

POPULAR SOCIAL STRUGGLES FOR QUILOMBOLA TERRITORY AND THE  
AGRICULTURAL ISSUE

*AS LUTAS SOCIAIS POPULARES PELO TERRITÓRIO QUILOMBOLA E A  
QUESTÃO AGRÁRIA*

*LUCHAS SOCIALES POPULARES POR EL TERRITORIO QUILOMBOLA Y LA  
CUESTIÓN AGROPECUARIA*



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**ABSTRACT:** The 1988 Federal Constitution was a milestone for quilombos, regarding recognition as subjects of rights. However, the reality experienced by quilombos remains dramatic, both due to the difficulty in the processes of demarcating the territory and in situations of conflicts, inequalities, and injustices in the Brazilian agrarian issue. Even so, experiences of struggle for territory emerged, led by the *quilombola* movement, denouncing and seeking the implementation of public policies. This article aims to analyze the challenges of the struggle for *quilombola* territory and the protagonism exercised by social movements, taking the legal-parliamentary coup process initiated in 2015 as a historical perspective. It is a methodology based on the qualitative and quantitative aspects through the theoretical framework and data that critically analyze the Brazilian agrarian issue and *quilombola* communities. It concludes with a reflection on the ongoing challenges for the working class as a whole, which includes *quilombola* communities.

**KEYWORDS:** Agrarian question. Quilombola territory. Social movements. Social politics.

**RESUMO:** *A Constituição Federal de 1988 foi um marco para os quilombos, no que se refere ao reconhecimento enquanto sujeitos de direitos. Contudo, a realidade vivenciada pelos quilombos continua dramática, tanto pela dificuldade nos processos de demarcação do território, quanto nas situações de conflitos, desigualdades e injustiças da questão agrária brasileira. Mesmo assim, emergem experiências de luta pelo território encaminhadas pelo movimento quilombola, denunciando e buscando a efetivação de políticas públicas. Este artigo tem por objetivo analisar os desafios da luta pelo território quilombola e o protagonismo exercido pelos movimentos sociais, tendo como recorte histórico o processo de golpe jurídico-parlamentar iniciado em 2015. Como metodologia, pauta-se no aspecto qualitativo e quantitativo, por meio de referencial teórico e dados que analisam criticamente a questão agrária brasileira e as comunidades quilombolas. Conclui-se com uma reflexão acerca dos desafios em curso para o conjunto da classe trabalhadora, em que se inserem as comunidades quilombolas.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Questão agrária. Território Quilombola. Movimentos sociais. Políticas sociais.*

**RESUMEN:** *La Constitución Federal de 1988 marcó un hito para los quilombos, en términos de reconocimiento como sujetos de derechos. Sin embargo, la realidad que viven los quilombos sigue siendo dramática, tanto por la dificultad en los procesos de demarcación del territorio, como por situaciones de conflictos, desigualdades e injusticias en la cuestión agraria brasileña. Aun así, surgieron experiencias de lucha por el territorio, lideradas por el movimiento quilombola, denunciando y buscando la implementación de políticas públicas. Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar los desafíos de la lucha por el territorio quilombola y el protagonismo ejercido por los movimientos sociales, tomando como perspectiva histórica el proceso de golpe jurídico-parlamentario iniciado en 2015. Como metodología, se basa en el aspecto cualitativo y cuantitativo, a través de marcos teóricos y datos que analizan criticamente la cuestión agraria brasileña y las comunidades quilombolas. Concluye con una reflexión sobre los desafíos actuales para la clase trabajadora en su conjunto, incluidas las comunidades quilombolas.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Cuestión agraria. Territorio Quilombola. Movimientos sociales. Políticas sociales.*

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## Introduction

Quilombos are embedded within the framework of Brazil's social, political, and economic formation. For centuries, across diverse sociogeographical contexts and realities, there has been the resistance and existence of the black population as a means of challenging both the oppression of the colonial slave system and the post-abolition situation of exclusion and vulnerability. Portrayed as dangerous and subversive to the established social, political, and economic order, many quilombos faced violent repression by the State and economic elite. Additionally, in the Brazilian societal imagination, the conception has been formed that *quilombola* communities belong to the past, and even when acknowledging their present existence, they are often condemned under the stereotype of backward groups.

Quilombos have played a fundamentally contributory role in the Brazilian civilizational process, leaving behind a significant collection and legacy that intertwine material and immaterial heritage, cultural, religious, and artistic dimensions, as well as values, oral traditions, memories, knowledge, practices, and worldviews based on collective labor, exchange, collective effort, and communal land use. Agreeing with Gusmão (1995, p. 124, our translation), the *quilombola* territory becomes "synonymous with a set of lived relations, concrete work, the work of a memory that is conjecturally fabricated; it is a personal and collective experience, daily relationship, organization, and resistance." This confers a unique identity, constantly constructed and articulated between past and present. Although each *quilombola* community possesses specificity in terms of social, political, and economic organization, shared material and symbolic elements unite and identify them.

As cautioned by Almeida (2002), it is essential for us to liberate ourselves from the archaeological definition of quilombo, which perpetuates stereotypes, prejudices, and dehumanization of *quilombola* subjects by associating quilombo with the idea of the past, backwardness, or geographical isolation. Therefore, Almeida (2002) emphasizes the importance of understanding *quilombola* communities throughout the historical process and, particularly, how they assert themselves in the present with new social and cultural dynamics as a form of ethnic and social existence and resistance.

According to Gomes (2015, p.120, our translation), across various regions, "the various quilombos – which were already true peasant micro-communities – continued to reproduce, migrate, disappear, emerge, and dissolve in the intricacies of peasant forms in Brazil from north to south." In other words, they constitute a specific part of the totality of peasant forms in Brazil,

accumulating experiences, constructing their identities, sharing collective memories, and passing down knowledge from generation to generation.

Therefore, the *quilombola* issue is so contemporary and complex that it deserves understanding in a sensitive reality, especially in the challenges that unfold in both material dimensions, such as the struggle for land and territory, and symbolic dimensions, through ethnic-racial and cultural valorization, aiming towards overcoming the stigmas, prejudices, and racism rooted in our society as a legacy of the colonial-slave system.

Thus, this article results from the developments of research conducted in the research group "*Educação do Campo, Movimentos Sociais e Pedagogia da Alternância* (Education in the Countryside, Social Movements, and Alternation Pedagogy)" at the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ). It adopts a theoretical approach, engaging with authors addressing agrarian and *quilombola* issues and a quantitative approach, referencing it in the problematization of agricultural conflicts, focusing on the historical period from 2015 to 2018. This period is crucial in Brazilian history, marked by profound changes in social, political, and economic realities, such as the impeachment of former President Dilma Rousseff and the rise of the far-right and fascist government of Bolsonaro.

Thus, this work presents three central aspects that will be discussed throughout the text. Firstly, it seeks to analyze the Brazilian agrarian issue, which historically reveals the dramatic situation in which *quilombola* communities and other traditional peoples live. The violence and massacre in rural areas, committed by the ruralist class, violating the Federal Constitution and Human Rights in favor of projects that prioritize agribusiness, mining, and predatory extractivism, demonstrate the unsustainability of the capitalist development model for the countryside, which is exclusionary and unequal.

The second point to be addressed consists of the specific presentation of the panorama of *quilombola* communities in the current agrarian reality and context. This examination will be based on the current political, economic, and social situation, highlighting the post-parliamentary, legal, and media coup period initiated in 2015. This event, perceived as an indication of social setbacks, culminated in the rise of a presidential candidate during the 2018 elections in Brazil.

The mentioned candidate expressed a strong affinity with fascist ideas, evident through the adoption of discourses promoting the elimination of diversities, persecution of minorities, incitement to violence and hatred, as well as opposition to the plurality of ideas and freedom of

thought. This stance notably contradicts Marxist currents, which have been particularly subject to criticism and repression in the current context.

Lastly, it is about advocating the importance of strengthening social movements built by men and women in various situations of social, political, and environmental conflicts. Unveiling these experiences and the educational and formative actions of these movements are fundamental conditions for strengthening popular struggles, as they contribute to elevating critical consciousness among subjects, the subaltern, and the oppressed and propose a project for a genuinely popular and democratic society.

### **Social Struggles and the Agrarian Issue**

From a historical perspective, the Federal Constitution of 1988 represented a significant milestone for *quilombola* communities, especially through the recognition as rights-bearing subjects by the State. This recognition is evident both in the mandatory titling of territories, as expressed in Article 68 of the Transitional Constitutional Provisions Act (ADCT), and in the protection of these groups' material and immaterial cultural heritage through Articles 215 and 216. These achievements marked a new political and social space for quilombos, becoming visible to the State and civil society, whether in the advocacy for public policies or in addressing the debate and denunciation of the historically vulnerable and violent situation faced by quilombos. A Brazilian structure of profound social, political, and economic inequalities characterizes this situation.

As a result of this mobilization process, Decree No. 4,887, dated November 20, 2003, was subsequently achieved, which established the criterion of self-attribution for each *quilombola* community. In other words, the definition of what constitutes a quilombo is not determined by the State but by the communities themselves, based on their identity, cultural, and heritage ties, including the indication of the ancestral territory to be demarcated and titled, as well as other public policies.

The Brazil *Quilombola* Program, created in 2004 and later incorporated through Decree No. 6,261, provides for integrated management for the development of the *quilombola* social agenda. It allows actions to consolidate access to land, infrastructure, quality of life, productive inclusion, local development, and rights and citizenship. Decree No. 5,051, dated April 19, 2004, promulgates Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning the protection and respect for the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples. Decree No. 6,040,

dated February 7, 2007, establishes the national policy for the sustainable development of traditional peoples and communities. Finally, Resolution No. 8, dated November 20, 2012, defines the National Curriculum Guidelines for *Quilombola* School Education in basic education as essential for valuing and respecting the rich contribution of quilombos to the national civilizational process and advancing the anti-racist struggle.

In his contribution to the Brazilian agrarian issue, Stédile (2011, p. 15, our translation) defines it as "a set of interpretations and analyses of agrarian reality, seeking to explain how land ownership, property, use, and utilization are organized in Brazilian society." From a historical perspective, it can be asserted that what characterizes the Brazilian agrarian reality is the concentration of land and the formation of land property, often obtained through illegal mechanisms (invasion, coercion, and land grabbing) orchestrated by government policies that favor the agrarian ruling class.

Regarding the concentration of land and the formation of land property, it is essential to recall, for example, the Sesmarias Law (created in Portugal in 1375 and later adopted as an agrarian policy in colonial Brazil), involving the distribution of large land portions to a grantee, serving as the foundation for land property formation in the colonial period. On the other hand, the Land Law of 1850 envisioned land acquisition through a purchase and sale contract, as well as regularization of already consolidated holdings, maintaining the exclusion of the poorer layers from land access due to the high prices for acquisition (Panini, 1990).

Such policies facilitated the establishment of monoculture properties intended to supply the European market through the adoption of an agricultural model favoring predatory practices. The use of slave labor became a commodity and was essential for the maintenance of this system (Panini, 1990).

Throughout historical development, during the transitions from Colonial Brazil to the Empire and subsequently to the Republican period, political and economic ties remained unchanged, directed towards preserving land property and promoting the interests of the Brazilian agrarian elite. This reaffirms the persistence of social injustices. Panini (1990) correlates the marginalization of the poorer layers, devoid of any social prestige, to the organization and peasant mobilization in Brazil, such as in Canudos (1896), Contestado (1912), and Cangaço (1870), among others. Similarly, quilombos' critical and emancipatory formation is understood as resistance and contestation to the political-economic and social model.

This unequal reality regarding the Brazilian agrarian issue permeates and spans various historical periods. The fundamental element is to understand the agrarian structure as a result

of the mode of production and the established political, economic, and social arrangements in each situation. In Brazil, the genesis of violence, latifundia, and favoritism towards agrarian oligarchy persists in the colonial slave model and later in capitalism. As Oliveira (2005, p. 468, our translation):

In the countryside, the process of capitalist development is equally marked by the industrialization of agriculture, i.e., the development of typically capitalist agriculture opened up the historical possibility for landowners and capitalists/landowners to appropriate capitalist land rent, causing an intensification in the concentration of the Brazilian land structure.

Even with the emergence of an industrial bourgeoisie in the cities during the first republican decades and the formation of the first proletarian nuclei, there was no break with the agrarian structure, nor with the dependent agricultural model (oriented towards exports), with land property persisting. Concurrently, the ruralist class starts to establish public policies in the State in favor of its interests<sup>4</sup>. The intensification in the concentration of the Brazilian land structure mentioned by Oliveira (2005) is evident more recently, both during the Civil-Military Dictatorship period (1964-1985)<sup>5</sup>, and in the neoliberal stage from the 1990s to the present.

The perpetuation of an agrarian-export model, placing Brazil in a condition of dependency, along with industrialization in agriculture characterized by increased mechanization in the field and the use of pesticides, the opening of new agricultural frontiers posing risks to biomes, flora, and fauna, and the facilitation granted to foreign companies through economic opening policies, have exacerbated social, environmental, and political contradictions and conflicts in rural areas.

Agribusiness, along with mining and other large territorial projects (such as hydroelectric plants), clearly reflects the development agenda adopted by the State and widely advocated by the ruralist class. It is relevant to emphasize that when referring to ruralists, the existence of concrete organizations, entities, men and women who formulate policies based on their interests and integrate them into the state sphere is highlighted. The Brazilian Agribusiness Association (*Associação Brasileira do Agronegócio*, ABAG), the National Agriculture Society

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<sup>4</sup> Take, for example, the creation of the *Ministério da Agricultura, Indústria e Comércio* (Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce, MAIC), in 1909. For this discussion, refer to the work of Mendonça (1997), which is essential for understanding the plots and disputes among classes and factions of the ruralist class to maintain their political-economic interests.

<sup>5</sup> Martins (1985) discusses how the Land Statute of 1964 represented a reform that did not bring about ruptures with the right to property; on the contrary, it avoided confronting the latifundium and suppressing any manifestation, organization, and popular resistance that questioned this model.

(*Sociedade Nacional de Agricultura, SNA*), the Brazilian Mining Institute (*Instituto Brasileiro de Mineração, IBRAM*), and deputies and senators associated with the agribusiness, agrochemical, mining sectors, etc., are examples of organizations or individuals who respond to and serve the interests of the ruralist class.

In this context, the reference period is from 2015 to 2018, marking the parliamentary, legal, and media coup resulting in the impeachment of then-President Dilma Rousseff and the assumption of Michel Temer, who implemented unpopular and antidemocratic actions and measures. Similarly, there is the strengthening of the conservative and fascist spectrum during the 2018 elections in Brazil, representing a threat to traditional peoples and communities.

In a more general sense, starting in 2015, some policies were approved to favor mainly sectors associated with ruralists, highlighting their significant representation in the National Congress. Some of them will be mentioned to demonstrate both the audacity with which the ruralist class appropriates the State to pass measures that benefit them and to reveal the need to be vigilant about ongoing policies: Law No. 13,465 of 2017, favors agricultural expansion, speculation, and land grabbing; Bill No. 4,059 of 2012 relates to land acquisition by foreign companies; Decree No. 9,406, dated June 2018, regulates mining in Brazil (a demand from mining companies); Decree No. 9,142 of 2017 extinguished the National Copper Reserve in the states of Pará and Amapá (*Reserva Nacional de Cobre nos Estados do Pará e Amapá, RENCA*), but was revoked by Decree No. 9,159; and Ordinance 1,129, revoked but that weakened the inspection of conditions similar to slave labor.

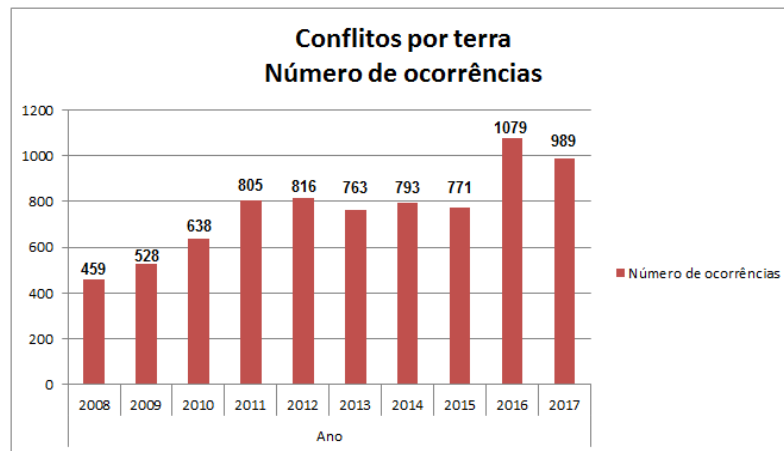
The approval of these policies, along with other measures such as labor reform, pension reform, limitations on public spending in health and education, and ongoing administrative reform, has contributed to the increase in violence and conflicts in rural areas, as indicated by the survey conducted by the Pastoral Land Commission (*Comissão Pastoral da Terra, CPT*)<sup>6</sup>. This is evident in both land conflicts in terms of the number of incidents (see Table 1) and the number of murders (see Table 2) from 2008 to 2017.

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<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.cptnacional.org.br/>. Annually, the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) releases a report on conflicts in rural areas in Brazil. It is an essential reference document for consultation and reflection, providing data on agrarian conflicts and articles and texts from researchers dedicated to the topic.

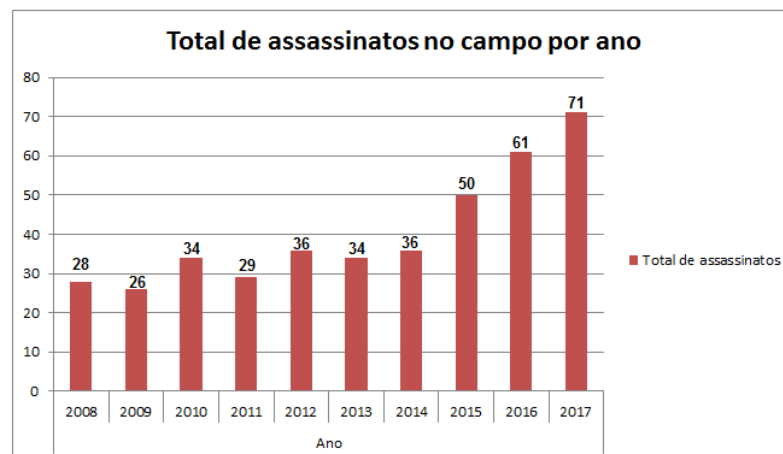


**Table 1 – Land conflicts (number of incidents)**



Source: Pastoral Land Commission (CPT)

**Table 2 – Total murders in rural areas (per year)**



Source: Pastoral Land Commission (CPT)

This increase in conflict and murder rates in rural areas, not to mention conflicts over water and labor, reveals that the institutionalization of social setbacks, with a high cost for the entire working class, coupled with the conservative and fascist discourse gaining strength from 2015, has had its repercussions on the Brazilian countryside. Intolerance, impunity, and the legal support given to the ruralist class foreshadow an extremely challenging future for social movements fighting for land.

However, what is the role of *quilombolas*, peasants, and indigenous people in this process? Up to this point, a brief overview and historical context have been outlined, revealing

a perverse and unequal agrarian structure. What are the popular organizations and mobilizations built by men and women that stand out for their existence and resistance?

Contrary to some literature's claims<sup>7</sup>, capitalism, due to its inherently unequal and contradictory nature, has not succeeded in incorporating, from the perspective of wage labor and the demarcation between proletariat and bourgeoisie, nor eliminating *quilombolas*, peasants, or indigenous people. On the contrary, there is a growing intensification of social struggles in rural areas, where projects for society are confronted, identities, differences, and collective movements in favor of land and territory are strengthened. According to Oliveira (2004, p. 35, our translation):

The understanding of the role and place of peasants in capitalist society and Brazil, in particular, is fundamental. Either one understands the issue within the process of capitalist development in the countryside, or one will continue to see many authors asserting that peasants are disappearing, but, nevertheless, they continue to fight to gain access to land in many parts of Brazil.

Despite the Brazilian agrarian structure revealing the backstage cruelty, it is necessary to unveil the widespread social movements that emerge in this reality and decisively engage in the political arena as a space of struggle for land (land reform), as well as labor, education, etc. This is the case with the experiences of the MST, CONAQ, MAB, Via Campesina, and many other movements that articulate, at various scales, with potentials and local, regional, or national interventions. Valuing these actions and consolidating them means advancing toward a project of society that is genuinely popular and democratic, with respect for differences, diversity, and social and environmental justice.

In this context, the aim is to contribute to the dialogue, focusing on the struggles faced by *quilombola* communities regarding the recognition, demarcation, and titling of their territories. The challenges present in the current conjuncture are analyzed.

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<sup>7</sup> On this issue, see Oliveira (2004).

## The Struggle for *Quilombola* Territory: Ongoing Policies

The *quilombola* issue carries its specificities regarding cultural, material, symbolic, religious, and identity-related aspects, just like any other traditional people or community. There is no intention to trace a historical line of the quilombo formation process, considering the already established and widely disseminated contributions of authors such as Almeida (2002), Arruti (2009), and O'Dwyer (2002). Instead, the aim is to understand how the quilombo is constructed and organized in the present, as well as to identify the conflicts and challenges present in the struggle for territory.

From the outset, the importance of the "territory" category is not only understood as a legal-political delineation but also encompasses symbolic and belonging dimensions that social groups establish in relation to the place they reside. These dimensions include the bonds of solidarity and reciprocity formed, as well as the collective use of the land. Ultimately, the territory is built and rebuilt by individual and collective subjects, being essential for the reproduction of the material and symbolic life of communities.

Defending the territory as a legitimate right of *quilombola* communities means fighting against a past and present of oppression and subalternity in the dimensions of race, class, and gender. It points us towards overcoming historically created inferiorizing representations and stigmas that are still present in the Brazilian social imaginary (with reflections, even in school education). Defending the territory, therefore, involves respecting the civilizational values of *quilombola* communities and their rich contribution to Brazil's social, cultural, political, and economic formation, as well as making significant progress in combating social injustices present in our agrarian structure.

From this perspective, a fundamental discussion about social movements lies in analyzing *quilombola* movements as one of the dimensions of the Black Movement. As Gomes (2017, p. 23, our translation) points out:

We do not want to get stuck in a vast conceptual discussion about what should or should not be considered the Black Movement. What matters is understanding the power of this social movement and highlighting the most revealing dimensions of its emancipatory, assertive, and demanding character, which characterize it as an important political actor and educator of individuals, collectives, and social institutions throughout history and across diverse generations.

Through their political spaces, Quilombos address and do not dissociate the dimensions of race and class. Firstly, in the fight against racism, they channel demands centered on the

issue of education, from discussions within schools located in the communities (through *quilombola* Education as a national curriculum guideline) to university occupations, strengthening and defending quota policies, and educating professionals in various fields of knowledge. Along this path, individuals develop a critical awareness of the need to overcome racism in Brazilian society.

Secondly, they confront and denounce large estates, mining, and agribusiness in their struggle for territory, which historically subtract and expropriate lands from traditional peoples and communities. Similarly, they fight against the alienation and exploitation of capitalist labor, seeking autonomy and sovereignty in their existence's material and symbolic production. Thus, they engage in and wage the class struggle, which occurs when, according to Thompson (1987, p. 10, our translation), "some men, as a result of common (inherited or shared) experiences, feel and articulate the identity of their interests with each other, and against other men whose interests differ (and usually oppose) theirs."

It took centuries for the State to recognize the territorial rights of *quilombola* communities. This only happened in the process of Brazil's re-democratization, within the formulations and discussions of the 1988 Constitution, where various civil society organizations advocated and forwarded their claims after two decades of military repression.

According to Arruti (2009), the introduction of the right of quilombos to territory in the Federal Constitution was orchestrated by the Unified Black Movement (created in 1978) and anthropological studies within the movement about rural black communities. The unsatisfactory<sup>8</sup> result was the incorporation of Article 68 of the Transitional Constitutional Provisions Act (ADCT), formulating that "the remnants of the quilombo communities occupying their lands are recognized as having definitive ownership, and the State must issue them the respective titles."

This wording did not clarify the criteria and steps for the demarcation and titling of a *quilombola* territory or what the State was conceptualizing as a quilombo remnant. Only in Decree No. 4,887 of November 20, 2003, did it consider the remnants of *quilombola* communities as "ethno-racial groups, according to self-attribution criteria, with their historical trajectory, endowed with specific territorial relations, with a presumption of black ancestry related to resistance to historical oppression"<sup>9</sup>. Procedures for identification, recognition, delimitation, demarcation, and titling of lands occupied by quilombos were also regulated.

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<sup>8</sup> On this issue, see O'dwyer (2002).

<sup>9</sup> See at: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/Decreto/2003/D4887.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/Decreto/2003/D4887.htm). Accessed in: 17 Nov. 2018.

What arises from this Decree is both the criterion of self-attribution, i.e., the community defines, based on its social and cultural elements, whether or not it wishes to be recognized as a quilombo remnant, and the demarcation of its territory, supported by criteria of territoriality, which involves emotional belonging and ancestral ties to the territory or, according to Arruti (2009, p. 119, our translation), "all spaces that are part of their uses, customs, and traditions and/or that have the environmental resources necessary for their maintenance and the historical reminiscences that allow perpetuating their memory." In other words, it enables communities to recover their lost territories throughout history caused by the invasion of landowners, businessmen, land-grabbing practices, etc.

Two fundamental organs stand out for the titling of *quilombola* communities: the Palmares Cultural Foundation (*Fundação Cultural Palmares*, FCP), responsible for the certification process of quilombos, acting as a preliminary support for the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (*Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária*, INCRA), which is responsible for the stages of identification, recognition, delimitation, demarcation, and titling of *quilombola* territories. For a quilombo to have the title to its lands, it is necessary first to have the certificate issued by the FCP and then proceed with the process at INCRA.

However, the historically acquired rights by the Black Movement and *quilombola* communities faced even more significant threats and setbacks from 2015 onwards, signifying a policy of material and symbolic violence against quilombo communities. In addition to the policies mentioned earlier, the unelected President Michel Temer sanctioned Decree No. 8,865 in 2016, which extinguished the Ministry of Agrarian Development (*Ministério de Desenvolvimento Agrário*, MDA), transforming it into the Secretariat of Family Agriculture and Agrarian Development, linked to the Chief of Staff of the Presidency. INCRA, which was linked to MDA, also became the responsibility of the Chief of Staff. In short, the end of a ministerial department means the loss of significant public resources allocated to agrarian reform policies, jeopardizing the titling of new *quilombola* territories and even the resolution of agrarian conflicts (for example, between landowners and settlers).

To give an idea of what this has been representing, until 2015, there were 2,607 communities certified by the Palmares Cultural Foundation (aside from those still in the certification process). According to INCRA, 116 communities were titled from 2005 to 2017

<sup>10</sup>. In other words, when it comes to titling and, therefore, expropriation of farms, large estates, etc., the process takes even longer due to challenges and objections from ruralists and the threat faced by *quilombola* communities. Threats of death to groups, individuals, or leaders who decide to advocate for and pursue territory titling are commonplace.

In addition to the lack of investments, a significant decision by the Supreme Federal Court (*Supremo Tribunal Federal*, STF) occurred in February 2018. The court deemed unconstitutional Direct Action of Unconstitutionality (*Ação Direta de Inconstitucionalidade*, ADI) 3,239, which was proposed by the then Liberal Front Party (*Partido da Frente Liberal*, PFL), currently Democrats (DEM). This action sought to overturn the essential Decree No. 4,887/03, which, as shown earlier, is crucial for the demarcation and titling of *quilombola* lands. Along the same lines, there is an ongoing Constitutional Amendment Proposal (PEC) 215/2000, which attempts to transfer the ratification of indigenous and *quilombola* territories from the executive to the legislative branch. Observing the legislature's composition (National Congress), it becomes evident that this project sparks interest from the ruralist and conservative political-party bloc.

As we outline this overview of the current political landscape, concern arises regarding what lies ahead in the coming years. This new phase of neoliberalism, characterized by state reforms aimed at recovering the profits of large corporations in the face of inevitable crises in the capitalist mode of production, has generated insecurity and losses for the entire working class, mainly due to the loss of historically acquired rights. In the agrarian context, the continuous expansion of agribusiness, the opening of new agricultural frontiers, and the relentless approval of fertilizers or pesticides have endangered the biodiversity and sustainability of traditional peoples and communities.

However, if reality portends dark times, those who endure daily social ills, oppression, and prejudice must devise their own strategies of action and resistance. This involves strengthening numerous experiences of popular social struggles embedded in various contexts and geographical scales. Thus, the following reflections are presented not as conclusive but as delineating possible paths of hope, aiming for the construction of a truly emancipated, popular, and democratic societal and national project.

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<sup>10</sup> This data can be consulted at the following links: [http://www.incra.gov.br/sites/default/files/uploads/estrutura\\_fundiaria/quilombolas/comunidades-certificadas/comunidades\\_certificadas\\_08-06-15.pdf](http://www.incra.gov.br/sites/default/files/uploads/estrutura_fundiaria/quilombolas/comunidades-certificadas/comunidades_certificadas_08-06-15.pdf) e [http://www.incra.gov.br/sites/default/files/incra-andamentoprocessos-quilombolas\\_quadrogeral.pdf](http://www.incra.gov.br/sites/default/files/incra-andamentoprocessos-quilombolas_quadrogeral.pdf). Accessed in: 17 Nov. 2018.

## Final considerations: weaving and constructing resistances

We currently find ourselves at a crucial moment in history, where the rise of ultra-conservatism and fascist ideas is manifesting globally in increasingly intolerant societies and governments becoming more unpopular and anti-democratic. In this analysis, it is imperative to consider the capitalist mode of production, which, permeated by its crises and contradictions, has been the driving force behind all barbarism and violence. However, the deepening social inequality and the notorious deterioration of objective and subjective living conditions do not prevent a popular reaction and mobilization as a means of contestation and revolt against capitalism's social and political-economic model.

The ongoing mobilizations and popular organizations reveal some central issues. First, they expose the contradictions and profound inequalities generated by capitalism, which stifles urban and rural workers, exploiting labor to the maximum for surplus value and depriving access to land, housing, and many other essential rights for human dignity. Second, in an unjust mode of production and a class-based society, it is not appropriate to conform or believe in class conciliation or that capitalism can maintain social rights, as many movements have felt in recent years in Brazil.

Recovering the project of human emancipation requires looking at reality as a whole, that is, how capitalism structures the world, recognizing, however, the experiences that are built in everyday life on the ground of those who live directly with hardships and injustices.

Popular social movements, throughout their history of organization and action, emerging in various contexts, share a common origin: they draw from the experiences of men and women in a particular situation, reflecting on the reality in which they find themselves and becoming aware of the need to transform it. Therefore, it is argued that the social movement, constructed by individual and collective subjects, assumes an educational and political nature. Thus, it contributes to elevating critical consciousness by unveiling the structures of society and capitalism.

Regarding *quilombola* communities, the subject of this work, the existence of resistances demanding recognition and strengthening becomes evident. Even with setbacks in social rights, spaces of contestation and subversion emerge in various socio-spatial contexts and geographical scales. These claims are articulated through the collective organization of men and women through the creation of associations, movements, and collectives—where dialogues and resolutions of popular demands occur.

Therefore, reflecting on the challenges of the current historical moment requires being constantly vigilant and attentive to the political intricacies and decisions within the State and observing the experiences and struggles that are constructed and articulated in everyday life and various spaces. After all, what have popular social movements been teaching us, and how are we engaging in this process?

Being attentive and valuing the formation of popular masses, strengthening the direction and popular project, and contesting spaces and territories is essential for building a path and horizon with the historical capacity to overcome social, political, economic, and environmental injustices and inequalities.

As Konder (1985, p. 78, our translation) warns, "If history is being made, to an unacceptable extent, by others, then the problem is in us starting to make it more decisively ourselves," that is, taking a position as historical subjects and having a commitment to praxis. Therefore, it is necessary to be attentive to the individuals, men, and women, who are struggling to accumulate and share experiences in multiple contexts and social scales. Whether in academic research or political and activist practice, bringing visibility to the *quilombola* issue is to be committed and sensitive to a historically concrete possibility of transformation.

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