

Agreste by Yann Gross

The story is taking place in the north-east Brazilian countryside area.

This place has a remainder of the *Mata Atlantica*, which was once the second largest forest of South America and which has only about 6% left of its original size. The rivers taking their source in these wooded hills can supply water to the villages nearby. However, deforestation is accelerating, and water begins to fail.

I was interested to talk about the everyday life of the people living there, small stories which are taking place in this remote area.

This semi-arid territory was once a prosperous farming region.

The land belonged to the Indians, who hadn't any possession concept, the land belonged to everyone. Then arrived settlers who built large fazendas and using of slaves from Africa. The Indians were chased and «parked» in a kind of ghetto.

Nowadays, the descendants of the slaves and the settlers are working as farmers in these hills. Most of the Indians are still living in their ghetto, and even if they got the land back, they prefer to rent it instead of working (which isn't part of their philosophy).

I spent 4 months in this area, living with farmers and Indians. There isn't any spectacular things to tell about it. The lifestyle is very simple and every little detail becomes a moment of entertainment.

There are several NGOs fighting against deforestation and social problems in the Amazona and most of the people know about it, because of the media coverage. But maybe, we could talk and show what's going on there, 400km far from the South Atlantic coast.

Agreste, means «from the countryside» in French, but it's also the name of a Brazilian region.