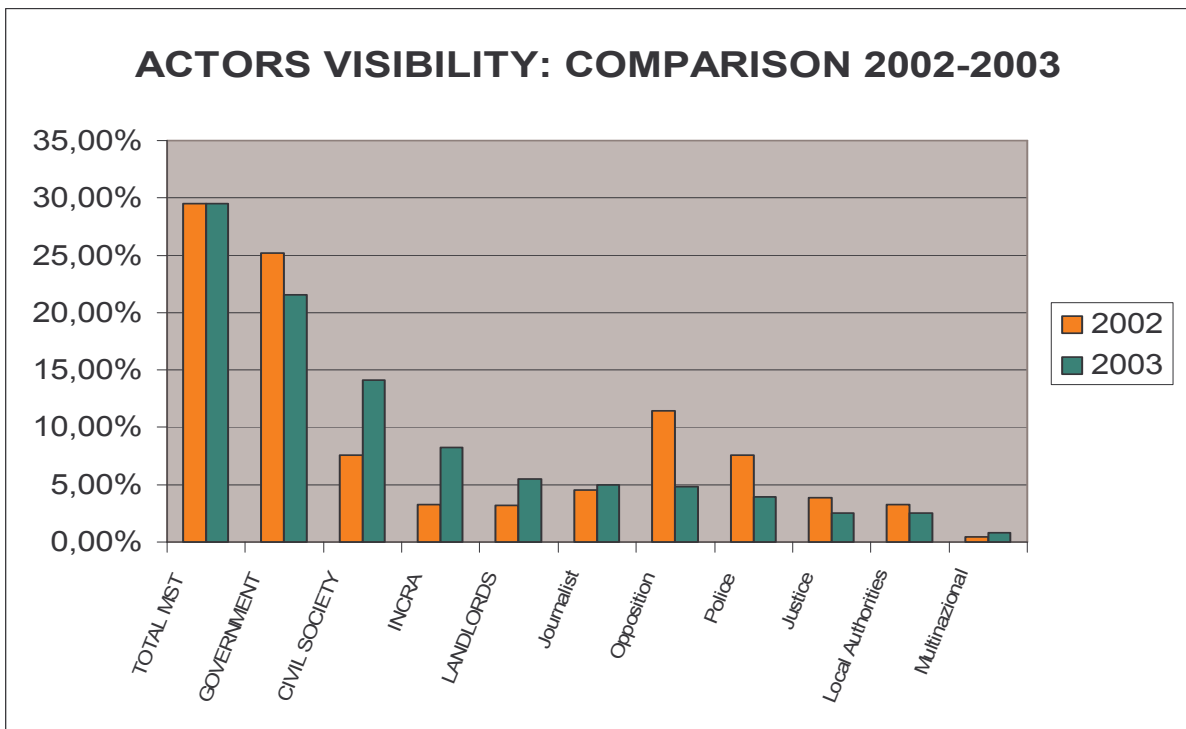


GRAPH 3.4 – THE MOST VISIBLE ACTORS IN THE NEWS 2002

⁴⁸ The former President Cardoso spent most of the first trimester in Paris, France, never directly participating to interviews and discussions about the first 100 days of the Lula’s government.



GRAPH 3.5 – THE MOST VISIBLE ACTORS IN THE NEWS 2003



GRAPH 3.6 – COMPARISON OF ACTOR'S VISIBILITY IN 2002 AND 2003

3.3 THE NEWS FREQUENCY

Concerning the Cardoso period, the episode of Buritis on March 24 constitutes a real “magnet” for the media, concentrating most of the attention of the trimester. The fact that 300 hundred peasants tried to directly *touch* the President’s interests generated a “wave of moral condemnation” in the newspapers, with a *manicheist* tendency to isolate MST as the “enemy of the order”. The private, not federal, propriety of the Cardoso family became a symbol of the honour of all Brazilian citizens. Some governors and even landowners protested against the private use of the Army, with the intervention of more than 200 soldiers, helicopters, and intelligence services, which had been immediately activated in order to protect an unofficial residence of the President. In a very rhetorical atmosphere, media simply seemed to ignore an important fact: the farm belonged to the Cardoso’s sons and to another business partner, not to President of the Republic.

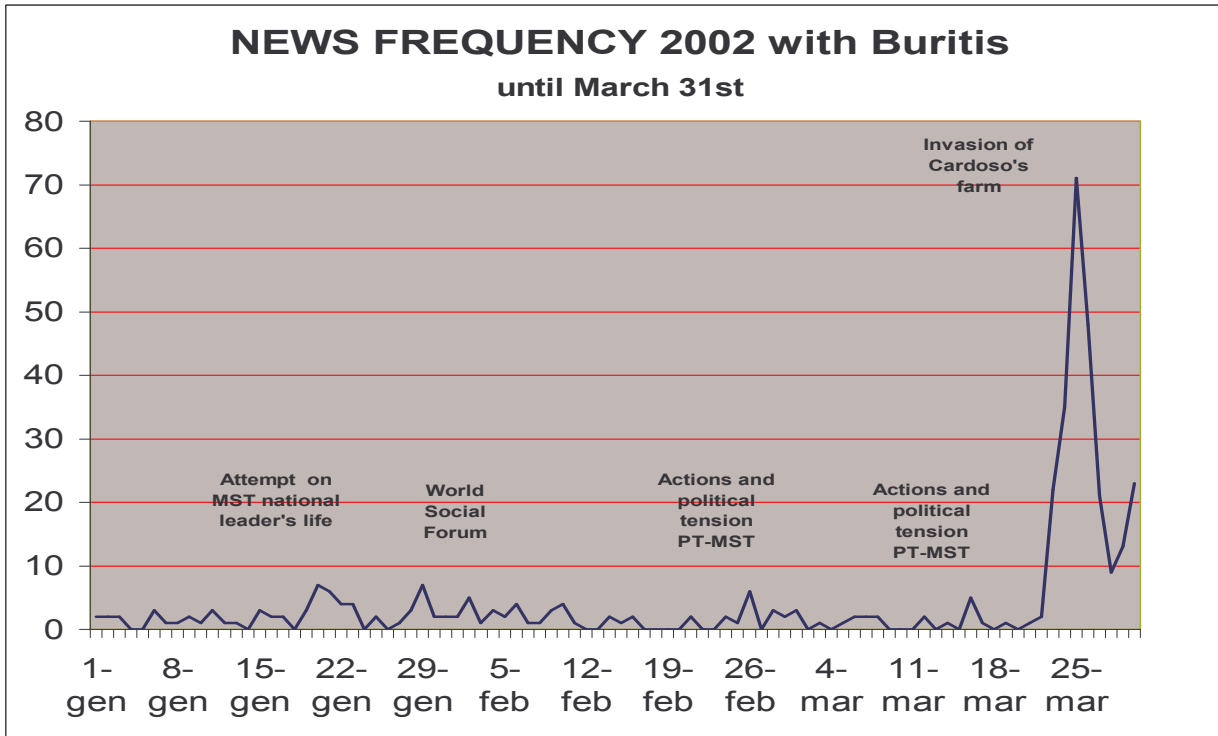
However, it has to be said that, for the first time, Brazilian people knew that their President, with a background of progressive sociologist critical of the most traditional elites of the country, used to spend his weekends in a propriety of 1.100 hectares, equivalent to 1.540 football fields. Although there is no doubt that the episode seriously damaged the MST’s image in the society, at the same time, it should be noted that the visibility created from this episode, especially in a long-term perspective, forced the public opinion to get more involved in the agrarian dispute. As Maria da Gloria Gohn argues, “no social movement in Latin America has showed a so good knowledge of the media philosophy”.⁴⁹

There are 4 other relevant events that called the media’s attention in the same period, even if with a much lower index of visibility compared to the episode of Buritis. In chronological order, media focused: on the already mentioned outrage against the MST’s national leader José Rainha on January 21, in the state of São Paulo, which was covered by all the four newspapers (with a total of 7 news stories). Secondly, there was a general growth of attention during the week of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre since January 29, even if, simultaneously, the media covered some episodes of land conflicts. Then, there was a long “break” until February 26 (6 news stories), when the journals reported a polemic declaration of the PL senator José Alencar against MST. According to the senator, the PT should have isolated the movement in order to gain the elections. These comments were followed by the answers of the then President of the Worker Party José Dirceu and of the powerful PT senator Eduardo Suplicy, who confirmed to consider MST as a legitimate interlocutor in view of a possible agrarian reform.

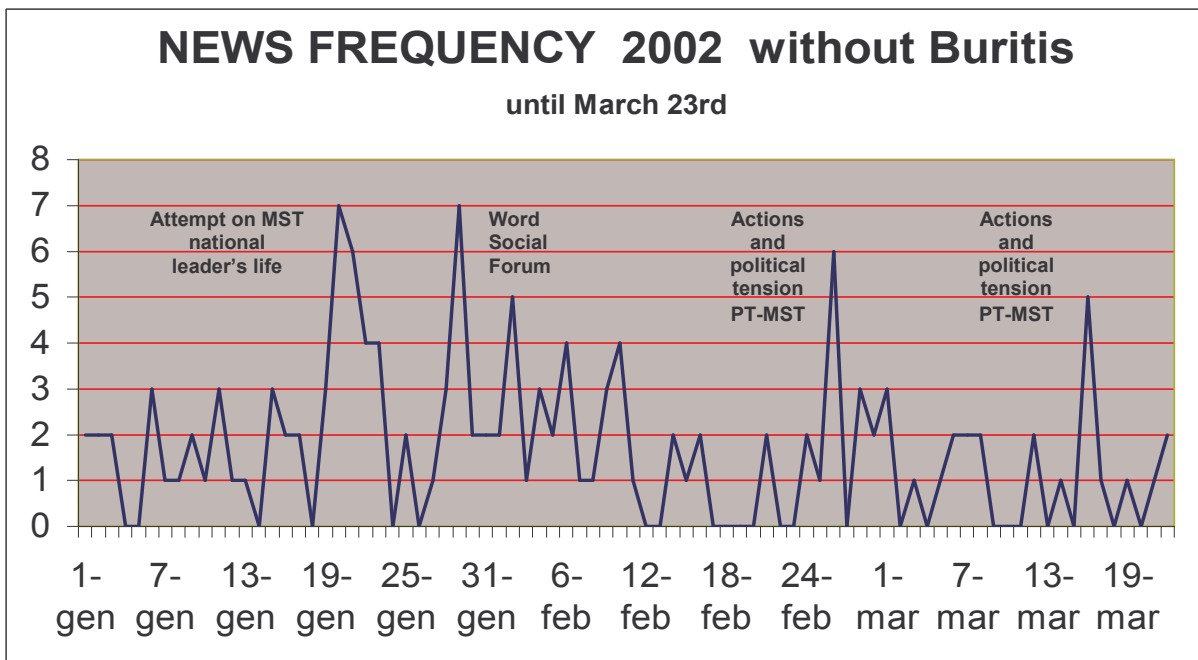
⁴⁹ The Brazilian sociologist Maria da Gloria Gohn was interviewed by the author in São Paulo on 17/03/03.

The same debate was covered with 5 news stories some weeks later, on March 17. Nevertheless, again, nothing is comparable with the authentic “news boom” of the last week of the month, which presented a daily coverage of 34 articles.

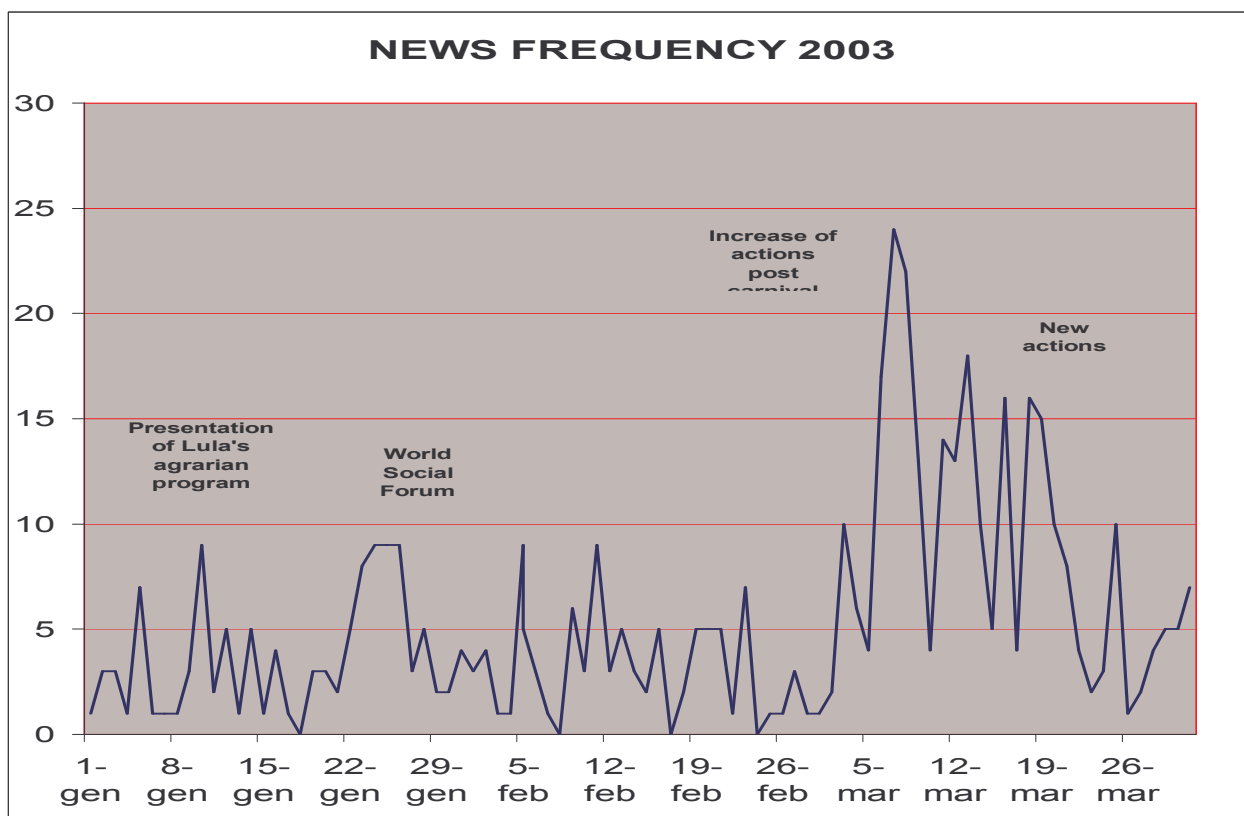
GRAPH 3.7 – NEWS FREQUENCY IN 2002 INCLUDING THE INVASION OF THE PRESIDENT FAMILY’S FARM



GRAPH 3.8 – NEWS FREQUENCY IN 2002 EXCLUDING THE INVASION OF THE PRESIDENT FAMILY’S FARM



GRAPH 3.9 – NEWS FREQUENCY IN 2003



In regard to 2003, there are some similarities and some important differences to notice. First of all, the most covered period is still in correspondence with an intensification of MST’s invasions - in this case, during and immediately after the week of Carnival (from March 3 to March 9). In these seven days, we have a news average of almost three times compared to the overall trend of the trimester (13 vs. 5). However, as said before, the entire month of March is usually particularly tense, due to the approximation of the rain season, especially in the poorest part of the country, the Northeast. In this period, peasants demonstrate being “less available” to tolerate further delays in the land distribution program, and, through symbolic land invasions, try to force the national and local authorities to implement it as quickly as possible.

Like in 2002, the week of Porto Alegre (from January 22 to January 29) represents one of the key-moments of MST coverage, but with a substantial difference in terms of daily average (6,85 in 2003 vs. 3,14 in 2002). We could refer to it as a “peaceful frame” in which the peasant movement is not constantly associated with land tensions, violence, threats to the public order and so on.

Another positive “news peak”, but much more significant from a human rights policy point of view, is represented by the presentation of the agrarian program and the “agrarian team” of the Lula government on January 10. On this occasion, all the newspapers put emphasis on the Lula’s and Rossetto’s declarations, which tended to establish a mutually beneficial feedback with MST.

Stedile and other national leaders of the movement were invited to express their opinions about the new policy, as to identify their priorities and to criticize the activity of the previous government. Even though the following weeks and months will show different moments of convergence, sometimes depicting the two actors as extremely close and, other times, as in permanent conflict, this day is for sure the most emblematic symbol of the relative “change of perspective” on the agrarian issue. Even the most conservative media was somehow “obliged” not to interfere excessively with the President’s declarations and purposes, only 10 days after the inauguration of the government and with the opinion polls attributing to Lula more than 70% of the popular consensus. MST, we can say, enjoyed a moment of unprecedented media legitimation in its 19-year history.

However, after a period of relative compliance and “indulgence”, above all, in the month of January with a positivity average trend of 45%, the national newspapers quickly came back to identify the movement as a kind of “embarrassing and inconvenient” ally for the government. This is what emerged from a high majority of the editorials and, in general, from the articles with a more direct and active presence of the journalist.

3.4 THE LANGUAGE

In this section, we will pay attention to some linguistic marks and tendencies frequent in the MST coverage, in order to understand what is the most common semantic and semiotic media collocation of the movement's activity. Researcher Maria Mendonça⁵⁰ identified some particular *formula* adopted by the main four newspapers in 1999: the category of articles aiming at identifying the MST with episodes of violence and aggression; those focusing on the supposed MST's intention to "conquer the power"; the articles hypothesizing a connection of the movement with dangerous Latin American guerrillas; and those accentuating the image of fierce internal conflict with other social movements.

In regards to the first category, Mendonça discovered that, in most cases in which rural workers were victims of land conflicts, the general tendency of the newspapers was to delegate the responsibility of the crimes to external, non-better identifiable factors, such as "eviction", "revenge", "shooting" or even "superior order". Thus, the real actors who provoked and generated acts of violence were systematically occulted or confused with abstract, unclear and complex concepts.

The opposite approach was visible, according to Mendonça, in the cases of direct actions of peasants and MST's members. Here, there is a general preference for the "personalisation" of the representation of the actors, who become active, clearly identifiable and responsible for violent acts. Then, there are headlines such as "*Policeman made hostage by a landless worker in São Paulo*"⁵¹ compared to "*Conflict kills a landless worker in Paraíba*"⁵², or "*Landless workers pillage and burn historical farm in São Paulo*"⁵³ compared to "*Shooting injures 7 people on farm*"⁵⁴.

According to the author of the research, this approach is just the reflection of the general condition of impunity in the rural areas. From 1987 to 1999, 1.167 rural workers were killed, but only 86 of these cases have been judged. Among the people recognized as guilty for the crimes, only 7 have been convicted.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Maria Mendonça, journalist of the magazine *Brasil de Fato* and director of the NGO Global Justice, has been a member of the Central Committee in the last two editions of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. In 1999 she realized a specific research on the media approach toward the MST during the Cardoso's era. See <http://www.mst.org.br/multimedia>.

⁵¹ Estado de São Paulo, 31/05/1999.

⁵² Folha de São Paulo, 08/07/1999.

⁵³ Estado de São Paulo, 15/07/1999.

⁵⁴ Jornal do Brasil, 20/04/1999.

⁵⁵ These data had made public by the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) in 1999.

In our research, a similar negative and partial characterisation is evident in the case of the description of the *Eldorado dos Carajás*' massacre, which represents the most important case of gross human rights violations regarding land conflicts in the recent history of Latin America.

On April 17, 1996, 19 rural workers were killed by a massive military police attack in the Northern state of Pará, during a peaceful manifestation (not invasion) against the state delays in the land distribution program. Seven years after the episode, the process against the police chiefs responsible for that action has still not produced a final conviction⁵⁶ and 68 families of those injured in the action are still waiting for a minimal form of compensation. In the two periods covered in our research, there are some important references to the Carajás case, for which media still tends to keep a form of ambiguity.

The famous journalist Josias de Souza, editor in chief of the *Folha de São Paulo* in the Brasilia headquarter, prefers to use the phrase “*the so called massacre of Carajás*” when referring to the episode, while the *Estado de São Paulo* argues that “*That case, in which 19 landless workers died, attracted the international attention toward the land possession in Brazil and gave new energy to the MST*”⁵⁷. On March 16, 2003, *O Globo* reminds that, during the Buritis' invasion, the government “*tried to avoid a new massacre such as that occurred in Eldorado dos Carajás, when 19 people died*”. On March 5, 2003, the *Folha de São Paulo* explains that in Carajás “*19 landless workers died during a clash with the police*”.

Talking about the attempt of killing the MST's national leader José Rainha by the landlord Roberto Junqueira on January 21, the *Estado de São Paulo* defined the situation “*an accident occurred when Rainha was coming out from the farm, which had been occupied by 275 families*”. Finally, on March 19, 2003, the *Estado de São Paulo* stated that “*the Human Rights Commission of the Organisation of the American States decides to investigate on the deaths of Carajás*”. This news referred to the fact that the OAS⁵⁸ Commission had accepted to consider the MST's claims about the state of impunity concerning the massacre.

Another example of language distortion is the broad use of military definitions, which contribute to create the picture of an everlasting war and, above all, to present the question exclusively in terms of national security rather than in terms of social inequalities. On February 2, 2003, *O Globo* reports that “*the MST can rely on a legion of collaborators in the most important ministries, who are more prone toward the agrarian question*”. On March 8, *O Globo* refers to the MST's regional leader Jaime Amorim in the state of Pernambuco, saying that “*he commands 15,000 of the 35,000*

⁵⁶ The two police colonels Mário Colares Pantoja and Raimundo Lamendra have been condemned in the first grade but they have still not been imprisoned, waiting for the second grade of the process. The rest of the accused policemen involved in the attack have been acquitted.

⁵⁷ Estado de São Paulo, 06/03/2003.

⁵⁸ OAS, Organisation of American States.

of landless workers living in the state, where he is preparing the *deflagration* of new land occupations”. Thus, any kind of suggestion of the movement for the nominations of INCRA regional coordinators is described saying that “the first objective of MST is to *bit* (in Portuguese “*abocanhar*”) and to catch the key-positions of INCRA”. Other strong headlines, in this sense, are “the MST is arming for an *escalation* of invasions”, or “the MST *teaches guerrilla techniques* to the landless workers”.

When presenting the MST’s activity in the rural areas, there are also many examples of confused and unclear descriptions about its role and its functions, paving the way to suspects and significant misunderstandings. In particular, there are five categories of terms to underline.

- 1) Invasion vs. Occupation (*invasão vs. ocupação*)
- 2) Camp vs. Settlement (*acampamento vs. assentamento*)
- 3) Big boss vs. Coordinator (*chefão vs. coordenador*)
- 4) Command vs. Central committee (*comando vs. comité central*)
- 5) Forced fees vs. contributions (*pedagio vs. contribuição*)

The first distinction is the most relevant in order to identify the landless workers’ activity. Referring to the article 184 of the national constitution, they argue to act in order to accelerate the legitimate principle of the expropriation of unproductive land for social reasons. In this sense, they say to “occupy” a land, which otherwise would be utilized for the speculative aims of the big landowners, as it frequently happened in past Brazilian history. Their initiative, consequently, is more symbolic than concrete, because the families of rural workers affirm to organize massive occupations, not in order to immediately live in the occupied land, but rather with the objective to facilitate the individuation of unproductive lands for the government and the INCRA regional constituencies.

The concept of invasion, on the other hand, even if it is probably formally correct, when used in the media context, without any kind of further clarification or integrative information, tends to focus only on the violation of the right to property. But when the journalist does not specify what is the history of the invaded land, which are the eventual precedents of legal dispute between the landowner and the state, or whether he does not indicate the extension and the use of the land with official data, we can say that he is committing a violation of the right to impart and to receive impartial information. He is abusing of the guarantees of freedom of expression, trying to distort the representation of extremely delicate social and economic issues.

The liberty of defending a particular political position cannot be considered a justification. When the interests and the lives of millions of homeless, landless and undernourished people are at stake,

when the UN representative for the right to food⁵⁹ denounces a situation of *civil war* in the rural areas of the country, when Brazil presents the third worst record in terms of social inequalities after Sierra Leone and Central African Republic - in these cases, we think that there is no excuse for the occultation, mystification and alteration of public data.

The second observation regards the deeply conceptual difference between “camps” and “settlements”, often ignored by the media. According to Leticia Barqueta, in charge for the MST’s national communication office, most of the journalists who try to arrange interviews with MST’s leaders and representatives are “*completely unaware of the juridical and formal distinctions between the two concepts*”. Thus, the tendency is to confuse them or to prefer the simplified term “camp”, privileging the image of precariousness, lack of organisation and of legal recognition for the landless workers. The word camp, in fact, indicates the condition of people waiting for the INCRA registration and land distribution, living in a situation of temporary and absolutely indigent residence. The definition of “settlement”, instead, implies the official recognition made by the State, which authorizes the progressive stabilisation of the peasants in a particular piece of land. On most of the MST’s settlements, the communities of rural workers manage a family-based agricultural system through cooperative societies. Most of the MST’s settlements have electricity, water, schools, health centres, and, in general, present a positive standard of quality of life compared to the camp situation. The third and the fourth distinction are related to the use of a military-style of language, as already observed above for some examples of titles and subtitles. Then, the fact to use “command” instead of “committee”, or “big boss” (the very ambiguous “*chefão*” in Portuguese) instead of “coordinator”, especially when referring to real episodes of violence against rural workers, cannot be explained or justified in terms of subjective preference of words by the journalist. If such “alternative, allegoric language” can be, somehow, a simple question of style when talking about sport, entertainment or even referring to the political, official, parliamentary debate, we have a totally different situation when in presence of real, concrete, visible, and not symbolic, land violence. The use of phrases and definitions, in this context, should not be superficial or casual. Concerning the fifth linguistic category mentioned (fees vs. contributions), we would like to illustrate a specific case, which is particularly significant on this matter, and which can also provide a further important contribution in order to define the media context in relation to the agrarian reform.

⁵⁹ Jean Ziegler, Un special Rapporteur for the right to food, who visited Brazil in March 2002, see *supra* note 1.

3.5 MST AND INDEPENDENCY OF MEDIA

3.5.1 THE *DE SOUZA'S* CASE

In this section, we will describe a particular denigration campaign against the movement, which was conducted by the *Folha de São Paulo* in relation to suspected, but never proved, illegalities in the MST's self-financing system.

In May 2000, Mr. Josias de Souza, journalist of the *Folha de São Paulo*⁶⁰, wrote a series of articles about alleged illegal taxes imposed by MST to the people residing on occupied lands in the federal state of Paraná, in the South of the country. The most famous of these articles was entitled “*MST misleads funds of the agrarian reform*”, published on May 14. Some months later, some national NGOs and social movements⁶¹ denounced the fact that Mr. de Souza had been compensated for a hotel, driver and transportation by the regional office of INCRA in Paraná (see Appendix 1), in order to visit some occupied “camps” and to collect a series of interviews from the 8th to the 10th of May 2000. Some concerns for this fact were expressed also by the National Federation of Journalist (FENAJ) and by the main organisations and institutions dealing with the protection of freedom of expression, such as the *Observatorio da Imprensa* (Press Observatory) of São Paulo. The FENAJ pointed out the use of public funds by the newspaper in order to realize a “campaign of persecution against MST”. Moreover, they claimed that Mr. De Souza was putting the independency of press at risk while also violating the internal “Code of Conduct” of his newspaper, in which it was expressly stated that “*when the travel of a journalist is paid for by public authorities and it results in the publication of an article, the newspaper has the obligation to inform readers under what conditions the article itself was realized*”. Moreover, “*the newspaper will not publish articles or reports which have been made possible through the collaboration of public authorities or institutions accepted without previous authorisation of the Director*”.

The De Souza's initiative strongly influenced the following “behaviour” of many printed media, which, since then, gave much space to the this anti-MST campaign and which started referring frequently to “fees” in order to address the volunteer contributions of the landless workers to MST. As said above, no juridical evidence has, so far, demonstrated the validity of the De Souza's suspects and declarations. Both cases, the one against the INCRA⁶² and the other against MST, are still under judgement by the Regional Court of the State of Paraná.

⁶⁰At that time Josias de Souza was editor in chief of the *Folha de São Paulo* office in Brasilia.

⁶¹The National Forum for the Agrarian Reform and Justice on land, representing many NGOs' and social movements including also MST and CPT, on November 9th 2000 filed a complaint to the Public Prosecutor of Curitiba, capital of the state of Paraná, against the INCRA for deviation of public resources. The Forum accused the regional INCRA of Paraná to utilize public funds in order to finance some articles against the MST in the *Folha de São Paulo*.

⁶²See supra note 61.

According to MST and CPT, the articles had the precise objective to prepare the public opinion to justify the following “repressive measures against MST” approved by the government. On May 14, 2000, the same day in which the *Folha of São Paulo* published the principal article of Mr. De Souza about the “alleged forced taxations of MST”, the government suddenly announced the immediate abolition of credit funds for cooperative agricultural societies. Suffice here to say that May 14 fell on a Sunday, which is not exactly the ‘most proper day’ for such a delicate initiative.

After the article, the Federal Police set up an inquiry in order to verify the informal denounces made by Mr. De Souza. At the end of May 2000, President Cardoso approved a “temporary measure” by presidential decree aiming at discouraging the “invasion-strategy” of MST⁶³. According with the law, all the lands illegally occupied could not be “*vistoriadas*” (inspected) by the INCRA for the following two years and should be excluded from the land reform program promoted by the government. According to one representative of the Press Observatory, the journalist Luis Antonio Magalhães⁶⁴, in the De Souza’s case the key-problem was of ethical nature. The readers of the *Folha de São Paulo*, in fact, should have the right to know under what circumstances that article had been produced in order to have an objective perception of the problem. The following outline could help consider the fact in chronological order:

2 of May 2000	- MST occupies public buildings in 19 states
4-5 of May	- The main journals of the country publish editorials asking the government to set out more repressive measures against MST.
4 of May	- The government approves an agrarian bill against MST and announces the mobilisation of the Federal Police and the Army.
5 of May	- The Minister of the government communication secretary Andrea Matarazzo asks the state channel TVE to remove an interview with the MST’s national leader João Pedro Stedile.
6 of May	- The magazine <i>Veja</i> publishes a series of article denigrating MST
8 of May	- INCRA provides hotel, car and driver to Mr. De Souza in order to realize a <i>reportage</i> in the MST’s settlements in Paraná.
14 of May	- The <i>Folha de S. Paulo</i> publishes the article of Mr. De Souza entitled “ <i>MST deviates funds of the agrarian reform</i> ” - The government suspends funds for the agrarian reform

TABLE 3.3 - Source: Comparato, 2000

⁶³ Temporary Decree 2027 of May 2000, see p.38.

⁶⁴ Luis Antonio Magalhães was interviewed by the author in São Paulo on 18/03/03.

As for the subject of the article, that is the claim of possible irregularities in the MST's activity in the settlements, two things have to be considered. According to research done by the political scientist Bruno Konder Comparato⁶⁵, the issue was not new in the national agenda. In the past, in fact, the government had already accused MST of misleading public resources, but without pushing for any concrete juridical measure.

On February 6, 1997, for example, *O Globo* published an article on the front page, denouncing that "*Landless Workers give public money to MST*", referring to a case investigated by the police in the region of Pontal de Paranapanema, in the state of São Paulo. According to the article, small producers of the region paid MST up to 5% of the official credits they received from the government. The episode was covered again on March 10, suggesting a direct intervention of the federal government.

In that situation, the only reaction of President Cardoso and of the Minister for the Agrarian Reform, Raul Jungmann, was to invite MST to give an explanation "to society" for the episode. That is, no concrete or legal measure was undertaken. Comparato hypothesises that Cardoso preferred not to take juridical initiatives against MST simply because the process was perfectly legal, in the sense that MST was collecting funds with the same system already used by trade unions, associations, NGOs, political parties and so on. In this regard, Comparato mentions an article written by the journalist Sebastião Nery published on the *Diario Popular* on May 17, 2000, and titled "*Only MST can not do it*". In the article, Nery listed a number of organisations which were traditionally taking advantage of public funds in order to support their activities: among them the Church, the biggest trade union CUT, a variety of political parties in the government and in the opposition, associations of entrepreneurs including the agricultural producer group CNA, the Brazilian Lawyer Order (OAB), groups of engineers, doctors, economists, architects to fund also private initiatives, the National Union of Students (UNE) to finance seminars, meetings, congresses and so on.

At the end of the article, Sebastião Nery asks what was the "*real difference between MST and all of these other entities*", which could justify such a denigration campaign inaugurated by the big national press and be followed immediately by the Cardoso government.

⁶⁵ See Comparato Konder B., *A Ação Política do MST*, São Paulo, Expressão Popular, 2003.

3.5.2 INDEPENDENCY OF MEDIA UNDER THREAT: THE MATARAZZO'S CASE

Another worrying case happened in the same days of May 2000, concerning a particular initiative of the Minister of the government communication secretary Andrea Matarazzo.

On May 5, Stedile recorded an interview on the public channel TV Cultura, affiliated with the national TVE, affirming that *“The government spends a lot of funds in propaganda, but does not make up ground in the opinion polls. Thus, it tries to denigrate us, pinning the blame on us for its failures. When the government misleads public resources, there is no comment in the news. Just an example: this year there have been more than 55 flights of ministers to the beach, in Fernando de Noronha⁶⁶, utilizing FAB airplanes (Brazilian Military Air Forces)”*. The day before, the government had proposed to take some measures against MST, also threatening to mobilize the Army through the law of “National Security”. Judging Stedile’s presence as “dangerous for the national interests”, the minister Andrea Matarazzo called the TVE editor, asking to withdraw its intervention from the program *“Opinião Brasil”* scheduled for 9 pm of May 5.

As the *Folha de São Paulo* reported two days later, *“The program Opinião Brasil is produced by the São Paulo TV Cultura and transmitted on a national level through the TVE in Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro. On May 5, some hours before the program started, Stedile was in the TV Cultura studio in São Paulo with the journalists Gabriel Priolli and Monica Texeira. In Rio de Janeiro, the journalist Vera Barroso, from TVE, and the political scientist Amaury de Souza were ready to participate in the debate. In order to obey the minister Matarazzo, TVE decided to disrupt the transmission of the program, only broadcasting an interview of Vera Barroso with Amaury de Souza, while the TV Cultura showed the interview with Stedile”*.⁶⁷

Matarazzo never denied his direct censorship intervention, arguing that “it was inadmissible to make an interview public with a person who had been declared under suspicion by the police⁶⁸”.

The Brazilian Constitution is very clear on this point. Art. 220 of chapter 5, which is especially dedicated to the Social Communication, states that *“The manifestation of thought, the creation, the expression and the information, in any form, process or medium shall not be subject to any restriction, with due regard to the provisions of this constitution.”* In particular, § 2 states that *“Any and all censorship of a political, ideological and artistic nature is forbidden.”*

⁶⁶ Fernando de Noronha is a famous tourist isle in the Northern Brazil.

⁶⁷ *Folha de São Paulo*, 07/05/2000.

⁶⁸ The former minister Matarazzo refers to a case occurred in 1999 when Stedile was investigated by the Federal Police in accordance with National Security Law after having publicly defended a landless rally in a highway of São Paulo.

The case raised many political critiques, with the formal protest of many opposition's MPs in the Congress. The *Press Observatory* of São Paulo published a series of interventions online⁶⁹ concerning the episode, trying to involve different media players in the debate. Formally, nobody denied the complete independency of the TVE, but in the facts no legal measure was taken in order to condemn the Matarazzo's initiative, and the minister did not feel obliged to publicly recognize his abuse.

In this regard, Egbon observes that "Television can contribute to modify in many aspects thoughts and attitudes of people in terms of their cognitive expectations, their believes and opinions, as well as their behaviours" (Egbon 1982 in Gohn, 2000).⁷⁰

⁶⁹ See <http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br>.

⁷⁰ See Egbon in Gohn M.G., *Mídia, terceiro setor e MST*, São Paulo, Editora Vozes, 2000, p.158.

4 - SYNTHESIS OF THE ARGUMENTS

In this chapter, we will give a short recapitulation of the main arguments covered in the research, trying to focus on the main points of debate in reference to the initial hypothesis. Considering what emerged from the analysis of the coverage, of the language and of the cases described, we want to consider four major aspects.

4.1 MEDIA AND ZERO HUNGER

Although 100 days of government are not sufficient in order to draw general conclusions about the condition of freedom of expression on the right to food, we think that it is possible to address some significant tendencies in progress.

We consider the Lula's phase, and his social justice program, as a new fundamental step toward the process of democratisation of the country. This is a process that, after the institutional and formal requirements fulfilled in 1985, has to be extended to the society and to its poorest sectors. In this perspective, it has to be stressed that the January-March 2003 coverage is only the result of the changes of the political climate started at the beginning of the electoral campaign in August 2002, when most of the opinion polls took for granted the Lula victory in the October presidential elections. Because of their mostly government-oriented tradition, the biggest media progressively adopted a more moderate and conciliatory approach toward social and left wing policies, trying not to excessively oppose the popularity of the new president. That, in turn, substantially modified the approach toward the overall agenda of the Workers Party, centred on a policy of social justice, including also the realisation of an agrarian reform and the dialogue with social movements.

In such a context, we have focused on some significant changes on the MST coverage, but also on some important contradictions. Our considerations are essentially based on the 'agenda-setting' theory, formulated by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The agenda-setting approach argues that the media controls the agenda by selecting issues, and that, as a result of repeated coverage, those issues are judged as important by the receivers (McCombs & Shaw, 1972)⁷¹. Thus, the process of news selection in a particular 'priority-scale' would influence not so much what we think, but it would tell us what to think about. Then, it would suggest 'under what order and sequence' classify issues and topics.

⁷¹ McCombs, M.E. and Shaw, D.L. (1972). 'The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press.' *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36: p. 176-87.

The presentation of the Lula's Zero Hunger program, with the involvement of different sectors of society and of the international community on the food security issue, certainly played a key- role in partially modifying the media attitude toward MST. In terms of issues presented, the main new and positive element in 2003 is the prevalence of the news depicting MST as official or semi-official political interlocutor of the government. This category of news overcomes that which is related to the MST's invasions and occupations, despite the fact that they present a relevant increase compared to the first trimester 2002 (from 10 to 41). As we have observed, this is also explicable taking into account the strong emphasis given in 2002 on the episode of Buritis, which again underlines that the media is not very concerned about the violation of the right to property *per se*. Essentially, they tend to be more concerned with the interests of major actors or subjects traditionally opposed by MST, such as representatives of the traditional elites and, in the Buritis' episode, of president Cardoso and the minister Jungmann. The lesser presence of *actions* news, apart from the journalist's attitude, contributes to attenuate the image of landless peasants as promoter of violence, and, somehow, it plays an important role in legitimising their claims on the national agenda.

Another positive aspect regards the higher representation of a variety of civil society components, which enter in the media discussion with new energy and "political credit", often mentioned in reference to the "dialogue initiatives" on the agrarian reform promoted by the minister Miguel Rossetto. Independently from the political attitudes of these social players, their higher representation gives a fundamental contribution in granting pluralism and democratic tolerance for different point of views. In this sense, the four biggest newspapers seem to more properly interpret the media function of realizing a "citizen open forum".

At the same time, as we have pointed out during the coverage analysis, the decrease of the association of MST news with the police actuation favours a more serene debate on the problem, reducing the perception of it mostly in terms of public order and security.

Finally, two important elements regarding the subject's visibility represent a positive signal for the respect of freedom of expression. First of all, the much more fair distribution of different opinions on the MST's activity, with 50% of the most visible subjects generally agreeing with the movement and 50% criticizing it. Also the right to receive impartial information, in this sense, appears much more guaranteed.

Secondly, it was interesting to observe a significant shift in the media choice of voices internal to MST. Even with important distinctions between the more moderate position of the *Folha de São Paulo* and that more conservative of the *Estado*, the predominance of more moderate and diplomatic figures, such as that of João Pedro Stedile, is evident.

Thus, it should be noted the lesser visibility of more aggressive and radical exponents, such as José Rainha. Stedile, who, in 2002, was the 11th most mentioned subject, becomes the 4th most relevant subject, that is, the MST's member mostly interviewed. Following the opposite trend, Rainha, who, in 2002, was the 4th most mentioned subject, drops to the 17th position in 2003, so becoming even less present than the former minister of the agrarian reform Raul Jungmann.

On the other hand, other tendencies have emerged, some of which have presented a continuity with 2002. A generally higher coverage, in fact, with almost 100 more news stories in 2003, does not necessarily imply a positive attitude brought out by the media. Negative news, in fact, is still in the majority, with 41% of the coverage - even if with 14 points less. The relationship with the government, which becomes the top issue, still shows a 43% of negative representation, which often does not reflect the real existence of tension between MST and the Lula administration, who continued to schedule their meetings and common initiatives throughout the trimester. Most of the times, this negativity is the result of the emphasis put by the newspapers on elements of conflict between the two parts.

In general, one should note the increased negative attitude of the journalists at the moment to which they express the journal's position. Compared to 2002, in fact, journalists tend to be less positive (from 15% to 3% of their direct interventions), with an almost constant trend of the yet dominant negativity (from 77% to 81%). The other strongly negative players who gain visibility are the landlords' movements (90% of negative attitude), who, in the previous year, were mostly framed as "provokers and radicals" not refusing to use violence against MST, while now they tend to gain much more legitimacy as "representatives of the producers category". In this sense, the debate seems to have new and different references of polarisation in the "media theatre", with journalists and landlords taking the role of the former government as main opponents of the MST's pressure for an agrarian reform.

In some examples, we often had the impression to assist to a "last minute search process" of newspapers in order to collect anti-MST opinions. This is the case, for example, of the continuous citation of the strongest phrases against the movement of Lula minister Dirceu and of the new PT president Genoino. Dirceu and Genoino have somehow been "elected" by media as the politicians who defend the isolation of the MST's proposals and, in this sense, they show a growing visibility. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the politicians who opted for the dialogue with the peasant movement, such as Rossetto and Resende, received a double treatment in the press. On the one hand, they tended to be over-represented when condemning an action of MST, such as after the intensification of initiatives in March; on the other hand, the articles in which Rossetto and Resende

tried to defend and to appreciate the MST's role, were often the same articles with a more direct "presence" of the journalist, who, in 80% of the cases was negative, as said above.

Two other less optimistic processes have to be considered. Firstly, the fact that, although the actions visibility presents an important decrease (from 53% to 22% of the overall coverage), it still is a key-category in terms of news frequency. Thus, the media attention toward MST continues to be much higher and intense in correspondence with episodes of land occupations. Other issues have certainly emerged, but those related to the violation of the right to property are still the favourite ones in terms of intensity of coverage (news per day).

The second process observed regards the subject involvement. If, on one side, it is evident that less radical interlocutors gain higher attention, the ongoing process of personalisation of the issue (RIGHT TO FOOD = MST = THAT PERSON, THAT FACE) could also imply some risks in terms of effective information on the topic of the right to food. The traditional pluralist policy of MST, for example, tries to avoid the identification of the movement with specific spokespersons. In a formal rejection for hierarchy, they refuse to send only national coordinators in the international conferences and events, preferring to extend the movement representation and visibility without selecting a particular "testimonial". The media approach, on the other hand, aims at individuating "one particular voice", that is "one specific point of view" often in order to simplify the communication flow.

4.2 THE CENTRALITY OF THE RIGHT TO FOOD

In the overall and complex discussion, one point remains absolutely crucial: the centrality of the right to food and the right to land in the Brazilian society. As we have seen, mentioning the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food in chapter 2.2, the food security issue is strictly related to the lack of an effective agrarian reform, which, in turn, is intrinsically connected with a variety of other fundamental social and economic problems. Among the most relevant of them, suffice here to remember the uncontrolled urbanisation, the high level of illiteracy, the poor health conditions, an incredible level of violence, unemployment and the existence of forced slavery labour, all phenomena which indicate the "suffering" of the rural areas. Urban and rural problems cannot be separated within an analysis of the state economic and social standards, because, despite of the fact that Brazil of today is mostly an urbanized country, with 80% of the population residing in the cities, two aspects should be commented upon. First of all, that the rural areas show the worst records in terms of "adequate standards of living". Secondly, most of the people overcrowding the slums of the big capitals, such as São Paulo, Rio, Recife and Salvador, are not urban for choice, or

for “vocation”, as some UDR leaders argue, but essentially because of lack of economic opportunities outside the cities. In many cases, they are former land workers, or descendant of former land workers, who have been forced to enter the cities because of the intense process of the land concentration, which occurred during both the dictatorship and the last 18 years of democracy.

These contradictions are part of the “mirror of society”, and they cannot be ignored. They cannot just remain visible in the statistics of international organisations. Such contradictions have to be read in relation to the government activity, and, in particular, in reference to the state international obligations. The poor implementation of economic and social rights regards not only the international law, but also the mere respect of the national legislation and its stable application.

The Special Rapporteur Jean Ziegler, while reporting on the mission in Brazil in 2003, explicitly affirmed that the government was not meeting its international obligations in terms of the right to food, avoiding the utilisation of “the maximum available resources” in order to respect, to protect and to fulfil this right. According to recent FAO estimates, the country, who is one of the first food exporters of the world, would have sufficient food resources in order to satisfy the food needs of its 172 millions of citizens and to maintain its high export trends.

Ziegler also underlined the strict, unavoidable connection between the right to food violations and the urgency of the realisation of the agrarian reform. Moreover, he particularly addressed the social movements and MST for its “vibrant role in pressuring the government” to pursue this aim, condemning the “recent evident attempts to criminalize and discredit the MST’s claim on the public sphere”.

Brazil is definitely violating different human rights international treaties, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁷², the most important human rights instrument for the right to food (art.11), but it is also violating art. 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to the Special Rapporteur, the state is also failing in meeting a number of other treaties relevant to the right to food, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (see article 6 on right to life), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (see articles 24 and 27 on child nutrition) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (see articles 12 and 14 on adequate nutrition for rural women). The Government is also committed to addressing the right to food through regional legal instruments, including the Additional Protocol to the American Convention of Human Rights (see relevant article 12).

In reference to the national law, the preamble of the Constitution places a primary focus on ending inequality and promoting social rights. The “fundamental objectives” of the Federative Republic of

⁷² Presidential Decree 591 of 6 July 1992 proclaimed that the ICESCR will be implemented and fulfilled entirely in Brazil. Law 8.069 of 13 July 1990 relates to the CRC.

Brazil are defined in article 3 as: “To build a free, just and solidary society [and] to eradicate poverty and sub-standard living conditions and to reduce social and regional inequalities.”

The Brazilian Constitution does not make specific provision for the right to food *per se*, but it does provide for a wide range of justiciable “social rights”, and the right to food can be derived from other rights in the Constitution (e.g., rights to a minimum wage, agrarian reform, social assistance, education, non- discrimination and the right to life).

4.3 RIGHT TO FOOD AND DEMOCRATISATION

The reflection on the centrality and the justiciability of the right to food and the right to land leads toward another consideration, which is their relationship with the process of democratisation of the country. Can a democracy be considered as “consolidated” if 44 millions of people suffer from under-nourishment with 100 millions hectares of unproductive cultivable land? Can a democratisation process be regarded as “completed” if 46% of the land belongs to 1% of the population? Can democracy be considered stable if economic and social conditions of 1/3 of the population are under the minimum standards of living?

The Brazilian writer Luis Fernando Verissimo observes that “*The agrarian question is the major immorality of the country. It is the first of all the immoralities, toward which all others have to be measured*”⁷³. The former president of the Workers Party José Dirceu stated that “*Brazil should amplify democracy, extending it to different sectors of society, and it is for that reason that the country shall endorse the agrarian reform*”⁷⁴. Thus, the solution of this “immorality” cannot be reached without the involvement of the whole society. But no involvement is possible, in our opinion, without more correct, complete and impartial information to citizens.

4.4 MEDIA AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE VISIBILITY OF VIOLATIONS

The latter observation introduces the fourth point of discussion, which is the visibility of the violations, and the effective role of the media on the topic. More precisely, during the coverage analysis, we have observed different trends of “allocation of visibility” by the media regarding the main interlocutor of the agrarian reform in the country. The basic assumption was that a movement which directly or indirectly represents the social interests of a consistent part of the society, which

⁷³ Luis Fernando Verissimo in *O Globo*, 29/03/2002.

⁷⁴ From *Folha de São Paulo*, 14/02/03.

is more than 4,5 millions landless workers, about 22 millions people, should have the right to participate in the media debate under fair conditions.

In a democratic context, in fact, the expectation is that media could exercise a double function: the representation of the debate involving all sectors of society, which is the representative function, and the control over possible abuses by the executive power and/or by the elites, the so called watch-dog function (Lichtenberg, 1990).⁷⁵ These are fundamental conditions to realize the effective maturity of a democracy and to grant a real balance among internal political and social forces.

Considering the two different periods of the research, characterized by important political changes for the country, we have observed a general tendency to under-estimate both of these aspects. First of all, the main national newspapers analyzed, which have been selected as more representative in terms of media agenda formers, show a general negative attitude toward the MST's claims representation. This phenomenon, even if with significant differences between 2002 and 2003, often resulted in the occultation of data, statistics, clarifications and representation of the agrarian conflict. The most important evidence in this sense is the poor coverage of the juridical issues related to the topic, which, in our view, contributes to create a climate of confusion and ambiguity in the so called "communication recipients" (the readers). The second aspect, which showed an extremely low level of visibility was that of the educational *problematique* involved in the land conflict, which according to the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, UNICEF⁷⁶, and the majority of the national civil society actors, constitutes a fundamental element in order to understand the deep contradictions of the rural environment. In these cases, we have explicitly spoken of a violation of the right to receive impartial information, which, at an international level, is expressly guaranteed by art. 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights and art.19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. On a national level, the Brazilian constitution dedicates a specific part to the "social communication" issue on art. 220 of chapter V, underlying the fundamental value of free information.

The general impression, during the news classification, was of a predominantly partial communication, essentially based on the prevalence of the most visible, spectacular episodes related to the MST's claims, which are their so called "actions". The action visibility, in particular, has been often responsible of an under-representation of the concrete violations of economic and social rights related to the land conflict, giving more space to another juridical violation, which is the right to property, a no less legally valid, but often over-represented, violation. In other words, the right of big landowners to defend and to protect their properties has been often perceived as the essential

⁷⁵ Lichtenberg J., *Democracy and the Mass Media*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990 (p.105).

⁷⁶ See the UNICEF prize to the MST for its educational work in the rural areas in 1995.

“breach” in legal terms, giving much less attention to the deep lack of implementation of social and economic equality conditions, which, in many cases are the first causes of this often symbolic violation. In fact, as we have seen referring to the 1996 Supreme Court sentence, the MST’s land occupations should not to be interpreted in pure terms of “invasion of a property”, but more as symbolic political acts conducted in order to accelerate the implementation of a constitutional right by the government - this right being the distribution of unproductive land for social utility (art.184 of the Constitution).

In a strictly media perspective, it has to be remarked that the violation of the right to property is certainly much more easily representable in the simplified format of newspapers, but also in that of TV and radio information. This happens because this violation generally presents an immediate identification of who are the victims and who the offenders in two distinct semantic areas.

The simplification of reality in two clear, separate blocks is a classic aspect in the media approach. Rather, it is undoubtedly much more difficult to build a “simplified frame” for the violation of right to food and right to land, which demands much more complex levels of historical, political, social and economic clarifications. In other words, we could say that the violation of right to property is easier to “sell” in the media market.

But beyond these considerations, there are also strong political explanations, in the sense that national media generally tended to isolate social movements and their claims, giving voice to other interests and priorities. Essentially, these have been the priorities of the high or middle-high class and of the economic elites of the country, which, in the recent history of Brazil, have almost always coincided with the government’s positions. The MST’s communication office coordinator Leticia Barqueta classified this condition as “the mass media untouchable latifundium”⁷⁷ of the country.

Thus, we can mention the second biggest responsibility of media in a democratic context, which is the watchdog function. Over the past decades, the considerable levels of identification of the press with the pro-elites governments positions on agrarian problem have generally produced a huge misrepresentation of the economic and social scenario, basically excluding social actors from the space of the media legitimation. Then, mass media often did not play a role of critique or “control” on the democratic exercise of power by the elites and by the government.

The consequence of this distorted informational process, according to Comparato⁷⁸, is the lack of actual awareness of the agrarian problem within the mostly urbanized public opinion, often characterized from a more abstract vision of the context. Media, in this sense, should have an enormous responsibility as fundamental ambassador of the food and land emergencies toward the

⁷⁷ Latifundium, see supra note 27.

⁷⁸ Comparato, see supra note 65.

urban classes. Firstly, this is because it is part of their democratic duties to facilitate the integration of a so-split society, with incredible records of social and economic inequalities. Secondly, as we have explained above, it is because the high majority of the recently urbanized population, today residing in the slums, has rural origins, in the sense that most of them were forced to inflate cities because of the impossibility to survive with the agricultural work. So far, the state preference for an export-oriented agriculture has been one of the main factors that produced the massive migration from the lands to the cities.

When media players choose to ignore, to under-estimate or to declassify the agrarian reform issue from their daily agenda, they are simply paralyzing and inhibiting the democratisation process, which is impossible to develop without a more integrated society. The general tendency to cover the MST's actions can be read in two different phases. At first, in the early 90's, this kind of spectacular initiative had the undeniable merit to break the media resistance and scarce interest on the topic generating an authentic flow of information about the movement. This happened until the Carajás massacre in 1996, and the big national march to Brasilia in 1997, which represented the most covered episodes for MST. But afterwards, the action strategy started to be perceived in a more "routine system", which progressively affected the debate, restricting and enclosing it inside an extremely negative frame made out of violence, depredations, police repression, arrests etc.

This is a negative and violent frame, in which the landless peasants were frequently identified as aggressive promoters, not as victims or as just one of the many actors involved. Antonio da Silva Camara observes that "*In the case of the social movements, spectacular actions are associated with new events, and that seems to be the pre-condition in order to obtain the 'ambiguous' dissemination produced by the national press*".⁷⁹ Thus, this generates a sort of "vicious circle" of coverage, which, in a long-term, strongly affects the MST's possibility of presenting other claims and perspectives, practically suffocating the other issues (see: active policy, GMOs, juridical aspects and education in our news classification) or compulsorily converging them toward the "action category". In this regard Canclini wrote that "The subordination of the political action to its spectacularisation operated by the media is gradually reducing the importance of parties, trade unions, strikes, public and mass manifestations, that is, of the issues in which social negotiations should be realized".⁸⁰

Further evidence of such attitude is the huge discrepancy between the media visibility of the Special Rapporteur's declaration on the Brazil's violation of international treaties and the visibility of the episode of the invasion of the Cardoso's sons' farm. Significantly, the two facts happened in

⁷⁹ Antonio da Silva Camara is professor of the Sociology Department at the Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences of the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil. See www.mst.org.br/multimedia.

⁸⁰ Canclini in Gohn M.G., *Mídia, Terceiro Setor e MST, Impactos sobre o futuro das cidades e do campo*, Petropolis-RJ, Editora Vozes, 2000, p.160.

the same week, so it is even more interesting to compare the coverage data. On March 18 2002, Mr. Ziegler announced the conclusions of his 18-day mission in Brazil, whose aim was to evaluate the conditions of the implementation of the right to food in the country. His observations, denunciations, comments and recommendations on the insufficient efforts of the government and on the fundamental role of MST were mentioned in 2 articles in the following 4 days. On March 24, there was the “clamorous” invasion of Buritis, with the stealing of steak and whiskies from the Presidential refrigerator. The protest initiative, even if morally and legally wrong, produced an overwhelming news flow for more than a week with the unprecedented average of 34 news stories per day. Could we say that, in this week, the general presentation of the problem could have benefited from the parallel reference to expressions such as “maximum of the available resources”, “land concentration”, “44 millions of under-nourished people”, “1500 killings of landless workers in 15 years”, “32% of child illiteracy in the rural areas” or again “the construction a free, just and solidary society to eradicate poverty and sub-standard living conditions⁸¹”?

Our critique on the episode does not concern the coverage of the fact *per se*, but the consideration of the strong cognitive impact which it created on the public opinion in a long-term perspective, that still affects the media reference on the agrarian reform MST’s demands. The intense semantic association “PEASANTS = VANDALS” made during that week is still fresh in the Brazilian citizens, and we believe it represented a significant stop in the democratic popular involvement toward the solution of the economic and social tragedies of the country.

⁸¹ They are some of the phrases used by Mr. Ziegler in the presentation to the press of the conclusions of his mission in Brazil.

5 - CONCLUSION

When a country is in a condition of open and evident violation of economic and social rights, we affirm that freedom of expression shall be interpreted in a very particular manner. That is, in such a context, the media players, charged for the production and distribution of information, have a much more complex task to fulfil and a much higher ethical responsibility to endorse, compared to the media players of Western, developed countries.

This task is essentially based on the necessity to see, analyze, address these unsustainable macro-contradictions of society, and to “mediate” them to the citizens. No real freedom of expression is possible, in our view, if such violations, regarding 1/3 of the population, do not find a legitimate space on the media agenda, that is, in the public discussion. The fact to publicly deny the existence of the violation of the right to food and the right to land in a country such as Brazil, definitely means to put the effective survival of democracy in danger, trying to marginalize some interlocutors of society.

The *de facto* independency and pluralism of media are determinant in order to guarantee a better integration and harmonisation of a recently democratised country. In other words, after the democratisation of the state apparatus (free elections, constitution), media can play an absolutely key-role in the contribution to the democratisation of society – society, which, in Brazil, is still profoundly split. “*It is like to have in the same country Belgium and India, a kind of Belindia*” argued the economist Edmar Bacha. In the ‘70s Jacques Lambert coined the expressions “*The two Brazils*”, one rich, the other poor, in order to describe such a context.⁸²

Commenting the importance of social rights in democracies, T. Jaspers argues, “In times of economic prosperity – in any case for a number of regions of the world in which the economy is indeed flourishing – the exclusion of groups from (participation in) certain aspects of society’s activities, be these concerned with work, income, politics or culture, is seen as a ‘real’ problem. It is just such economic development that, in terms of work or income as the basis for participation in society, should create a dam against social exclusion. The exclusion of sizeable groups in period of economic prosperity makes this phenomenon distressing, but at the same time it makes it a top priority issue on the political agenda. The undesirable effects thereof, in terms of increasing criminality, the formation of *ghettos* with their own lifestyle, laws and customs, social and cultural

⁸² From the *Estado de São Paulo*, 23/03/02. This reflection is particular relevant in reference to the high social and economic discrepancy between urban and rural society existing in the country.

separatism and political apathy are both seen and experienced as a threat to society. The exclusion of sizeable groups forms, or in any case is seen as, an encroachment upon social cohesion.”⁸³

The government and the elected authorities undoubtedly have the major responsibility for the practical implementation of economic and social rights, which are “programmatic” in nature. Thus, the initiative of the state and the political power is obviously fundamental in order to limit social exclusion and in order to encourage the active role of different sectors and groups of society.

However, mass media can be determinant in encouraging and creating better conditions for social cohesion within a developing country. The media can be active in moderating the debate among the different interlocutors and voices of society – rural and urban ones, in the example of Brazil. The media can act as an educator, in a country with 15% of official illiteracy, but also with another 15% of *cultural illiteracy*. Media can act as *dynamic forum*, creating space for exchange of opinions, but also for the formulation of new opinions, not limiting itself to be sterile instrument to the repetition of old, traditional, more ideological approaches. Media can represent an input to build social, economic, and political alternatives - alternatives, for example, to the fact that 46% of the cultivable land belongs to 1% of the population, and alternatives to the fact that 90% of the national media is controlled by 7 powerful families.

Freedom of expression and freedom of the press, as civil and political rights, are the basic conditions in order to guarantee this particular media function. This aspect is deeply related to the principle of the indivisibility and reciprocity of human rights, as stated in the Vienna Declaration of 1993:

All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We intend this concept in the light of a wide-ranging and purposive ‘global interdependence’ rather than of a strict “technical interdependence” of human rights, in accordance to the conception of Lamarche⁸⁴. In this regard, Scott identifies a “risk of legalistic rigidification” unless one constantly keeps in mind that the idea of interdependence “has been developed not for the sake of

⁸³ Jaspers T., *The challenging Struggle for Fundamental Social Rights* in M. Castermans F. Van Hoof and J. Smith (Eds.), *The Role of the Nation State in the 21st century*, Kluwer Law International, 1998, pp. 79-90.

⁸⁴ Lamarche L. in Scott C., *Reaching Beyond (Without Abandoning) the Category of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, *Human Rights Quarterly* 21, 1999, pp. 633-660.

rights but for the sake of persons”.⁸⁵ In the Lamarche global interdependence approach, “Human rights norms should inform the progressive and generous development of human rights interpretations quite apart from whether a given interpretation follows from normative inter-treaty borrowing in situation where textual signals (for example, the preambles of both the ICCPR and ICESCR) seem to permit or even mandate such borrowing”.⁸⁶

Moreover, in our view, the major aim will not be limited to the fact to give equal legal priority to both categories of rights, pressing for implementing and extending the concept of justiciability also to economic and social rights. Beyond that, we address the enormous importance to interpret one of the foundations of civil and political rights, such as freedom of expression, in view of a better, quicker, and more effective realisation of economic and social rights. The two categories of rights are not just equally universal, but also deeply and globally inter-connected. The best way to realize this purpose is through the active involvement of all sectors of society on the economic and social problems, in a good and effective exercise of democracy. Democracy, which, we believe, cannot be based on principles different from pluralism, transparency, and deontology.

On the other hand, this irreversible process of democratisation, which in Brazil started in the ‘80s, certainly transcends the attitude and the action of a particular political majority. Consequently, the major challenge will be of cultivating such freedoms in the daily life in a long-term perspective. Because the application of freedom of expression on ESC rights is much more important than a particular political leader or a specific social movement. Because the application of freedom of expression on ESC rights is linked to the possibility to produce communication on freedom from want, communication on freedom from need, communication on freedom from being exposed to the worst humiliations and denigrations of human life.

The two following figures may contribute to clarify our considerations:

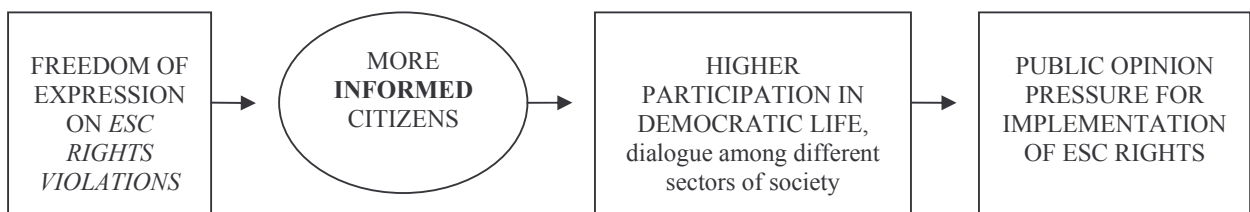


Figure 5.1

⁸⁵ Scott C., supra note 83.

⁸⁶ Lamarche L., *Perspectives Occidentales du Droit International de Droit Economiques de la Personne*, in Scott C., see supra note 80.

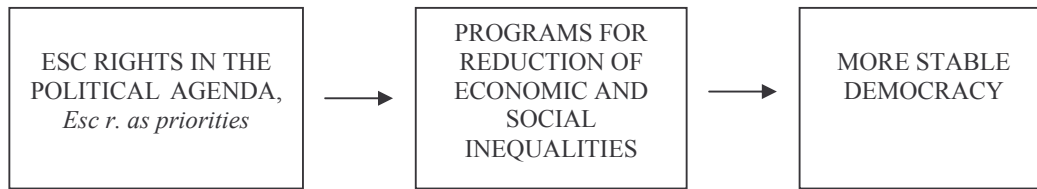


Figure 5.2

Commenting the value of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, Mme de Staël, a European political theorist of the 19th century, affirmed that “*They are the rights on which all other rights depend*”.⁸⁷ This principle can be interpreted arguing that it is possible to protect the effective justiciability of a right only *publicizing the concrete meaning* of its violation in what we today call “public opinion”. Ignoring this aspect, citizens would be marginalized from the political participation and excluded from the development process of their country. Thus, democracy would be strongly compromised, because economic and social contradictions and gaps of a state cannot be solved without the concrete support of its citizens. A *not well informed* citizen is like an illiterate citizen, in the sense that he will never have the real possibility to exercise his/her right to actively participate in the democratic life and in the democratisation process. What it is not visible, it does not exist.

⁸⁷ Mme de Staël in Lichtenberg J., *Democracy and the Mass Media*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, (p.27).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research constitutes a first attempt to analyse the influence of the media on the implementation of the right to food and the right to land in a particular country. As mentioned earlier, it was not possible to integrate television as a medium in this research investigation. Thus, even if it is unquestionable that press often represents a key-reference for broadcasting media in order to approach political and social issues, research including television coverage could certainly extend the understanding of the media role in the context of the violation of these categories of social and economic rights.

Concerning the specific ambit of social movements, we believe that they are passing through a topical process of transformation and political legitimation in Brazil, but also in other countries of Latin America. This continent could be defined “a region in ferment” because of the enormous political and social changes occurred in the last decade. Suffice here to remember the end of dictatorship in Chile, Bolivia and Peru, the democratisation process in Argentina, Paraguay and Guatemala, the election of the first non pro-elites governments in Venezuela, Ecuador and Brazil, and the increasing mobilisation of indigenous people communities in the entire continent.

In a phase of general crisis for the previous hegemonic powers, new actors are emerging in the social and political sphere.

Brazil is undoubtedly a very representative country in Latin America regarding the impact of social movements: firstly, because of the dimension of its territory and of its population; secondly, because of the high level of industrialisation, especially in the south of the country. But also in other states of the continent, many popular and human rights movements are growing, consolidating and progressively gaining social and political force, in a variegated picture of civil society: this is the case of the peasant movement *Chiapas* in Mexico, of the indigenous movements such as *Asymaras* in Bolivia, and of a variety of human rights movements in Colombia, Argentina, Guatemala and El Salvador.

On the one hand, the new social movements, born in the ‘80s, are more and more committed toward the implementation of economic and social rights rather than civil and political rights. In particular, rural movements, in solidarity with traditional urban movements, are certainly playing a key-role in attracting national and international attention.

On the other hand, it is evident the tendency of social movements to realize forms of political pressure refusing a policy of cooperation with the state authorities - a strategy which today is more typical of trade unions, parties and workers’ associations. Rather, they are more and more engaged in getting support and mobilisation of public opinion through highly visible, spectacular initiatives,

whose final aim is to lobby the government. In order to achieve this goal, social movements are trying to maximize the use of the increasing media resources available in the globalisation era, constituting broad networks and extending their platforms beyond their traditional local headquarters.

In order to better understand and evaluate this ongoing process of legitimation, it is crucial, in our opinion, to deepen the aspect of media visibility and media participation. In this sense, further research focusing on the mass media function could contribute to clarify the increasing impact of social movements in addressing the *de facto* realisation of economic and social human rights.

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REVIEWS:

- G. Mészáros, *No Ordinary Revolution: Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement*, in «Race and Class », vol. 42, no. 2, October-December 2000, pp. 1-18.
- G. Mészáros, *Taking the Land into their Hands: The Landless Workers' Movement and the Brazilian State*, in « Journal of Law and Society », vol. 27, no. 4, December 2000, pp. 517-541.
- Scott C., *Reaching Beyond (Without Abandoning) the Category of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, Human Rights Quarterly 21, 1999, pp. 633-660.

RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES:

- International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, 1966
- International Convention on Economic, Social and Economic Rights, 1966
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- American Convention on Human Rights, “Pact of San José, Costa Rica”, 1969
- American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of the Man, 1948.
- Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition, 1974
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979.
- Additional Protocol to the American Convention of Human Rights, in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “Protocol of San Salvador”, 1988

INTERVIEWS:

- 1) Jean Paul Marthoz, editor in chief of “La Libre”, Bruxelles, Belgium, 5/03/03.
- 2) Oliver Money-Kyrle, Director of Project Division, International Federation of Journalist, Bruxelles, Belgium, 07/03/03.
- 3) Samla Mesquita, Agencia Estado, Bruxelles, Belgium, 08/04/03
- 4) Marie Ganier-Raymond, Information Director of FIAN, via e-mail, 03/02/03.
- 5) Gilberto Ferreira, president of the Belgian-Brazilian Comm., Bruxelles, Belgium, 07/03/03.
- 6) François Heinderyckx, ULB, Bruxelles, Belgium, 22/03/03
- 7) Maria da Gloria Gohn, professor at Unicamp University, São Paulo, Brazil, 17/04/03
- 8) Leticia Barqueta, responsible for the MST Communication Office, São Paulo, Brazil, 17/04/03
- 9) Juvelino José Strozake, attorney, MST human rights office responsible, São Paulo, Brazil, 17/04/03
- 10) Josias de Souza, journalist, editor in chief of the Brasilia headquarter of Folha de São Paulo, via e-mail, 18/03/03
- 10) Luis Antonio Magalhaes, journalist, Observatorio da Imprensa, São Paulo, Brazil, 17/04/03.
- 11) José Arbex Junior, journalist, editor in chief of the magazine Brasil de Fato, São Paulo, Brazil, 18/04/03
- 12) Emir Sader, sociologist, Uerj, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 29/04/03
- 13) Vito Gianotti, coordinator of the Communication Research Centre NPC, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 29/04/03
- 14) Cid Benjamin, vice-editor of the newspaper Jornal do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 29/04/03
- 15) Riccardo Barranca, Osservatorio per la comunicazione di Pavia, Italia, 30/01/03.
- 16) Antonio Nizzoli, Osservatorio per la comunicazione di Pavia, Italia, 30/01/03.
- 17) Rossana Gaia, communication professor at University of Alagoas, Brazil, 02/06/03
- 18) Luis Peixoto, coordinator of the NGO Fian in Brasilia, Brazil, via e-mail, 14/04/03
- 19) Priscilla Claes, coordinator of the NGO Fian in Bruxelles, Belgium, 07/03/03.
- 20) Augusto de Paula, MST Lawyer, Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, via e-mail, 21/02/03
- 21) Patricia Wittenberg, former journalist Globo News 24, Brazil, via e-mail, 28/03/03
- 22) Antonius Klom, European Commission, Brazil Desk Coordinator, Bruxelles, Belgium, 25/03/03.
- 23) George Meszaros, professor and researcher at Warwick University, UK, via e-mail, 04/02/03.

WEB SITES:

- MST, Landless workers' movement: www.mst.org.br
- FIAN, Foodfirst international action network: www.fian.org
- IBOPE, Brazilian institute for public opinion and statistics: www.ibope.org.br
- Folha de São paulo: www.folha.com.br
- Jornal do brasil: www.jbonline.com.br
- Globo: www.oglobo.com.br
- Correio Braziliense: www.correiobrasiliense.com.br
- Estado de São paulo: www.estadao.com.br
- Epoca: www.epoca.com.br
- Veja: www.veja.com.br
- Istoé: www.istoe.com.br
- Brasil de fato: www.brasildefato.com.br
- Press Observatory of São Paulo: www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br
- ABRA, Brazilian Association for Agrarian Reform: www.abra.org
- IBGE, Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics: www.ibge.gov.br
- Conectas, Brazilian human rights network: www.conectas.org
- INCRA, Institute for National Colonisation and Agrarian Reform: www.incra.gov.br
- UNDP: www.undp.org
- UNHCR: www.unhcr.org
- FAO: www.fao.org

APPENDIX 1

Document edited by the state agency INCRA, proving the transport payment for Mr. Josias de Souza, journalist of Folha de Sao Paulo, in order to realize a report on the MST. In the document there is a clear description of the service provided by INCRA and of its motivations: "to drive the car with license plate AJA-3628 transporting the Folha de São Paulo's Director to the settlements of Aguas de Jurema, Recanto Estrela, Ireno Alves dos Santos, in order to subsidize an article on the application of the agrarian programs Procerá and Pronaf." (See "Descrição do service a ser executado" on the right side of the document).

Serviço Público
CURITIBA

SECRETARIA DE
01/01/71

PROPOSTA E CONCESSÃO DE
DIÁRIAS Nº 007

RESERVAÇÃO DO PROTOCOLO Nº 0000000000

INICIAL PROLONGAÇÃO

PROVENIENTE

1) UNIDADE GESTORA DE CADERNOS PIRGS: P.1 FONTE: 1000000000
NOME: BENEDITO DONALAZUAS RIBEIRO
CARGO: FUNÇÃO DE CHEFE DA DIVISÃO ADMINISTRATIVA E FINANCEIRA

PROPOSTO

2) NOME: JESUS RIBEIRO CREA Nº 000.500.00 MATRÍCULA: 316240
CARGO, FUNÇÃO OU EMPREGO: AUTORISTA OFICIAL
CIC Nº: 18000 BANCO Nº: 00 AGENCIA: 12416

1) LOCAL	2) AFASTAMENTO		3) DESCRIÇÃO DO SERVIÇO A SER EXECUTADO
	DE	ATE	
CURITIBA, PARANÁ - SANTA MARIA DO DEBUÍ, PARANÁ - CURITIBA	08.03.2000	10.03.2000	CONDUZIR VIATURA DE MARCA KIA TRANSPORTANDO OS DIR. DA FOLHA DE PAULO AOS ASSENTAMENTOS AGUAS DE JUREMA, RECANTO ESTRELA, IRENO ALVES DOS SANTOS, P/ SUBSIDIAR MATÉRIA SOBRE APLICAÇÃO DO PROCI E PRONAF.
LOCALIDADE(S)	Nº DIÁRIAS	VALOR UNITÁRIO	VALOR TOTAL R\$
CURITIBA, PARANÁ, SANTA MARIA DO DEBUÍ, PARANÁ	2,0	57,20	114,40
DEBUÍ, PARANÁ	1,0	3,50	3,50
MP 1041 DEC 2000	1,0	1,20	1,20
TOTAL			119,10

ASSINATURA DO PROPONENTE: *Josias de Souza*

CONCESSÃO

1) CONCESSÃO AUTORIZADA O PAGAMENTO DAS DIÁRIAS

2) RECEBIMENTO DO PAGAMENTO DIRETO DA PAGA A IMPORTANCIA DE R\$ 119,10 (CENTO E NINTE E OITO REAIS E OITENTA E SEIS CENTAVOS)

ASSINATURA DO RECEBENTE: *Josias de Souza*