


## On the cruel images: iconicity of the massacres in the countryside

### Sobre as imagens cruéis: iconicidade dos massacres no campo

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**ABSTRACT:** *In this text, we sought to develop an approach, aligned with critical visual studies, to study the iconicity of the “Massacres in the Countryside” page of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT). It starts from the heuristics that, in mediatization, the narrative emergence of subalternized contexts enables the perception of perspectives situated on its images. We also mobilize the concepts of everyday catastrophes and perplexity to understand the reality of agrarian conflicts in Brazil. The analysis is focused on the distinction between the circulation of widely-recognized conflicts and the mediatization of agrarian conflicts, drawing some possible observations about the way in which the images from the CPT archives situate the narratives of massacres in the countryside.*

**Keywords:** *image; circulation; narrative; agrarian conflicts.*

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**RESUMO:** *Este texto busca desenvolver uma abordagem, alinhada aos estudos visuais críticos, para o estudo da iconicidade da página “Massacres no Campo” da Comissão Pastoral da Terra. Parte-se da heurística de que, na mediação, a emergência narrativa de contextos subalternizados viabiliza a percepção de olhares situados sobre suas imagens. Mobilizamos também os conceitos de catástrofes cotidianas e atordoamento para compreender a realidade dos conflitos agrários no Brasil. A análise foca a distinção entre a circulação de conflitos amplamente reconhecidos e a mediação dos conflitos agrários, apontando algumas observações possíveis sobre o modo como as imagens dos arquivos da CPT situam as narrativas de massacres no campo.*

**Palavras-chave:** *imagem; circulação; narrativa; conflitos agrários.*

## Introduction

Among the hermeneutic possibilities of the image, several forms of critical visual studies<sup>1</sup> have been arising lately, characterized by the elaboration of situated perspectives to the point of repositioning the imagetic actions. Against the reproductive imagination of hegemonic icons in history, Benjamin (2009), in his *Passages*, and Warburg (2024), in his *Mnemosyne Atlas*, have echoed, for some time, the heuristic power of the image, respectively, for constructions of “history against the grain” and reassemblies of a “science of culture.” Strongly inspired by them, Didi-Huberman (2013; 2015; 2020) displaces visual criticism of cultures in general to localized social problems, such as the dramatic abuse of images in *the invention of hysteria* and the historical power of the four images conceived and torn from the Auschwitz-Birkenau hell.

Situated perspectives emerge from the narrative plots “when the images take position” (Didi-Huberman, 2017, free translation) — which impels us to relate the empirical condition of subjects situated before the images that affect their experiences and, therefore, their own subjective conditions. Among the essays that adopt this perspective, we draw attention to the approach De Carli (2021, p. 7) develops between the philosophy of the image and some speculative notions that concern the subjective situation, such as the *Amerindian perspective* of Viveiros de Castro (2017), who teaches us how “the experience from a point of view creates the subjects, and the subjects no longer manufacture a point of view and detach themselves, unharmed, through them” (free translation).

Situating the perspective makes visual studies critical as, in addition to the search for observing visual culture, they focus on the exercise of “showing the seeing” (Mitchell, 2006). Among other merits, the study

1 The term “critical visual studies” in this article derives from the course with this name taught by researcher Anelise De Cali at the Association of Research and Practices in Humanities (*Associação de Pesquisas e Práticas em Humanidades – APPH*) in May 2024. The course syllabus can be found at: <https://anelisedecarli.com/cursos/>.

by Saidiya Hartman (2020) stands out for an exercise as such: not only the author indicates the absence of archives of subalternized people, but proposes a *critical fabulation* as a powerful gesture in the face of images of Black girls. Certainly, other paths can be followed in this theoretical scene, whenever it is possible to reposition the visual criticism in face of the constitution of perspectives.

One of the paths to be pursued, as is the attempt of the present study, is the contribution of the dissertation of Professor Ana Paula da Rosa (2012) when relating theories of image, imagery, and mediatization to understand the process of symbolic elaboration and visual criticism in a society strongly permeated by media processes. Specifically, it is in the changes in the process of circulation of meanings that other forms of constitution of situated perspectives are materialized.

In this article, we raise a question of this type — more than an interpretation of certain images, we seek to situate visual criticism since the narrative emergence of subalternized contexts in mediatization. In this text, the focus lies on the situation of agrarian conflicts in Brazil, which dates back to colonization and lives through in all regions of the country in a ritualized way as if it were a thing of the past. Records of the Pastoral Land Commission (*Comissão Pastoral da Terra – CPT*) show, in a survey carried out annually, the everyday life of this catastrophe, which includes murders, land grabbing, invasions, threats, slavery and — the phenomenon regurgitated in the present study — massacres (or slaughters) that occurred amid conflicts over land and water in rural areas of the country.

In the context that relates critical visual studies, imagery, and mediatization, the relevance of this empirical object lies in the distinction highlighted between the circulation of widely-recognized conflicts (such as televised catastrophes) and the mediatization of everyday catastrophes (such as agrarian conflicts). In this article, we contribute to this theoretical scene as we investigate, in mediatization, the narrative emergence of subalternized contexts, specifically when the images take position in the agrarian struggle movements.

Images of massacres in the countryside have been produced and archived over nearly 40 years by CPT. With documents from judicial proceedings, journalistic coverage, and base works of pastoral agents, the collection constituted in a documentation center was made available on the Internet for the first time in 2017, on an online and interactive page called “Massacres in the Countryside”, a microsite linked to the CPT website<sup>2</sup>. Taking this page as an object of study, our goal is to understand how the unprecedented montage of images of massacres in the countryside by CPT questions the circulation of meanings about this catastrophe over time. Between the denunciation that calls for some visibility and the stun of circulating invisibilization, *how do the images of the CPT archives situate the narratives of massacres in the countryside?*

### **Massacres in the countryside: from catastrophe to stun and from collection to montage**

Since the events that marked colonization in Brazil, the land dispute remains evident. The history is long, complex, and only begins to be effectively organized as a public debate on agrarian reform in the second half of the 20th century, with the struggles of the *Ligas Camponesas* (“Peasant Leagues”, Brazilian social organizations founded aimed at improving rural workers’ living standards) during the elaboration of the subsequent elaborations of the Federal Constitution (COSME, 2018).

At the heart of the debate are female and male land workers, also recognizable in the forms of traditional and peasant communities and by various other identifications:

Homesteaders, landless persons, squatters, small owners, *parceiros* (owners of plots of land), small tenants, rural workers, prospectors, *caiçaras* (inhabitants of coastal regions of southeastern and southern Brazil), peasants from *fundo e fecho de pasto* (peasant communities located in the state of Bahia), *faxinalenses* (traditional peasant communities from the mid-south

2 Available from: <https://cptnacional.org.br/massacresnocampo>. Accessed on Mar. 12, 2024.

of the state of Paraná), *geraizeiro* (traditional inhabitants of the Cerrado regions of the state of Minas Gerais), *marisqueiras* (traditional artisanal fishing workers), fishermen, Quilombola people, *retireiros* (traditional communities who live at the banks of Araguaia River, state of Mato Grosso), riparian people, rubber-tappers, *vazanteiros* (riparian communities who live at the banks of rivers, especially nearby São Francisco River, in Minas Gerais), extractivist workers (chestnut, palm tree traders, babassu coconut breakers, rubber-tappers), Indigenous peoples, etc. (CPT, 2024a, p. 10)<sup>3</sup>.

The Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), which documents this struggle, emerged in 1975, linked to the National Confederation of Bishops of Brazil (*Confederação Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil – CNBB*), an organization of the Catholic Church that guaranteed the work of defense to the peoples of the countryside during the period of military dictatorship in the country. Later, it became an ecumenical institution, maintaining the mystique that confers identity to pastoral action in the struggle for human rights.

The rights provided for by the State, but little effective, and for which the CPT and other social movements fight, basically refer to the “lack of entitlement of Quilombos, demarcation of Indigenous territories, the allocation of public land, and the expropriation of agrarian properties for agrarian reform, as well as the non-holding of free, prior, and informed consultations” (CPT, 2024a, p. 7, free translation).

Alentejano *et al.* (2024), from the Laboratory of Studies of Social Movements and Territorialities of the Universidade Federal Fluminense (LEMTO/UFF) and the Group of Studies, Research and Extension in Agrarian Geography (GeoAgrarian/UERJ), point out that, in the last decade, the country registers a real “agrarian counter-reform,” as the policies already formulated in this regard are not only stuck, but also move backwards. There is what we can call a stun in the face of the everyday catastrophe of agrarian conflicts in Brazil.

3 Those affected by dams and leaderships are also other categories mentioned in the report, which demonstrates that there are several somewhat recognized ways to refer to the various people living in the countryside, by identity criteria, events, or activities exercised in daily life.

Legally and culturally supporting the communities that experience these conflicts, the CPT takes on the “task of documenting” as a pastoral mission that has, according to its own statement (CPT, 2024a, p. 11), the theological, ethical, political, pedagogical, historical, and scientific dimension. In addition, it categorizes some types of conflicts that help guiding the public debate about: land, occupation, and repossession conflicts, camps, labor conflicts, slave labor, overexploitation, resistance actions, water conflicts, conflicts in times of drought, conflicts in areas of mining, union conflicts, manifestations, and violence in the countryside.

Data on these categories are produced and published annually in the report *Conflitos no Campo — Brasil* [Conflicts in the Countryside — Brazil], a journal that also includes analytical texts interspersed with comparative tables, infographics, and photographs. The publication is based on a database made up of primary sources (reports and official documents), followed by secondary sources (newspapers and the Internet) and organized into a collection currently digitized and, in recent years, originally digital.

Due to the fact that it is established as one of the dimensions of the very activity of popular consultancy to social movements, the CPT carries out data collection ‘in loco’ and, therefore, makes feasible the records from real situations experienced by rural workers, traditional, primitive populations, Quilombola, riparian populations, *caičaras*, peasants, etc. who have reacted and react, organically, to the processes of land grabbing, expulsion, and the impacts of the construction of large projects such as dams and disasters resulting from mining activities, or even in their struggles against forms of exploitation of ‘contemporary slave labor’ (RIBEIRO *et al.*, 2020, p. 412, free translation).

We can understand this work of denunciation of the reality of conflicts in the countryside as a narrative resource that seeks to give legibility and visibility to this struggle. The narrative arises, precisely, when it is necessary to elaborate and act in the face of the complexity of world problems, constituting itself “as a mediation of the experience of historical time” (MANNA, 2020, free translation).

The narrative understood as a communication process finds its greatest heuristic power if it is understood in this broad field in which language is founded in relation to complex social dynamics, historically constituted and materially experienced in culture (MANNA, 2020, p. 45, free translation)

In this case, the experience of time mediated by the narrative of the *Conflitos no Campo* [Conflicts in the Countryside] report of CPT is necessarily of the order of disasters or, still, of the crises of time, configurations in which one perceives “a considerable confusion in the elaborations and actions on the course of history” (MANNA, 2020, p. 41, free translation). This catastrophe of conflicts in the countryside in Brazil becomes an everyday occurrence when perceived in its historicity, in the forms of colonization, centuries of violations, the last decades of struggle for agrarian reform, and the current scenario of counter-reform (COSME, 2018; ALENTEJANO *et al.*, 2024).

Having emerged in 1975, the CPT records the catastrophe of agrarian conflicts with documents that have been retroactive since the 1960s, but as of 1985 — therefore, almost 40 years ago — it started annually publishing the *Conflitos no Campo — Brasil* report. With the publication, the Commission is able to guide the media and denounce to society the seriousness of the events that pastoral agents witness every day.

The reports are highlighted, therefore, because they objectively bring, while going against the official records controlled by the same elites, the version of those affected by impunity and illegality carried out by these supposedly (until proven) landowners, who overindulge themselves in promiscuous access to public state apparatus (RIBEIRO *et al.*, 2020, p. 415, free translation).

However, in addition to the daily nature of the catastrophe, 2017 marks a moment of stun — when, along with the coup suffered by President Dilma Rousseff, the aforementioned process of agrarian counter-reform culminated with the alarming increase in deaths in the countryside. In that year alone, there were five massacres. The report, then, warned:

The numbers of violence grow in a frightening way. 71 murders are the highest number recorded since 2003, when 73 victims were counted. [...] But the macabre side of the murders in 2017 are the massacres. Five massacres with 31 victims. As Professor Cláudio Maia pointed out, in two of these massacres, Colniza, state of Mato Grosso, (9) and Pau D'Arco, state of Pará, (10), the number of people killed was only lower than that of Eldorado dos Carajás, dated April 17, 1996, with 19 deaths. Numbers of massacres, close to those of 2017, were recorded only in 1985, with 10 cases and in 1987, with six cases. However, in none of these 16 cases, the number of deaths per event came close to those recorded in 2017. Since 1988, more than two massacres were not recorded in a single year (CPT Nacional, 2018).

The CPT recognizes as “massacre in the countryside” every case in which three or more people were killed on the same occasion of agrarian conflict. The increase in this type of occurrence accentuates the denunciation of other violence, and it is from this stun that emerges the narrative device that we will analyze here.

Between the everyday catastrophe of agrarian conflicts and the increase in the occurrences of massacres, one can see the stun that sparks off a “temporal crisis” (MANNA, 2020). Suddenly, 2017 is mistaken with the scenario recorded in the 1980s and even with the colonization process. This, at first, is what is seen on the online page that makes the CPT collection a montage of images that intended to “bring greater visibility to all massacres in the countryside”:

Motivated by the boom of these crimes in 2017, with cases of greater repercussion in the states of Mato Grosso and Pará, CPT created a page dedicated to the topic, seeking to bring greater visibility to all the massacres in the countryside that occurred in previous years and to show society that this type of crime ‘is a rite of passage for genocide,’ as pointed out by Alfredo Wagner Berno de Almeida. An element that is evoked, because this type of violence has historically reached primitive and countryside populations, reflecting the process of land colonization and, currently, the land concentration in the country (CPT, 2024b).

The collection, previously available only at the Dom Tomás Balduino Documentation Center (*Centro de Documentação Dom Tomás Balduino*), was reorganized and published on the Internet as a set for the first time in 2017. This unprecedented montage of images of massacres in the countryside by CPT is a resource that expands and invites to public access what was restricted to researchers in the documentation center. This is one of the effects — positive, we must say — of mediatization on narratives coming from subalternized contexts.

Thus, in addition to denouncing it, the page drives the circulation of meanings and this takes place in at least two different ways. First, as a narrative that is inscribed in circulation, being able to move forward or not. Second, as a narrative that discloses the gaps of circulation of massacres in the countryside over the four decades of records made by CPT. Based on these two aspects, our objective in this research was to understand how the images of the CPT archives situate the narratives of massacres in the countryside.

### **Circulation of images in mediatization**

More than an interpretation of the represented meaning — which, in the case of a denunciation of murders, is evident —, when we propose an investigation on the images of massacres in the countryside, which are presented on the CPT page, we specifically seek to empirically situate the visual criticism on this topic, from the narrative emergence of subalternized collectives. Undertaking the way CPT arranges its archive images is the focus of this study to situate visual criticism.

Mediatization, understood not as subjugation to technology, but rather as an “interactional process of reference” (BRAGA, 2006, free translation), intensifies the challenges, but also the paths of struggle, as synthesized by Freire (2023, p. 113), in the author’s study on the communicational organization of human rights in mediatization:

The process of mediatization intensifies in such a way that our experiences are increasingly conditioned to the presence in these spaces of mediation,

negotiation, visibility, interaction. Although we cannot talk about radical changes in the understanding of human rights in our society, we perceive gains in the collective effort to bring more comprehensive discussions on the subject, that are not restricted to the principles of normative texts, but which contextualize the debate on human rights from concretion (FREIRE, 2023, p. 113, free translation).

One of the ways in which mediatization manifests itself is by autonomizing the scope of the circulation of meanings, no longer restricted to productive activities or to forms of reception. For Eliseo Verón (2004), the circulation of meanings has always existed as an invisible sphere, in the gap between production and reception — circulation would be what is lost, articulated, or changed. With digital devices, there are procedures that not only expand access to the means of production and reception, but also evidence a sphere in the production of meanings that cannot be circumscribed either by the broadcasting agency or by the work of reception.

Verón (2004) points out that circulation can be understood by the analysis of marks, grammars, operations, and logics perceptible in any communication process. Within the context of this article, we consider that the page “Massacres in the Countryside” can be seen, from the circulation, in two ways: the circulation of the narrative of the massacres to which the page refers and the circulation of this narrative seen by the visual montage provided by the page itself.

In the first case, we would have the process that Braga (2006) calls “moving forward.” It is the ability to carrying on the construction of the meanings in circulation from new appropriations. In this sense, and already in the field of the imagery of catastrophes arising from conflicts, Rosa (2012) investigated the circulation of images of September 11, noticing how its symbolic force motivated its configuration as an “image-totem.”

Every representation already brings in itself a certain structure that is connected with socially constructed imageries. Thus, even unconscious, there are basic structures inherent in the development of human beings, such as, for example, myths, archetypes. However, there are photographs, videos, technical images that are mediatized and which become preponderant to

other images that are also accessible to the eyes. This is not only because such images are being publicized frequently, but rather because they involve deeper social structures that I consider here as totem (ROSA, 2012, p. 331, free translation).

This is, therefore, a case in which the mediatization does not avoid the symbolic power of the circulating images, which move forward and continue producing new meanings (including the meaning of this analysis) up to the present day throughout the world. In the early 2000s, September 11 occupied the place of icon of the new millennium, so powerful that it was able to kill, as expounded by Mondzain (2009).

In this sense, it is possible to infer that the images of massacres in the countryside are far from this iconicity. Therefore, we will not focus, at least at this moment, on the study of circulation that takes place from the page. The intended visibility is still a struggle faced by the CPT and its repercussions in moving forward may be expounded at another time, with more room for this analysis.

The focus here lies on the analysis of circulation from the perspective of the CPT montage: how do the images of the CPT archives situate the narratives of massacres in the countryside?

The analysis will be carried out based on the observation of the page “Massacres in the Countryside” as an “image plates.” The heuristic attempt is inspired by the articulation that Didi-Huberman (2013) makes between the thoughts of Walter Benjamin and Aby Warburg to point to the existence of a “knowing-montage,” capable of evoking Benjamin’s traditional propositions about a “history against the grain,” that is, a way of reassembling the history falling short of hegemonic writing; and of Warburg’s “science of culture,” which is continuously reassembled from the very images of culture.

Didi-Huberman (2015) noticed this, for example, by studying the photographic iconography of Salpêtrière, a clinic that, from the author’s perspective, was responsible for the “invention of hysteria.” Assembling a series of images of women in spectacular acts was an iconicity justified by medical research, but which had the practical effect of inventing this

form of suffering, specifically linked to the pose that makes itself aesthetic to become an image.

In another study, Didi-Huberman (2020) analyzed the images produced by members of *sonderkommando*,<sup>4</sup> in a clandestine and risky way, known as the only four photographs of the surroundings of the gas chamber in *Shoah* — conferring to this achievement the qualification of “images despite everything,” because they were able to witness and survive despite all tragedy.

What interests us in Didi-Huberman (2013; 2015; 2020) is the possibility of this visual criticism that takes place from the devices that are set as montages of certain images. In our case, the “Massacres in the Countryside” page shows a montage or, as Mondzain (2013) prefers, an iconicity.

According to Mondzain (2013, p. 118, free translation), “the essence of the image is not visibility; it is its economy, and only this, which is visible in its iconicity.” It is a perspective of the relationship between symbolically designated images, more than an analysis of the image as a linguistic sign that designates its referent. For the author, “the image is supported by an idea of meaning, not the sign” (MONDZAIN, 2013, p. 112, free translation).

To think about iconicity, the methodology presented with Warburg, Didi-Huberman, and Mondzain is the perception of the relations between images. To this end, in Warburg, the montage of image plates stood out. We can recognize precisely this operation on the “Massacres in the Countryside” page when arranging its images. Our goal is to understand how the montage of these images by CPT questions the circulation of meanings about this catastrophe over time.

### **“The cruel images of the massacre of squatters”**

When opening the CPT “Massacres in the Countryside” page (Figure 1), there is a homepage with an image representing the map of Brazil covered by lands, icon of the struggle in question, overlaid by the title of the

4 Prisoners who were forced by the Nazis to work in extermination camps during World War II.

page and its description: “Continuous monitoring of massacres in the countryside in Brazil, by the Pastoral Land Commission, from 1985 to the present day.” This map is immersed in newspaper clippings/headlines that reported these catastrophes. One of them is the title of this analysis — “the cruel images of the massacre of squatters.”

Figure 1 – Homepage of the “Massacres in the Countryside” page



Source: CPT (2024b).

Before carrying on, it is necessary to add some methodological and operational observations to the theoretical-methodological notes already outlined about our understanding of conflicts in the countryside, such as everyday catastrophes in Brazil, and the warning about the increasing massacres in present times as a stun, as well as our proposition of heuristics of critical visual studies from a perspective situated in the CPT.

First, a personal note adds a relevant methodological datum of this study. At the time of the stun, in 2017, I, the author of this study, worked as a journalist in the CPT communication advisory and reported not only the largest number of murders due to agrarian conflicts in 14 years, but also the series of five massacres involving 34 victims: Pau D’Arco (state of Pará), Colniza (state of Mato Grosso), Vilhena (state of Rondônia), Lençóis (state of Bahia), and Canutama (state of Amazonas). In addition, I was part of the team that carried out the search and synthesis of

information that would go from the CPT collection to the microsite “Massacres in the Countryside,” our object of analysis herein.

This research, therefore, began in 2017, with the observation of this scenario and the creation of a page capable of evidencing the recurrence and severity of this outcome of agrarian conflicts in Brazil, among others. In this project, I physically moved from the communication sector to the documentation sector. I spent a few weeks at the Dom Tomás Balduino Documentation Center to check massacre by massacre. Starting from the information on the cases that occurred each year, from 1985 to 2017, the adopted procedure was to go through all the records, already digitized, eventually checking the physical collection and the complementary archives, to collect the available images and the main contextual and outcome information, aiming at writing notes summarizing each occurrence. Therefore, it is not appropriate to analyze the work carried out or what these images represent in this study — this is duly expressed. As certain operative movements with the images have already been made a few years ago, what is up to us now is to put ourselves before these images again and perceive how they question the circulation of meanings about the massacres in the countryside over time.

The description we chose as the title of this analysis — “the cruel images of the massacre of squatters” — evidences the meaning intended to all the massacres, presented on the page from an image that leads to the description and the available news/headlines about the occurrence. But let us look at a screenshot of the page as a whole. Its unusual verticality hinders its disposition in this study, but favors our analysis (Figure 2):

The presentation of this quite vertical image contrasts with the multiple possible ways of visibility of the page on digital devices, and this is motivated by two objectives in this analysis: the first is that, in fact, there are cruel images and our focus is not to obstinately fixate them on the retina of the reader of this article. Visualizing the images in thumbnails, side by side, still has a second goal, which is to notice its montage more deeply and what it can disclose to us. This is what we will address, through the practice of reassembling these images, to outline how the

Figure 2 – Image plate of massacres in the countryside by CPT



Source: CPT (2024b).

montage of the CPT questions the circulation of images in the imagery related to the massacres in the countryside.

The first aspect that is disclosed is that although there are images that are even “cruel,” it is the promise of “images” that is not fulfilled. There are 56 massacres, 56 frames for images. Half (30) of the massacres are not accompanied by images, and what is seen is the icon of the lack of a figure. The invisibility is iconically presented in frames bordered by the space-time sign that indicates the city and the year in which a massacre took place (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – Reassembly I: iconic invisibility



Source: Prepared by the author, based on CPT (2024b).

The first of these frames gives access to the report on the death of four squatters by police officers and employees of a farm with pending evaluation, by the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (*Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária – Incra*), on the possession of the land occupied by 1,200 families in the Fazenda Agropastoril e Extrativa do Brasil, in São João do Araguaia (state of Pará), 1995. It is against this lack of files that CPT reiterates its mission.

Researchers that have already focused on the issue of (in)visibility in cases of agrarian conflicts report how extreme is the difference in the visibility required by social movements and the invisibility provided by traditional media. In the case of massacres in the countryside, Machado (2021, p. 168, free translation) points out that “in corporate media journalism, these actors [peasants] had low visibility and negative visibility” and considers that this makes it difficult to recognize this violence as a social issue of everyday life.

The low visibility of violence occurring in places far from urban centers may be related to a deepening of violations, because it reduces the possibilities of being incorporated as social problems, socially recognized (and rejected) (MACHADO, 2021, p. 44, free translation).

The issue of visibility, in this and in other cases, is lamented in the face of the media alienation. Machado (2021, p. 169, free translation) believes that “while visible pain and suffering can evoke empathy, feelings of grief and emotion, the conditions in which these deaths occur and the unfolding of events are marked by erasures, injustices, and invisibility.”

A second aspect to highlight is that this invisibility also discloses the symbolic motivation of the “Massacres in the Countryside” page as a montage of invisibilization. The gaps can give us time to think, but they also inform that, even without visual records, each space keeps the account of the cruelty of the massacres in the countryside.

Conversely, a third aspect of our analysis at this moment is the perception of the topics that motivate and present themselves symbolically in the images. All 30 images presented on the covers of conflicts, without exception, are highly indicial. In dialogue with the montage strategy of webpage, we elaborated, in Figure 4, a reassembly that makes different indicial modes into contact:

In this set, we see remaining cartridges of fifteen shots against three members of the League of Poor Peasants (*Liga dos Camponeses Pobres* – LCP) in Porto Velho (state of Rondônia), in 2021, after months of persecution; the absence of bodies of the Quilombola leaders in an empty boat in the river, in Lençóis (state of Bahia), in 2017; dead bodies of people

Figure 4 – Reassembly II: indiciality of violence



Source: Prepared by the author, based on CPT (2024b).

killed in the Pau D'Arco Massacre, in 2017; bodies in coffins in the Eldorado dos Carajás Massacre (state of Pará), in 1996; unrecognizable bodies of tenant farmers killed in Marabá (state of Pará), in 1985, who were thrown at Itacaiunas River and found a week later; ashes of bodies in a charred car with workers who supported the struggle for agrarian reform in Vilhena (state of Rondônia), in 2017<sup>5</sup>.

The colors are in earthy tones of landscapes devastated by death and the wounded bodies do not appear as icons only when the newspaper images themselves occupy this space. They are there not only for what the newspapers said, but for the indiciality of the event. The need for the indication is disclosed, as we see in this other reassembly, which articulates different temporalities by multiplying the indicial frames: they are photos inserted in journalistic publications, which in turn are replicated on the CPT page. We can see how the work with CPT archive images produces complex articulations,

5 Full reports can be found on the aforementioned website. Available from: <https://cptnacional.org.br/todos-massacres> Accessed on: Feb. 12, 2024.

which still lack more studies, between primary and secondary sources, articulated to their fieldwork in the monitored communities. Far from being an isolated act, it is a work deemed necessary by the movements of struggle for land. That is why, during the evaluation of this article in the editorial processes of this journal, *Revista Comunicação, Mídia e Consumo*, one of the evaluators had the generosity of indicating possible parallels with the atlas of photographs of the Landless Workers' Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – MST*), elaborated by Stella Senra.

A fourth aspect takes place when we access the images (Figure 5). They guide us, in most cases, to small summaries of each massacre. Over time, the images and news multiply. There are certainly more images about the five massacres that occurred in 2017 than about those of the 1980s. Not even the largest massacre ever recorded by the CPT — the Eldorado dos Carajás Massacre in 1996 —, which was widely reported at the time, can overcome the proliferation of current images in digital format. The page, however, does not show this imagetic difference. What it denounces is that no matter how much there are more images, invisibility seems to be the same.

Figure 5 – Reassembly III: indiciality of the event



Source: Prepared by the author, based on CPT (2024b).

As we look at the “gaps” of circulation (DIDI-HUBERMAN, 2013; ROSA, 2012), it is evident that among the images there is a temporal distance of 40 years of records articulated by a unity of the shapes and colors that denounce the massacres in the countryside in a very indicial way. This finding of something that is repeated over time reminds us of the statement given by CPT (2024b) itself that “this type of crime is a rite of passage for genocide.”

Despite the circulating invisibilization, what this thematic persistence shows us seems to be the sense of resistance and survival of communities and images, which is sharpened by the few images of living people among the analyzed set. They are photos of memories, they are the eyes of children, they are Indigenous people in communities, as we see in our reassembly in Figure 6:

Figure 6 – Reassembly IV: survival of images, peoples, and conflicts



Source: Prepared by the author, based on CPT (2024b).

These notes — which are not intended for a conclusive analysis, but rather for a study capable of raising the questions that the “Massacres in

the Countryside” page present to the circulation of meanings about its own topic over time — make us conclude that there is another face of the mediatized images. The cruel images are not only those that present us with cruel death. While those of September 11 or even contemporary wars make us see the moving-forward circulation in the production of meanings, the images surveyed here lead us to think about the permanence of a never-elaborated meaning, as it is never socially recognized. The images of massacres in the countryside are not only cruel in their content, but in their circulating invisibilization.

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