Restinga Seca is a town of approximately 17,000 inhabitants, located on the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil’s extreme south. The city has two furnitures industries that, such as the local commerce, employs a significant part of the urban population. However, the center pillar of the local economics is the agriculture production, mostly based on rice, soybean and tobacco.

The year of 2004 beggined with a crisis on the local furnitures industries. The factory’s president, Gaudêncio da Costa, stated in public that, in order to don’t close doors, he was forced to fire 101 employees in that year. During my field work, on july of 2006, I have interviewed former employees of the furnitures industries, and they have mentioned that has been between 400 and 500 people fired, what means that the crisis reflected directly on a important part of the economically active population of the county.

This, however, wasn’t the only big problem to be faced. Restinga Seca went through a severe dry spell on that year. The pluviometric data were below the ratings of the previous years, what brought to the local agriculture a series of problems.

There was a shortage of water for human supply, and also for cattle and for the crops. The crop losses were big: 55% of the soybean harvest, 35% of the rice harvest, 52% on the corn production, 30% of the milk production and 15% of the tobacco harvest.

The crisis went worst until, on march of 2005, the Restinga Sêca county declared situation of emergency.
On top of that, there was a serious concerning on low prices of the rice, a situation that have been announcing since 2004, but would only reach the status of public matter along 2005.

On an effort of trying to reduce the weather uncertainties, the region’s producers had chosen for the irrigated rice culture, now depending of level of the region’s rivers and not only of the rain. On this matter, there was an effort concentration on the rice culture, what led to a devaluation of the product.

Besides, the producers would complain about the import that the Brazilian Government was doing of the argentinian and uruguayan rice, which was generating an rice excedent in Brazil. The imported rice, they would say, came with a lower price, due to the costs of productions and the taxes on it, smaller than the ones in Brazil. All of that would pull down the cereal price and, as if it wasn’t enough, the increase on the production costs of the brazilian rice was making the producer’s profit margin lower.

Several protests were done, some of them aiming to close Brazil’s borders with Argentina and mostly Uruguay. Hundreds of rice farmers, not only from Restinga Sêca but also from several cities of Rio Grande do Sul, would take their tractors and machines to the road, paralyzing the traffic between the countries. The protests had a single goal: reivindicate from the Federal Government measures that would protect the brazilian agriculturist. If Brazil was self-sufficient on rice production, why import from neighbours countries?

Interviewing a rice farmer named Tadeu, when we talked about the cereal’s devaluation, he gave me a statement that impressed me: “On early days I would buy a tractor with 1000 bags of rice. Nowadays it takes over 5000!” . According to him, this means that the agriculturist raised productivity to gain less money than before, investing in technology, and in some cases, increasing the amount of work in order to gain less for the product.

What we can conclude is that it wasn’t the rice price who was on devaluation, but the agriculturist’s work and so himself who had lost part of his value.

So, it is worth mentioning the presence of stickers on Restinga Sêca’s shop windows, representing Brazil’s map cut by a black stripe and below the picture it was written: “The Countryside mourns!”.
The mourning reference express feelings such as sadness, bitterness and deception, all originated from the loss of something dear. Who speaks on mourning is consequently speaking of death and, in this case, the message was that, in Brazil, agriculture was dying and this death was with the government’s consent.

The financial problems of the Gaudêncio’s Forniture Factory and the devaluation on the price of the agricultural products framed a crisis scene in Restinga Sêca, with consequences raised by the drought. In this scenario, the producers and farm workers understood that the solution of their problems would only come through governmental aid. Since the government measures would point to a direction that the agriculturists understood as opposite to their interests, the crisis responsibility was entirely of the governants and, especifically, to the most powerfull of them all, the President.

Therefore, the climatic problems were encompassed by the economic and the political questions. These questions gave the frame of the interpretation of the drought.