

CLAG Field Study Award Report

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Project: The Changing Dynamics between Smallholders and Ranchers in Agrarian Reform Settlements in the South of Pará

We finally had a moment to chat without the men being around. When he was around, I never really heard her voice or her perspective. So when he was summoned to help with a mired cow, I took the opportunity to have some girl time. I suddenly felt like a therapist. She had a lot of pent up frustration from doing most of the work around the farm and getting no recognition. She does everything from keeping the house in order to maintaining annuals, and producing home-made cheese and yogurt for some extra income. She used to be a lot more involved in the movement when he lived in the city for temporary work, but since he's been back, he hasn't allowed her to go back. She says men are scared of independent women, so they create barriers to keep women from finding their independence. (Field Notes 7-10-17)

Although my research wasn't specifically looking at gender dynamics, it is conversations like these that help elucidate daily struggles and help inform research needs in a community. This past summer I spent a month in between Belém and Marabá (and smaller towns close to Marabá), to conduct pre-field work for my dissertation research focused on the changing dynamics between smallholders and ranchers. Since this was my first time in the region, and first time meeting potential research partners and participants, I did a lot of listening. I began my fieldwork in Belem, where I met my in-country advisor for a planning meeting. She completed her dissertation research in the area, so it was very valuable to have an in-person meeting about her experience working in the same site. I also had a chance to meet with professors from the Geography department at the Federal University of Pará, who provided important insights and also connected me with people at my study site, particularly social movement leaders.

My next stop was in Marabá, my study area. I had some meetings lined-up with the researchers in the Geography department at the State University, and they were able to provide some more specific information about current research in the area, and made helpful recommendations for other works in the area. They also offered support for conducting my own research, and indicated interest in helping me collect data. My time at the State University in Marabá also coincided with the orientation for the new students beginning the Agricultural Education Program, which is a result of a partnership of the Landless Movement and the State to provide agricultural education to youth in agrarian reform settlements. I had the opportunity to attend a few talks, round-table discussions and documentary showings that were part of the orientation. To my luck, a lot of the social movement leaders I needed to contact were presenting at the orientation, so I was able to meet with them and set-up my rural settlement visits.

I visited three rural settlements: 26 de Março (in Marabá), Canudos (in Eldorado dos Carajás) and Palmareis II (in Parauapebas). At each settlement I stayed for at least two nights, and spoke to a variety of people. In total I visited 9 households, spoke to one 6 social movement leaders

and agricultural extension officer. Below are some of the main findings that were valuable in reshaping my research for when I come back to collect data:

Social movement heterogeneity: According to one of Prof. Michelotti from the State University is Pará: "Many peasants become autonomous, so it is difficult for the movement to maintain control. There are multiple dynamics and not all members are in line with the movement's mission, so many peasants establish relations with the ranchers." This was confirmed when I visited the sites, and realized that most of the original settlers had already sold their lots (which is against agrarian reform policy). Therefore, not only there are many settlers that are no longer involved in the movement, there are many residents in the settlements that were never even involved in the movement. As a result, the movement's mission towards sustainable alternatives is weakened from lack of participations and member commitment.

Milk Production: Although there are challenges to sustainable alternatives, milk production among smallholders is rising. According previous research in the area (from 2006 and 2011) although the development plans promote milk production as a sustainable alternative for smallholders, many were solely engaged in ranching activities. However, many smallholders were producing milk. Many indicated that milk prices were not fair, and in that fact the relations with the dairy industry was more exploitative than with ranchers.

Internal Tensions: The South of Pará is a region notorious for violent land conflict. However, settlement projects in the area are situated in a growing and thriving cattle economy, with opportunities to work with ranchers. As a result, smallholders and ranchers who used to be adversaries are now engaging in a complicit relationship to meet market demands. Previous work in the area raises concerns about this changing relationship, specifically on the informal terms of trade as a potential threat to smallholders' livelihoods and food sovereignty. Through my fieldwork, not only is this dynamic complicated with the dairy industry as new source of oppression, but new tensions seem to be rising within settlement residents as opposed to with smallholders and ranchers.

The CLAG Field Study Award (\$1500) was applied towards a round trip ticket from Miami to Belém (\$900), a domestic flight from Belém to Marabá (\$200), and for lodging and transportation costs while in Marabá (\$200). This experience was extremely enriching and critical to strengthen my research proposal and include factors I could not have anticipated without field work experience. As shown in the report above, I made important networking connections, met with potential collaborators, and collected important data for my return in the Spring. I am very grateful for this opportunity and support provided by the Latin Americanist Geographers!