

Questioning the Social Dimensions of Sustainability: the Weakening of Traditional Communities and the Biofuel Industry in Brazil



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Traditional Populations



Convention 169 of ILO from 1989 protects the rights of indigenous and tribal people in independent countries. Article 14:

“The rights of ownership and possession of the peoples concerned over the lands which they traditionally occupy shall be recognized. In addition, measures shall be taken in appropriate cases to safeguard the right of the peoples concerned to use lands not exclusively occupied by them, but to which they have traditionally had access for their subsistence and traditional activities.”



Traditional Communities in Brazil



- Represented by indigenous peoples, river and delta dwellers, rubber tappers, grazers, fisher-folk, peasants, and the quilombolas (descendants of runaway slave communities of African origins).
- Have been part of a historical process of expropriation and exploitation.
- Complex class/race relationship dictates their lack of power.

What is Quilombola



- Descendents of Afro- Brazilians who lived in **quilombos** (communities of run away slaves).
- Called *parenques, gafitunas, marron, etc.* in other languages.
- *Conception/identity problem: “Quilombos are African-descendant communities. Regardless of their specific history or whether they began as maroons, these communities share an ethnic identity and a collective view of land ownership”*
Quilombola Jo in Bowen 2010.

Debates Over the Concept of Quilombo



- **Palmares: The biggest: between 15 to 30 thousand people - from 1630 until 1695. Zumbi: the lider**



Long-Term Titling process



INCRA- National Land Reform Institute

- delimit, demarcate and title quilombo territory

Ministry of Culture- Instituto Palmares

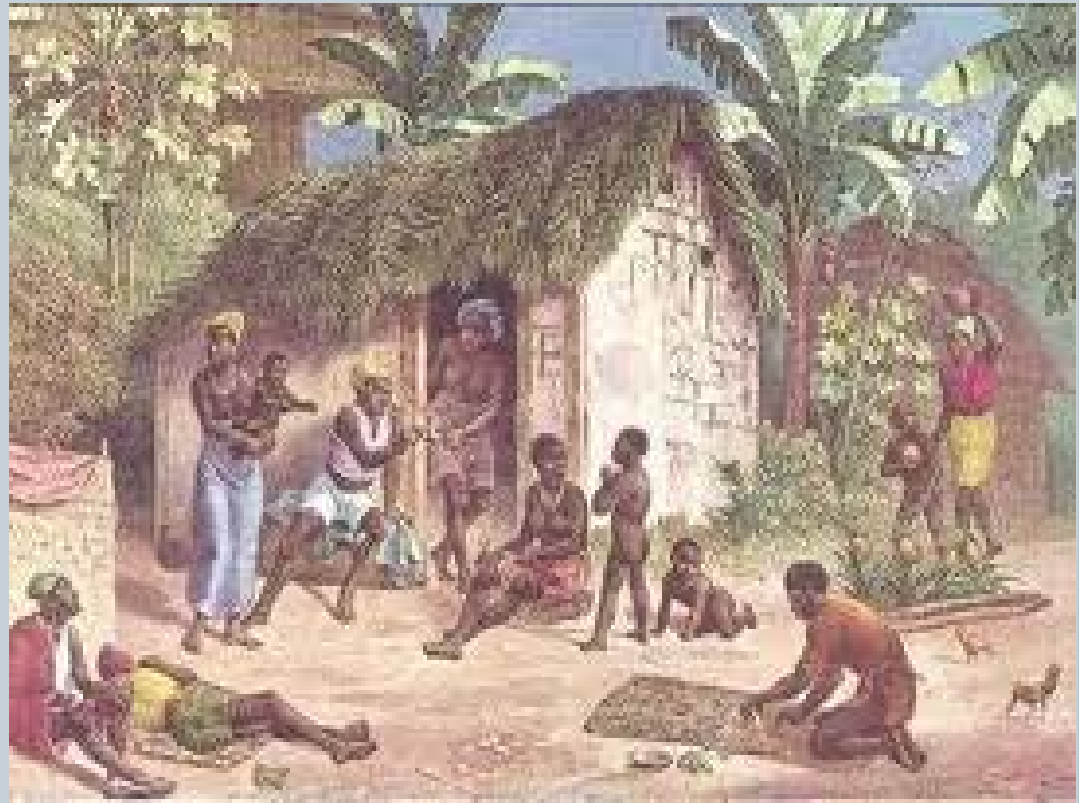
- identify, recognize

By 2013, only 139 quilombola communities had their land titles, while 1264 processes where open

Old vs. New



- Currently, around 2 million people distributed in 2,500 communities
- Land vs. territory
- Rural vs. urban
- Race vs. poverty





Nº de comunidades quilombolas por estado

- ❑ Maranhão 642
- ❑ Bahia 396
- ❑ Pará 294
- ❑ Minas Gerais 135
- ❑ Pernambuco 91
- ❑ Rio Grande do Sul 90
- ❑ Piauí 78
- ❑ São Paulo 70
- ❑ Rio Grande do Norte 64
- ❑ Mato Grosso 59
- ❑ Ceará 54

Socio-Economic Position



Brazilian population by color or race



Color or race	1940	1950	1960	1980	1991	2000	2010
White	63.5	61.7	61	54.2	52	53.74	47.7
Brown	21.2	26.5	29.5	38.8	42	38.45	43.1
Black	14.6	11	8.7	5.9	5.0	6.21	7.6
Native	X	X	X	X	0.3	0.3	0.6
Yellow	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.5	1

Source: IBGE (2011)

Population with high school degree (%)

Color/ race by gender	1960		1980		1991		2000	
White	2.6	2.3	8.43	9.53	12.65	14.28	17.86	20.26
Black	.11	.12	1.84	2.03	5.06	5.87	9.01	11.11
Yellow	1.43	2.22	20.44	19.4	24.62	24.6	27.24	26.62
Brown	.35	.29	2.79	3.33	5.7	7.31	9.39	12.09
Native	_____	_____	_____	_____	2.5	2.9	7.77	8.54
Total	1.7	1.51	5.95	6.86	9.39	11.06	13.94	16.05

Source: Beltrao and Teixeira (2005)

p.s.: women in red men in blue

Population with college degree (%)

Color/ race by gender	1960		1980		1991		2000	
White	1.38	.22	3.84	2.52	6.03	5.25	6.57	6.6
Black	.03	0.1	0.27	.23	.93	.96	1.24	1.58
Yellow	.55	.19	10.55	6.61	18.89	14.79	21.11	18.33
Brown	.11	.02	.54	.43	1.15	1.16	1.29	1.55
Native	_____	_____	_____	_____	.78	.73	1.37	1.4
Total	0.87	.14	2.41	1.64	3.72	3.42	4.19	4.46

Source: Beltrao and Teixeira (2005)

p.s.: women in red men in blue

Conflict of Interests



Indigenous Lands: the Guaranis



- The Guarani Indians in Brazil are divided into three groups: Mbyá, Kaiowá and Ñandeva. The Kaiowá and the Ñandeva live in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, on the border with Paraguay.
- The Guarani live in extended family groups and each has its own land called tekohá which refers to the whole space occupied by natural resources: land, rivers, forests and gardens which are integral to sustaining their way of life.



- **Before the arrival of the Europeans in the sixteenth century, the Guarani occupied a vast region in the south-center and south-east of South America. There were an estimated 1,500,000 Indians in a territory of about 350,000 square kilometers. The Guarani population in Brazil now numbers approximately 43,000. Waves of violent invasions have converted their homeland into a vast network of cattle ranches, soya farms, and sugar cane plantations for Brazil's biofuels market (Survival 2010).**



- Today many Guarani live in chronically overcrowded reserves, for example Dourados Reserve where 12,000 Guarani are living on 3,000 hectares of land. Here they are no longer self-sufficient because they have very little land on which to hunt, fish and grow crops. Lack of opportunity, migrant labour outside the community and cramped conditions have led to social tensions, high rates of internal violence, alcoholism and disease.
- Some Guarani communities have no land at all, and live camped by roadsides in appalling conditions with no access to clean water and food. For example, the Guarani of Laranjeira Nanderu who were evicted from their land in September 2009 and whose village was set on fire by unidentified people, and the Guarani of Apyka'y whose roadside camp was attacked and torched in the same month (<http://intercontinentalcry.org/second-guarani-village-burned-in-mato-grosso-do-sul/>).
- The process of expulsion of the Guarani has forced them to take up temporary employment in the region's large farms and alcohol refineries, thus separating them from the extended family and the traditional form of social organisation. Profoundly affected by their huge loss of land, the Guarani of Mato Grosso do Sul suffer a wave of suicide unequalled in South America. They also suffer from high rates of unfair imprisonment, exploitation in the work place, malnutrition, violence, homicide and assassination.



- ***“I always remember one old man said, ‘The whites – they’re going to finish us off. They’re going to finish off our houses, finish our fish, even our crops. And once all our forest is gone, we as a people will be finished. It’s all going to change and our land will become very small. And you know, that man, all those years ago, calculated absolutely right’”*** (Paulito, a Guarani shaman, summed up his people’s situation in an interview with Survival in 1998).

Other peasants and fisherman

Trapiche Sugarcane Mill- Sirinhaem PE owns 28,500 ha of land, large part acquired after displacing local fishermen population in 2002 by the use of private militia. Now, living in slums, local population also have their source of income threatened:

“Each year, the pollution increases with the increasing production of the mills . . . If the river continues to be polluted, I and thousands and thousands of others will not be able to continue to work and survive” (Holanda Santos, fisherwoman, in interview to Oxfam in Oct. 2013).



Total land area Brazil	851.487.659 ha
Used for agriculture in 2006	330.000.000 ha of which 24% owned by family farmers and 76% owned by corporations
Agricultural stablishments in 2006	5.175.489 units of which 85% are family and 15% are corporate
Annual gross product value 2006	71.5 billion dollars (38% produced by family farmers and 62 % by agribusiness)
Employment	17.074.025 people (74% by family farms and 26% by agribusiness)

Fernandes et al. 2013.



Land Grabbing

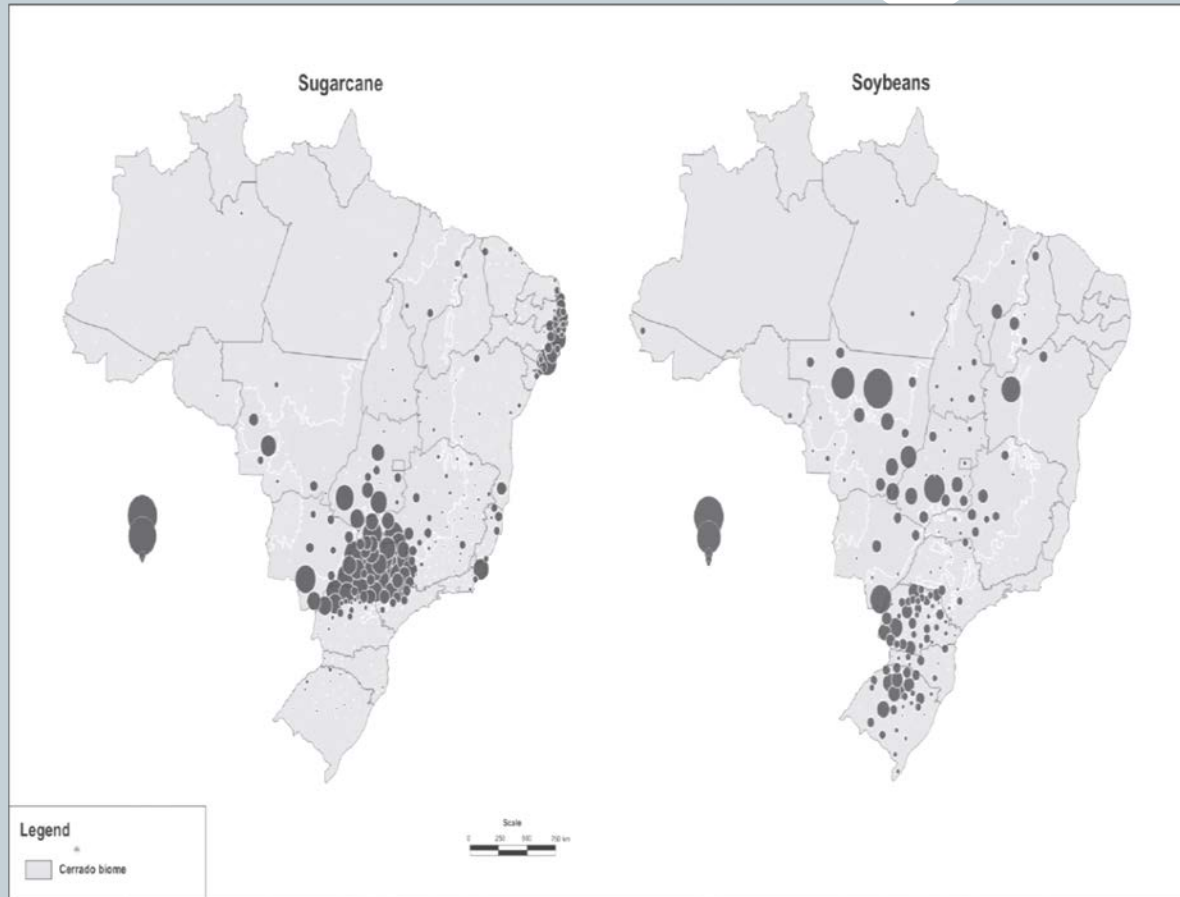


- Land grabbing in Brazil was facilitated in the 1990s by drastic changes made to land regulation pertaining to foreigners. In 1995, Brazil's National Congress approved an amendment that effectively removed barriers to the amount of land foreign corporations were able to purchase in the country, by allowing national companies controlled by international capital to continue operating as Brazilian entities, regardless of their respective degree of foreign ownership and capital (Oliveira 2010).
- Three years later, in 1998, another major alteration was made, by way of an Informed Opinion (GQ181) issued by the Office of Solicitor General (AGU) at the direct request of President Cardoso, which saw the federal government relinquishing 'any form of effective control on land purchase by foreign companies in Brazil' (Pretto 2009: 7).



- Expansion of soybean has created space for the involvement of transnational agro-industrial giants, such as ADM, Bunge, Cargill, Dreyfus, Monsanto, Syngenta and Dupont. These corporations, among many others, have reaped considerable benefits from Brazil's soybean boon, gaining control over national agricultural land and processing facilities through an intricate and ongoing process of corporate mergers and acquisitions. Between 1995 and 2005, the share of international capital in Brazil's agro-industrial grain sector increased dramatically, jumping from 16 per cent to 57 per cent (Sauer and Leite 2012).
- There has been a flurry of mergers and acquisitions among national and international firms in the energy, agriculture, biotechnology and chemical sectors, such that foreign entities today control about 22 per cent of Brazilian sugarcane and ethanol companies (Geiver and Jessen 2010).
- As a result of the purchase of land by foreigners in Brazil, land prices have increased significantly across the country.

Sugarcane and Soybeans in Brazil 2010



Source: Clements and Fernandes 2013.



- **Thank you!**