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Gouvernementalité: the hidden agenda of Brazil's 2016  
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*Clifford Andrew Welch*

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## ***Gouvernementalité: the hidden agenda of Brazil's 2016 agricolpe***

*Clifford Andrew Welch,*

The concept of *gouvernementalité* (*governmentality*), originally theorized by Michel Foucault in the 1970s, is fundamental to understanding the formation of contemporary neoliberal society. The concept refers to the governmental qualities of the state; Foucault was particularly interested in the development of new forms and strategies of coercion, control and vigilance (“security apparatus”) used to make people conform to norms imposed by bourgeois leaders (Foucault, 1978; Veiga-Neto, 2008). It goes without saying that we are talking about repurposing the State to strengthen even more the power and wealth of capitalists against the interests of workers.

The term is useful to explain an underlying element in Brazil's contemporary social history, a chapter of the recent past that has been shaped by conflict over land and its usage. When applied to rural social relations, the term helps explain the agrarian policies of the governments led by Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) and Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) presidencies from 2003 to 2016, as well as the coup regime that took control of the government that May. Indeed, the new State quickly affirmed an agribusiness agenda that included a crackdown on most rural social movements and pro-peasant institutions and policies, thereby fulfilling – at least in form – the neoliberal mandate to make the State more thoroughly businesslike. It established competitive, market-oriented principles to manage agrarian reform.

It would be a mistake to claim that all of these changing presidential administrations were equivalent in their *governmentality*. Four distinct presidents, hailing from three competing political parties, presented different strategies of governance for their own specific contexts. But each had to deal with the overriding pressure to conform to neoliberal norms, an apparatus thoroughly analyzed in books like Dardot and Laval's *A nova razão do mundo* (2016). While Cardoso (PSDB) and Michel Temer (PMDB, 2016-2017) identified with the trend, Luís Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff (PT), did not. But this does not mean the PT regime managed to travel in time to some distant future called the “post-neoliberal era” (López Segrera, 2016).

Each in his or her own way responded to their diverse historical circumstances to advance the neoliberal agenda by aligning government with the demands of capital. It is worth recalling that Lula's administration was celebrated by the international financial community as innovative in its ability to make the transition to neoliberalism more palatable to the poor (Anderson, 2011). Dilma was not as successful, but her two electoral victories demonstrated Brazilian resistance to neoliberal governance. Continued investment in such Lula era welfare programs as “Bolsa Família,” “Minha Casa, Minha Vida” and “ProUni” helped her win significant support among the poor. In fact, FHC initiated similar programs, while Temer merely undercut them without eliminating them. While such programs contradicted some neoliberal principles by demanding big-state expenditures, they were consistent with other neoliberal precepts. They supported individuals and their immediate families, integrating them more tightly to the market economy through key “*governmentality* apparatus” like consumption, property and education. More significant deviations from neoliberal dogma came under the FHC government when, in 2000, he bowed to political pressure and created a new federal ministry, the Ministério de Desenvolvimento Agrário (MDA). In 2016, however, while organizing his palace coup, then-Vice President Temer gained the support of congress's Bancada Ruralista<sup>1</sup> by promising to

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<sup>1</sup> The “*Bancada ruralista*” is a phrase commonly used in Brazil to define a large group of congress members – estimated to be between 120 and 200 – that generally defend the interests of large-scale rural landlords, farmers and ranchers. It's formal name is the Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária (FPA). Many members are themselves holders of significant properties, while other are beholden to the agricultural lobby or wealthy and powerful land interests (Castilho, 2012).

dismantle this same ministry. With the full support of FHC, Temer extinguished the MDA on the same day that he became interim-president.

For some two decades, numerous peasant and landless worker organizations like the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) had been especially successful at mobilizing to help wrest public policy benefits from the Brazilian government. While policy never matched the movements' desires for radical agrarian reform, the MST and its allies helped achieve numerous advances toward that goal. Among these achievements we can count constitutional articles, thousands of agrarian reform settlements, hundreds of rural schools, including dozens of alternative agriculture and political strategy training centers, higher education access for thousands of radical activists, the development and implementation of government programs to purchase and distribute settlement farmer products, and creation of the MDA. From a governance perspective, the state treated the landless movement like a special interest pressure group (ONDETTI, 2008; MÉZSÁROS, 2013). But the coup government moved quickly to turn these gains around and mire the peasant movement in individualist, competitive values, where the state's role is the maintenance of order for the benefit of property holders. For the agrigolpe, agrarian reform had no meaning. Although prior trends, promoted by sympathetic governments, already pointed in this direction, the current situation is especially bleak. The discussion that follows examines these processes and policy changes to chronicle the construction of a new *governmentality* in the Brazilian countryside.

### **From FHC to Lula**

Until Lula's victorious 2002 campaign for president, the PT always supported a radical definition of agrarian reform. That is to say, Lula and the party saw agrarian reform as a crucial tool for building socialism in Brazil. In the hands of the PT, the state would use this policy tool to weaken the ruling class fragment that secured its power by controlling large swaths of Brazilian territory. The PT allied with the landless movement; Lula went out of his way to participate in land occupations, marches and forums organized by the MST and other peasant groups. He visited jailed leaders like José Rainha Júnior, who was regularly persecuted by the state as "gang leader" that successfully organizing thousands of families in land occupations. Lula joined the MST in arguing that Rainha and other landless militants were political prisoners who should be released.

By 2002, however, the PT position in favor of agrarian reform had changed. Instead of it being part and parcel of the fight for socialism, it had become an essential economic development policy. "The agrarian reform question is a problem that interests all workers, in the countryside and city, because it depends on a developmental model that generates employment and produces for domestic consumption, helping to make food available to all" (PT, 2002: 99). It also made a deal with the agribusiness sector that was consistent with this new economic development perspective. The die was cast when Antonio Palocci was named coordinator of Lula's fourth campaign for president in 2002. Palocci, a medical doctor with political roots in the radical student left, had been twice elected mayor of Ribeirão Preto, Brazil's so-called agribusiness capital. In this environment, Palocci moderated his radicalism and reached out to agribusiness as a nationalist ally in building "Brazilian capitalism," an important step in the progress toward socialism. The associations he built in Ribeirão Preto carried over to national politics once Lula was elected. For example, Palocci brokered Lula's selection of the president of Brazil's agribusiness association, a Ribeirão Preto planter and big-ag lobbyist named Roberto Rodrigues, as minister of agriculture, ranching and food supply (MAPA). It is also noteworthy that Rainha suffered his longest imprisonment ever during Lula's first term as president. In the meantime, Palocci became Lula's finance minister, achieving unprecedented economic stability by adhering to many neoliberal orthodoxies established by the Cardoso administration (BASTOS, s/d).

Stylistically, the two governments differed dramatically in their approaches to the agrarian question. FHC constantly sought techniques for enhancing his control over the countryside. In response to

pressure from international observers as well as the landless movement, FHC issued a Medida Provisoria 3.338 establishing the MDA in January, 2000, anticipating that its special minister, Raul Jungmann, would take command of the agrarian reform process and reestablish the *governmentality* of his administration. An explosion in the number and size of land occupations followed. From the perspective of the social movement, land occupations had stimulated the formation of nearly 80 percent of the settlements created under agrarian reform laws. Within a few months, Cardoso seemed to acknowledge the power of occupations with a new edict, MP 2.027, which criminalized and penalized the strategy by disqualifying for two years the redistribution of occupied lands and, in a later amendment to the measure, excluding occupation participants from participating in agrarian reform programs (QUERO, s/d). Ironically, even though Jungmann was a former Communist party member, he sought to demonstrate Cardoso's firm authority over rural social relations.

In contrast, during Lula's first term of office, the president donned the MST cap with pride, despite harsh criticism from the media and opponents. He sought to demonstrate that his administration valued democracy and knew how to listen to the people's demands. His inauguration witnessed massive, spontaneous street parties. On the macro-level, Palocci's successful efforts to control and lower inflation brought economic stability and provoked increased consumption, generating production and expanding formal employment. On the micro-level, his Zero Fome program helped poor people in the Northeast collect water and grow their own food. Direct payment programs like Bolsa Família provided enough help to keep children in school. New investments in higher education and standardized entrance exams made college accessible for thousands of young people.

In terms of the countryside, Lula invited labor leaders and intellectuals who were close to the landless movement to occupy diverse posts, such as the gaucho politician Miguel Rossetto, who served as the MDA minister from 2003 to 2006. One of his first tasks was that of re-formalizing the MDA's existence, completed in June, 2003. Another issue was that of criminalizing land occupations by using Cardoso's executive order from 2000. Here again, a difference in style prevailed. The Lula administration determined land occupations to be legitimate forms of democratic expression. Rossetto described the measure as "inefficient" and promised to see it revoked. But pressure on the administration from its agribusiness allies caused Chief of Staff José Dirceu to reject Rossetto's promise (QUERO, s/d; SCOLESE, 2004). In the end, Lula neither revoked nor used the measure.

Both Cardoso and Lula completed two full terms in office. While the statistical game is complicated, FHC created more agrarian reform settlements and settled more families than Lula. We base this conclusion on the rigorously scientific effort to integrate diverse sources and resolve conflicting numbers called DATALUTA. Administered by researchers in the Agrarian Reform Research, Project and Study Center (NERA) at the Paulista State University (UNESP), DATALUTA that from 1995 to 2002, the FHC administration created 4,307 new settlements and settled 464,174 families (NERA, 2016). At an average four people per family that is more than 1.8 million people. On the other hand, from 2003 to 2010 the Lula government established 3,607 new agrarian reform settlements, where 425,485 families settled (NERA, 2016). That is to say that Cardoso statistically beat Lula by creating 707 more settlements, benefitting nearly 40,000 more families.

Given the rivalry, numbers such as these are quite controversial. Both Lula and FHC liked to claim the title of having established the largest number of settlements and settled the largest number of families. Perhaps the most striking point is that Lula, whose historic victory in 2002 depended greatly on popular mobilization, creating tremendous expectations for radical change, did not overwhelm the Cardoso record with an enthusiastic push to advance agrarian reform. To the contrary, Lula strived to control these movements by demanding their acquiescence and trust of his good intentions. Just as FHC used agrarian reform to contain massive peasant mobilization during his years in office, Lula used his long alliance with the movement to pacify peasant militancy. We can see in these statistics the *governmentality* inherent in agrarian reform politics.

What the statistics fail to support is any positive impact of agrarian reform on a fairer distribution of Brazil's territorial wealth. Despite growth in the number of settlements created and families settled, Brazil's agrarian question remains as provocative as ever. In terms of the Gini index, land concentration in Brazil worsened by getting closer to "1" between the agricultural censuses of 1995/1996 (0.856) and 2005/2006 (0.872) (FRAYSSINET, 2010).<sup>2</sup> In 2006, some 4,236 landowners possessed 85 million hectares, equivalent to 14 percent of Brazil's 5.7 million registered hectares. Comparatively speaking, some 3 percent of rural establishments occupied nearly 57 percent of occupied, while 62 percent of Brazil's farmers cultivated only 8 percent of this total. Land-grabbing by foreigners also affected Brazil. For example, Volkswagen is said to control areas totaling 30 million hectares (Andrioli, 2002). A study reported in 2015, confirmed continued trends toward greater concentration during Lula's presidency (Farah, 2015).

The worsening of land concentration was a direct result of economic development policies favoring corporate agriculture. Rodrigues, Lula's first minister of agriculture, was a leading big-farm advocate. Emphasis on this sector made Brazil a global superpower in the production of beef, pork, chicken, soy, and agro-industrial products such as ethanol. Brazilian investors became owners of some of the biggest names in food products, such as Swift meats, Heinz condiments and Budweiser beer. During his time in office, Lula helped construct the narrative of agribusiness as the "savior" of the Brazilian economy, claiming that it contributed greatly to improve the country's balance of payments. Indeed, large-scale agriculture oriented toward commodity production benefited significantly during the Lula years. As a consequence, recent census statistics indicate that land concentration increased most in states marked by the growth of soybean and sugarcane plantations, as well as cattle pasture. In 2006, properties of more than 1,000 hectares accounted for 46 percent of Brazil's agricultural land, while farms with less than 10 hectares occupied barely 3 percent (Frayssinet, 2010).

The concentration of land ownership resulted in reduced rural employment, a trend reflected in the declining small-farm contribution to employment, which dropped from 77 to 74 percent during the period. The 5 million small farmers who continued to produce foodstuffs had to work even harder as the nation's dependency on their crops grew during the period. Thus, small farmer production of important staples like beans and cassava grew, respectively, from 67 to 70 percent and from 85 to 87 percent (Andrioli, 2002). The pressure to work harder came in the form of increased importation of cheaper foodstuffs from abroad, as well as rising land prices. This competition, especially exercised through globalization's application of Ricardo's comparative advantage theory, is the main neoliberal form of enhancing a State's *governmentality*. To the extent that workers and farmers are made to see and feel threatened in their livelihoods by foreign competition, the more likely they are to work harder, for less money and with less time to worry about their rights, argue Dardot and Laval (2016).

The Lula administration's embrace of developmentalism as a social as well as economic project helped the PT implement a two-prong strategy for the countryside. From the perspective of *governmentality*, an institutional history of having separate ministries for agriculture and agrarian development proved advantageous. While the ministry of agriculture followed the aggressive economic development path described above, the MDA focused on agrarian reform, broadly defined as a social rather than economic problem.

The redefinition of "agrarian reform" is central to understanding Lula's approach to the agrarian question (Oliveira, 2011). Agrarian reform as land redistribution became the classic association as various 20<sup>th</sup> Century revolutions advocated (Wolf, 1969). This definition found its way into Brazilian political discourse in the 1920s via the Brazilian Communist Party and was advocated in the late 1950s by the Ligas Camponesas of the socialist Francisco Julião (Welch, 2010). When the military took over in the 1964 golpe, they embraced agrarian reform but stripped it of its political content. Following the

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<sup>2</sup> The Gini coefficient for land concentration is difficult to confirm. INCRA reported in 2015 that it had declined from 0.836 to 0.820 during the period 1967 to 2010 (FARAH 2015). A decline in concentration is attributed to a more complete system of registry implanted by 2010.

lead of U.S. Cold War policy, agrarian reform policies sought to enhance productivity. While peasants were said to be the beneficiaries of these policies, they most often turned out to be its victims, with 30 million Brazilian peasants joining a rural exodus to the cities from 1960 to 1990 (Martine, 1987). On the other hand, agro-industry benefited from the military's "agrarian reform" project – the construction of large irrigation and hydroelectric infrastructure as well as subsidies for chemical fertilizers, machinery and plant upgrades (Petras, 1973; Gonçalves Neto, 1997; Welch, 2009).

The end of the dictatorship helped re-establish the initial radical political content of agrarian reform, then advocated with vigor by the newly formed MST. But resistance to this interpretation contributed to produce new definitions in the context of the struggle to include the topic in Brazil's new constitution of 1988. In this document, redistribution was limited to cases of unproductive land and those proprietors proven to have abused labor or environmental laws. In such cases, private land could be appropriated by the state but such transactions still had to honor market logic. The trend of replacing political objectives with economic ones was reaffirmed in the 1990s by FHC who introduced "market agrarian reform." Under this policy, the landless were forced to take out loans subsidized by the World Bank to buy single-family "agrarian reform settlements" (Ramos Filho, 2008). These programs enhanced the State's control – its governance over – agrarian policy by undermining social movements like the MST. Would-be farmers were provoked to ask themselves why they should suffer through land occupation struggles when they could take out loans to buy their own farms?

Lula employed nearly all these tactics to formulate his agrarian reform policies. From a statistical point of view, the administration disputes the DATALUTA findings. The National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), the MDA entity responsible for implementing the administration's policies, claims that 580,000 families, or some 2.3 million people, received land between by 2010. Based on these calculations, Lula claimed to have settled more than half (59 percent) the total number of all families benefiting from agrarian reform throughout Brazilian history. The government also claimed to have settled them on 47 million hectares, nearly five times the amount of land distributed to peasants by his predecessor (Agência Brasil, 2010).

The difference between Lula's numbers and those of his critics is explained primarily by the practice of "regularization." This is a process of normalizing the possession of peasant properties. Traditionally, peasants have faced significant difficulties in securing titles for their smallholdings. Due to local power structures and the expense of filing, many peasants fail to register their farms. INCRA set out to overcome these problems through a policy of regularizing these holdings, counting each as one more family settled. For many researchers, the policy is an important investment in small farming but should not count as an agrarian reform statistic since the families and parcels involved were already occupied and worked by the beneficiaries (Oliveira, 2011). Since DATALUTA counts only "families settled," they report 154,515 families less than those claimed by Lula. In 2010, geographer Arioaldo Umbelino de Oliveira told a reporter that, "During his second term, Lula no longer included agrarian reform as one of his objectives. The goals in this area dropped year after year" (QUEIROZ). He disputes DATALUTA's numbers for the period 2003 to 2007, arguing that only 163,000 families were settled in agrarian reform projects, while the vast majority were existing peasants whose holding were formalized under Lula, adding little to the structural change implied by his definition of agrarian reform (Oliveira, 2011).

Indeed, the Lula administration's developmentalist definition has been sharply criticized by the MST. "Lula did not implement agrarian reform, but only a policy of settlements," said Gilmar Mauro, a longtime coordinator of the MST (Nader; Brito, 2010). He called for organizing new strategies to pressure the government to breakup large estates and redistribute them to peasants rather than create settlements on public lands. During his second mandate, Oliveira argues that Lula refused to confront agribusiness interests and established settlements only were they might assist agribusiness by providing them with a low-cost supply of land and labor. In some sugarcane growing areas, settlers have been pressured to rent their land to expanding plantations. In short order, they have also had to work on these plantations, cutting cane during harvest seasons.

A diversity of peasant movements experimented with new strategies to stimulate radical agrarian reform during Lula's reign. One group occupied Congress and destroyed parts of government buildings. Others attacked large corporate estates and facilities, such as the uprooting of orange groves in São Paulo state, the destruction of a Syngenta genetically modified seed laboratory in Paraná state, and attacks on various of Brazil's enormous eucalyptus plantations, such as those in Espírito Santo state. These targets were selected to challenge their classification under the law as productive and thus ostensibly outside the reach of agrarian reform legislation. Through these actions the MST and its Via Campesina allies sought to emphasize a neglected aspect of the constitution that stressed the "social function" of the land. They argued that the vast "green deserts" of eucalyptus trees, farmed by chemicals and machines to produce cellulose for paper fabrication, served little social function beyond that of enriching investors. But the media painted such "direct action" strategies in dark colors and rural social movements increasingly lost support among Brazil's majority urban population.

While the Lula administration distinguished itself by not over-reacting, the media criticized the government for permitting disorder. In consequence, these so-called social problems became matters for the police and judiciary. Whereas each former presidential administration attempted to repress the movement, Lula condemned radical actions, while he defended the autonomy of civil society organizations as essential to Brazil's budding democracy. He attempted to win over the movement through negotiation, incorporating militants in the agrarian development ministry and by expanding Pronera, a national program that supported the enrollment of militant peasants in public university courses. Repression occurred during the Lula years, but it was limited either to state or local police and judiciary actions or to the Congress, in which conservative legislators used every tool available to them to distract, deter and undermine the movements. In these forums, sympathetic legislators worked to thwart attacks, but these investigations weakened the social movements. As the lost power, they also lost influence in the PT. Lula and the party strengthened their ties to the agribusiness sector, delinked the settlements from economic development policy, and created settlements only where they might help relieve social tensions (Souza, 2016). Looking back, we can see how Lula rehearsed new forms of *governmentality*.

Another of Brazil's leading small farmer and rural labor organizations, the National Confederation of Workers in Agriculture (CONTAG), remained supportive of the president's policies and practices, despite some criticisms. "The agrarian reform actions of the Lula administration, while especially favorable in terms of the quantity of land settled and the number of families favored, still fall short of being implemented in a more systematic and rigorous fashion," reads a recent CONTAG statement (Leal, 2010; Welch; Sauer, 2015).

Founded in 1963, CONTAG has long supported agrarian reform, learning to accept definitions that include colonization as well as regularization as legitimate reform measures. It calls members "family farmers" rather than peasants and has worked with the government to expand "market-based agrarian reform." The national family farm buying program (Crédito Fundiário - PNCF), funded by the World Bank, is popular among union leaders. During the Lula years, MDA's Pronaf expenditures increased to \$1.3 billion, contributing to CONTAG's favorable impression of the PT government (Frayssinet, 2010; Leal, 2010). This, too, needs to be seen in light of the *governmentality* concept, as it is self-evident that such policies enhanced a divide and conquer strategy.

## **From Dilma to Temer**

Lula's hand-picked successor, president Dilma Rousseff, reinforced the *governmentality* emphasis of agrarian policy in her predecessor's second term. In a July, 2010 campaign speech to a CONTAG assembly, she promised to include another 2 million families in the PRONAF credit program and stated that "rural agriculture and agrarian reform in the countryside will be among my priorities" (Leal, 2010). The discursive redundancies revealed her awkwardness with the topic, but experience

would soon show how thoroughly the government had managed to gain the upper hand over radical rural social movements.

During her first campaign for the presidency, the theme was barely mentioned as Dilma and her opponents concentrated on urban and international themes. Quite unlike Lula, Dilma had no record of support and participation in the land struggle. Her feel for the subject was limited to its contribution to national development, its role in easing stress on Brazil's crowded cities by helping to retain people in the countryside. "What we need is to transform the small farmer into a property owner, and ensure that he sees his life improving in the countryside and in his educational opportunities," she commented (Peduzzi; Lopes, 2010). The idea of property ownership is anathema to the MST because it encourages individualism and competition, essential tactics of neoliberal *governmentality*. Increasingly absent in the PT's approach to problems was a commitment to *collective* solutions, an essential element in dealing with original peoples and traditional peoples, not to mention peasants (SOUZA, 2016).

Different from Lula, Dilma came from a bourgeois rather than working class family. During the dictatorship, she participated in the armed resistance like a number of other courageous yet idealistic college students. Like Lula, but unlike FHC, she did not express insecurity in dealing with social movements. But she demonstrated her intolerance for one MST tactic – the occupation of public buildings, a tactic frequently used to pressure INCRA, the Bank of Brasil and other government agencies to quicken the pace of agrarian reform measures (Peduzzi; Lopes, 2010).

If Lula's agrarian reform record frustrated Brazilians who cared about the issue, Dilma's reign was thoroughly disappointing. In her five complete years as president, from 2011 to the end of 2015, her administration created only 592 settlements, affecting 46,904 families – some 160,000 people (NERA, 2016). Her administration articulated the argument that increasing the pace of land distribution could only be justified if existing agrarian reform settlements improved their productivity. True to her word, the MDA incentivized productivity through the expansion of rural extension projects, credit (Pronera) and subsidized buying programs (PAA).

At the beginning of her second term of office in 2015, she sought to shore up her support with the agribusiness sector by appointing as minister of MAPA Katia Abreu, a federal senator and president of the rural employers parallel organization to rural labor's CONTAG, that is, the CNA – Confederação da Agricultura e Pecuária do Brasil. This appointment was equivalent to Lula's selection of ABAG's Rodrigues. In addition to her official roles, and her proven agility as a debater, Abreu had become known as a close personal friend of President Dilma. Remarkably, the Dilma administration did not appropriate any land for purposes of agrarian reform in 2015 (Souza, 2016).

Thus, as 2016 began, few could have speculated as to a weakening of the chummy relationship between the PT leadership and the agribusiness sector. We got an inkling of this deterioration in February when we interviewed current ABAG president Luis Carlos Correa Carvalho. His motives for questioning Dilma had nothing to do with Noronha's argument. Carvalho blamed presidents Lula and Dilma for policies that contributed to closing 70 sugar and ethanol mills after 2002. "You're probably going to see a high correlation between their policies and shutting down these mills," he said. He also questioned the capacity of Katia Abreu to run the agricultural ministry, alleging that politics and friendship with Dilma led to her appointment. Although she had been president of ABAG's rival, the corporatist CAN, an elected senator who had masterfully forced a very regressive forestry code revision through congress, Carvalho accused her of being "radical," disinterested in "green economy" ideas, and incapable of thinking about the relationship between agriculture and industry.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Here's a transcript of what he said: "Pega cana de açúcar. Vai ver que entre 1988 e 2002, 14 absolutamente órfã, onde você perdeu muita coisa. Aí vem a nova onda a partir de 2002. Aí vêm os governos Lula e Dilma. Vai ver provavelmente uma correlação muito alto entre a arrumação das políticas públicas e a queda das usinas, e hoje tem 70 usinas fechadas. Obviamente tem um problema de emprego. ... A ministra da agricultura da Dilma é a Katia Abreu. Ela era presidente da CNA. A CNA é muito diferente que ABAG, é só agricultura. Quer que a

Dilma's approach to the agrarian question changed only as impeachment proceedings against her reached critical depth in 2016. While the media, opposition and formerly allied politicians, like her vice president Michel Temer, turned against her, thousands gathered in rallies all over the country to protest against impeachment. From March to August, MST militants and flags were often among the most prominent symbols of support for the beleaguered president. Thus, on April 1, aware that the agribusiness sector had turned against her and that rural social movements were defending her, Dilma organized an event to publicly sign 21 agrarian reform decrees involving the appropriation of 35,000 hectares. In an effort to strengthen her political situation, MDA minister Patrus Ananias floated the idea of quickly settling all 100,000 families then in encampments around the country (Noronha, 2017). He calculated that this could be done relatively quickly and dramatically by expropriating the land of the 11 largest landowners who together owed Brazil's social security system over R\$ 1.5 billion in back taxes, placing them in violation of labor laws, one of the main constitutional justifications for agrarian reform appropriation actions.

This situation made INCRA economist Gustavo Noronha (2017) speculate that it was fear of acting on this plan that stimulated the "bancada ruralista" to turn against Dilma on April 17, when they joined a supermajority of congressional deputies in voting to bring impeachment charges against her. On May 12, 2016, Brazil's senate voted to adjudicate the impeachment charges. Following the vote, Dilma was relieved of her authority and Temer became interim president. Noronha's argument gains added weight with Temer's first presidential actions: that of extinguishing the MDA and passing its functions to a secretariat within the newly created Social and Agrarian Development Ministry (MDSA). Within two weeks, most of the attributes and constituent agencies of the old MDA were dismembered from the MDSA and placed under direct authority of the interim president himself, through his chief of staff Eliseu Padilha (Brazil, 2016). It must be noted that Padilha himself faces charges of violating labor and environmental laws in at least two criminal processes involving his large landholdings (Ameni, 2016).

As shown above, the MDA represented one of the principal achievements of nearly 20 years of peasant movement pressure on the state. It was the MDA that worked with peasant movements to establish their priorities, create and manage agrarian reform settlements, organize buying programs for peasant products, fund and monitor the unique "Education for the Countryside" school programs, and fight for resources to help small scale agriculture. This fight was carried out against the much more traditional and powerful MAPA. Between the two, there was little dialog but their existence help legitimize and channel two distinct models of development for rural Brazil. In recent years, for example, the MDA promoted agro-ecology, while the MAPA assisted further monopolization of the soil, monoculture, the widespread use of highly toxic agro-chemicals, exportation, and further concentration of the agribusiness sector. The MDA worked with rural social movements, sharing management of agrarian reform settlements, funding programs to buy peasant produced foodstuffs and employing movement and farmworker union militants. Under the PT governments of Dilma and Lula, MDA funding for small farmers grew about seven times from R\$4.2 bi to R\$28.9 bi (about 7 times), while MAPA's budget for medium and large farms rose by a factor of nine from R\$20.5 bi to R\$187.7 bi (Souza, 2016). In these figures, we can see how the PT determined that *governmentality* required them

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indústria morra. Ela quer que a indústria exploda. Tem a CNI, que é a irmã da CNA, que quer que a agricultura se lastra, como a CNA fala da indústria. Essas coisas segmentadas levam nisso. Por quê a Katia é ministra? Primeiro, porque a Katia aderiu a Dilma. A Katia era a maior inimiga da Dilma. É política. Se pegar um presidente de entidade de classe específica e botar como ministro, não vai estar preocupado com o país, não, só com a coisa dele. Ministro de Agricultura tem que ser um cara que pensa no agronegócio, ele tem que ter integração com todas as áreas, tem que pensar a agroindústria. No contexto do Código Florestal, ela radicalizou tudo. Ela é um Caiado de saia! [In the 1980s, Ronaldo Caiado founded the UDR, an armed militia of ranchers organized to fight the inclusion of agrarian reform in the constitution.] Estou qualificando. Eu acho que o Caiado de hoje é mais sensata. Tinha as ONGs ambientais falando absurdos sobre o meio-ambiente, mas a Katia também. Levei gente lá para falar sobre a economia verde, mas ela não entendeu. Não queria entender."

to appease and promote both sectors *and* how the party favored the dominant sector, doing nothing to enhance the power relationship of small growers.

Temer's transformation of the MDA into the Secretaria Especial de Agricultura Familiar e do Desenvolvimento Agrário (SEAD) demonstrated the dramatic changes the countryside would soon undergo as an unelected administration took charge of the executive branch. This was more than a throw-back to 1996, when the El Dorado dos Carajas massacre forced FHC to create the Ministério Extraordinário de Política Fundiária (MEPF). In both cases, the purpose of such institutional changes was to sideline agrarian reform from a permanent structural issue to a temporary problem. The question's prominence in the *golpista* agenda underscored both the heightened influence of agribusiness groups and the diminished influence of peasant, small farmer and rural labor organizations. Curiously, as Rousseff's final judgment day arrived in August, 2016, Temer announced plans to re-establish the ministry. Soon began a race among the minor parties to trade impeachment support for the spoils of patronage jobs.

In the context of negotiating for votes of support to impeach Dilma, Temer secured support from the Solidariedade Network – a break-away center left political party started by Marina Silva, Lula's former minister of the environment – in talks with their representative, Deputy Paulinho Pereira da Silva, current president of the Força Sindical, a labor confederation founded in 1991 to influence rather than oppose the neoliberal reform project, then in its infancy. In reaching out to “Paulinho da Força,” Temer sought to 1) guarantee Dilma's impeachment, 2) fragment rural social and labor movement solidarity and 3) help the amenable Força Sindical gain a foothold among rural workers and peasants. It is worth noting the irony of these developments. Unlike Lula and Dilma, Temer did not come to this strategy from a grassroots base. He was a longtime member the party created by the dictatorship to articulate the opinions of a loyal opposition. As the dictatorship ended, Temer joined the newly elected state government of São Paulo as secretary of public safety. In this role, he ordered the violent repression of rural social movements, especially the mass mobilization of rural workers in the mid-1980s.

Establishing the SEAD ruptured relationships and altered priorities, seemingly in an effort to erase the MDA's institutional history. In a discussion paper about the interim government's dismantling of the MDA and its policies, the Santa Catarina economist Lauro Mattei (2016) addressed several key changes. On May 31, Temer used the new administrative structure to defund the Plano Safra da Agricultura Familiar 2016-2017, cutting its budget of R\$500 million by suspending the contracts of 1,000 extension agents, barring new expenditures on a national rural housing program, and recalling R\$170 million already provided to CONAB – National Food Supply Company. CONAB is a federal agency established in 1990 to ensure an adequate supply of food to the population, a goal it has accomplished partially by encouraging family farmer productivity. It has helped the family agriculture sector produce around 70 percent of Brazil's domestic food supply, a job it fulfills by employing nearly 75 percent of rural workers (Noronha, 2017). All this accomplished on less than 25 percent of the country's agricultural land, far out-stripping the “social function” of large scale, corporate agriculture (Paulino, 2014). But Temer's attack on CONAB is but another measure taken to comply with the stated goals of the agribusiness coalition in congress, the Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária (FPA, 2016).

During the latter half of 2016, President Temer busily set about fulfilling nearly every item on the Bancada Ruralista list from an April 27 meeting he attended. The manifesto of the parliamentary front and agribusiness think tank, IPA – Agribusiness Thought Institute, included not only extinguishing the MDA and CONAB. Temer also promised to increase the flow of credit to the agribusiness sector, guaranteeing prices, facilitating exports, lowering registry fees, and allowing planters to reduce property taxes by separating improvements from land. Temer was to reverse recent administrative and judicial decisions regarding the demarcation of indigenous, *quilombola* and agrarian reform areas, and relax environmental protections, controls on the use of toxic fertilizers and pesticides, and labor laws defining “slave” labor (FPA, 2016).

As this last item suggests, the agribusiness lobby sees in the Temer government an ally in promoting even its most aggressive, antisocial and inhumane desires. Brazil, with Articles 184 to 191 of the positivist federal constitution of 1988, penalizes rural employers and landowners who violate labor laws, ignore environmental protections or fail to productively use their property in socially beneficial ways. Accordingly, the constitution stipulates that such perverse behaviors warrant expropriation for the purposes of agrarian reform. By 2017, Temer was seeking ways to amend the constitution to limit these restrictions on the privileges of property owners and to pass laws to satisfy the sector's other demands. The sale of rural land to foreigners was also liberalized, ending restrictions imposed in 1971 by the dictatorship. These new policies and measures led an INCRA economist to speculate about "the end of agrarian reform" (Noronha, 2017). Temer wholeheartedly accepted the fiction, as stated in the FPA manifesto (2016), that agribusiness "will continue to captain" Brazil's economic development.<sup>4</sup>

The only channel of communication the Temer administration has encouraged with those representing, at least in name, 30 years of peasant mobilization is a break-away movement calling itself the Grassroots MST that is located in the Pontal do Paranapanema region of northwestern São Paulo. This group is led by José Rainha Junior, the historic leader of the legitimate MST who was ousted in 2006 for continually undermining MST policy directives. Lacking alliances after his being expelled, Rainha eventually aligned with the Força Sindical. Thus, he and his allies were among the few family farmer representatives that appeared with Temer in a photo op to "celebrate" re-establishing the MDA, an initiative that was short-lived once Temer became interim president (Barrocal, 2016). In the meantime, the MST is arguably the most dedicated of groups working to challenge, undermine and delegitimize the Temer regime.

The one organization specifically created by the government to voice the concerns of farm workers and family farmers – CONTAG – also stands opposed to the Temer government. Created by the Rural Worker Statute of 1963, a few months before the military-civilian coup d'état of 1964, CONTAG has a legal responsibility to express the interests of its millions of members in the halls of power. Ever since it was founded, CONTAG's primary banner has been that of agrarian reform. Thus, it too has come to define the Temer regime as bent on finishing off agrarian reform in Brazil. It describes Temer's administration as "illegitimate," "golpista" and "deliberate in seeking to take away the rights of the working class and tear down the state." This policy has been made obvious by "putting an end to the MDA, gutting and weakening INCRA and the Agrarian Reform Secretariat, holding back and paralyzing actions and programs, and greatly cutting back budgets in strategic areas" (Tozzi, 2017).

In defiance of diverse constitutional articles and laws, Temer and his supporters have retained a majority in congress while making a priority of unraveling reformist legislation designed to develop the countryside as an attractive and decent place to live and work, where the traditional networks of landlord power and violence against workers and small producers was in the process of becoming less potent and dangerous. Emboldened by their success in deposing an elected government and securing the passage of reactionary legislation, including a constitutional amendment that forced limits on government spending on health care and education, the Temer government has rushed to gain approval of legislation backed by the FPA, playing an insider's game that limits or excludes public debate of the issues. In mid-2017, Even as Temer faced down profoundly incriminating testimony evidencing his own high crimes and misdemeanors, the interim president ruthlessly advocated for his this neoliberal, antidemocratic agenda. He took no action to control an ever more violent wave of private repression in the countryside as 2016 registered the highest number of murdered rural activists – 53 – in 13 years (Tozzi 2017). While outright, unpunished murder is the antithesis of *governmentality*, the role of coercive repression certainly plays an important role in establishing state hegemony.

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<sup>4</sup> "A busca pela retomada do desenvolvimento econômico... continuará sendo capitaneada pelo setor agropecuário" (FPA, 2016).

## Conclusion

It is not enough to describe these events; one must try to explain them. In the context of the 1964 golpe, the tension between President Jango Goulart and the planters was palpable; they openly rallied against him. Goulart's instigation of rural labor organizing and land reform, establishing the first agency (SUPRA) to actively engage the burgeoning farm worker movement and establish a network of unions under CONTAG using Communist and Catholic leaders, truly frightened planters. They were among the leaders of the civilian movement that undermined his government (Welch, 2004). The same thing cannot be said of President Dilma or Lula, both of whom selected expressive leaders of the sector to head MAPA. Ministers Roberto Rodrigues and Katia Abreu got everything they wanted from Lula and Dilma. They were among these president's most loyal and durable supporters. They were recognized as key elements to economic recovery and political stability. Rodrigues did not seem to mind that Lula settled or normalized the situation of hundreds of thousands of landless peasants. Dilma had one of the worst records of support for land reform, but she invested in the productivity and stability of those who were already settled.

Alceu Luís Castilho, a former *A Folha de S. Paulo* reporter, claims that Dilma's impeachment was in fact a "golpe ruralista" (2016). He points to various facts, including the conclusions of his own 2012 book, *Partido da terra: como os políticos conquistam o território brasileiro*, that document the large landholdings of nearly half the deputies who voted to initiate the impeachment process. Circumstantial evidence, like Temer's actions outlined above, are also cited by Castilho. The venerable SNA-National Agriculture Society is cited as "commemorating Temer," writing in understated fashion that the "first signs of the Temer government are positive for agribusiness" (SNA cited in Castilho, 2016). In this same piece Castilho cites ABAG's Carvalho for praising the new interim Temer administration, calling on him to revise labor laws and construct at taxpayer expense thru-ways linking the grain producing Centerwest region with ports on the Amazon river and Atlantic coast. These projects are likely to materialize as Temer appointed as agriculture minister Blairo Maggi, a multi-billionaire known as the King of Soy, due to his large and productive farms in the centerwest state of Mato Grosso.

Lauro Mattei (2016) sees Temer's decision to close down the MDA as a conservative backlash, pay back time for a narrative the ruling class never wanted to hear. He catalogs the progress of peasant and farm labor movements in their struggle to see agrarian reform integrated into the 1988 constitution, to out-manuever hostile and sympathetic presidents in forcing implementation of the laws through the institutionalization of nearly 9,000 agrarian reform settlements and the settling of nearly two million families. The cherry that topped off this decade's long struggle was the MDA and its institutionalization during the Lula years. From 2002 to 2010, not only did its budget and staff grow, but also laws to legitimize and define such concepts as "Education for the countryside," agro-ecology and family farmers as well as programs to support poor people and public school children through the purchase and distribution of healthy food produced by family farmers. These were all key elements in a permanent struggle to contain agrarian capitalism by using the State to measure, promote and defend small-scale farming as a national treasure. The MDA, with its own policy institute subsidized research that demonstrated the benefits of these policies. While never attaining the levels of support desired by the MST and other advocacy groups, the very existence of the MDA during the PT years created a space for dialogs of knowledge to occur between the paradigms of agrarian capitalism and the agrarian question, as the geographer Bernardo Mançano Fernandes characterized the debate as early as 2005.

Landowners, agribusiness organizations and their intellectual and political representatives rarely tolerated the debate. Their responses were tabulated in militants killed or maimed, lawsuits filed, judicial decisions to retake land occupied by landless peasants and several congressional investigations that all combined to cripple the peasant and farmworker movements. With a declining economic situation in Brazil, increased insecurity, high unemployment and price inflation, the mainstream press and other ruling class instruments turned the heat up on President Dilma. Thousands took to the streets in March, 2015 and more than a million in March, 2016 to protest against Dilma's government. The

tone was often misogynist, and Temer played along, finally betraying Dilma to cast himself as the political strongman who could resolve Brazil's problems.<sup>5</sup> In actuality, Temer is an unlikely authoritarian. Knowing he lacks popularity, he has assiduously avoided appearing in public. In his 70s and short, a subservient press makes him look younger, sturdier and taller than he really is. The same media plays off the positive attributes of his "strong father" image to reassure the public (Lakoff, 2002).

In addition to the self-interest of landed politicians and plantation owners, the relief of frustrated angst over the modest gains of peasants, and the effects of machismo, the "agrigolpe" and end of debate has to be considered from a global perspective. The parallels between Brazil's rightward turn and similar courses recently set in other Latin American countries, Europe and the United States cannot be ignored. In their compelling analysis of neoliberalism, French scholars Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2016 [2014]) emphasize a hidden feature of the neoliberal regime – *governmentality*. They point out that neoliberals not only seek to diminish the role of the State – starting with a diminished budget and ending with greater dependency on market forces – they also seek to inculcate these very same measures as values in the citizenry. In other words, every individual is encouraged to value his or her autonomy, enterprise, self-reliance, while devaluing those who lack these traits or receive government subsidies such as welfare. The more market values become character traits, turning individuals into competitive entrepreneurs, the less people will demand of the State and the wealthy and the sooner they will become so trapped in a race against everyone and everything that they will no longer have the time or interest to care about the political sphere. Such a political ecology is primed to accept extreme contrasts of wealth and poverty and ripe for authoritarian leadership.

In Brazil, the competition between FHC and Lula, Dilma's fall, Temer's rise and the intolerance for debate over such a profound social, economic and political problem as the agrarian question fits neatly into Dardot and Laval's diagnosis. It is an "end of history" type moment, when the right-wing intellectual Francis Fukuyama (1992) set out to characterize the triumph of capitalism. The MDA was designed to help small-farmers prosper in a competitive environment. It offered small subsidies in the form of cheap credit and state buying programs for their produce. INCRA sought out land, most of it public land, to give to those willing to cultivate it. Pronera, the national agrarian reform education program, helped peasants obtain access to public schools and universities in order to complete elementary, middle and higher education. Contracts were made with social movements to help their militants gain a living while servicing the necessities of a needy but productive segment of the population. More profound challenges to the status quo arose from this experience, such as denunciations of concentrated land holding, wealth and power as well as pronouncements of alternative, healthier and more sustainable forms of agriculture. The counter-cultural "agro-ecological package" opposed the conventional "agro-industrial package" and achieved a certain level of institutionalization on the waves of the internationalist, anti-globalization movement, that the Workers Party stimulated to help stave off neoliberal trends.

But the left in Brazil as elsewhere found it necessary to adopt neoliberal language and policy in order to achieve power. This started in England and the United States in the 1990s with the conservative transformations of the Labor party under Tony Blair and the Democratic party under Bill Clinton. To confront FHC's legacy, Lula had to ally the PT with industrialists and agribusiness in order to finally get elected. Political "left" and "right" distinctions meant less and less as market oriented competitive *governmentality* values became more and more naturalized. Today, polls show how some of the poorest of the new middle class in Brazil see their gains as arising not from state interventions but from individual struggle. Many people find themselves in accordance with the mainstream media

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<sup>5</sup> At this writing, a year after Temer's interim government began, there is little sign of improvement. In fact, an additional 2 million registered employees are out of work, inflation continues to rise and Temer's legislative initiatives all burden the working class with the heavy costs of recuperating the economy. Most recently, labor laws have been changed to discourage fixed employment and encourage contract-labor and proposed changes to social security laws may add decades of labor to those who were promised decent retirement conditions.

when it condemns “handouts” to unworthy landless farmers (FPA 2017). What is needed, say Dardot and Laval, is a left that recognizes these problems and works self-consciously to up-root the competitive, individualist and antidemocratic *governmentality* framework.

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## **About the Author(s)**

**Clifford Andrew Welch** is professor of contemporary Brazilian history at São Paulo Federal University (UNIFESP) and in the postgraduate program on Latin American and Caribbean Territorial Development at Paulista State University (UNESP). He is a researcher with UNESP's Study Center for Agrarian Reform Research and Projects (NERA). Welch is author of various books and articles on contemporary rural social history  
cliff.a.welch@gmail.com



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