- SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND TRANSFORMATION -

THE POLITICS OF AGRARIAN REFORM IN BRAZIL

THE LANDLESS RURAL WORKERS MOVEMENT

WILDER ROBLES & HENRY VELTMEYER

The Politics of Agrarian Reform in Brazil

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND TRANSFORMATION

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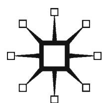

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For Jorge Nef,

Wonderful teacher, mentor, colleague, friend

Contents

List of Figures and Tables ix
Preface xi
Acknowledgments xv
List of Brazilian Presidents, 1985 to Present xvii
List of Abbreviations xix

Introduction 1
1 The Agrarian Question Today: The Politics of Poverty and Inequality 17
2 Rural Development and Social Movements 37
3 The Politics of Agrarian Reform in Brazil: A Historical Background 65
4 Agrarian Reform under Sarney and Collor de Mello-Franco 85
5 Agrarian Reform under Cardoso 105
6 Agrarian Reform under "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff 125
7 Cooperative Experiences 143
8 Popular Agrarian Reform 171
Conclusion 189

Notes 197
Bibliography 215
Index 227

Figures and Tables

Figures

0.1 Gini index of land inequality in Brazil, 1985–2006 4
0.2 Gini index of income inequality in Brazil, 1980–2009 6
0.3 Alternative numbers of agrarian reform beneficiaries in Brazil, 1985–2012 8
1.1 Gini index of global income inequality, 1820–2002 20
1.2 Land occupations in Brazil, 1988–2012 30
1.3 Participation of Brazilian landless peasant families in land occupations, 1988–2012 31
3.1 Evolution of rural movements engaged in land occupations in Brazil, 2000–2012 66
4.1 Murder of peasants in land conflicts in Brazil, 1985–2013 99
6.1 Brazilian GDP annual growth, 1995–2013 129
7.1 Number of established agrarian reform settlements, 1985–2012 144

Tables

0.1 Distribution of agricultural landownership in Brazil, 2006 4
0.2 Official Brazilian government numbers of agrarian reform beneficiaries, 1964–2013 7
1.1 Regional breakdown of people living on US $1.25 per day, 1981–2010 19
1.2 Land occupations by regions and participation of Brazilian landless peasant families, 1988–2012 32
1.3 People living in poverty and absolute poverty in Latin America and Caribbean, 1980–2012 34
5.1 Number of agrarian reform beneficiaries, 1995–2013 110
7.1 Number of established agrarian reform settlements and landless peasant families settled, 1979–2012 143

Preface

This book focuses on the macro-and microfactors that have shaped the processes of peasant mobilization, agrarian reform, and cooperative formation in contemporary Brazil. Specifically, this study examines the role of the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, or Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) in the process. This study turned out to be quite a challenge. At an earlier stage of this study, one of the authors, Wilder Robles, in the context of collecting data for his doctoral dissertation, was interested only in examining the interrelationships among peasant mobilization, agrarian reform, and cooperative formation through the macroanalysis of three closely related processes: democracy, globalization, and social movements. However, he soon found that this approach had serious limitations. During his stays in many MST and in other encampments and settlements, he discovered a multitude of problems the landless peasants faced. There were internal conflicts, ideological differences, limited material resources, and lack of access to technology and markets. Some of these problems were beyond the landless peasants' control. Nevertheless, they were determined to advance agrarian reform. He soon realized that the struggle for agrarian reform and the struggle for cooperative formation were two interconnected struggles, requiring different albeit complementary analyses.

Thus, Robles was gradually drawn to explore the aforementioned interrelationships via a microanalysis of three closely related processes—community building, grassroots democracy, and sustainable livelihoods. Eventually, he came to appreciate the importance of integrating this microanalysis with a macrolevel structural and political analysis of the dynamics of capitalist development. The coauthor of this book, Henry Veltmeyer, based on years of study and field research on capitalist development, contributed with this macrolevel class analysis perspective, which is needed to understand

the "big picture," that is, the dynamic inner workings of the world capitalist system that generate the forces at play in the production of poverty, inequality, and exclusion, and the resulting class conflict. Ultimately, an integrated micro-macroanalysis is fundamental for devising effective community-based development programs that respond to the needs, goals, and expectations of the rural poor. This study has been a highly rewarding experience for the authors. We have witnessed firsthand both the fulfilled and unfulfilled hopes of the landless peasants to have land of their own. We have also witnessed the successes and failures of peasant cooperatives, allowing us to reflect on their meaning, scope, and limitations. These experiences have strengthened our belief that an ongoing and concerted peasant mobilization is indispensable for promoting agrarian reform. They also have reinforced our belief that the state has to play an active role in consolidating agrarian reform. True enough, peasant movements are key to promoting agrarian reform. However, these movements have their limitations. To overcome these limitations, these movements must be closely connected to the academic and research communities. Unfortunately, there is a growing dissociation today between academia and society, and between theoreticians and practitioners. Certainly, this is the case in the international development studies community today. The interaction between theoreticians and practitioners is superficial and shortterm in scope. This unhealthy situation prevents a lively, ongoing dialogue, and collaboration between both parties.

What is also true is that the MST has made efforts to overcome this situation: it has linked academics, researchers, students, workers, women, and children to a reflection-action agrarian reform project. Unfortunately, the strength and scope of this solidarity linkage varies from region to region due to a multitude of factors beyond the landless peasants' control. The uneven structure of this linkage either strengthens or weakens the overall struggle for agrarian transformation. On their own, landless peasants will have difficulties in consolidating agrarian reform. The forces standing against them are simply too powerful. Yet, the system created by these powerful forces is not immutable. It suffers from built-in contradictions and a propensity toward crisis that results in the development of not only forces of popular resistance, but also fissures generated by the crisis that creates windows of opportunities for the mobilization of these forces. Thus, it is imperative that academic researchers and peasants work together in order to advance concrete strategies of progressive

social change—strategies that require a close look at the forces at play and dictate a concrete analysis of the situation in which the "wretched of the earth" (as the supra-poor were described by Frans Fanon) find themselves. It is here that academics and researchers, even those from the North America who do not have to "live" the conditions experienced by them, can play a useful role in advancing the struggle.

Like any study of this scope, this study has its shortcomings too. Some scholars are likely to argue that it does not pay enough attention to nonpeasant actors in the struggle for agrarian reform, or that its analysis of the political forces contesting or resisting agrarian reform is very limited. Other scholars are likely to argue that this study treats landless peasants as subjects, and not objects, of their own history, or that its analysis of class and ethnicity in "new" social movements is very superficial or nearly absent. All of these are valid questions that require clear answers. Our response is very simple: this is an interdisciplinary study that aims to provide a broad but critical overview of the complex processes of peasant mobilization, agrarian reform, and cooperative formation. The beauty of interdisciplinary studies is that it opens windows from which one can appreciate the landscape of the subject of study and identify its main components. This is the purpose of this study. We hope discipline-specific scholars—anthropologists, historians, and sociologists in particular—will be motivated to further examine issues not fully explored in this book.

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We are deeply indebted to many people for the help and guidance they provided us during the research and writing of this book. In particular, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to João Pedro Stédile, Wanusa Santos, and Geraldo Fontes, present and former members of the MST's National Co-ordination and Secretariat, for their friendship and assistance. Our deep thanks also to the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (CPT), or Catholic Church Commission on Land Reform, for giving us access to their database and other valuable resources during summer research visits to Brazil. We also wish to thank Aguinel Fonseca and Sister Ozania, dedicated staff members of this progressive Catholic organization, for their enormous assistance with visits to MST encampments and settlements in many parts of Brazil. We would also like to thank from the bottom of our heart our dearest friend, colleague, and *companheiro de luta* Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, director of the Centre for Studies on Land Reform (NERA) and professor of Geography at the *Universidade Estadual Paulista* (Unesp), for his unlimited help in collecting data on the MST and land issues. Finally, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback on several drafts of this manuscript.

Brazilian Presidents, 1985 to Present

President	*In Office*
Tancredo Neves	Neves was elected by the Brazilian Congress on January 15, 1985. He became seriously ill just days before his swearing-in ceremony of March 15, 1985. Neves died on April 21, 1985. He was replaced by his vice president, José Sarney.
José Sarney	March 15, 1985, to March 14, 1990.
Fernando Collor de Mello	March 15, 1990, to October 2, 1992. He was the first president elected by free, direct popular vote since the military coup of 1964. He was impeached by the Brazilian Congress for corruption and replaced by his vice president, Itamar Franco.
Itamar Franco	October 2, 1992, to December 31, 1994.
Fernando Henrique Cardoso	January 1, 1995, to December 31, 2002. President Cardoso was elected for two consecutive terms.
Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva	January 1, 2003, to December 31, 2010. President Lula was reelected for a second term in 2006. His term in office ended on December 31, 2010.
Dilma Rousseff	January 1, 2011, to present.

Abbreviations

BT	*Banco da Terra*, Land Bank
CEBs	*Comunidades Eclesias de Base*, Christian Base Communities
CEPAL	*Comisión Económica para América Latina*, Economic Comission for Latin America
CIMI	*Conselho Indigenista Missionário*, Indigenous Missionary Council
COAPRI	*Cooperativa dos Assentados e Pequenos Productores da Região de Itapeva*, Cooperative of the Small Agricultural Producers of the Itapeva Region
CONAB	*Companhia Nacional de Abastecimento*, National Supply Company
CONCRAB	*Confederação das Cooperativas da Reforma Agrária do Brasil*, Confederation of the Agrarian Reform Cooperatives of Brazil
CONTAG	*Confederacão Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura*, National Confederation of Rural Workers
COPAVI	*Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária Vitória*, Agricultural Producers Cooperative of Vitória
COOPERSAN	*Cooperativa Mista Agropecuária dos Produtores Familiares de São Carlos e Entorno da Serra Dourada*, Family Farmers Cooperative of São Carlos and Serra Dorada
COOPVARIVE	*Cooperativa Agropecuária dos Produtores Familiares do Assentamento Mosquito e Região do vale do Rio Vermelho*, Family Farmers Cooperative of Mosquito and Red River Valley
CPT	*Comisão Pastoral da Terra*, Church Commission on Agrarian Reform

CUT	*Central Única dos Trabalhadores*, Unified Worker's Union
EMBRAPA	*Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária*, Brazilian Agriculture and Livestock Research
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FETAEG	*Federação de Trabalhadores na Agricultura do Estado de Goiás*, Federation of Rural Workers of the State of Goiás
IBGE	*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estadística*, Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics
ICA	International Cooperative Alliance
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INCRA	*Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agraria*, National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform
MDA	*Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário*, Ministry for Agrarian Development
MPA	*Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores,* Movement of the Small Agricultural Producers
MST	*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, Landless Rural Workers Movement
NERA	*Núcleo de Estudos, Pesquisas e Projetos de Reforma Agrária*, Centre for Research and Policy on Agrarian Reform
PMDB	*Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*, Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement
PNRA	*Programa Nacional de Reforma Agraria*, National Plan for Agrarian Reform
PROCERA	*Programa de Crédito Especial para Reforma Agrária*, Special Credit Program for Agrarian Reform
PRONAF	*Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar*, National Program for Strengthening Family Farmers
PRONERA	*Programa Nacional de Educação na Reforma Agrária*, National Program of Agrarian Reform Education
PT	*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, Worker's Party
UDR	*União Democratica Ruralista*, Ruralist Democratic Union
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WB	World Bank

Introduction

The world is currently facing a food crisis of global proportions and multiple dimensions. Millions of people do not have access to food and are living in hunger. This crisis is particularly acute in the developing world, where people tend to spend most of their income on food. In 2007 and 2008, sharply rising prices triggered food riots in Mexico, Morocco, Senegal, Uzbekistan, Guinea, Mauritania, Egypt, Yemen, Philippines, Pakistan, Kenya, South Korea, India, and Indonesia. Prices of major foodgrains consumed by the vast majority of the global population (wheat, rice, and corn) had reached historically high levels in international markets. This dramatic increase in food prices plunged many developing countries, particularly those heavily dependent on food imports, into a severe food crisis, generating what Bello (2009) has described as the "food wars."

In 2008, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) called attention to the alarming effect of the food crisis on millions of people across the world, especially in developing countries, where most of the extremely poor live. FAO called upon governments, international organizations, and civil society organizations, as well as the "private sector" (especially the multinational corporations) to join efforts in tackling the global food crisis. The heads of state of the major industrialized capitalist democracies—the G8 (or G7 after Russia's suspension from the group because of the takeover of Crimea)—called for decisive action to free humankind from poverty and hunger. Indeed, they committed themselves to providing financial and technical assistance to poor countries in order to increase agricultural productivity and, hence, achieve a measure of "food security."

In 2009, the global financial crisis pushed the food crisis out of the headlines. This was particularly so in Europe and North America, where governments were confronting massive budget deficits due to a severe economic downturn caused by financial global capitalism.[1] The combination of financial deregulation and unrestrained greed

led to the formation of a overfinancialized global economy based on speculative capital and far removed from its productive function of improving the quality of people's lives. The financial crisis also led many G8 countries to renege on their promises of providing development assistance to poor countries heavily affected by the food crisis. In many developing countries such as China, Pakistan, India, and the Philippines, governments started imposing tariffs to limit, or in some cases to forbid, the export of basic food staples in order to prevent the depletion of their own food reserves. These government actions worried the FAO because they threatened to undermine its food security paradigm. Since the early 1980s, the FAO has championed the idea that efficient and unhindered markets are the best mechanisms for providing households access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food necessary for active and healthy living.[2]

Tragically, although not unexpectedly, the strategy advocated by the FAO and other influential international organizations to improve food security has not produced the expected outcomes. On the contrary, it has contributed to a situation of increasing global food insecurity. Food has become an expensive commodity that can only be accessed via the market by people with sufficient purchasing power. The failure of the FAO is clear enough. It is based on the normal workings of the free market capitalism system on which so many governments, institutions, and organizations have misplaced their faith. Under conditions generated by the inner workings of this system, which includes dispossession of peasants from the land, millions of people across the world have become vulnerable to poverty, hunger, and diseases.

Global food prices over the past decade have risen at twice the rate of inflation, impoverishing people at a time when poverty relief had captured the world's attention. Huge price swings for wheat, maize, soybeans, and rice, staple crops for much of the world, made matters worse, disrupting markets and harming both producers and consumers. The food riots that swept more than two dozen countries in 2007 and 2008 were the most visible effect of these trends, but they also pointed to a deeper and more lasting concern: global food insecurity. Other factors have also exacerbated food insecurity, such as environmental changes, political conflicts, and land grabbing.[3]

If not dealt with in a systematic way food insecurity is likely to spread, intensifying human suffering in many regions of the world. The current food situation in Guatemala, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Chad, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo,

and Somalia are clear examples of the gravity of the food crisis affecting the world's poor: hunger is increasing at an alarming rate. In 2012, the FAO reported that almost 870 million people were chronically hungry worldwide, including 239 million in Africa, 563 million in Asia, 49 million in Latin American and the Caribbean, and 1 million in Oceania. This report confirmed a simple truth: despite global efforts over the last decades, there has not been much success in reducing global hunger or undernourishment.

Centrality of Agrarian Reform

Agrarian reform[4] is fundamental for overcoming the food crisis. Unfortunately, agrarian reform is not receiving the attention it deserves. And, in a world order geared to free market speculative capitalism, it is not a priority for governments in the developing world. On the contrary, these governments are more concerned with addressing the energy crisis by allocating cultivable land for agrofuel (i.e., ethanol) production, thereby deepening the food crisis. This is true particularly in Brazil. The massive expansion of agrofuel production has propelled Brazil into a global agrofuel superpower. The increase in ethanol production has yet again restricted landownership and is generating a growing dependency on a socially and environmentally destructive monoculture economy. Monoculture blocks agricultural diversification, causes environmental degradation, and generates low-paying employment. Indeed, monoculture has a dark history in Brazil: it has been responsible for extensive human misery and environmental destruction. This has been particularly the case in the Northeast region of the country, where sugarcane cultivation left a sad human and environmental legacy (Rogers, 2010).

Land Inequality: A Legacy of Colonialism and Mercantile Capitalism

Brazil is a country with highly skewed landownership. Currently, 44 percent of the country's total registered agricultural land belongs to less than 1 percent of landowners (see table 0.1). In Brazil, as in the rest of Latin America, land inequality is a legacy of colonialism. Indeed, colonialism left a sad legacy of extreme concentration of land in the hands of a privileged few. A small number of wealthy landowners and corporations hold large estates of fertile, undercultivated land, whereas

Table 0.1 Distribution of agricultural landownership in Brazil, 2006

	2006			
Rural Property Size (hectares)	*Number of Properties*	*% of Properties*	*Area (hectares)*	*% of Area*
Less than 10 (*Minifundia*)	2,477,071	47.86	7,798,607	2.36
10 to less than 100	1,971,577	38.09	62,893,091	19.06
100 to less than 1000	424,906	8.21	112,696,478	34.16
More than 1000 (*Latifundia*)	46,911	0.91	146,553,218	44.42
Total	**5,175,489**	**100**	**329,941,393**	**100**

Source: IBGE, *Censo Agropecuário 2006* (Brasília, DF: IBGE, 2009).

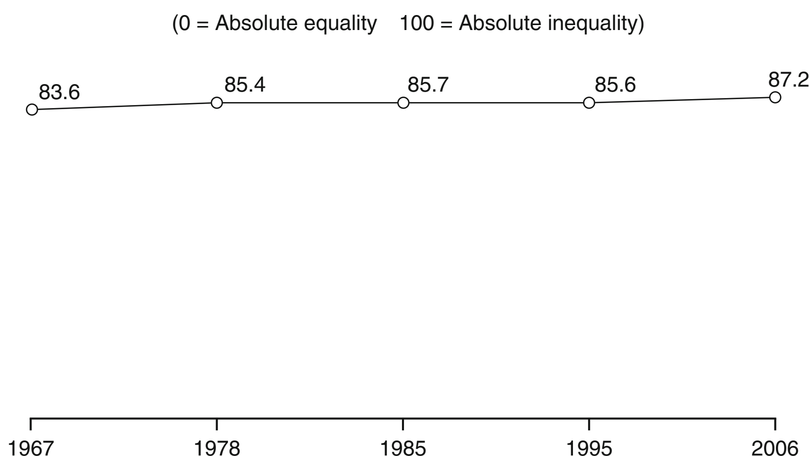

Figure 0.1 Gini index of land inequality in Brazil, 1985–2006.

Sources: DIEESE/NEAD/MDA: Estatísticas do Meio Rural, 2008 (Brasilia DF: MDA, 2008) and IBGE, *Censo Agropecuário 2006* (Brasília, DF: IBGE, 2009).

a much larger group of subsistence peasants and family farmers hold small plots of low fertility, intensively cultivated land. Despite efforts to change this situation over the last three decades, land inequality has remained virtually unchanged. Neither the expansion of subsistence farming over this same period nor the belated efforts of the government to carry out agrarian reform has changed the enormous concentration of landownership. Not surprisingly, the Gini index[5] of land inequality remains very high (figure 0.1). The persistence of high land inequality has stymied Brazil's social and human development—it

has contributed to the development of inefficient land-use patterns, the systemic displacement and marginalization of peasants and indigenous peoples, and the permanent destruction of forests and woodlands. This unfortunate situation continues to this day.

Democratic Transition and Agrarian Reform

In 1985, Brazil saw the end of two decades of military rule and a return to democratic governance. The military regime was forced to give up power due to a combination of external and internal forces beyond its control. External pressures meant the military could not continue its high-growth economic development model. The country was facing growing foreign debt, rampant inflation, and high unemployment. Internally, the military faced unwavering political dissent from diverse sectors of Brazilian society. Industrialists, financiers, academics, workers, students, peasants, and urban dwellers had joined forces and were demanding *Diretas Já!* or Elections Now! The military was also under enormous pressure from the Catholic Church, which was openly legitimizing political dissent and actively supporting popular mobilization. The dynamic interplay of these external and internal forces severely weakened the military's ability to exercise its power. In the end, the military had no option but to give up power altogether.

The postmilitary civilian government inherited a country with enormous social contradictions—two decades of rapid economic development had produced winners (a small minority) and losers (the vast majority). This paradox was self-evident in the first decade of the Brazilian "economic miracle," when military dictator Emílio Garrastazu Médici (in power from 1969–1974) declared: "*A economia vai bem, mas o povo vai mal*," or "the economy is doing very well, but the people are doing badly." As has been historically the case in Brazil, and the rest of Latin America, the poor had once again become victims of economic development.

Brazilians greeted the arrival of democracy with enormous enthusiasm. They saw democracy as the best means of changing Brazil's unjust social situation. This was particularly the hope of millions of landless peasants; they had played an important role in the push for democracy by organizing a concerted opposition to the military regime. For the landless peasants, the arrival of democracy opened new opportunities to pursue agrarian reform. They welcomed democracy as an opportunity to exercise effective political citizenship by organizing nationwide peasant mobilization for agrarian reform.

They were determined to promote agrarian reform by linking it to the processes of democratic transition and, eventually, democratic consolidation.

From the beginning, the transitional democratic government of President José Sarney (1985–1989) promised to resolve the situation of millions of landless peasants. Under intense pressure from the landless peasants, Sarney moved quickly and instituted the *Programa Nacional de Reforma Agrária*, or National Plan for Agrarian Reform (PNRA). This was an ambitious program that promised to give land titles to 1.4 million landless peasants over four years. Unfortunately, Sarney's promise, like many that preceded it and others that followed it, went unfulfilled. After almost three decades, the successive democratic governments have not made meaningful headway against the enormous concentration of landownership in the hands of a few. Large estates have not only remained intact, but have actually expanded. The current demand for agricultural products in Asia, particularly in China, has further encouraged the development of capital-intensive "agribusiness"[6] enterprises with complex global financial interests. This is certainly the case in the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, which have become home to large cattle ranches and soybean plantations. Powerful political and economic interests inside and outside Brazil support agribusiness.

Democracy has not significantly changed Brazil's lengthy tradition of socioeconomic inequality: it has not substantially altered the gap between the haves and have-nots. The establishment of long-overdue social welfare programs, such as the Family Allowance Program

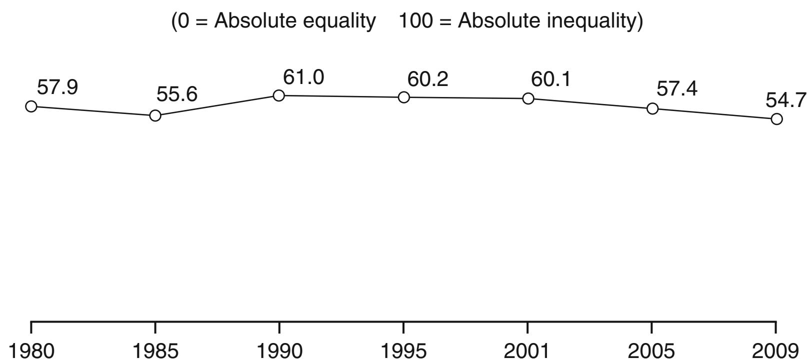

Figure 0.2 Gini index of income inequality in Brazil, 1980–2009.
Source: World DataBank: *World Development Indicators*, May 30, 2014.

(*Bolsa Família*), has certainly reduced absolute poverty and income inequality. Nevertheless, Brazil still faces enormous socioeconomic obstacles to becoming a more inclusive and just society. In 2009, the Gini index of income inequality was 54.7, one of the highest in the world (figure 0.2).

Poverty, inequality, and exclusion distort and restrict democracy. This unhealthy situation empowers the rich and disempowers the poor. Restricted democracy subjects the poor to conditions over which they have little control, say, or power. Certainly, this is the case in the Brazilian countryside, where millions of very poor people continue to live in appalling conditions. Agrarian reform is fundamental for overcoming this situation. Without improved access to land, millions of landless peasants cannot sustain their livelihoods or achieve a decent standard of living. Being able to engage in farming, whether on land they own or share with others, is their only hope for a better life. Unfortunately, successive Brazilian democratic governments, including the current *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, or

Table 0.2 Official Brazilian government numbers of agrarian reform beneficiaries, 1964–2013

Period Military and Democratic Regimes	*No. of Peasant Families Settled*	*Set Target*	*Total area (Millions hectares) Approximate*	*No. of Peasants Families Settled Average Per year*
Military (1964–1984)	77,465	N/A	13.8	3,873
Sarney (1985–1990)	89,950	1.4 Million	4.5	17,990
Collor and Franco (1990–1994)	60,188	N/A	2.3	15,049
Cardoso (1995–2002)	540,704	N/A	20.8	67,588
Lula (2003–2010)	614,088	400,0000 (First Term)	47.9	76,761
Rousseff (2011–2013)	75,335		2.5	25,111
Total	**1,457.730**		**91.8**	
Total (1985–2013)	**1,380.265**		**78**	

Notes: Most of these families received land titles via colonization and settlement projects. Although during the 1995–2010 period, there was a substantial increase in the granting of land titles, the total number fell short of the 1.4 million target set in 1985.

Source: Data collected from the following sources: "*Reforma Agrária: Compromisso de todos." Secretaria de Comunicação Social, Presidência da Republica*, 1997; INCRA, *Resumo das Atividades do 1NCRA*, 1985–94; MDA, Balanço (2003–2006): *Desenvolvimento Agrário Como Estrategia*; and Journal INCRA, Balanço 2003, 2010 and 2014.

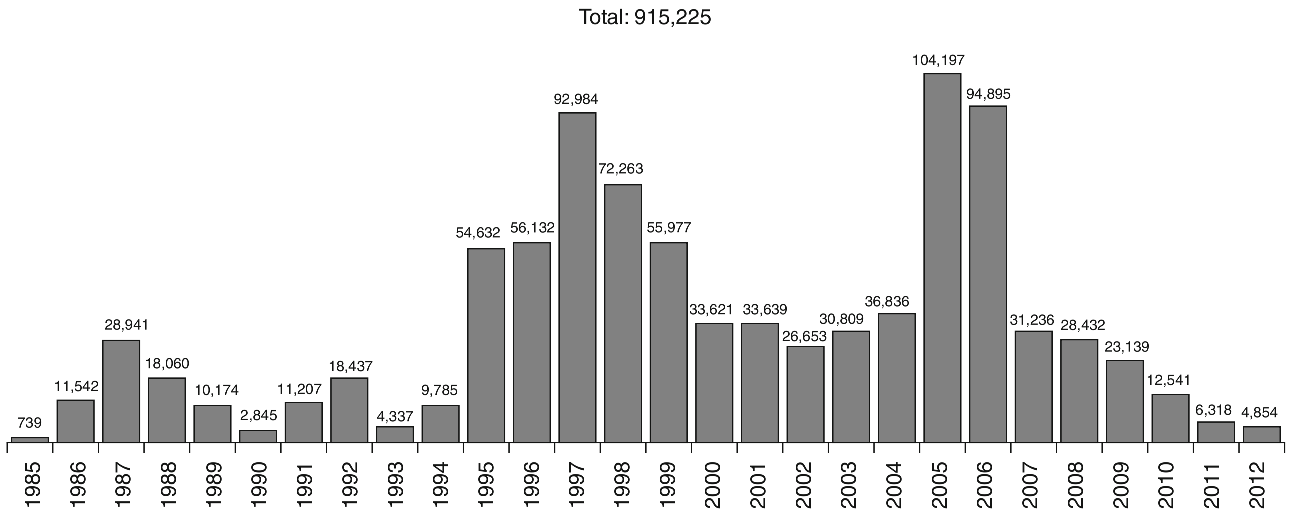

Figure 0.3 Alternative numbers of agrarian reform beneficiaries in Brazil, 1985–2012.

Source: DATALUTA. Banco de Dados da Luta Pela Terra: Relatorio Brasil 2012.

Workers' Party (PT) administration, have been reluctant to implement comprehensive agrarian reform. From 1985 to 2013, just over 1.3 million landless peasant families, according to official government sources, have received conditional land titles,[7] (table 0.2). Data from DATALUTA[8] (1985–2012) indicate the number may be closer to 915,225 (figure 0.3). Does this mean that the struggle for agrarian reform is over? Far from it—the landless peasants are as determined as ever to continue the struggle. They are aware that this is a daunting task that requires further concerted and ongoing popular mobilization.

The Central Focus of the Book

This book focuses on the forces that have shaped peasant mobilization, agrarian reform, and cooperative formation in Brazil. Its context is the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, or Landless Rural Workers Movement[9] (MST), which is the largest and most dynamic force for progressive social change in Latin America today. This movement has placed agrarian reform at the center of current debate concerning democracy and development. It has a strong political base, an effective organization, and a clear vision for a better world as a well as a strategy for bringing it about. All of these strengths have enabled the MST to advance new projects and practices of political and economic democracy in Brazil and beyond. This movement was established in 1984 in the city of Cascavel, in the state of Paraná, to pursue agrarian reform through the occupation of idle private and public lands. The MST has transformed, and continues to transform, Brazil's rural landscape. Firstly, the MST has compelled the Brazilian government to grant land titles to hundreds of thousands of landless peasants. Secondly, it has established dozens of agricultural cooperatives and food processing plants, and an extensive educational and social welfare system. Finally, the MST has greatly contributed to the globalization of peasant struggles by actively participating in the formation of the *Vía Campesina*.[10]

One of the main arguments of this book is that the MST has established an innovative community-based model for consolidating agrarian reform. The MST has effectively practiced the politics of land occupation and eagerly cultivated the politics of agricultural cooperativism to consolidate agrarian reform. This integrated approach to agrarian reform has reduced chronic poverty, enhanced peasant identity, and promoted environmental stewardship. It has also redefined

and expanded democratic citizenship. However, the MST has very limited capacity to promote far-reaching structural changes in the Brazilian countryside.

The Importance of the Issues Addressed

This book is of particular importance for four main reasons. First, the MST expresses the power of the politics of nonviolence. It has deliberately opted for nonviolence as the most effective means of pursuing agrarian reform. With few exceptions, Latin American peasant movements have historically resorted to armed insurrection in order to address their social grievances. However, this option has seldom led to the desired outcomes. Second, the MST provides an opportunity for reexamining contemporary peasant movements from a conflict theory perspective. The MST's emergence has given a new impetus to the study of the relationship between neoliberal capitalist development and the formation of social movements in resistance to this development. Third, the MST provides us with an opportunity to examine the challenges and opportunities for contemporary agricultural cooperative movements. Historically, cooperativism has emerged in times of socioeconomic crisis. However, cooperativism has experienced more failures than successes, particularly in Latin America.[11] Failure has been due to several factors, most notably the role of the state itself. The MST's cooperative strategy is redefining state-cooperative relations by stressing political autonomy and by cultivating a culture of cooperation among the peasantry. Finally, the MST demonstrates the enormous challenges facing peasant movements in their pursuit of food sovereignty—the right of peoples to define and promote their own food, agriculture, livestock, and fisheries systems, outside the control of international market interests. The Via Campesina rightly advocates food sovereignty as a viable alternative to FAO's food security. Yet, the pursuit of this noble objective is not an easy task—promoting food sovereignty requires a broad-based vision and practice of political and economic democracy.

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

This book uses an interdisciplinary theoretical perspective to examine peasant mobilization, agrarian reform, and cooperative formation

in Brazil. At the macro theoretical level, the authors use a class analysis to examine the "big picture" of the complex interrelationships between the dynamics of capitalist development and rural poverty, between peasant mobilization and agrarian reform, between the state and peasant mobilization, and between land occupations and cooperative formation. From this theoretical perspective, the MST is conceptualized as a class-based movement seeking fundamental structural change. At the micro theoretical level, the authors use the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) to examine the external and internal forces that shape, and reshape, cooperative formation within the MST settlements. Although, this approach is notorious and has been criticized for ignoring the broader structural context of the development issues addressed, it is nevertheless useful for evaluating the shortcomings involved in cooperative formation, including internal conflicts, ideological differences, limited material resources, and lack of access to technology and markets.

Methodologically, context is important to provide a more nuanced understanding of the opportunities and obstacles that the MST has faced in the struggle for agrarian reform. The ethnographic[12] fieldwork research for this book was carried out during six summer research trips to Brazil.[13] It took place in three Brazilian states—Paraná, São Paulo, and Goiás.[14] Paraná and São Paulo were chosen because these states are home to some of the MST's most promising experiences of consolidating agrarian reform. The MST is well organized and enjoys considerable support from different sectors of society. Goiás was chosen because it represents "the other Brazil." This is a state where the MST has had difficulties pursuing agrarian reform—soybean production and cattle ranching dominates the agricultural economy; old forms of political Clientelism still dominate the countryside. For a lot of reasons, the MST has faced serious obstacles to build a solid political base. As such, the struggle for consolidating agrarian reform is more challenging than in Paraná or São Paulo. Thus, the three states were chosen to provide a balanced evaluation.

Studying the MST

This book is a small contribution to the growing research literature on the MST.[15] It has received extensive attention by academics from diverse theoretical perspectives. Among these are two important scholarly works in the English language that merit special mention. The first is Ondetti (2008), who uses the "political opportunity"[16]

approach to examine the highs and lows of the MST's political trajectory—its emergence (1974–1984), growth (1985–1994), take off (1995–1999), decline (2000–2002), and resurgence (2003–2006). His main argument is that the MST's trajectory was shaped by the changing political opportunities created by Brazil's transition to and consolidation of democracy. Political opening facilitated the organization, operation, and strategy of this movement. The MST gained public sympathy and support after the massacres of landless peasants in Corumbiara, Rondônia in 1995 and Eldorado de Carajás, Pará in 1996. These massacres exposed a serious crisis of political legitimacy, forcing the Brazilian government to speed up agrarian reform. The MST took advantage of the political situation to intensify land occupations nationwide. However, the introduction of "violent and destructive tactics" (actually, isolated cases of vandalism in 2000–2004) turned public opinion against the MST. This situation, in turn, constrained the political opportunities for the MST to advance its struggle. For Ondetti, the overall impact of the MST has been positive—they have provided political and economic opportunities for the poor to change their unjust situation. Despite its strengths, Ondetti's approach has some weaknesses. First, he tends to overemphasize the political character of the MST, while giving scant attention to its economic or cultural dimension. Second, Ondetti pays little attention to the contemporary dynamics of coalition building, network linking, resource sharing, and discourse construction between social movements. The dynamic interaction of these movements have created opportunities for diffusing collective action and for forming coalitions beyond institutional politics. These processes have, at different times, either helped or hindered the MST's capacity to contest the state. Finally, Ondetti's analysis tends to downplay the power of the landholding oligarchy and the neoliberal state in constraining the advances of the MST in the countryside.

Another important study on the MST is by Wolford (2010). Based on extensive ethnographic research in the Brazilian states of Santa Catarina and Pernambuco, and inspired by the "moral economy"[17] school of peasant studies, Wolford explains how regional histories, economies, and cultures has shaped the MST's struggle for land. A human geographer by training, Wolford is particularly interested in understanding how the MST operates in particular regional places. As such, Wolford selected two different regional MST settlements to examine this process—the *Campos Novos* settlement in Santa Catarina, and the *Água Preta* settlement in Pernambuco. In both cases,

settlers joined the movement with the shared desire to gain access to land, in order to improve their lives. The settlers in Campos Novos came from family farming backgrounds, while the settlers in Água Preta had previously worked on sugarcane plantations. For Wolford, these two locations represented different moral economies, or different localized political economies, traditions, cultures, and contexts. These moral economies, in turn, shaped different concepts and meanings of property, production, and community. Wolford argues that these localized moral economies have led the struggle for land to take different paths. The settlers in Campo Novos eagerly and successfully went back to family farming, while the Água Preta settlers could not detach themselves from monoculture production, and consequently, went back to subsistence farming or abandoned the land altogether.

For Wolford, the MST gave priority to the politics of land occupation in order to advance the nation-wide struggle for land. This certainly allowed the movement to achieve remarkable success in settling hundreds of thousands of landless peasants. However, the emphasis on land occupation has also generated internal contradictions and conflicts within the movement, because the MST's prevailing ideals, strategies, and culture has been heavily influenced by the moral economies of smallholding family farmers from Southern Brazil. This is an important fact that any thorough scholar should recognize—the processes of land occupation and cooperative formation have often been difficult, conflict-ridden, and, in some cases, divisive. Landless peasants have joined, and in many cases, left the MST because of varied reasons. This has happened all over Brazil. Also, limited access to educational, financial, technological, and commercialization resources has weakened efforts to advance agricultural diversification in the settlements. Wolford concludes that the MST is not a coherent movement with a homogenous identity and strategy. Even so, Worlford recognizes the transformative political character of the movement. Without doubt, Wolford's analysis of the MST is a highly sophisticated and nuanced piece of scholarship. However, it has two main weaknesses. First, Worlford's analysis rests too heavily on two case studies to permit general conclusions. Although Wolford states that the experiences in Santa Catarina and Pernambuco are not sufficient to make general conclusions about the MST's overall experience in Brazil, she unknowingly or not, allows her main arguments throughout the book to suggest the opposite. The title of the book itself gives the impression of a national experience. Second, the MST's difficulties are not merely related to its inability to recognize

the diversity of regional moral economies. On the contrary, they are related to the difficulties of advancing sustainable rural communities,[18] within the context of a dominant agricultural capitalist model. The pervasive structural forces embedded in this model have stymied the MST's capacity to sustain, let alone advance, the struggle for agrarian reform. The MST is currently confronting powerful counteragrarian reform forces. This situation has forced the movement to reexamine its objectives and strategies in order to reenergize the struggle for agrarian reform.[19]

Structure of the Book

This book is written in a "spiral" form and is structured as follows. The introduction provides an overview of the central focus and the design of the book. It also includes a brief discussion of the theoretical perspective and research methodology employed. Chapter 1 presents the global and national context of poverty, inequality, and exclusion that has shaped the struggle for agrarian reform in Latin America in general, and Brazil in particular. Chapter 2 provides both a historical context and a theoretical framework for interpreting the relationship between rural development and the peasant movements in contemporary Latin America. The political dynamics of the struggle for agrarian reform is examined within the context of agricultural capitalist development.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of the political dynamics of the history of agrarian reform in Brazil. It provides the context for a historical-political analysis of the MST's evolving conceptualization and strategy of agrarian reform. This strategy is traced out in the context of three political regimes. Chapter 4 focuses on the early struggle for agrarian reform during the Sarney and Collor de Mello-Franco administrations. The evolution of land occupations is reviewed in the interest of describing and explaining the political dynamics of the MST. Chapters 5 and 6 then explore the political and policy dynamics of the agrarian reform process under the Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2003), Luis Ignacio "Lula" da Silva (2003–2011), and Dilma Rousseff (2011–2014) administrations. These chapters also examine the political complexities of the relationship between the MST and the state.

Chapter 7 examines the outcomes of agricultural cooperative formation. This chapter draws on the evaluation of four cooperative experiments located in three Brazilian states to illustrate the complexities

and uneven outcomes of cooperative formation. The four case studies describe and examine the factors that either facilitated or impeded the establishment of effective agricultural cooperatives.

Chapter 8 takes the study of the MST beyond the land question to the broader issues of agrarian reform. It examines the complexities of changing both the dominant model of agricultural development and the underlying system that sustains it. Finally, the book presents the following main conclusions. First, Brazil's agrarian reform program to date has had limited impact on the root causes of social inequality in the countryside. Brazil remains a country with highly skewed landownership. Second, concerted peasant mobilization is fundamental to achieving comprehensive agrarian reform. Yet, to advance and sustain this objective requires more than merely gaining access to land—it requires transforming Brazil's current unsustainable model of capitalist agricultural production. Third, the nurturing of a culture of cooperation and of solidarity among the peasantry are vital to effectively advancing cooperativism. State support is also vital for advancing cooperativism. Finally, despite confronting serious obstacles, the MST remains a political force to be reckoned with—it continues to be the most vocal and best-organized landless peasant movement for agrarian reform in Brazil. If properly supported by the state and nonstate actors, the MST's community-based model of agrarian reform offers great potential for effectively promoting a more just and inclusive Brazilian rural society.

1

The Agrarian Question Today: The Politics of Poverty and Inequality

The so-called global village,[1] a social construction of theorists mesmerized by the power of information technology to transform and drastically shorten the circuits of space and time in the postmodern world, is facing a startling paradox—the coexistence of massive poverty in the midst of unparalleled affluence. Millions of people, mainly in the global South, continue to live in abject poverty while a privileged minority, mostly in the global North, live in abundance far beyond their needs. This paradox, or the "inequality predicament" as a UN report described it (UNDESA, 2005), troubled James Wolfensohn, the former president of the World Bank (WB), who openly expressed his frustration with global poverty and inequality on several occasions during his ten-year tenure as president. In an address to the Board of Governors, in 2000, he lamented:

> We live in a world scarred by inequality. Something is wrong, when the richest 20 percent of the global population receives more than 80 percent of the global income. Something is wrong, when 10 percent of a population receives half of the national income—as happens in far too many countries today. Something is wrong, when the average income for the richest 20 countries is 37 times the average for the poorest 20—a gap that has more than doubled in the past 40 years. Something is wrong, when 1.2 billion people still live on less than a dollar a day and 2.8 billion still live on less than two dollars a day. (Wolfensohn, 2000: 7)

Despite rapid economic growth, impressive technological progress, closer global trade integration, and significant foreign aid over the

past six decades, the problems of global poverty and social inequality persist. Indeed, the scale and scope of global poverty and inequality is truly appalling. In 2010, more than 1.2 billion people still lived on less than US $1.25 per day (the WB's baseline of absolute poverty) in conditions that did not allow them to meet their basic human needs (table 1.1). In terms of income distribution, 20 percent of the world's richest individuals controlled almost 83 percent of the total global income in 2010 (World Bank, 2013). Indeed, as Milanovic shows, the Gini index of global income inequality has continuously increased since 1820 (figure 1.1).

Government officials and representatives of diverse intergovernmental and international organizations, academic associations, and the "development community" have met the current state of global poverty and inequality with professed concern in general. They are particularly concerned with the potential social destabilizing effects of persistent global poverty and inequality.[2] Even dissenters of the worsening global poverty and inequality thesis, such as Firebaugh (2003) and Melchior (2001), have acknowledged this potential risk.

Persistent poverty and inequality are structural problems of uneven capitalist development. Since the 1980s, neoliberalism[3] has further reproduced and exacerbated this situation (UNDP, 2010). Neoliberalism has fundamentally changed the socioeconomic fabric in many countries in both the center and periphery of the world capitalist system. In developed countries, neoliberal policies led to the downsizing of the welfare state, the erosion of labor and environmental protective regulations, and the transfer of relatively well-paying jobs to low-wage countries such as China (Collins, Williams and di Leonardo 2008). In developing countries, neoliberal policies led to increased vulnerability to international financial turmoil, imposition of austerity measures, and intense competition for meaningful employment. Overall, neoliberalism drastically altered the role of the state from that of a mediator of competing interests and conflicts among different classes, to an advocate of global free-markets and the interests of the "transnational capitalist class"—the rulers of the world as Pilger (2002) describes them.

The global forces of neoliberalism have also weakened the international Bretton Woods system established after World War II to govern monetary and financial relations among independent nation-states.[4] This situation, in turn, has led to increasing instability in the world order. Indeed, there is a serious concern today among the global ruling class that inequality has contributed significantly to growing

Table 1.1 Regional breakdown of people living on US $1.25 per day, 1981–2010 (Millions and percentage of population)

Regions	*1981*		*1990*		*1999*		*2010*	
	Millions	%	*Millions*	%	*Millions*	%	*Millions*	%
East Asia and Pacific	1,096.5	77.18	926.42	56.24	653.56	35.47	250.90	12.48
Europe and Central Asia	8.21	1.91	8.64	1.86	17.97	3.82	3.15	0.66
Latin America and the Caribbean	43.33	11.89	53.43	12.24	60.10	11.86	32.29	5.53
Middle East and North Africa	16.48	9.56	12.96	5.75	13.64	5.01	7.98	2.41
South Asia	568.38	61.14	617.26	53.81	619.46	45.11	506.77	31.03
Sub-Saharan Africa	204.93	51.45	289.68	56.53	376.75	58.01	413.73	48.47
Total	**1,937.83**	**52.16**	**1,908.45**	**43.05**	**1,741.50**	**34.05**	**1,214.98**	**20.63**

Source: World DataBank: Poverty and inequality Database, 2013. http://databank.worldbank.org.

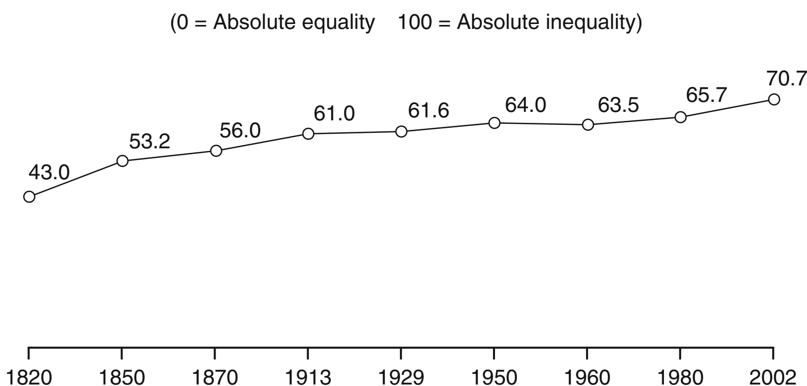

Figure 1.1 Gini index of global income inequality, 1820–2002.

Sources: Milanovic, B. (2009). "Global Inequality and the Global Inequality Extraction Ratio: The Story of the Past Two Centuries." Policy Research Working Paper 5044. Washington D.C.: World Bank.

social discontent and political conflict. This is the view, for example, of Henry Kissinger (2001), George Soros (2002), and Joseph Stiglitz (2002), all of them main theoreticians and practitioners of capitalism. For these three influential personalities, capitalism in the form of neoliberal globalization poses fundamental problems of security and governance, as well as equity. They are all too aware that the institutional framework of the current world order is not designed to benefit the world's poor, and that in the interest of global security, if nothing else, the dynamics of current financial global capitalism need to be better regulated and managed.

The Challenge of Ending Rural Poverty

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the persistence of endemic rural poverty in developing countries is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity. Despite decades of rural outmigration, poverty remains deep and widespread in rural areas. The persistence of massive rural poverty reflects the failure of development. In 2010, nearly 75 percent of the world's poorest people lived in rural areas. That is, out of the almost 1.2 billion people living in absolute poverty, around 900 million lived in rural areas (World Bank, 2013). Most of the rural poor live in "marginal zones" or the "less-favored areas" (areas with low agricultural potential), characterized by low-fertility soils, low

rainfall, and rudimentary roads. Subsistence farmers and landless peasants continue to make up the vast majority of the rural poor.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the massive influx of billions of dollars in aid and loans from Western governments and international institutions, decades of rural poverty alleviation efforts and policies have been generally ineffective. The reasons for this are not difficult to understand. Poverty reduction has been predicated on governments staying the course with narrow policy agendas that has tended to reproduce or reinforce the social structure of poverty and inequality. State-led and market-driven rural development programs have not benefitted the rural poor. Millions of rural people are unable to gain access to fundamental life-supporting assets, whether productive, educational, or technological. As a result, the opportunities for the rural poor to improve their social conditions are limited or nonexistent, and the development pathways out of rural poverty—primarily migration and labor—are fraught with pitfalls and obstacles. The prevalence of systemic rural poverty not only results in an enormous socioeconomic loss in developing countries, but also contributes to environmental degradation.[5] Certainly, rural poverty is interlinked with urban poverty, environmental degradation, and unfair international trade agreements (i.e., highly subsidized agricultural policies). However, the root cause of rural poverty is the lack of access to land—landlessness is by far the main cause of rural poverty—more so than population growth or environmental degradation.

Neoliberal agricultural policies have intensified poverty and landlessness. Peasants are confronting forces beyond their control that undermine the sustainability of their livelihoods. They are experiencing difficulties accessing financial, technical, and marketing resources. They are also confronting the inroads made into agribusiness. All of this has contributed to a crisis in rural communities—poor prospects on the land have exacerbated rural migration, food insecurity, land conflicts, and poverty. This crisis has pushed millions of subsistence peasants into the ranks of landless peasants, rural workers, seasonal workers, and odd-jobbers. Millions more have migrated to urban centers to live in appalling conditions.[6]

Ending rural poverty is a difficult, but not an impossible task. For instance, in Brazil the countryside still offers great potential for improving the livelihood of the poor. The sustainable use of the country's rich natural resources could enhance the economic opportunities and quality of life for rural people and their communities. Economically vibrant rural communities would not only slow down continuous

rural migration, but would also provide a "refuge" to the "urban poor." This assumption is based on a simple fact—Brazil's economy has become increasingly competitive and dependent on highly skilled labor. The urban poor, who typically have low educational skills, run a greater risk of facing deeper economic marginalization. Returning to the countryside may offer them better opportunities. However, facilitating this process requires the implementation of progressive rural policies. The revitalization of rural communities requires an active state involvement via policies that enhance the allocation of, access to, and transfer of resources. More importantly, it also requires the consultation and participation of peasant communities.

The Problem of Agrarian Reform

Agrarian reform is a prerequisite to ending rural poverty and food insecurity. Yet, the World Bank's rural poverty reduction strategy, implemented by virtually all governments in developing countries avoids any mention of the need for agrarian reform, except for reference to the need for the poor to gain improved access to the market.[7] Among the many policy programs needed to revitalize rural communities, agrarian reform is the most important policy instrument. Recent studies have clearly stressed this view. For instance, Rosset, Patel, and Courville (2006) argue that agrarian reform is essential to promote food sovereignty, strengthen rural communities, and reduce rural poverty. Similarly, Lipton (2009) and de Janvry, et al. (2001) argue that agrarian reform is a prerequisite to enhancing the productive capabilities of the rural poor, generating rural income, and strengthening local markets. Despite their differences in policy prescriptions, these studies recognize that agrarian reform is fundamental for promoting sustainable rural livelihoods.

Agrarian reform is also fundamental to reversing the historical legacy of marginalization and discrimination of peasants and indigenous peoples, who constitute the vast majority of the world's rural population. Therefore, it has to be at the forefront of any progressive government's social agenda. Unfortunately, agrarian reform has not received the attention it deserves in government circles. Among the obstacles to the prioritization of agrarian reform are the disappointing legacy of previous experiments with it, the continuous expansion of large-scale commercial agriculture, and the development policies of the neoliberal state. These factors have not only prevented agrarian reform, they have also inhibited the state's capacity to promote redistributive policies.

Disappearance of the Peasantry?

Current peasant activism challenges conventional wisdom on the future of the peasantry. Indeed, the peasantry has been the central protagonist in contemporary agrarian reform struggles. However, both the nature of these peasants and their role in contemporary struggles over the land, have been subject to considerable debate. Specifically, current peasant activism challenges the *depeasantization* or the *death of the peasantry* thesis. Depeasantization predicts the erosion of the agrarian way of life based on subsistence and commodity agricultural production, with an internal social organization based on family labor and village community settlement. (Bryceson, 1999; Bryceson and Kay, 2000). Several influential "peasantologists" believe that capitalist expansion into the developing world, particularly post–World War II, incited a rapid process of rural marginalization and migration. The result was the transformation of the peasantry into landless peasants, seasonal workers, rural workers, and small-scale capitalist farmers. Indeed, there has been a sharp drop in the number of people involved in farming worldwide. For instance, in the United States, where President Nixon's Agriculture Secretary Earl Butz once told farmers to "get big or get out," less than 2 percent of the population are currently engaged in farming. Yet, in many parts of the developing world, a significant percentage of the population is still engaged in farming. For example, in Brazil the 2006 IBGE's Agricultural Census counted 4.3 million family farms (84 percent of Brazil's total farms) occupying 24 percent of the total agricultural area, employing 12 million rural workers (75 percent of the total rural labor force), and constituting 38 percent of national revenues from the agricultural sector (US$ 25.2 billion). Are claims of the peasantry's death then exaggerated—or merely premature? Depeasantization is definitely afoot, and the prospect is ominous, but it is not an inexorable process. Moreover, depeasantization has to be examined within a broader context of persistent marginalization of both rural and urban classes. Workers are facing similar experiences worldwide—the so-called process of deindustrialization is drastically changing the political, economic, and cultural character of the working class.

The depeasantization debate has not helped the peasant cause. Rather than advancing concrete proposals to deal with the agrarian issue, it has restricted the debate to endless argumentation and counterargumentation regarding the changing anthropological, sociological,

and economic identity of the peasantry. For instance, Feder (1978) argued that peasants as a "species" had become extinct. Likewise, Bernstein (1979) observed that the peasantry had been nearly destroyed by capitalism and imperialism. Depeasantization had changed the peasants' "traditional" identity—they were struggling to stay on the land, experiencing growing landlessness, engaging in diverse wage-labor activities, and facing increasing urban migration. These trends continue today. What are peasants in this new socioeconomic context? For Kearney (1996), peasants are *polybians*—individuals engaged in combined subsistence farming production, wage labor, and other nonagricultural income activities. For Otero (1999), they are semiproletarians—peasant workers who are unable to earn enough from their land to meet their basic needs; they are struggling to stay on the land by working part-time for other richer peasants. He argued that these semiproletarians are key players in the complex process of class formation and political mobilization. This is a noteworthy observation because peasants (whether landless peasants, landless tenants, landless workers, or seasonal rural workers) have demonstrated over the centuries an enduring capacity for adapting and responding to changing situations. Peasants are able to devise their own strategies for survival and mobility by engaging in a variety of income-generating activities. Notably, they have enormous enthusiasm and openness for addressing community problems through collective efforts.

For Stédile and Fernandes (1999), depeasantization is a misguided concept, which attempts to portray peasants as passive, not active, subjects in the making of their own history. They argue that this debate obscures the root causes of chronic landlessness, rural migration, and ecological decay—the unequal access to natural resources caused by the unequal distribution of political and economic power. Moreover, Stédile and Fernandes argue, peasants must actively engage in the struggle for agrarian reform in order to reconstruct their livelihoods, identity, and culture. In Brazil, the MST has challenged the landless peasants to assume this important task.

The central protagonist or actor in the protracted land struggle associated with the capitalist development process has been the peasantry. However, both the nature of these peasants and their role in contemporary struggles over land, have been subject to considerable debate. First, the precise meaning of the terms peasant and peasantry as a socioeconomic category remains at issue. A second issue has to do with its role in the political struggle. On this issue, studies have tended to oscillate between two competing and politically very

different perceptions. On the one hand, the peasantry is viewed as an entirely passive entity, the disempowered object of various kinds of state agency (legislation, taxation, agricultural production regimes, systems of regulation, macroeconomic planning, et cetera). On the other hand, the peasantry is viewed as an active and empowered force that continues to contest the terrain of land struggle.

This difference in perception is reflected in the debate between proponents of "structuralism" as a mode of analysis and those who reject all forms of structuralism in favor of "grassroots postmodernism" (Esteva and Prakash, 1998) and "discourse analysis" (Escobar, 1994). For structuralists generally, including Marxists, the peasantry is an economic and a political category that corresponds to a transitional organizational form, destined to disappear into the dustbin of history, and whose presence on the world stage is effected now in other disguises—as a rural proletariat, an urban lumpenproletariat trapped in a proliferating informal sector, or as "wage-labor equivalents" (Kay, 1999; 2000).

The social and political dynamics of this process have been analyzed at length in terms of expropriation, land concentration, rural outmigration, and land invasions ("occupations" in the terminology of the MST) on the periphery of large urban centers, settlement on these lands, and gradual incorporation of the rural migrants into the structure and life of the city. The end result of these processes, in theory anyway, is the peasantry drastically diminished as an economic actor and as a force for change, decimated by the processes of modernization, urbanization, and capitalist development of urban-centered industry (Bartra, 1976; Esteva, 1983; Kay, 1999).

This is one perspective on the peasantry, associated with views regarding the "disappearance of the peasantry" and "the death of agrarian reform." But it is by no means the only one. Some analysts have detected a trend in the reverse direction, namely peasantisation or repeasantisation. There is also the perspective on agrarian change articulated by Petras and Veltmeyer (2000; 2005). In their view the peasantry cannot be understood just in numerical terms, that is as a percentage of the labor force, or by the contribution of agriculture to the economy. Peasants, he argues remain a significant force for change, whose weight and significance is out of proportion to their numbers. Indeed, in Latin America peasantry constituted the most dynamic force for antisystemic change in the 1990s (Veltmeyer, 1997). It was found on the crest of a new wave of class struggle and a social movement of indigenous people for land, autonomy, social justice, and

democracy. The Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in its political irruption in 1994 can best be understood in this way, as can the MST, the subject of this book.

Three Modalities of Agrarian Reform

Since the late 1970s, the Latin American socioeconomic context included fundamental changes that created new conditions for the dynamics of the land struggle. Some analysts in this context invoked the notion of the "end of agrarian reform" (Lehmann, 1978), or the "death" of the peasantry (Hobsbawm, 1994), while others wrote of an "agrarian transformation" process (Gwynne and Kay, 2004). De Janvry (1981) conceptualized the nature and dynamics of this transformation as a move from "state-led" to "grassroots" agrarian reform, while others turned toward a "market-assisted" approach to agrarian reform. In the same context, Petras and Veltmeyer (2000; 2005) pointed to the emergence of a new wave of peasant movements that pushed beyond agrarian reform, that is, peasant movements oriented toward a more revolutionary project of societal transformation. Overall, it is possible to identify three divergent paths towards agrarian reform, each characterized by a distinct overall strategy and a mixed bag of tactics: (1) state-led agrarian reform (expropriation with compensation, land redistribution, and rural development); (2) market-assisted agrarian reform (titling, commodification, and land banks); and (3) grassroots-led agrarian (mobilization, occupation, and consolidation or production).

State-Led Agrarian Reform (SLAR)

The state plays a key role in this approach. It usually expropriates land from large landowners and redistributes it to selected beneficiaries. In most cases, the state compensates landowners and promise beneficiaries financial and technical assistance. Historically, the state has encountered difficulties in implementing this type of agrarian reform because of its reliance on "top down" decision-making initiatives and its bureaucratic, corruption-prone, and co-corporatist control (Grindle, 1985; Korovkin, 1990; McClintock, 1981). As a result, this approach has tended to disempower, coopt, or control peasant movements pushing for agrarian reform. In Latin America, SLAR was high on the political agenda following the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Government after government passed agrarian reform legislation, not

only to prevent further political radicalization in the countryside, but also to bring peasants and smallholders into the orbit of capitalist development.

The tools employed to promote agrarian reform were land redistribution and rural development.[8] However, agrarian reform proved difficult to implement due to a variety of factors, including stiff resistance from the landholding oligarchy (Dorner, 1992). First, redistribution was limited and did not change the overall skewed distribution of landownership. Second, peasants faced serious obstacles to consolidating any gains. In some cases, as in Mexico under Lázaro Cárdenas's rule, the gains made were secured. In other cases, as in Chile with the ascension of Augusto Pinochet to power, the gains made were reversed. Either way, the essential factor in determining the outcome was the relation of forces between the peasantry and the landholding class—the favorable or unfavorable political conditions that shape the struggle for agrarian reform in a particular period of time.

By the 1980s, agrarian reform was no longer a priority for Latin American governments. After a prolonged process of state disinvestment in the agricultural sector, governments passed legislation that favored agroexport monopolies and cheap imported foodstuffs. The exception was Brazil, where the transition to democracy in the mid-1980s was accompanied with calls for comprehensive agrarian reform. Even so, successive Brazilian governments have pursued some variation of state-led agrarian reform, in what could be best described as a "conservative agrarian reform." Under this approach, the impetus for agrarian reform was essentially reactive and restrained. The government strove mainly to appease rural conflicts, rather than to promote peasant farming. There were no proactive measures aimed at transforming the skewed concentration of landownership.[9] By treating agrarian reform as an isolated problem of marginal interest to the nation's development, successive governments have engaged in an ad hoc distribution process, offering land in places convenient to the state and the landholding elite.[10]

Market-Assisted Agrarian Reform (MAAR)

The market plays a fundamental role in this approach. This approach limits the role of the state in agrarian reform and tends to exacerbate inequities in the countryside. In the 1990s, the arrival of neoliberalism in Latin America facilitated the implementation of market-assisted agrarian reform programs (Veltmeyer and Petras, 2000; 2005). The fundamental objective of this approach is to promote land markets as

a means of improving the access of poor rural households to society's productive resources, primarily land (Ghimire, 2001). This approach is also predicated on the accumulation of "social capital" rather than the natural capital embedded in the land (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Helmore and Singh, 2001). By emphasizing social capital, that, the poor theoretically possess due to their capacity to network and act cooperatively, the market-assisted agrarian reform approach tends to depoliticize the agrarian question and minimize the need for redistributive land policies. Thus, the "agrarian question" is reduced to a question of "social empowerment" (Amalric, 1998).

The World Bank played a central role in pushing the MAAR—it promoted the creation of land banks to stimulate the growth of land markets; the institution of land titling to provide security of tenure to those with access to land; and the elimination of community landholdings (that is *ejidos*), which prevented individuals from buying and selling land (Bromley, 1989). Hardly a country in Latin America has avoided implementing this new approach to agrarian reform. During the early 1990s, the governments of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and Brazil turned towards this new approach to agrarian reform (Borras, Kay, and Lahiff, 2011; Ghimire, 2001; Zoomer and van der Haar, 2000). In Mexico and Ecuador, this meant the abolition of the constitutional protection of indigenous communal lands. In the case of Mexico (in 1992), this move did not encounter significant resistance, because the government had control over the country's main peasant organization. However, this was not the case in Ecuador, where the government was forced to back down in the face of stiff resistance from indigenous and peasant organizations. In regard to land banks, the WB instituted pilot projects in Brazil, Colombia, and the Philippines. The aim of this policy was not only to promote a land market, but also, at least in the case of Brazil, to undermine the tactic of land occupations by grassroots landless peasant organizations (UNRISD, 2000; Stédile, 2000).

Neoliberal governments abolished subsidies to the agricultural sector and reduced, or outright eliminated, credit programs for family farmers. This situation forced family farmers to resort to commercial loans to finance their production. Commercial lenders invariably viewed family farmers as high risk and imposed usurious interest rates—up to 25 to 30 percent a month in Brazil, Peru and Mexico—with the result that many family producers could not gain access to credit, and those who could, incurred enormous debt loads.[11] In addition to restrictive credit, the reduction of protective tariffs, and in

many cases overvalued currencies, created a difficult environment for small-scale producers (Crabtree, 2003). As Crabtree pointed out in Peru small-scale producers were extremely vulnerable to the inflow of cheap agricultural products from abroad. This pattern repeated itself in many other Latin American countries. This situation, in turn, not only undermined local economies, but also accelerated a fundamental change in production and consumption patterns away from traditional crops, especially grains like quinoa, kiwicha, olluco, beans, and potatoes. The impact of this change, and its implications, is yet to be evaluated.

Popular Agrarian Reform (PAR)

Organized grassroots communities of landless peasants and small-scale producers play a key role in this approach. Land occupation is the main tactic employed by these movements. In Latin America, and Brazil in particular, this approach to agrarian reform reemerged in the mid-1980s, within the context of redemocratization, the advent of neoliberalism, and the strengthening of civil society. Despite its potential, this approach faces strategic challenges to sustaining and extending comprehensive agrarian reform initiatives because of the well-entrenched power of the landholding class and the neoliberal state.

As previously described, in many situations, the state pushed agrarian reform initiatives in response to revolutionary threats in the countryside. However, in other situations, peasants and rural workers played a major role in the struggle for agrarian reform programs. This was the case, for example, in the 1960s and 1970s, when the peasantry and the rural proletariat, inspired by the Cuban Revolution and acting directly, brought about the impulse toward revolutionary agrarian reform. The protagonists in this struggle were, on the one hand, the state, generally acting on behalf of the propertied class and deeply committed to averting communism in the region. On the other hand, peasants and rural workers were generally advocating revolutionary change via land occupations and armed insurrection. Eventually, these movements lost their vitality due to political fragmentation, cooptation and repression. In collaboration with many Latin American governments, particularly in Central America, the United States government played a key role in demobilizing these movements through counterinsurgency operations (Le Blanc, 2012; Walker and Wade, 2011).

By the early 1980s, the struggle for agrarian reform, in both its reformist and revolutionary forms, had given way to “new” forms of

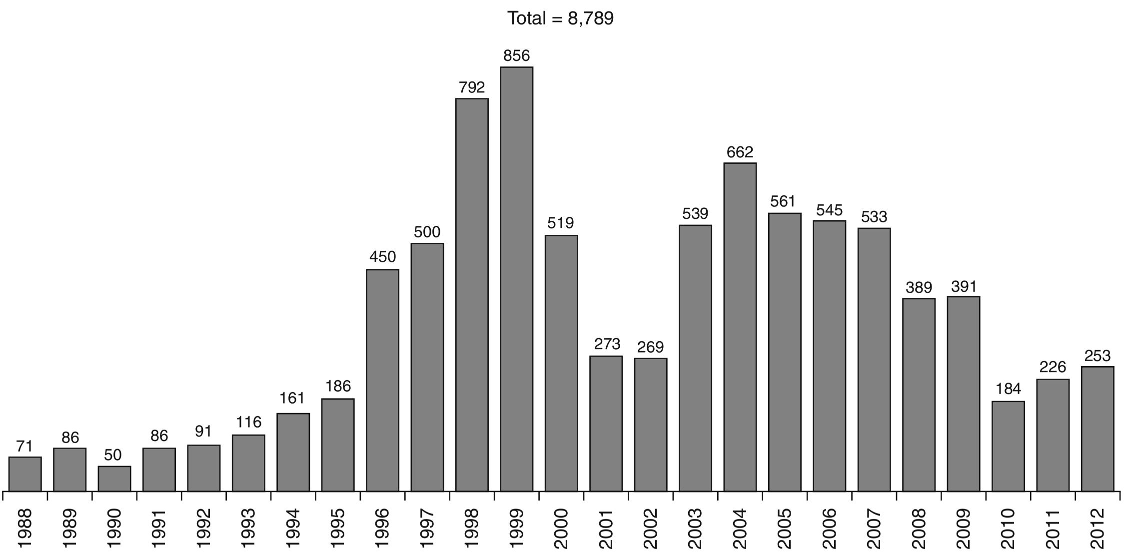

Figure 1.2 Land occupations in Brazil, 1988–2012.

Source: DATALUTA. Banco de Dados da Luta Pela Terra: Relatorio Brasil 2012.

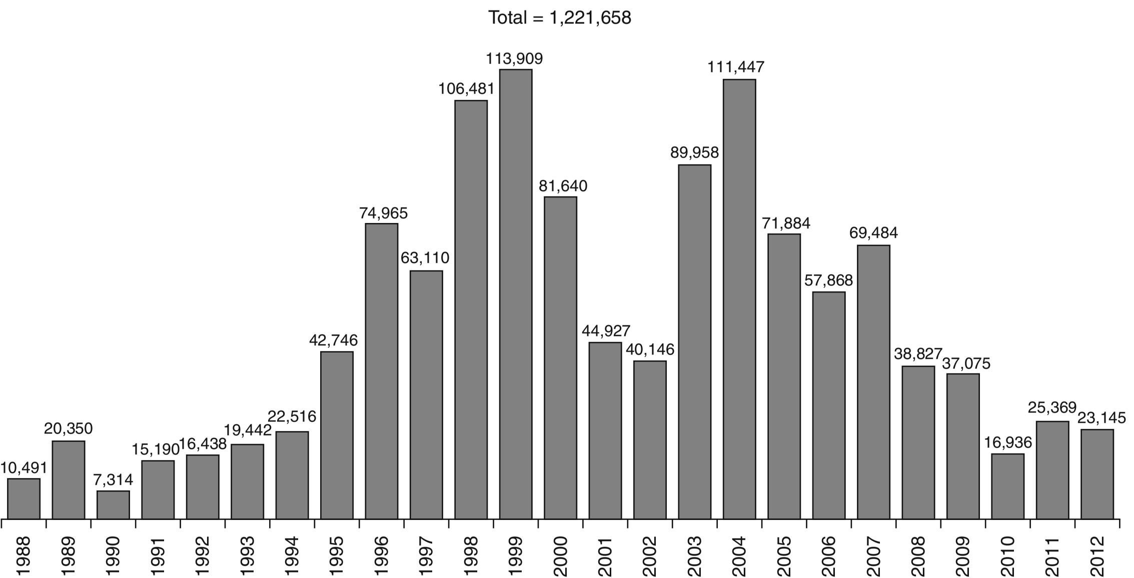

Figure 1.3 Participation of Brazilian landless peasant families in land occupations, 1988–2012.

struggle led by "new" social movements. In these new social movements, the major protagonists were no longer traditional peasants, workers or student movements, but urban-based and identity oriented movements (Brass, 1991; Escobar and Alvarez, 1992; Slater, 1985).[12]

In the 1990s, however, these new social movements gave way to a third wave of sociopolitical movements that were both peasant-based and peasant-led and, in some contexts, rooted in the struggle of indigenous communities for land, autonomy, and social justice. In Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, and Paraguay, these peasant movements demanded fundamental societal transformation. They embraced "basismo," or grassroots participatory democracy, as a tool for expanding the real exercise of political citizenship. The MST is the best representation of these movements. Its strategy for agrarian reform has been land occupation, political negotiation, and cooperative production. In the 1990s, land occupations become so successful as to force the government to revive and step-up its own agrarian reform program. From 1988 to 2012, the MST carried out 8,789 land occupations (figure 1.2), involving over 1.2 million landless peasant families (figure 1.3). Of note, more than half of the occupations took place in southeast and northeast Brazil (table 1.2). By the mid-2000s, however, land occupations slowed down, due to a several factors beyond peasant control, particularly the criminalization of land occupation and outright repression. Despite its potential, the PAR approach has faced strategic challenges to promoting comprehensive agrarian reform initiatives, because of the well-entrenched power of the landholding and agribusiness classes. The present neoliberal state also poses obstacles to the struggle for agrarian reform.

Table 1.2 Land occupations by regions and participation of Brazilian landless peasant families, 1988–2012

Region	*No. of Occupations*	*%*	*No. of Landless Peasant Families Participation*	*%*
North	817	9.3	109,900	9
North-East	3,352	38.14	448,314	36.70
Center-West	1,184	13.47	194,722	15.94
South-East	2,334	26.56	295,242	24.17
South	1,102	12.54	173,480	14.20
Total (Brazil)	**8,789**	**100**	**1,221,658**	**100**

Source: DATAWTA. Banco de Dodos da Luta Pela Terra: Relatorio Brasil 2012.

Peasant Movements and Agrarian Reform

Since the mid-1980s, the emergence of a new generation of peasant, indigenous, and landless rural workers' movements has reopened the *agrarian question*[13] and the *indigenous question*[14] in Latin America (Desmarais, 2007; Moyo and Yeros, 2005; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2005). Under the banners of "food sovereignty," "social justice," and "self-determination," these movements constructed national and transnational organizations, forged political coalitions, and established extensive social networks. To overcome "top down" forms of political participation, these movements established autonomous, decentralized, and participatory grassroots organizations. Although their strategies, leadership styles, ideologies, and political strengths differ from country to country, these movements embraced a common objective of promoting a more equitable and just society.[15] These efforts allowed the peasant movements to gain unprecedented social vitality to contest the neoliberal state.

Among the most significant rural movements, in Latin America today, are the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN) in Colombia, Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP) in Haiti, National Union of Regional Autonomous Peasant Organizations (UNORCA) in Mexico, the Rural Workers Association (ATC) in Nicaragua, and the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) in Bolivia. With the exception of the ACIN, CONAIE and MAS, these peasant movements are affiliated with Via Campesina, headquartered in Honduras.

The rebirth of these peasant movements has injected a significant measure of popular participation in the Latin American democratic process. Their vitality demonstrates that peasants, indigenous, and rural workers are in fact alive and well and are determined to resist the further intrusion of neoliberalism in the countryside. Despite their vitality and their relative success in contesting the neoliberal state, these movements face major obstacles in bringing about fundamental structural changes. Their first obstacle is getting their governments to respond to legitimate demands for the provision and protection of access to land, land rights, and natural resources. The second obstacle is the conflict-prone character of these movements. Unresolved ideological and strategical diferences tend to weaken or split these movements, thus limiting their long-range effectiveness. Finally, the third major obstacle is the continued exclusionary character of Latin

America's political system, which prevents the poor from exercising greater democratic citizenship.

Ironically, all of these new social movements emerged in seemingly "established" democratic regimes. Democratic *transition* in Latin America has not led to democratic *transformation*; that is, it has not substantially changed the structures of power that buttress social inequities. There has certainly been some progress on poverty reduction and inequality. However, this has not changed the overall socioeconomic character of Latin America and the Caribbean—the region still remains as one of the most unequal societies in the world (UNDP, 2010; 2013). In 2012, 164 million people, or 28.2 percent of the total Latin America and Caribbean population were living in poverty (table 1.3). Not even the "red" or "pink" tide of left-leaning regimes over the last decade has fundamentally altered the structure of poverty and inequality in Latin America.[16] In the early 2000s, the leftward tilt of many governments in South America provided hope of a move away from neoliberalism. But thus far it has not materialized. In Brazil, "Lula" da Silva and his successor, Dilma Rousseff, have largely followed the neoliberal economic agenda of the previous administrations, albeit with a progressive twist. The creation of social programs for the poor has reduced absolute poverty, but has also politically sedated the rural and urban poor. These programs have also strengthened the political base of the Workers' Party at the expense of the MST. In Argentina and Uruguay, the "leftist" (center-left, to be precise) administrations of Néstor Kirchener, and

Table 1.3 People living in poverty and absolute poverty in Latin America and Caribbean, 1980–2012

Year	*Millions and Percentage (Total Population)*			
	Poverty		*Absolute Poverty/Indigence*	
	Millions	*%*	*Millions*	*%*
1980	136	40.5	62	18.6
1990	204	48.4	95	22.6
1999	215	43.8	91	18.6
2002	225	43.9	99	19.3
2008	186	33.5	72	12.9
2011	170	29.6	67	11.6
2012	164	28.2	66	11.3

Source: CEPAL, Panorama Social de America Latina 2013, (Santiago de Chile: CEPAL, 2013).

his successor, Cristina Kirchner, and Tabaré Vázquez and his successor, José Alberto "Pepe" Mujica, have basically reformed the neoliberal agenda in response to widespread disillusionment with neoliberalism. In contrast, in Venezuela Hugo Chávez, and his successor, Nicolás Maduro, have vigorously criticized neoliberalism and stressed economic socialism or nationalism as an alternative path. Similarly, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, have rejected neoliberalism and advocated "inclusionary state activism" as vital to advancing progressive socioeconomic development. In Peru, Ollanta Humala has followed modified versions of "Lula" da Silva's policy prescription.

Thus, the shift toward leftist politics in Latin America has not provided a clear alternative to neoliberalism. It is not quite clear what political course this trend will take, but there are clear indications of a shift towards to a more active role for the state in the process of socioeconomic development. The minimalist role of the state as envisioned in the Washington Consensus[17] has been jettisoned. Certainly, reorienting the neoliberal state is necessary for promoting progressive social policies, but it is not sufficient for advancing more inclusive forms of political citizenship. The latter requires democratic transformation. Prominent among the many contemporary social movements pursuing this objective is the MST. Its open, nonviolent, defiance of authority transcends the political realm—it is a revolt against institutional and noninstitutional barriers to transformative democracy. This movement is convinced that the neoliberal state is not likely to address the agrarian question unless it is forced to do so by intense grassroots political mobilization.

2

Rural Development and Social Movements

In most developing countries, a large proportion of the poor still live in rural areas, where poverty is far more severe than in urban areas. Rural poverty is a structural phenomenon with many dimensions and complexities. In the twenty-first century, rural poverty has been further exacerbated by natural resource degradation, climate change, growing landlessness, political violence, and increasing food insecurity. These are forces beyond the control of the poor. Despite rapid economic growth, impressive technological progress, expansion of educational resources, closer global trade integration, and significant foreign aid during the last six decades, rural poverty has persisted. Subsistence farmers and landless peasants make up the vast majority of the rural poor. In their desperate attempts to modernize traditional agriculture, developing countries embraced Western technology and strategies. Unfortunately, these strategies failed to take into consideration the structural dimension of rural poverty, which is intrinsically linked to "old" and "new" forms of capitalist development. As such, the outcome was increased poverty and environmental degradation.

This chapter examines the dynamics of poverty within the context of the Latin American capitalist development. It also examines responses to these dynamics, with particular reference to Brazil's political development, described in subsequent chapters. These responses are sorted into two categories. First, the strategies pursued by the state within the changing policy and institutional framework of "international cooperation for development," a constantly changing framework constructed after World War II. Second, the actions taken by organized workers and semiproletarianized peasants in response to the forces of change released in the capitalist development process. The MST best exemplifies the forces of resistance to capitalist structural transformation.

Dynamics of Social and Economic Transformation

From a mainstream development economics perspective, rural poverty is rooted in the low productivity of peasant agriculture and the persistence of rural poverty reflects the failure of the rural population to make the transition from a traditional, pre-capitalist agrarian society, to a modern industrial capitalist society. However, from a radical agrarian political economy perspective, rural poverty is rooted in the historical dynamics of capitalist development. The introduction of capitalism into the countryside drove peasants from their land, forced them to migrate to urban centers in search of remunerated labor for their means of subsistence, and converted peasant agriculture into a profit-oriented economic activity.[1]

Historically, the forces of capitalist development have stimulated an ongoing process of social and economic transformation. In the post-World War II context of the "old developmentalism," based on the agency of the development state and international development cooperation, the capitalist model of development unfolded within the institutional and policy framework of the Bretton Woods system. By the 1960s, this model was well entrenched at the center of the capitalist system, resulting in a division between countries that had completed the transition and those that were either on the way (developing) or had failed to develop (agriculture-based).[2]

In the early 1970s, the post–World War II capitalist model entered into crisis, putting an end to the "golden age of capitalism," of two decades of uninterrupted rapid economic growth.[3] The crisis generated a system-wide process of economic stagnation, high unemployment, and uncontrolled budget deficits. The capitalist class blamed the crisis on the shortcomings of the postwar socioeconomic structure of accumulation, especially the overextended role of government in economic affairs, the expensive welfare state, and the power of labor unions. This situation forced the capitalist class to seek a solution to the crisis by promoting the restructuring of the capitalist system and the role of the state. It did so by encouraging governments to implement a series of fundamental policy changes during the 1970s and 1980s. First, the capitalist class promoted the restructuring of capital-labor relations as necessary to increase productivity. The changes drastically curtailed the so-called "excessive power" of organized labor and constrained wage labor. Second, the capitalist class stimulated the separation of technology-intensive and labor-intensive operations within the core

of the capitalist system. Transnational corporations started a process of relocating labor-intensive production operations to countries with abundant cheap labor, particularly Asia. The outcome was the formation of a new international division of labor and the formation of newly industrializing countries on the periphery of the system. Third, the capitalist class increased investment in research and development in order to advance a new generation of high technology industries, increase labor productivity and profits—a technological restructuring that was described by Marx as the "revolutionary road" to capitalist development. This eventually led to what has been described as the "third technological revolution" based on information and communication technologies (ICTs). Fourth, the capitalist class introduced new forms of capitalist production and consumption based on changing the dominant mode of regulating labor at the point of production, or post-Fordism (Lipietz, 1987). Finally, the capitalist class encouraged the restructuring of the welfare state, which was designed as a solution to both the fiscal and economic crises that had beset most countries at the center of the capitalist system. The global economic recession triggered by the oil crisis during the 1970s, forced most governments in developed countries to move forward with the implementation of these measures as a means of restarting economic growth.

The aforementioned policy measures laid the foundation for the IMF and World Bank's structural adjustment policies (SAPs). The global economic crisis of the 1970s badly affected many developing countries, particularly Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Egypt. These countries faced enormous debt, budget deficits, high inflation, and economic recession. By the early 1980s, these countries could no longer sustain their precarious situations and resorted to the IMF and World Bank for financial assistance. The SAPs promised to reorganize the debt-ridden economies of many developing countries by pursuing five major structural reforms: (1) the integration of national economies into the world market; (2) the privatization of state-owned corporations; (3) the deregulation of financial, capital, and labor markets; (4) the decentralization of governance and the engagement of both local governments and civil society in the development process; and (5) the liberalization of trade in goods and services.

In the Latin American countryside, the implementation of SAPs further undermined peasant farming, forcing peasants to abandon the land and take, what the World Bank (2008) described as the development "pathway out of rural poverty"—namely rural migration. The implementation of the SAPs brought about several changes

in the structure of Latin American society and economy, including the formation of an army of surplus labor—the supply of cheap labor to fuel a process of capitalist development in the urban centers.[4] It also accelerated chaotic urbanization and the formation of a growing "informal economy." According to Klein and Tokman (2000), 90 percent of the employment generated in the 1980s was in this informal sector of the economy. With the weakening of the industrial sector, opportunities for social mobility and improved social conditions associated with the formal labor market had drastically reduced. Thus, the urban economy was incapable of absorbing the masses of rural migrants, who were streaming to the cities in search of gainful work and improved living conditions.

The implementation of SAPs in Latin American countries had a significant impact on poverty—poverty increased from 40 percent of the total Latin American population in 1980 to 49 percent in 1990 (ECLAC, 2004). The lack of employment opportunities in urban centers forced millions of rural migrants to illegally cross the border into the United States, particularly Mexican and Central Americans labor migrants. The remittances associated with this flow of labor migrants reached such a volume as to constitute a major form of international financial resource flows that served to balance national accounts. According to the World Bank (2013), the flow of migrant remittances from Latin American and Caribbean citizens living abroad reached US$ 61 billion in 2013. In the case of Mexico, remittances now constitute the second major source of national income received from abroad—it reached US$ 22 billion in 2013.[5] In many cases, developing countries' migrant remittances are larger than foreign exchange reserves, the total inflow of foreign direct investment, or development assistance.

From the "Old" to the "New" Developmentalism

From its inception, development has been an instrument of foreign policy. The development project originated in the late 1940s within the context of the Cold War—the sustained state of political and military tension between the US (and its Western European allies) and the Soviet Union (and its Eastern European allies). African, Asian, Latin American, and the Middle Eastern countries became the scene of cold-war skirmishes, and the US and the Soviet Union competed

for their allegiance. Both countries supported brutal regimes through development assistance, financial support, or military aid in return for their allegiance. In Latin America, for example, the US promoted the Alliance for Progress,[6] which was an ambitious development project (at least on paper) aimed at defusing revolutionary ferment in the region through socioeconomic development. Agrarian reform and rural development were key components of this program. The former was difficult to implement due to strong resistance from the land-holding oligarchy. The latter was implemented through polices that promoted "growth with equity," including progressive taxation and income redistribution (channeling market-generated national income into rural development programs). Unfortunately, the Alliance for Progress did not deliver the promised socioeconomic progress. By the early 1970s, the program was considered a complete failure and it was quietly folded by the Nixon administration. By this time, the Latin American military dictatorships were confronting a profound political and economic crisis.[7] Under a combination of external and internal pressures, they could no longer manage their economies nor suppress growing popular discontent. The Latin American debt crisis, exemplified by the Mexican debt default of 1982, further exacerbated political and economic instability, thus forcing the military dictatorships to eventually relinquish power altogether.

During the 1980s, Latin America's transition to democracy was accompanied by the introduction of IMF and World Bank sponsored SAPs, with negative results. The "Lost Decade," as this development decade came to be known, was a period of negative economic growth, high unemployment, and increased poverty and inequality. This situation did not augur a good future for the region. The United States and Wall Street were deeply concerned about the situation and sought solutions. After all, United States' commercial banks had assumed high-risk lending in Latin America—US$ 327 billion by 1982 (FDIC, 1997). The Washington Consensus emerged from this context of political transition and economic instability.

In the early 1980s, policymakers, academicians, business leaders, and military officers from Latin America were invited to conferences in the United States to discuss with their American counterparts a range of political and economic issues. John Williamson, from the Washington-based Institute for International Economics, played a key role in in organizing economics workshops with leading development economists. Out of this emerged the following consensus—if development was to succeed in Latin America, it had to rely on

neoliberal economics and electoral democracy. Across Latin America, governments embraced the Washington consensus as a panacea to their socioeconomic woes. The Washington Consensus basically adopted the key policy recommendations embedded in the SAPs, namely, privatization, deregulation, and liberalization. However, the Washington Consensus went further than SAPs regarding the role of the state in economic affairs—it proposed a minimalist state role that conformed to the logic of the market. This view of the state's role was an ideological reaction to the failure of the state in promoting socio-economic development in Latin America. The Washington Consensus relied heavily on market fundamentalism—the belief that if markets are free from state intervention, it can lead to economic efficiency and, thus, material prosperity. Social equity was not a priority in the Washington Consensus' policy prescription. In the 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet Union gave the Washington Consensus a global dimension. Across Eastern Europe, governments adopted the Washington Consensus as the best strategy to transform their centrally planned economies. Economists from the IMF, World Bank, and other influential free-market oriented think tanks, such as the American Enterprise Institute (AIE) and CATO Institute, provided the necessary economic software and hardware necessary to dismantle the centrally planned economies of the former Soviet Union. In Russia, during the Boris Yeltsin administration (1991–1999), for example, the privatization of state-owned corporations, particularly the energy and mineral sectors, grossly enriched a few influential people closely connected to Wall Street. The transition from a centrally controlled to a market oriented economy created enormous human suffering—massive poverty, high unemployment, uncontrolled inflation, economic recession, increased crime, and the destruction of basic education, health, and social services.

In Latin America, the Washington Consensus policies had initial successes and later failures. Initially, the introduction of neoliberal macroeconomic stabilization policies abruptly halted hyperinflation, stimulated economic growth, and attracted foreign investment. In addition, the privatization of inefficient state-owned corporations relieved governments from unnecessary financial burdens. All of these contributed to a positive view of neo-liberalism among the electorate. Argentinean president Carlos Menem (1989–1999) is probably the best representative of the apparent early successes of the Washington Consensus. Menem's neoliberal reforms fundamentally altered the social contract that had existed in this country for decades.

Argentina became a success story widely praised by the international financial community. However, this triumphalism did not last long. In 2001, the Argentinean economic miracle crashed, leaving behind enormous social, economic, and political problems. In the long term, the Washington Consensus did not produce the promised results. Latin America continued to face an absurd contradiction—extreme material abundance for the few, amid extreme poverty for the vast majority. The gap between rich and poor remained stubbornly high. Neoliberalism not only opened up Latin American countries to the world economy, it also exposed them to new internal and external financial pressures. Moreover, tighter economic constraints limited governments' abilities to promote progressive poverty-reduction social policies. All of these factors decreased political participation and eroded government accountability, which in turn, encouraged systemic corruption and social inequities. The persistence of growing poverty and inequality, the inability of democratic governments to address historical social demands, and the corruption-prone state institutions (particularly the judiciary) brought into question the sustainability of the Washington Consensus. The deterioration of social conditions led to widespread protests led by peasant and indigenous organizations. As a result, the postauthoritarian Latin American governments entered a period of crisis.

In 1999, Hugo Chavez came to power in Venezuela with a strong popular mandate. In 2002, Evo Morales lost the Bolivian presidential election by a minimum margin.[8] In 2003, Luis Ignacio "Lula" da Silva, a former union leader, came to power in Brazil. Electing "leftist" radicals, particularly Chávez, raised eyebrows among conservative US policymakers deeply concerned with Latin America's tilt toward the "radical" Left. They expressed their open distaste for Chavez's anti-American diatribes and his close friendships with Cuba's long-time ruler Fidel Castro. In the mid-2000s, the growing popularity of leftist presidential candidates, Ollanta Humala in Peru and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, further intensified US concerns of a growing leftist political alliance in Latin America. Specifically, these conservative US policymakers were concerned that the growing "leftist threat," if left unchecked, might eventually hold the US government by the *cojones*—hindering its efforts to expand free trade agreements, secure reliable energy resources, and maintain political influence in the region. The "leftist threat" was an alarmist, biased, and misconceived argument, which denied the complexities of US-Latin American relations. This argument also diverted attention from the main source of

social protest and anti-US government sentiment in Latin America—the failure of the elite-engendered Washington Consensus.

By the late 1990s, the architects and guardians of the Washington Consensus responded to this threat by redesigning the neoliberal model of development so as to give it a "human face"—a more inclusive form of development (Saad-Filho, 2010). The new development strategy stressed the need to "bring the state back in" in order to establish a better balance between state and market relations. It also stressed the need to hold firm on the fundamentals of neoliberal "pro-growth" policies. This new Post-Washington Consensus stressed the need to promote a more socially inclusive, or a "pro-poor," form of development. As such, it proposed four basic policy principles: (1) the continuation of neoliberal structural reforms; (2) the implementation of new "pro-poor" social programs; (3) educational and health service reforms; (4) the continuation of political administrative decentralization; and (5) the promotion of community-based forms of development.

Bresser-Pereira (2009) gave the Post-Washington Consensus a unique Latin American label and flavor. He presented "new developmentalism" as a sensible alternative to the failure of the Washington Consensus. Specifically, he advocated a national development strategy with active state participation in order to meet the growing democratic deficit facing Latin American societies—systemic poverty and inequality. The state had to play a strategic role based on the imperatives of national development and within the context of fiscal and monetary discipline. Bresser-Pereira was critical of the misguided Washington Consensus conventional orthodoxy that did not take into consideration the peculiar characteristics of Latin American economies. He blamed the Washington Consensus for the irresponsible financialization, privatization, and liberalization of the Latin American economy. He also blamed the Washington Consensus for the reemergence of left-wing political populism in Latin America. Thus, "new developmentalism" promised to address the Latin American democratic deficit by redesigning macroeconomic policies within the context of the realities of twenty-first-century Latin America. Notably, Bresser-Pereira located "new developmentalism" as a strategy between "old developmentalism" and "conventional neoliberal orthodoxy" (i.e., Washington Consensus). He also warned that new developmentalism was not suitable for all developing countries because:

> New developmentalism is suitable for middle-income countries rather than for poor countries, not because poor countries do not require

> a national development strategy, but because their strategies involve accomplishing primitive accumulation and industrial revolution, or, in other words, because the challenges they face are different from those faced by middle-income countries. (Bresser-Pereira, 2009:16)

Perhaps a key weakness in Bresser Pereira's analysis is the emphasis on industrial development at the expense of agricultural development. He conceives industrial development as the best strategy to enhance the capacity of the state to promote sustainable economic growth, while protecting workers, the poor, and the environment. Contrary to this approach, the World Bank's conceptualization of the Post-Washington Consensus promoted new forms of rural development strategies to address persistent rural poverty. In doing so, the Post-Washington Consensus aimed to defuse peasant and indigenous political radicalism. By the mid-1990s, it had become evident that the "pathway out of rural poverty" (i.e., rural migration) had reached its limits. The capacity of governments to manage rural migration, even with international cooperation, was severely constrained by the sheer volume of the rural-to-urban migrant flow, restricted urban labor markets, and limited fiscal resources. The solution (at least on paper) was to encourage the rural poor to stay in the countryside, by promoting activities that maximized off-farm income, remittances, and state cash transfer income (Kay, 1999). Ironically, the Post-Washington Consensus and Bresser-Pereira's "new developmentalism" did not consider agrarian reform a policy priority.

"New" Social Movements and the Resistance to Neoliberalism

The contradictions of the elite-engendered Washington Consensus contributed to the emergence of new social movements in Latin America (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2004). Beginning in the mid-1990s, these movements rejected the Washington Consensus and resisted the further introduction of capitalism into the countryside. In Bolivia, for example, *La Coordinadora de Defensa del Agua y de la Vida* (Coalition in Defense of Water and Life) openly contested the neoliberal state. Led by the charismatic Oscar Olivera, *La Coordinadora* reversed the misguided privatization of the water system in Cochabamba in 2000. The neoliberal fever that reached Bolivia in early 1990s, led to the rapid privatization of state-owned corporations and public services under the rationale of economic efficiency. The privatization of the

mining, energy, and banking sectors did not encounter significant popular resistance, mainly due to the fragmentary nature of labor politics. However, the privatization of public services, water systems in particular, encountered strong resistance due to broad-based and well-organized grassroots opposition.

From the 1970s on, Cochabamba's population increased rapidly, primarily due to rural migration from poor areas. This migration exacerbated social problems, for example, more than 40 percent of Cochabamba's population in 1999, lacked running water or basic sanitation services. Cochabamba is the third largest city in Bolivia with approximately 600,000 people; it used to manage the city's water and sewage utility through the *Servicio Municipal de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado* (SEMAPA). However, SEMAPA suffered from financial, technical, and management problems, which ultimately made it a candidate for privatization. With the encouragement from the World Bank, the Bolivian government entered into negotiations in 1998 with a foreign consortium, led by US-based Bechtel Corporation, to privatize SEMAPA. The consortium established Aguas del Tunari, which began operating Cochabamba's water and sewage system on November 1, 1999 (Olivera, 2004). The Bolivian government understood that reasonable rate increases would be necessary. In fact, the actual rate increased, up to 300 percent, which generated widespread social tensions and poverty-strapped Cochabambinos refused to pay.

In January 2000, *La Cordinadora* led massive protests and demanded the termination of the water concession contract. In the coming months, the protests intensified both in Cochabamba and in many other parts of the country. Labor unions and the police joined the protesters, forcing the Bolivian government to dispatch military personnel to control civil unrest. Violence erupted and six Bolivian protesters were killed. In response to the deteriorating political situation, the government cancelled the contract on April 10, 2000. Following the disastrous water privatization experiment, *La Coordinadora* assumed control, along with the municipality of the water and sewage utility in Cochabamba. La Coordinadora decided to establish a community-based water and sewage public utility organized around principles of transparency, efficiency, participation, and fairness, rather than returning the management of this utility back to the state, which had privatized it. The praxis of *La Coordinadora* encouraged communities in Bolivia and beyond to seek new forms of collective action to promote the responsible governance of public goods through the real exercise of democratic citizenship.

In Argentina, the Piqueteros, a loose term describing the organized coalitions of unemployed and underpaid workers, embraced a radical project of political and economic democracy by "scaling up" the power of grassroots democracy. By linking micropolitics to macropolitics, the Piqueteros contested Argentina's skewed power structures. This movement emerged in the late 1990s, in response to structural unemployment in the Argentinean economy, which became severe after the country's US$ 93 billion debt default in 2003. The crisis left behind enormous social, economic, and political problems. Government welfare services were drastically cut and thousands of workers were left unemployed and destitute. The socioeconomic repercussions of the crisis sparked a massive groundswell of popular grassroots mobilization. Among these organizations, the Piqueteros opted to respond to the situation by organizing alternative autonomous political and economic structures around the principles of grassroots democracy (Kohan, 2003).

This movement occupied factories, banks, and government offices. In addition to establishing worker-run factories, the Piqueteros also established small-scale economic enterprises such as community bakeries and kitchens, housing cooperatives, and educational and social services. Some Piqueteros organizations such as the *Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados* (Unemployed Workers Movement) or MTD, were successful in reawakening the social consciousness of the working class, regarding the manipulative nature of capitalist politics in contemporary society. By establishing neighborhood popular assemblies, worker-controlled factories, and community-based educational and social services, the Piqueteros developed alternative institutions for material production, economic exchange, political decision-making, and information and distribution networks. They showed a high degree of resourcefulness, passion, and commitment to social justice—virtues necessary for genuine democratic transformation. In sum, the Piqueteros advanced a "learning-by-doing approach" to political and economic democratization: they inserted a significant measure of popular participation into the limited Argentinean democratic process.

Similar movements emerged in Ecuador, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, and Mexico. Despite their diverse origins and philosophies of action, these new social movements shared a common objective—to contest the neoliberal state and advancing new forms of inclusive development. As such, these movements played a central role in the redefinition of the interrelationships among democracy, development,

and social justice. Across Latin America, social and economic marginalization worsened in the context of the Washington Consensus. In response, social movements sought new modalities of democratic organization and development that sharply differed from the dominant neoliberal capitalist development model and its associated project of globalization. They also reinvigorated democracy by injecting a significant measure of popular participation into the Latin American democratic process. In doing so, these movements redefined and expanded democratic citizenship to the poor and the disenfranchised. These movements built decentralized and autonomous national organizations, established international solidarity networks, created political education centers, and forged multiclass political coalitions. This strengthened the organizational and operational capacity of these movements to effectively contest entrenched power structures, that had for so long benefited a small privileged minority at the expense of the vast underprivileged majority.

The new social movements in Latin America were by default engaged in the pursuit of genuine and inclusive democracy.[9] The manipulative and exclusionary nature of the political system had long stifled social justice. New social movements not only contested the sources of social exclusion and marginalization, but also provided the poor with hope in the transformative expression of collective power. They functioned as both a catalyst for progressive social change and a form of healthy political therapy for dysfunctional social systems. In the countryside, new social movements were important sources of political energy, collective empowerment, and democratic creativity. They became vital instruments for organizing and equipping the poor and destitute to question skewed power relationships and develop alternatives. The MST is the best example of this antisystemic type of new social movement in contemporary Latin America.

Theorizing Social Movements

The study of social movements has a long and rich history that goes back over a century. It has been shaped by the different scientific traditions in both developed and developing countries. The study of these movements has also been a difficult task, because social movements are complex and have dynamic metamorphosis. They are continuously engaging and mobilizing citizens to promote human rights and social justice, while reinforcing their opposition to socioeconomic marginalization, environmental exploitation, violence and

militarism. This has certainly been the case in Latin America, where social movements have provided a subject of study for sociologists, while at the same time challenging the established frameworks of thought within sociology.

Since the mid-1950s, the study of social movements has received special attention from the international academic community. These social movements expressed a variety of concerns, values, ideologies, and aims. As a result, theories of social movements underwent a number of paradigm shifts, from "collective behavior" and "social grievance" to "resource mobilization," "political process or framing," "identity-oriented," and "Neo-Marxist" theories. In most cases, the debates centered on the relevance of these frameworks in diverse local and national contexts, on the cyclical character of collective action, and on the divisive or unifying impact of the politics of identity. In the late 1990s, the antiglobalization and anticorporate movements incited new forms of cross-border protests that challenged theoreticians to reevaluate their approaches. Obviously, a comprehensive reexamination of social movement theories cannot be achieved through abstract theorizing; instead, it requires a nuanced sociological analysis permeated by a political-historical perspective.

"Old" Social Movements

Social movements are not a new phenomenon in Latin America. In fact, these movements have a history that goes back to colonial times. Massive popular protests of one kind or another have occurred with unexpected consequences throughout the history of Latin America. The persistence of extreme poverty, the authoritarian nature of the political regimes, the discriminatory treatment of indigenous populations, and the pervasive influence of Western powers all contributed to the formation of Indigenous, peasant, student, and worker revolutionary and reformist movements that contested the political order. Notably, these movements manifested a strong class-consciousness or ethnic identity. Social theorists interpreted these "old" social movements (i.e., labor, peasant, and student movements) in terms of their macro political and economic character. They were movements expressing large-scale forms of political rebellion aimed at changing societal structures by seizing state power. These movements were also linked, in one form or another, to organized revolutionary or reformist political parties with universalistic ideologies.[10] The context of these early struggles reflected a particular sociopolitical environment marked by national capitalist development and the Cold War.

The evolving dynamics of this context contributed to the shaping and reshaping of the ideological, structural, and operational characteristics of these social movements. In the 1950s and 1960s, for example, the dynamics of capitalist development in Latin America led to the formation of urban and rural movements. In urban centers, labor movements sought to protect workers from the ravages of capitalist exploitation—low wages and poor working conditions. In rural areas, peasant movements sought to preserve their livelihood by demanding agrarian reform.

Parsonian functionalist theory, the dominant school of thought during the 1960s, argued that these movements expressed dysfunctions provoked by stresses in the social system. They were macroforms of collective protest or side effects of rapid socioeconomic transformation, which the system could not temporarily absorb (Smelser, 1962). In contrast, Marxian conflict theory, the predominant approach, contended that these movements were responses to capitalist economic exploitation, or conflicts over property relations (Paige, 1975).[11]

"New" Social Movements

In the 1980s, Parsonian and Marxian theories were eventually contested as Europe, North America, and Latin America witnessed a "new wave" of social movements expressing a variety of social concerns and demanding immediate state attention. These included peace, antinuclear, animal, civil rights, ecological, urban, indigenous, women's, religious, and gay or lesbian movements. These movements did not explicitly embrace universalistic ideologies or clear social visions. In fact, their ideological, organizational, and operational characteristics were marked by fragmentation, informality, and opportunism. Generally speaking, social theorists interpreted these "new" social movements in terms of their micro political and cultural character. With few exceptions, they were movements expressing small-scale forms of resistance and rebellion, aimed at moderate rather than revolutionary change. The sociological interpretations of these movements varied. Some argued that the "utopian" revolutionary ideologies of the "old" social movements had shifted to the more pragmatic and specific demands of political, environmental, and cultural rights (Cohen, 1985; Slater, 1985). Others asserted that these movements were neither new nor isolated from class-based movements, because ethnic, indigenous, slave, women's, and religious movements had existed for centuries (Frank and Fuentes, 1989). They merely assumed new forms, incorporated new themes, and adapted to new socioeconomic contexts.

Main Theories of Social Movements

Since the 1990s, three important schools have reshaped the study of "new" social movements—the "political opportunity approach," the "identity-oriented approach," and the "Neo-Marxist approach."

Political opportunity approach

The political opportunity approach is associated with, among others, the work of Eisinger, Piven, Cloward, and Tarrow (Porta and Diani, 1999). It has stimulated a great deal of research on new social movements (Lorenzo Valdes, 2001; Dalton and van Sickle, 2005; and Ondetti, 2008). The political process approach contends that the context in which new social movements emerge influences, or frames, their success or failure. The chances of a particular protest movement achieving success is discussed in terms of the opportunities that are available for the movement. Specifically, this approach maintains that the levels and forms of mobilization by social movements are channeled by certain features of the political context such as: (1) the open or closed character of the political system; (2) the stability or instability of elite political alignment; (3) the presence or absence of elite political support groups; and (4) the state's capacity and propensity for political repression. These factors have been viewed as political opportunities, that either increase or decrease the chances of success of collective mobilization (Tarrow, 1998). Of the four main components of this approach, the last (i.e. the state's capacity and propensity for repression) is a problematic one. The argument is that, if the state is strong and committed to repression, social movements are likely to fail. But, if the state is weak, political opportunities may arise which allow the movement to be successful. This is a generalized principle. In fact, the revolutionary experiences of Cuba (1959) and Nicaragua (1979) demonstrated that the state's repression intensified, not diminished, resistance, thus leading to successful revolution.

The political process approach contends that there are two other vital components for nonpredictive movement formation and protest—insurgent consciousness and organizational strength. Insurgent consciousness is related to deprivation and grievance; people develop a collective protest consciousness due to social or political injustice. This consciousness, in turn, serves as the motivation for collective mobilization, participation, and organization. Organizational strength refers to the ability of a movement to take advantage of the available resources and opportunities that make it possible to advance

its particular demands. All of these theoretical observations have provided a fruitful analytic orientation for reflecting on issues related to new social movements. Tarrow's cycles of contention added complexity and abstraction, to the political process approach. "Cycles of contention" refers to the pattern of rising and falling action experienced by particular social movements, and the tendency of these movements to generate, or not to generate, other movements. Therefore, cycles are considered contexts within which creative protest tactics are tested, refined, diffused, and eventually adopted as part of the repertoire of the politics of contention. The expansion of a cycle of contention is characterized by new social movements appearing at the fringes of the field of collective action. These newcomer movements revitalize and energize collective action through new visions and tactics. Thus, Tarrow examines social movements by focusing on the influence of political structures on the formation of these movements, and the interactions between these movements and the states or regimes. Tarrow uses mostly European examples to demonstrate that cycles of contention have had strong political effects on various nations' cycles of contention and other issues associated with social movements.

Tarrow's study on social movements contributed to the popularity of the political process approach. His abstract theoretical conception of cycles of contention has fascinated academics who value this sort of "scientific reasoning." Despite its strengths, the political process approach has some critical weaknesses. First, this approach tends to overemphasize the political-structural dimension of "new" social movements, while giving scant attention to their cultural and economic dimensions. Indeed, Melucci, Keane, and Mier (1989) pointed out that the political process approach has adopted an almost political reductionist perspective in its application to the study of "new" social movements. Second, the political process paradigm gives little consideration to the differences and relationships between "old" and "new" social movements. Understanding these differences is vital to understanding the contemporary dynamics of coalition building, network linking, resource sharing, and discourse construction. The dynamic interaction of these movements creates opportunities not only for themselves, but also for others by diffusing collective action through social networks and by forming coalitions of social actors. These processes can strengthen the capacity of social movements to contest the state. Finally, the political process approach tends to ignore the motivations, visions, and strategies of people engaged in "new" social movements.

Identity-Oriented Approach

The identity-oriented approach has been associated, among others, with the work of Touraine, Habermas, Castells in Europe, and Escobar and Alvarez in Latin America (Porta and Diani, 1999). It explains how "new" social movements strive to create group identities and solidarities to contest skewed power relations and dominant forms of cultural orientations. This approach responded to the shortcomings of the political process approach, and emerged in the context of rising disillusionment with Marxism and the waning influence of "old" social movements in Europe and Latin America.

The identity-oriented approach has two main streams—the European and Latin American. The European stream is influenced by political economy and centers its analysis mainly on why these nonclass-based movements emerge and their significance for modern society. The Latin American stream is influenced by postmodernism and poststructuralism[12] and focuses primarily on the potential role of these "new" social movements to promote alternatives to development. However, both streams share the view that identity-oriented movements are the "new" actors in the historical process of social transformation, replacing the labor and liberal-bourgeois movements of the past. For Touraine (1988) and Habermas (1991), the emergence of "new" social movements is a manifestation of the crisis of postmodern or postindustrial society. Specifically, it is a response to the failure of the democratic system to guarantee individual freedom, equality, and fraternity. Also, these two theorists argue that the state is turning into an authoritarian and technocratic structure, influenced by the free market and commercial mass media. This situation erodes democratic citizenship and dominates the public and private spheres of social life. From this, it follows that "new" social movements are responses to the state's postmodern propensity to control, commercialize, and commodify social life.

In Latin America, the early "new" social movements emerged in a particular historical conjuncture—the crisis of state-led capitalist development, the weakening of authoritarian regimes and left-wing political parties, the transformation of the Catholic Church, the awakening of gender, environmental, and ethnic consciousness, and the foreign "invasion" of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The church played a fundamental role in the formation and operation of grassroots development organizations.[13] Over the last three decades, this complex and dynamic context has contributed to the shaping and reshaping of the objectives and strategies of these movements. "New"

social movements expressed localized social struggles, not concentrated in the political realm of the state. Their arrival reinforced community identity, redefined democratic values and practices, opened political spaces for women, and expressed conflicts beyond the sphere of economic production. Above all, new social movements ushered in two vital tools for popular mobilization and empowerment—collective leadership structures and social solidarity networks. As these tools became more sophisticated, they enabled new movements to advance social agendas, advocacy networks, and political coalitions on a transnational basis. In the post–Cold War era, transnational networking significantly altered the political characters, social visions, and strategies of these movements. Notably, the institutional differences between new social movements and NGOs became blurred as both embraced activities oriented toward policy advocacy, provision of services, and grassroots development. For Escobar and Alvarez (1992), new social movements were important sources for organizing and channeling new forms of antisystemic activism. Specifically, they were vital tools for constructing emancipatory political, cultural, and ecological discourses. These movements were capable of reimagining the world and inventing alternative processes of world-transforming and world-making. Escobar (1994) came upon this messianic view of new social movements while criticizing Western development.[14] His linking of new social movements and alternative development gained considerable influence within the academic community during the early 1990s. Escobar rejected development as a tool of Western hegemony, a system of domination and control that imposes Western discourses and practices about how the world should be. Using Foucault's analysis of power, Escobar argued that development has caused more harm than good in developing countries. These countries had come under the iron heel of Western institutions, who imposed a model of development that promised but failed to bring about material prosperity. Considering the poor track record of the post–World War II development project, Escobar took a radical stance and declared that development must be rejected altogether. Notably, Escobar's rejection of development came during an opportune time—the impasse or crisis of development debate of the 1970s and 1980s. Many development theorists turned to Escobar's postmodernist theory to try to move on from this impasse or crisis, thus, heralding the "end of development" (Sachs, 1992). The central theme of postmodernist theory became clear: development should be replaced by new strategies of human emancipation based on the new social movements' strategies

and practices. Ultimately, postdevelopment offered not only a damning critique of Western mainstream development, but also a potentially valuable framework for attaining development that is defined, initiated, and controlled by those seeking to change their lives. The Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico, in 1994, added further momentum to this postmodernist approach to new social movements. In summary, Escobar ushered in a postdevelopment era, in which new social movements were seen as playing a messianic role.

The identity-oriented approach shifted the focus of analysis of social movements from politics and economics to politics and culture, from absolutism to relativism, from objectivity to subjectivity, from the state to civil society, from historical actors to social actors, and from national development to grassroots development. Epistemologically and methodologically, the study of social movements migrated from macro to micro theories, based on discourse, not class analysis. However, the identity-oriented approach to new social movements suffered from serious flaws. First, the emphasis on cultural identity and resistance unintentionally incited political tribalism. Claims of cultural differences and rights weakened relatively unified efforts to seek comprehensive and balanced strategies for advancing social change. Second, the rejection of utopian dreams unfortunately undermined the search for visions of new societies. Utopian dreams represented a vital source of hope and inspiration for social struggles. Indeed, "old" social movements that espoused utopian projects of societal transformation played important (though controversial) roles in the making of history. Finally, the postdevelopment path through new social movements was not clearly defined. Are these movements capable of empowering the poor to effectively contest powerful institutions that legitimize Western development? If so, what sort of strategies should these movements follow, in order to truly advance postdevelopment? If postdevelopment implies the construction of new, humane, culturally, ecologically, and democratically respectful modes of development, is the reorientation of the state vital to achieving this objective? These were some of the critical questions that the identity-oriented approach to new social movements did not clearly address. The truth is that the promotion of postdevelopment or alternative development requires broadening, not narrowing, the political base of popular struggles. It requires projecting a broad vision and a coherent strategy of social change that goes beyond the politics of identity and of protest. The MST is attempting to do this: it is linking micro-to macroforms of political solidarity and resistance,

in order to effectively promote structural change. Its social vision encompasses a broader project of social transformation that stresses greater equity, democracy, and justice.

Neo-Marxist approach

The Neo-Marxist approach to new social movements is associated with, among others, the work of Brass (1991) and Petras and Veltmeyer (2005). Although these scholars explore new social movements from a critical Marxist perspective, they provide different, albeit complementary, explanations about the origins, roles, opportunities, limitations, and strategies of these movements within the context of neoliberal global capitalism. They share the view that the so-called new social movements that emerged in the 1980s, are best understood not as antisystemic, but as movements that encapsulate the concern for a broad range of nonclass issues such as social injustice, the lack of democracy, the violation of human rights, violence against women and the lack of opportunities for them, and environmental degradation. The context for the formation of these new social movements was provided by the installation of a "new world order" that liberated the "forces of economic freedom" (the market, private enterprise, and foreign direct investment) from the regulatory constraints of the welfare-development state, and by the widespread rejection in academia of "structuralism" and all forms of scientific analysis, particularly Marxist class analysis and political economy (Brass, 1991; Veltmeyer, 2007). In this context, the theorists of the new social movements, armed with a postmodern sensibility and concern for culture, ignored the growing concern in both the cities and the countryside—the negative impact of the forces of change released by the neoliberal policy agenda adopted by many governments in line with the Washington Consensus. This concern led to the emergence of resistance and the formation of new sociopolitical movements with their base in the organizations of landless rural workers, dispossessed and semiproletarianized peasants, and indigenous communities. Like the peasant and labor movements, and the armies for national liberation, of the 1960s and 1970s, that had been either defeated or brought to ground by the state through a strategy and actions that combined rural integrated development (via international cooperation) with outright repression; the new sociopolitical movements were mainly concerned with class issues—land, labor, and public policies. As for the struggles that were theorized by a generation of postmodern academics as new social movements, with the advent of the 1990s, and

the turn of development theorists and practitioners toward "local or community-based" forms of development. The new social movements were metamorphosed into "civil society" or nongovernmental organizations, which were subsequently enlisted by the development agencies as strategic partners in the project of creating a more participatory and inclusive form of development with international cooperation and social participation.

In the context of Latin America, Petras and Veltmeyer (2005) argue that the relevance of a Marxist approach to Latin American new social movements is better understood by reflecting on the social and economic, as well as environmental, impacts of neoliberalism in the region over the last three decades. Neoliberalism incited changes in the modus operandi of old and new social movements as it affected all spheres of social life. Privatization, deregulation, and free trade exacerbated socioeconomic and environmental problems. These processes also forced NGOs to reevaluate their agendas and strategies. Microdevelopment projects were neither viable nor effective in dealing with large-scale socioeconomic dislocation and marginalization. Indeed, small-scale "band-aid" projects were often counterproductive, as neoliberal governments counted on these foreign-funded local NGOs to soften the social impact of their economic policies (Veltmeyer and O'Malley, 2001). Thus, neoliberalism awakened old and new social movements from political inertia and myopia during the 1990s. In Mexico, *El Barzón* (The Joker) movement demanded debt relief, lower interest rates, and an end to foreclosures. In Brazil, medium-scale farmers organized nation-wide protests to make similar demands as they suffered the consequences of a global agricultural subsidy war. The Zapatistas in Mexico, the Mapuches in Chile, the Quechuas in Peru, the Aymaras in Bolivia, and the Guaraní-peasants in Paraguay, all demanded political and cultural rights. In Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela labor and student movements protested against high unemployment, low wages, the privatization of higher education, and the destruction and commodification of public goods. In summary, growing human insecurity and social exclusion, as well as poverty and inequality, as a consequence of neoliberal policies reshaped the agendas of these movements. Generally, the social movements mounted by peasant and indigenous communities led the resistance and the popular movement, and in some contexts (e.g., Ecuador) managed to either halt or reverse the government's neoliberal policy agenda. By the end of the 1990s, these movements had placed neoliberalism on the defensive,

creating conditions for the rejection of neoliberalism as an economic model and the formation of a postneoliberal state.

However, wherever the guardians of the neoliberal world order had managed to turn the rural poor away from the social movements, in favor of a nonpower local development approach to social change, (on this see Holloway, 2010) the resistance to neoliberalism was localized, fragmented, and limited. The main weakness of these social movements, aside from internal divisions and a fragmented social base, was the lack of a clear strategy beyond armed insurrections, general strikes, street blockades, and demonstrations. Moreover, these actions had produced mixed results, when not supported by broad sectors of society. Likewise, the disastrous experiences of *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) or SL, and the *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* (Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement) or MRTA guerrilla groups in Peru (1979–1994) demonstrated that the politics of despair generates division, intolerance, and fanaticism.

By the late 1990s, the modus operandi of old and new social movements had substantially changed not only in Latin America, but also in many other regions of the world. In response to the challenges of global capitalist restructuring, these movements had reconfigured their identities, strategies, and agendas. Notably, they understood the need to construct cross-border solidarity networks in order to effectively address old and new problems of poverty, inequality, racism, genocide, women's rights, and other issues. The construction of a socially just, global society demanded fundamental structural changes. Accordingly, these movements had to go beyond mere demands for policy changes and service provisions—they had to contest well-entrenched national and transnational power structures.

The opportunity to demonstrate open defiance of these structures came on November 30, 1999, during the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting held in Seattle, Washington, USA. This meeting was intended to launch a new round of free trade negotiations, particularly in the agricultural sector. However, it was severely disrupted by the presence of a large-scale protest by diverse groups that banded together for a common cause. The "Battle of Seattle" highlighted not only the widespread discontent about neoliberal globalization, but also distrust, or outright rejection, of transnational corporations and institutions. Although, the demonstrators offered relatively little vision of an alternative path to a better world, their presence clearly manifested the need to advance new forms of political agency to create a more ethical and democratic global society. Even so, the Battles of Seattle (1999),

Prague (2000), and Genoa (2001) seeded hope in the power of collective action to change skewed power relations. Simultaneously, these battles further incited the processes of collective resistance to neoliberal globalization. Building on this antiglobalization and anticorporate momentum, social movements from all over the world used ad hoc transnational solidarity structures and resources to improve their visibility and strengthen their efforts to contest the power of global capital. The antiglobalization movements demonstrated the shortcomings of the international institutions and the nation-state in softening or managing serious socioeconomic disequilibria.

The impact of antiglobalization and anticorporate movements were uneven. These movements were relatively successful in disrupting further global trade negotiations and in raising social awareness regarding the neoliberal globalization agenda. However, they were not very successful in avoiding internal division, nor in advancing progressive visions and strategies of social change. Their successes and failures illustrated the need to move beyond the politics of identity and the politics of protest, in order to effectively promote consistent and progressive social change. Some scholars suggested that transnational movements were bypassing the nation-state as the main site of social struggles (Sassen and Drainville, 2004).[15] In reality, the state remained the key site of power contestation, because for the vast majority of social movements the state was still "closer to home." Global struggles inspired local struggles, and local struggles inspired global struggles. This relationship was vital not only for nurturing broad-based movements, but also for feeding creativity, passion, and commitment for social justice. The MST embodies this transformative vision. Since the early 1980s, this movement has made enormous efforts to bring together landless peasants from all over Brazil, under a common agenda—the struggle for advancing sustainable rural livelihoods by holistically reconceptualizing the theory and practice of agrarian reform. The MST has advanced a classed-based transformative pedagogy by linking "reflection to action" within a concrete social struggle. This pedagogy emerged out of necessity and was eventually adopted out of conviction. Notably, this pedagogy is incorporated into a broader project of political and economic democracy.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA)

Since the 1950s, the international development community has tackled rural poverty with little success. Rural poverty is deep, widespread,

and difficult to alleviate (IFAD, 2011). The persistence of rural poverty reflects the failure of rural development for six decades. The history of rural development reflects the history of development in general: it is a history of both hope and despair. From the 1950s to the 1970s, state and donor-driven rural development strategies did not effectively address chronic poverty, rural migration, and environmental degradation. These rural development strategies (i.e. agricultural modernization, basic needs, redistribution with growth, and poverty alleviation) were largely Keynesian and state-centric, with a strong emphasis on intensifying agricultural production (Grindle, 1985). These strategies relied on modern technology, agricultural extension, integrated rural development, rapid rural appraisal, state-led credit, and farming research systems. They cultivated the illusion that agricultural modernization would lead to material prosperity and, therefore, personal fulfillment and happiness. For the rural poor, this promise did not materialize. In fact, for the vast majority of the rural population, this promise turned out to be one of the greatest rural policy deceptions in modern times.

By the late 1980s, development practitioners were convinced that economic growth alone could not lift people out of poverty. In most developing countries, decades of state-led development, particularly in the countryside, had not produced the expected outcomes. Neoliberal rural development emerged from the criticism of the shortcomings of state-led development. Rural development experts ceased to view the state as the engine of production, growth, and equity. Rather, they saw the market as the preferred driver of development (Veltmeyer and O'Malley, 2001). Thus, the market approach to rural development was touted as the best path for improving the overall welfare of rural people. This was a misguided assumption. In Latin America and elsewhere, neoliberalism promoted deregulation, privatization, and free trade, as the most efficient polices for generating long-term economic prosperity. Neoliberalism also shunned the role of the state and discouraged government intervention in economic, financial, and even social affairs. The implementation of neoliberal rural development policies deepened the exclusionary nature of agricultural modernization and led to a general deterioration of social conditions in the Latin American countryside (Gwynne and Kay, 2004).

By the early 1990s, development scholars were shifting their attention from national food security to rural livelihoods. British rural development scholars linked to the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) proposed the Sustainable

Livelihoods Approach (SLA). Its basic premise was that the multidimensional character of poverty required a holistic, systematic, and participatory response (Carney, 1998). Poverty-focused development should be people-centered, responsive and participatory, conducted in partnership, and sustainable. Such an approach, it argued, enhances productivity, secures ownership of and access to assets and resources, and promotes ecologically friendly farming practices (Chambers and Conway, 1992). The SLA became central to discussions regarding rural development, poverty reduction, and environmental management. It placed (in theory) the priorities of the poor at the center of the development process. The SLA introduced many new concepts and tools—sustainability, empowerment, participation, social capital, civil society, and good governance. The SLA raised some important theoretical and practical questions about the socioeconomic construction of rural livelihoods within the contexts of local scale processes. Indeed, this approach became an important tool for understanding the complexities of poverty: it provided a conceptual framework with a set of operational principles to provide guidance on development policies and practices. (Morse and McNamara, 2013)

The SLA stressed community participation, capacity building, social capital, and sustainability. It also encouraged the active joint participation and collaboration of communities, governments, international organizations, research institutions, and civil society organizations. Proponents of this approach argued that this collaboration was vital for amplifying the voices of the poorest people and, consequently, for encouraging long-term solutions to their problems without undermining the natural-ecological resource. This approach fascinated the international development community, particularly because it seemed to provide a good alternative to the more confrontational approach to mobilizing the forces of resistance favored by the social movements. As of the 1990s, the SLA has been widely adopted by many governments and development organizations.[16]

Theorists of SLA define and describe livelihoods in the following terms: "A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets, (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living." (Chambers and Conway, 1992: 6) "A livelihood," Chambers and Conway add, "is sustainable when it can cope with, and recover from stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base."

This definition integrates three fundamental concepts: (1) capability—the ability of individuals to realize their full potential as human beings; (2) equity—the promotion of livelihood opportunities for one group should not foreclose options for other groups, either now or in the future; and (3) sustainability—the ability to maintain and improve livelihoods without undermining the natural ecosystem.[17] Ellis provided a definition of livelihood similar to the one offered by Chambers and Conway: Livelihood refers to "the assets (natural, physical, human, financial, and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by individuals or household." (Ellis, 2000: 10)

This definition reflects Carney's concept of livelihood (1998) and it is notable for its market language. Eventually, this definition of livelihood was embellished by the discourse on good governance. This combination of market-friendly language and emphasis on good governance made the SLA attractive to institutions such as the UNDP, the World Bank, and FAO. By the late 1990s, the UNDP had embraced the sustainable livelihood agenda as part of the organization's overall sustainable human development (SHD) mandate. This mandate included—poverty eradication, employment and sustainable livelihoods, gender equity, protection and regeneration of the environment, and governance.

Several points can be made regarding SLA as a development approach. First, these concepts and principles are by no means original. In fact, some of them (i.e. participation, capabilities, and sustainability) were widely discussed and adopted during the 1970s and 1980s. For example, the Integrated Rural Development and Popular Development approaches emphasized sustainability and participation as the key to social development.

Secondly, notwithstanding its purported holistic character, the SLA has major weaknesses. First, the SLA does not recognize power inequities existing within or between communities, organizations, and societies. Poverty and inequality are due to the lack of power and representation as well as the class structure of the broader capitalist system—what economists at ECLAC (2010) have described as the "structure of social inequality."[18] SLA theoreticians argue that overcoming this situation requires "empowerment," or capacitating the poor with the resources needed in order for them to control their own lives (Helmore and Singh, 2001). However, this is a merely instrumentalist and reformist view of empowerment: it does not view empowerment as an inherently sociopolitical and educational

process, by which community members learn to transform skewed power structures. Second, the SLA does not give enough attention to the inherently conflictive character of the development process. Its notion of "participation" denotes a depoliticized and harmonious process of mobilizing local community organizations, international development organizations, and government agencies under a common agenda. This is certainly not the reality. Different "stakeholders" have different, and in most cases opposing, views of what constitutes "sustainable livelihoods," and the best strategies to achieve them. Third, the SLA tends to view community from a narrow perspective. It fails to see communities as dynamic social spaces with complex forms of exploitation, domination, and resistance.

Fourth and most importantly, the SLA provides no understanding of the big picture—how these communities fit into the broader capitalist system and how they are negatively affected by external forces of change and capitalist development such as proletarianization and globalization. It fails to explain the structures of economic and political power that perpetuate maldevelopment, and draws the attention and the concern of the inhabitants of the rural communities, many of them landless or near-landless semiproletarianized "peasants" who are "constructed" by the World Bank and the development agencies as the "rural poor," away from the public policies that facilitate the workings of the capitalist system. These structures of social inequality and power constrain the capacity of poor people to secure their livelihoods and, significantly, lead them to seek change and an improvement in their lives in the local spaces of this structure, rather than, challenging the power holders or opting for a more confrontational approach to change favored by the social movements (Veltmeyer, 2007). Moreover, the SLA underestimates the intrinsic connection between urban and rural poverty and between urban and rural livelihoods. Both the city and the countryside are places of unsustainable livelihoods today. Finally, the SLA's language is highly prohibitive for the rural poor—the imprecise definition and use of concepts such as "livelihoods strategies," "livelihoods resources," and "livelihoods outcomes" do not resonate well with the poor. They are intellectual concepts open to different interpretations and tailored to the needs of professional development experts and policymakers. They do not empower the poor to act for themselves, in bringing about substantive social change.

Peasants are creative and resourceful. They tend to use tools that are beneficial to them and modify or reject tools that are not beneficial to them. This is certainly the case with the MST. This movement

has modified and incorporated many of the SLA principles into its agricultural cooperative strategy. Specifically, the MST has reframed and simplified the SLA's discourse in order to equip the rural poor to become their own agents of progressive development. In the process of forming cooperatives, landless peasants came to understand the strengths and shortcomings of the SLA. The realities of their social situation led them to adapt the SLA to make it more relevant to their real-life situation. Accordingly, the MST developed a distinctive pedagogy for advancing sustainable rural livelihoods. This pedagogy challenges the poor to ask questions about present global human and ecological insecurities and to look at these insecurities from a different angle than the logic of democratic capitalism.

Conclusion

In the 1990s, there were three main modalities of social change. An important modality was political democracy and electoral politics. However, notwithstanding the return to democracy in most of the region after several decades of military rule and authoritarian regimes, many people rejected this road to social change, or were skeptical of what could be achieved within the institutional framework of liberal democracy. Given this skepticism and the widespread rejection of the old way of doing politics, (fighting over state power) many on the Left turned toward either the social movements or increasingly the "nonpower" approach (the new way of doing politics) and the option of local or community-based "development" made available with international cooperation. In the1990s, the most important and dynamic social movements in the region were forced to confront this dilemma—electoral politics, social mobilization of the resistance, or local development. Each of these movements responded in a different way. In Ecuador, CONAIE (the Federation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) turned toward both electoral politics and the development option, with the result of a dramatic weakening of the movement in its capacity to lead the popular resistance against the neoliberal policy agenda. In Bolivia, the social movements managed to achieve state power by electoral means, but with the support of the social movements, most of which had their base in the rural communities. As for the MST, arguably the most dynamic social movement in Latin America, the jury is still out. The purpose in the subsequent chapters in this book is to tell the story—to reconstruct the dynamics of the on-going struggle for agrarian change and development.

3

The Politics of Agrarian Reform in Brazil: A Historical Background

Brazil is a country with enormous concentration of farmland in the hands of a privileged few. Land inequality has remained virtually unchanged since colonial times. Not even the efforts made by the successive democratic governments over the last three decades to redistribute land through the PNRA have changed this situation. Continuous high land inequality has stymied Brazil's path toward a more socially just and environmentally sustainable society.

Land inequality is a legacy of colonialism—it can be traced to the land policies established by the Portuguese Crown in the sixteenth-century to promote an agroexport economy. This objective legitimized the creation of the *latifúndia,* or large estates, under the control of an influential local elite. The exploitation of indigenous and slave labor played a key role in the workings of this economy (Prado Júnior, 1971). Ultimately, the development of the agroexport economy led to the uprooting of indigenous peoples, peasants, tenant farmers, and rural laborers (Viotti da Costa, 2000). More than five centuries later, the *latifúndia* remains a source of wealth, prestige, and power. Its continuing expansion has been the main cause of intermittent and often violent conflicts in the countryside (Bethell, 1987; Fausto, 1999; Fernandes, 2000).

Beginning in the early 1980s, rural revolts reemerged with intensity. Once again, landless peasants rose up against the status quo—they openly demanded comprehensive agrarian reform by carrying out nation-wide massive land seizures. The landless peasants began a process of political mobilization. This historic process of grassroots mobilization has been characterized by a tremendous vitality

throughout the country—the landless peasants have crossed community boundaries to establish nation-wide and international organizations and solidarity networks. They have also made efforts to open new political spaces for indigenous and rural peoples. These actions drastically transformed the political landscape in the countryside. Rural Brazil became an important arena for new forms of land struggles, propelled by diverse rural movements, or *movimentos socioterritoriais*, of different ideological and cultural orientations, including semimessianic and Afro-Brazilian movements. From 2002 to 2012, 166 movements engaged in land occupations in Brazil (figure 3.1). Among all these movements, the MST has remained the best known and best organized.

Despite their considerable size and motivation, and after three decades of collective mobilization, the aforementioned movements continue to confront serious obstacles in advancing their objectives. One of the main obstacles is the biased nature of Brazil's political system. The state is certainly not a fair mediator of conflicting interests in so-called liberal democratic societies. Rather, the state tends to defend the interests of capitalism over those of labor, and the rich over the poor. On the issue of agrarian reform, the state has played a reactive role rather than a proactive one. Since the 1980s, the successive democratic governments have been under intense pressure to

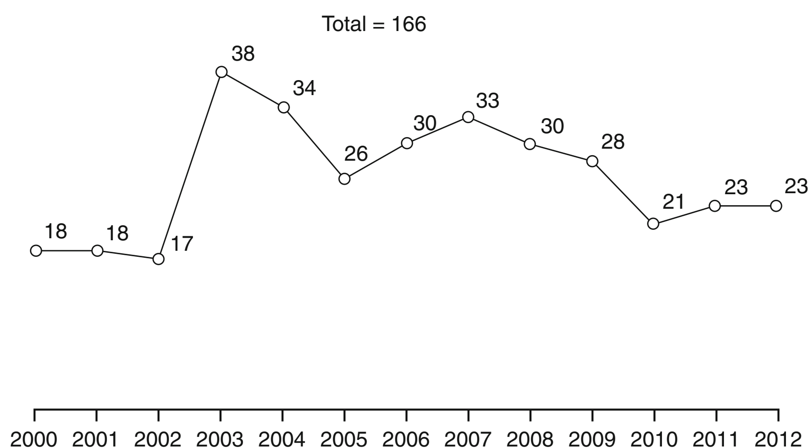

Figure 3.1 Evolution of rural movements engaged in land occupations in Brazil, 2000–2012.

Source: DATALUTA. Banco de Dados da Luta Pela Terra: Relatorio Brasil 2012.

either limit or increase their involvement in agrarian reform. On the one hand, the powerful rural elite, supported by corporate interest groups, vehemently opposes comprehensive or even limited agrarian reform. On the other hand, the landless peasants, supported by progressive social forces, fervently demand comprehensive agrarian reform. The rural elite within the dominant class has so far had the upper hand. Nevertheless, the landless peasants have achieved meaningful results that have encouraged them to continue their struggle. They are aware that the struggle for agrarian reform is a struggle to change well-entrenched power structures.

Agrarian Policy in Colonial Brazil, 1500–1822

The objectives of the Portuguese Crown's agrarian policy during this period were twofold—to secure territorial control and economic benefits. The constant Dutch, French, and Spanish incursions and the need to find new income forced the Portuguese Crown to resort to the establishment of a semifeudal system of territorial control *(Capitanias Hereditárias),* in order to secure its foothold in the New World (Fausto, 1999). This policy was established in 1536 by King João III, who created 15 hereditary captaincies and awarded them to *donatários* (influential Portuguese nobles) for their services and loyalties to the Crown. The captaincies measured from 150 to 600 km in length and were all perpendicular to the line of the Treaty of Tordesillas—the treaty imposed by Pope Alexander VI in 1494 to settle the contentious possession of newly discovered non-Christian lands between Portugal and Spain. The *donatários* were charged with developing, protecting, and administering the captaincies on behalf of the Portuguese Crown. They were also responsible for pacifying the indigenous peoples' resistance to Portuguese rule by incorporating them into the colonial society and economy.

An important feature of the hereditary captaincies was the fact that the *donatários* were entitled to take possession, but not ownership, of the land. As such, they could not sell their captaincies. Ownership of the land remained with the Portuguese King and only the King had the right to change or nullify a captaincy. The *donatários* promoted the economic development of the captaincies by granting large tracks of royal land (*sesmarias*), for a fee, to relatively well-to-do Portuguese settlers (*sesmeiros*) willing to make the land productive and pay tribute to the Portuguese Crown. A *sesmaria* could be between 16 to 50 square miles, or 40 to 129 square

kilometers. Any poor Portuguese settler who lacked the means to acquire a *sesmaria* could either live within the *sesmeiro's* land as a tenant or squat on unclaimed Crown land. Squatting was forbidden, but rarely enforced due to incapacity of the Crown to oversee its enormous geographical territory. The *sesmeiros*, like the *donatários*, had the right to use the land, but could not own it. However, this practice did not prevent the *sesmeiros* from making the land a source of personal wealth. They developed the land into large plantation complexes, or *fazendas*, to promote major export commodities. The lack of settlers who could work as labor forced the introduction of slaves, first indigenous and, eventually, African. Over time, the *sesmeiros* became known as *latifundiários* or *fazendeiros* in reference to their control over large estates.[1]

As Caio Prado Junior (1971) stated, the *latifúndia* shaped the structure of power relations, material production, and social formation in colonial Brazil. It functioned as both a self-sufficient agricultural community and a profitable agricultural enterprise. The earliest *latifundiários* enriched themselves by cultivating sugar cane for export to European markets. Sugar cane plantations were fairly sophisticated. Sugar cane was processed and refined in the mills (*engenhos de açúcar*) with indigenous and African slave labor. By the mid-1700s sugar cane accounted for almost 95 percent of the total export earnings; Brazil was the world's leading sugar exporter. Sugar cane production ushered in the *latifúndia* as an important source of wealth, prestige, and power.

The establishment of the *latifúndia* set in motion a historical process of dispossession, genocide,[2] slavery, impoverishment, monoculture, and deforestation. The interplay of these factors gave rise to intermittent confrontations between the indigenous peoples and the African slaves on one side, and the colonial rulers and big landowners on the other. However, these conflicts cannot be recognized as peasant struggles per se because peasants as a class did not exist. In most cases, these were struggles for freedom, autonomy, and community. This was certainly the case with the African slaves' revolts against the harsh treatment by their masters (Anderson, 1996). More than five centuries later, these early resistance struggles are seared in the landless peasants' historical memory.[3] They vividly remember the historical significance of the *quilombos*, the self-governed African communities established by runaway slaves, and relate these to the current struggles for land and autonomy. They also remember the famous African slave-warrior Zumbi, the leader of the largest and

best-known *quilombo* of Palmares (1630–1695). Today, many MST encampments and settlements, particularly in the north and north-eastern regions of Brazil, are named after Palmares.

Agrarian Policy in the Brazilian Empire, 1822–1889

In 1822, the establishment of the Brazilian Monarchy (*Império do Brasil*) formally ended Portuguese colonial rule. Under the rule of Emperor Don Pedro II, the Monarchy reinforced the inherited monopolistic land policy with the introduction of the *Lei de Terras*, or Land Law in 1855. Basically, this law preserved public land by forbidding *posse* (squatting). Prior to the passing of this law, "settlers" had obtained land by squatting and enforced their land claims by social norms and traditions. This practice was (and still is), very common, particularly in frontier regions where land was abundant and government enforcement minimal. The *Lei de Terras* forbade this practice by allowing the acquisition of public land through legal purchase only. This policy measure effectively excluded the poor from legally owning land.

Several socioeconomic and historical developments contributed to the enactment of the Land Law. However, there are four fundamental developments that propelled it—the abolition of the *sesmaria*; the rise of capitalist agriculture; the need to establish formal private landownership; and the influx of migration. With the introduction of the Land Law, the meaning of landownership changed—land became a market commodity available to those with purchasing power. The previous land policy, by which *sesmeiros* had the right to use the land, but could not own it, ended with the introduction of the Land Law. Another important development of this Land Law was the establishment of the *Repartição Geral das Terras Públicas* (General Office for Land Administration) to administer public lands and promote colonization schemes (Viotti da Costa, 2000). This bureaucratic institution, like many others to come, proved to be ineffective and biased in favour of the rural elite.

The Land Law ushered Brazil into a new era of agricultural development that contributed to further social exclusion. This legacy still haunts modern Brazil. Unlike events in the United States or Canada, where the introduction of agricultural capitalist development was accompanied by progressive redistributive land polices, Brazil followed

a regressive land policy that benefited a small rural elite. Ultimately, the Land Law of 1850, laid the legal foundation for changing capital-land-labor relations in rural Brazil.

The people most affected by the Land Law were the peasants.[4] Over time, they found it increasingly difficult to acquire land because of their limited financial resources, and the ill-defined and ever-expanding boundaries of the *latifúndia*. In most cases, squatting became the only alternative to gain access to land. This unfortunate situation tended to place peasants at the margin of the law and in constant conflict with the authorities and landowners. Peasants existed on the margins of the *latifúndia*, and produced crops for household consumption and local markets. All of these factors inhibited the development of a stable and prosperous peasant economy.

Agrarian Policy in the Brazilian Old Republic, 1889–1930

In 1889, Marshall Deodora da Fonseca deposed Emperor Don Pedro II and declared Brazil a republic. However, the change of political regime did not alter the *latifúndia*. On the contrary, republican rule strengthened and encouraged the expansion of large-scale coffee plantations in the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Paraná.[5] The *latifundiários* (big landowners) became a powerful political and economic class, whose most influential representatives ruled Brazil from 1889 to 1930.

In addition to opening new agricultural frontiers and encouraging immigration from Asia and Europe, the republican rulers introduced wage labor in order to accelerate the modernization of capital-labor relations in the countryside. The introduction of wage labor gave rise to a rural class-consciousness. This period marked the beginning of localized peasant movements. However, they were unique movements inspired by a combination of political and religious ideologies. As such, these movements represented more than the struggle for material interests (i.e., access to land). In the northeastern region of Brazil, the emergence of the so-called "messianic movements," led by socially-conscious charismatic religious leaders, represented the peculiar character of these early peasant movements (Pessar, 2004). These movements sought the "promised land" by rebelling against the social injustices of the secular order. The most well known example was Canudos (1896–1897), led by Antonio Conselheiro, a lay Catholic

preacher. The root causes of this rebellion were complex, involving social, political, and religious grievances (Myscofski, 1987; Levine, 1998; Pessar, 2004). More than a century later, the experience of the Canudos community, located in the state of Bahia, symbolizes the rich and varied tradition of rural rebellion in Brazil. Today, there are newly-established peasant settlements named Canudos in many states.

In the southern and Central regions of the country, similar peasant rebellions took place in response to the increasing encroachment of the *latifúndia* and forced land evictions. The best known was the Contestado Rebellion (1912–1916) led by "Monk" João Maria, a Catholic lay preacher and healer. The rebellion took place in the states of Paraná and Santa Catarina. The root causes of this conflict were complex (Diacon, 1991). However, the granting of land to the US-based Brazil Railway Company immediately triggered the conflict. This grant required the expropriation of land belonging to peasant families. The republic's inability to meet peasant demands for fair compensation reached an impasse, ending in open rebellion. The conflict eventually broadened to include other concerns. As with Canudos, the authorities' response was pulverizing violence (Diacon, 1991). For the republic, these peasant rebellions represented serious threats. As such, the authorities did not hesitate to use brutal force to subdue them.

Agrarian Policy in Corporatist and Populist Brazil, 1930–1964

In 1930, Getúlio Vargas deposed President Washington Luis and put an end to the political monopoly of the landed rural oligarchy. He closed Brazil's Congress seven years later and banned all political parties and trade unions. Vargas dominated Brazilian politics for almost three decades. He was a charming, but cunning and ruthless politician. Vargas's rule (1930–1945; 1951–1954) shattered the old political and economic structures of Brazilian society. He sought to transform Brazil from an agriculture-based economy into an industrialized powerhouse under direct state intervention. Industrialization led to rural migration, the formation of the middle and working classes, and the realignment of national political forces. Vargas was a wealthy proindustrial nationalist and anti-Communist who favored capitalist development through a top-down approach. During his

rule, Brazil experienced state-induced, import-substitution industrialization. Vargas had support from a wide range of Brazil's burgeoning urban professional and working classes, as well as progressive military sectors disenchanted with the politics of *coronelismo*—the system under which political control was centralized in the hands of a locally dominant oligarch known as a colonel. Vargas believed that the only means of industrializing Brazil was by a strong, centralized, interventionist state (Skidmore, 1999; Ribeiro, 2006).

Although Vargas posed a serious threat to the rural barons, particularly those from the states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, he did not dismantle their economic privileges, perhaps because Vargas' own political base was vulnerable and prone to dissension, or because he did not wish to openly confront the rural barons. In any case, Vargas' industrialization project required a vibrant agricultural sector capable of earning foreign currency to further industrialization, and capable of providing affordable food to the growing urban population. Alienating the *latifundiários* could have caused serious problems for his nationalist economic development project.

Vargas' state-led corporatism greatly affected Brazil's political and economic landscape (Hentschke, 2007). The emergent upper, middle, and working classes became new but unequal players in the political arena. These classes represented different ideological interests, pursued different political agendas, and supported Vargas to advance their own interests. Vargas actively courted urban workers for their support. He introduced generous labor legislation that greatly benefited workers by providing them with social welfare benefits. With Vargas, urban Brazilian workers gained a legitimate presence in the political process. Vargas' corporatist state effectively mediated conflicts between capital and labor. However, this mediation had a complex set of controlling mechanisms, which ultimately left the labor movement with little autonomy from the state. Three basic institutions sustained Vargas' corporatist system—the trade unions, the labor tribunals, and the social security system. Since the corporatist state controlled the levers of these institutions, the state was ultimately able to exert control over every phase of capital-labor relations. Even so, labor dissension abounded. Leftist labor groups associated with communist and socialist political organizations were constantly defying Vargas' labor control. They were also mobilizating support in the countryside, particularly the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB). In addition, the *União Nacional dos Estudantes* (National Student Union), which was established in 1943, frequently joined forces with dissenting

labor groups to demand an end to Vargas' authoritarian rule. Vargas' response was unequivocal—political repression.

Unfortunately, Vargas' urban labor legislation did not extend to rural workers. Strong political pressure from the powerful rural elite thwarted Vargas' efforts to extend labor legislation into the countryside. The elite also vetoed attempts to promote agrarian reform. Vargas sought to placate the landless peasants and rural workers by promising, but never delivering, labor rights and agrarian reform. In 1946, the Brazilian Congress promised to "promote the just distribution of property, with equal opportunity for all." However, this promise, like many others to come, was soon forgotten by the political elite.

Vargas attempted to tackle growing landlessness by promoting projects to open new land frontiers. In 1931, he created the *Serviço de Irrigação, Reforestação e Colonização* (Irrigation, Reforestation, and Colonization Service), or SIRC, to coordinate the resettlement of landless peasants in the southern and central regions of the country. In 1938, Vargas expanded this project with the creation of the *Divisão da Terra e Colonização* (Land and Colonization Division), or DTC. Unfortunately, Vargas' colonization policies had limited success in solving landlessness—landless peasants showed little inclination to move to other regions of the country without the financial and technical assistance necessary to make nonagricultural land productive. They showed more interest in migrating to the growing industrial urban centers of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, where industrialization offered them better employment opportunities. The city became a temporary refuge for the rural poor. In the coming decades, these cities would become crowded, as continuing rural migration led to chaotic urban expansion.

In 1945, Vargas yielded to popular calls for greater democracy and was forced to step down by the army. Five years later, he was voted back into the presidency. However, by 1953 Vargas' rule had weakened. External and internal developments had fractured his hold on power. Brazil's once thriving economy was riddled with foreign debt, high inflation, and shortages. Vargas' populist project was in tatters and he committed suicide in 1954. However, Vargas' legacy was enduring. He was instrumental in institutionalizing the nationalistic political and economic aspirations of the emerging industrial elite. Vargas established a relatively effective interventionist state, which in turn facilitated the emergence of a dynamic home-grown industrial base (Levine, 1998). In the name of national development,

Vargas also created state-owned corporations to exploit and manage Brazil's natural resources.[6] The state assumed a central role in economic development.

Despite its laudable achievements, Vargas' pursuit of national economic development through an interventionist state obstructed the development of a democratic political culture. He established a paternalistic, repressive, and clientelistic state that ultimately advanced narrow private interests. The established corporatist state neglected the most marginalized sector of the Brazilian society—the landless and rural poor. Populism always offers hope to the poor, but it fails to deliver meaningful change because it attempts to reconcile contradictory class interests. Vargas' populist experiment was no exception. He became a victim of the contradictions embedded in his own populist political project.

Ironically Vargas' populist project opened political and economic opportunities for peasants, landless peasants, and rural workers. First, industrialization provided markets for peasant producers as the demand for agricultural crops and livestock increased with urban development. Second, industrialization lured landless peasants to the cities as the demand for labor increased. Rural migration temporarily relieved tensions in the countryside. Finally, Vargas' courting of urban workers inspired rural labor mobilization in Brazil. Rural workers became aware of the labor rights granted to urban workers and demanded similar rights. They gradually organized and mobilized themselves outside of Vargas' control. In the southern region, the *União dos Lavradores e Trabalhadores Agrícolas do Brasil* (ULTAB), or Farmers and Agricultural Laborers of Brazil came into existence in 1954. The Brazilian Communist Party played a key role in the founding of ULTAB (Welch, 1998). ULTAB encouraged wage earners to fight for their rights, but it also supported other categories of workers, including sharecroppers and leaseholders.

In the northeastern region of Brazil, peasant mobilization became intense and widespread (Azevedo, 1982; Bastos, 1984). In 1954, *Ligas Camponesas* (Peasant Leagues) were formed in response to the imminent eviction of over 140 peasant families occupying the Engenho Galiléia, a *latifúndi*a located in Vitória de Santo Antão, in the interior parts of the state of Pernambuco. Peasant José Ortêncio convinced other peasants to organize themselves in groups or leagues to fight the eviction. He also requested legal assistance from Francisco Julio Arruda de Paula, (known as "Julião") a lawyer and savvy local political organizer, who had recently been elected to the Pernambuco State

Assembly by the *Partido Socialista Brasileiro* (PSB), or Brazilian Socialist Party. Julião was eager to help—he was very dedicated to the peasant cause. For Julião, it was much easier to incorporate peasants than salaried workers into mass social movements. He also understood that peasants were more committed to social transformation than intellectuals, workers, or students. The leagues received active support from the PCB, PSB, Catholic priests, and lay workers (Meade, 2009).

Julião mounted an effective defense of the peasants by mobilizing progressive urban sectors sympathetic to the peasant cause. Ultimately, concerted political action forced the Pernambuco authorities to expropriate the Engenho Galiléia and redistribute the land among the peasants. This episode taught the peasants a valuable lesson—rural-urban solidarity was vital to effectively defend their interests. Julião soon became the uncontested leader of the Peasant Leagues. He actively encouraged the peasants to organize themselves, in order to raise their voice and contest exclusionary politics.

The Peasant Leagues became a powerful political force in the Northeast region of Brazil. They established headquarters in key state capitals to facilitate political networking, action, and education. Under the slogan of *reforma agrária na lei ou na marra* (agrarian reform by law or by force), the Peasant Leagues called for a radical agrarian reform program that threatened the interests of the powerful rural elite. Ideologically, the Peasant Leagues represented diverse political orientations, including communism, socialism, and Catholicism. However, peasants espousing these diverse ideologies were united by a common objective—the pursuit of agrarian reform by stressing the social function of the land, a principle embedded in the social doctrine of the Catholic Church.[7]

After Vargas' death, the authoritarian Brazilian state assumed a more democratic face. Politically, Vargas' successors attempted to release social tensions, particularly in the countryside, by correcting power imbalances through more competitive politics. Economically, they continued with the capitalist development model. Vargas' successors were content to follow this model with some variations. They were determined to calibrate state power in order to move the country forward in an orderly fashion, with great optimism. However, this optimism was misplaced, because behind the democratic façade of political and economic opportunities, there were growing structural contradictions that eventually erupted. Ultimately, political calibration was not enough to contain popular discontent.

President Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira (1956–1961) embraced development as the most effective panacea to Brazil's social woes. His official motto, "Fifty Years in Five," attracted national attention. Under his administration Brazil experienced remarkable rates of economic growth, particularly in the industrial sector. His *Programa de Metas* (Program Objectives) targeted key sectors of the economy for rapid development—energy, transportation, food production, heavy industry, education, and public works. Kubitschek planned and executed the construction of Brasília, the new Brazilian capital. He also modernized Brazil's public service and created new specialized agencies to promote development. For instance, Kubitschek created the *Departamento de Obras Contra as Secas* (Anti-Drought Department), or DNOCS, and the *Superintendência do Desenvolvimento do Noreste* (Superintendence of Development for the Northeast), or SUDENE, to promote development in the most poverty-stricken part of the country, the northeast.

Despite his progressive political rhetoric, Kubitschek paid scant attention to the agrarian reform program. The powerful landholding elite, represented by the *Sociedade Rural Brasileira* (Brazilian Rural Society), founded in 1919, fiercely opposed even limited agrarian reform programs. Kubitschek bet on rapid industrialization as a solution to poverty and landlessness—industrialization could easily absorb surplus rural labor by providing the rural poor with new opportunities in the urban economy (Skidmore, 1999). However, Kubitschek's industrialization strategy required enormous amounts of capital, which the country did not have. Consequently, he introduced legislation to encourage foreign investment. Kubitschek's legislation paved the way for multinational corporations to move into Brazil. The automobile industry, among many others, greatly benefited from generous tax incentives in exchange for setting up manufacturing plants. The cities of Santo André, São Bernardo, and São Caetano in the state of São Paulo became the main centers of the automobile industry. These regions received thousands of peasants migrating from the countryside, particularly from the Northeastern states.[8]

Kubitschek's industrialization project did not change the rural character of Brazilian society. Peasants were reluctant to migrate to the cities for a variety of reasons—attachment to the land, family concerns, lack of financial resources, limited educational skills, or a combination of these factors.[9] By the late 1950s, Brazil remained largely a rural society, with almost 70 percent of the total population living in rural areas.

Kubitschek's administration resulted in high rates of economic growth, accompanied by high rates of public borrowing. His ambitious public works program and generous incentives to industry greatly increased the country's productive capacity. However, this achievement created a huge national debt, which eventually sparked high inflation. Kubitschek's legacy was further tarnished by massive political corruption, nepotism, and favouritism (Benevides, 1976).

In response to Kubitschek's lack of action on agrarian reform, peasants intensified their protests. Emboldened by the expropriation of the Engenho Galiléia, landless peasants became determined to pursue agrarian reform from the bottom up. In Pernambuco, the Peasant Leagues intensified political mobilization by carrying out land occupations, street protests, and the takeovers of government buildings. Governor Cid Sampaio, elected in 1959 with strong support from a coalition of progressive rural-urban voters, attempted to de-escalate the situation by expressing sympathy for the peasants' plight and calling for agrarian reform. Similarly, in the states of Goiás, São Paulo, and Paraná, governors Mauro Borges, Carvalho Pinto, and Moysés Lupion attempted to placate growing rural protests by promising agrarian reform and ending *grilagem*[10] (illegal land-grabbing), addressing labor issues, and granting land titles to *posseiros*. But it was Leonel Brizola, the socialist Governor of Rio Grande do Sul (1959–1963), who openly questioned the power of the landholding elite. Brizola advocated comprehensive agrarian reform on the grounds that it was vital to Brazil's social development. Specifically, Brizola saw agrarian reform as a means of extending basic political and economic rights to the most marginalized sector of Brazilian society—the rural poor.[11] Brizola encouraged the organization of *sindicatos rurais* (rural labor unions) in the countryside. In 1961, he had played a key role in the creation of the *Movimento dos Agricultores Sem Terra (MASTER)*, or Landless Farmers Movement in Rio Grande do Sul. Brizola's open support for the peasants frightened the landholding elite (Bandeira, 1979; Skidmore, 2007).

By the early 1960s, peasant movements and rural labor unions had achieved a remarkable degree of political radicalization, particularly in the southeast and northeast. In the states of Paraná, São Paulo, and Minas Gerais, confrontations between landowners and peasants became violent. Tensions in the countryside increased when Julião issued his 1962 *Carta de Ouro Preto*, or Letter from Ouro Preto, in which he dismissed electoral politics as the best strategy to advance agrarian reform. Having just returned from Cuba, Julião erroneously

assumed that Brazil was entering into a revolutionary period and called upon peasants to arm themselves (Ricci, 1999). Another communist peasant organizer, Francisco Raymundo da Paxião (known as "Chicão"), rationalized the call to take arms from a different, practical perspective—peasants needed to arm themselves in defense against violent landowners.[12] Chicão was the leader of the *Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais,* or Rural Labor Union, in Governador Valadares, Minas Gerais.

In 1963, the creation of the *Confederacão Nacional de Trabalhadores na Agricultura* (National Confederation of Agricultural Workers), or CONTAG, added momentum to rural mobilization. Led by Lyndolpho Silva, another peasant communist organizer, CONTAG brought together 743 *sindicatos rurais* or rural labor unions across Brazil, including ULTAB, providing them with a central organization and a unified voice (Ribeiro da Cunha, 2004). Under the Banner of *Reforma agrária já!* (Agrarian reform now!), landless peasants and rural workers across Brazil pushed the struggle for agrarian reform.

Growing peasant mobilization frightened the powerful landholding elite. The conservative newspaper, *O Estado de São Paulo,* summarized this fear when it stated in an editorial, that the expropriation of the Engenho Galiléia had set a dangerous precedent, which was likely to encourage further land conflicts (Bergamasco and Norder, 1996). The Cuban Revolution intensified this fear. As land conflicts intensified, the landholding elite started to lose faith in managed democracy as the best system to advance "order and progress." The *latifundiários* made effective use of the conservative media to advance an alarmist and effective discourse on the *Cubanization* and *Fidelization* menace confronting Brazilian society. Ultimately, this discourse played a vital role in galvanizing support among the middle classes for military intervention.

Jânio Quadros succeeded Kubitschek in 1961. A flamboyant populist politician, Quadros resigned the same year for reasons that he never explained. Quadros's resignation created a constitutional crisis in Brazil, as the military was not willing to accept Quadros's vice president, João Goulart, as president. Goulart was a young charismatic politician from Rio Grande do Sul. He had been minister of labor and vice-president during the previous Vargas and Kubitschek administrations. He was also politically close to Leonel Brizola. This political relationship raised suspicions within the military about Goulart's "communist" leanings. Eventually, Goulart was allowed to take office with severely limited powers, although a plebiscite in 1963 gave

him full presidential powers. During his campaign for the plebiscite, "Jango," as Goulart was popularly known, promised agrarian reform. He favoured the negotiated agrarian reform program, as put forward by the US government under the Alliance for Progress. Unfortunately, his attempts at agrarian reform ended in political disaster.

Goulart's administration was beset with political and economic problems inherited from the previous administrations. He attempted to deal with these problems by implementing economic reforms and offering political compromises, particularly in the area of agrarian reform. In the end, none of these measures were successful—the land-holding elite objected to Goulart's "communist" vision for the country, and the peasants objected to his ambivalence toward agrarian reform. Goulart's inability to strengthen his political base paved the way for landowners, industrialists, conservative clergymen, and the military to join forces and remove him from power. In 1964, Goulart's political career ended abruptly with a military coup. The US played a key, albeit covert, role in Goulart's downfall.[13]

Some important conclusions can be drawn from the peasant rebellion experience of the 1954–1964 period. First, peasants failed to transform intense political mobilization into a coherent and effective political strategy. The "scaling up" of the struggle for agrarian reform was weak and contentious. They were also riddled with competing ideological groups. Socialist, communist, and Catholic peasant groups espoused narrow or broad conceptualizations of agrarian reform. For some peasants, agrarian reform basically meant one struggle within a broader struggle for power; for others, it merely meant a struggle for access to land. The failure of the competing groups to come together and sort out their differences seriously undermined their efforts to advance agrarian reform.

Second, the Peasant Leagues and the rural labor unions were top-down organizations. Despite their apparent democratic character, the organizational structure of these organizations reflected charismatic and vertical forms of power relationships. Julião maintained control over the Peasant Leagues through his charismatic and persuasive personality. He did have an excellent understanding of the processes of political building and mobilization. Unfortunately, as an upper-middle class urban-based intellectual, he did not have a good understanding of the needs, sentiments, and motivations of the peasants. His insistence on controlling the political agenda of the Peasant Leagues led to dissatisfaction within the ranks. Additionally, his call to armed insurrection not only irreparably split the Peasant Leagues, but also rapidly

eroded public support for the movement. The call to arms also provided justification for the military to unleash a brutal peasant repression. By 1965, the Peasant Leagues had vanished from the countryside. As for the rural unions, they replicated the centralized organizational structure of traditional political parties. This was not surprising because the rural unions were products of the political proselytizing of left-wing parties, notably the PCB.[14] The peasant movements' political autonomy was limited. The end result was the lack of an effective link between the micro and macro forms of collective mobilization.

Finally, Brazilian society was deeply divided over the issue of agrarian reform. At the beginning of the 1960s, Brazil was confronting both internal and external pressure in favour of agrarian reform. On the one hand, peasants demanded radical agrarian reform as a means to correct a historical injustice. On the other hand, the US government urged agrarian reform as a means to avert communism. Unfortunately, the landholding elite was strongly opposed to agrarian reform. As a result, Goulart's efforts to advance agrarian reform were paralyzed. Moreover, Goulart was consumed by other immediate concerns—growing unemployment, hyperinflation, and rising debt. Goulart's token agrarian reform expropriation initiatives pleased neither peasants nor landowners. Ultimately, Goulart's weakened political base strengthened the landowners' and allies' resolve to overthrow him. It would be the task of the post–1964 peasant movements to continue the struggle for agrarian reform by "reinventing the wheels" of peasant politics.

Agrarian Policy in Authoritarian Brazil, 1964–1984

The military coup d'état in 1964 robbed Brazil of a historical opportunity to make agrarian reform a powerful instrument for social and human development. The military had often intervened in the country's political affairs to moderate disputes over power. But this time, the military made it clear from the outset that it was in power to implement a long-term socioeconomic agenda (Skidmore, 1990). On the economic front, it embarked on the modernization of the country's economy with the support of national and foreign capital. On the political front, it embarked on brutal repression—it banned peasant, labor, and student organizations; and imprisoned, murdered, or exiled their leaders.[15]

The military regime (1964–1985) silenced the agrarian reform debate. However, it could not fully suppress the struggle for agrarian reform or labor rights. Even in the face of brutal repression, 2,800 rural worker movements managed to organize and mobilize themselves for their labor rights during this period (Maybury-Lewis, 1994). However, these movements did not dare to openly challenge the military regime.

Ideologically, the military was convinced that agrarian reform was not an absolute condition for rapid economic development. The Catholic Church disagreed and pressured the military to find a just solution to chronic landlessness.[16] In response, the military issued in late 1964 the *Estatuto da Terra,* or Land Statute, which justified the expropriation of land in the "social interests" of the country. Land, the Statute declared, had a social function. The powerful landholding elite did not object to this clause because the military had assured them that they had nothing to fear. Indeed, this was the case. The military approved this law to legitimize the opening of new land frontiers; specifically, land traditionally occupied by indigenous peoples of the Brazilian Amazon.

In 1964, the military created the *Instituto Brasileiro de Reforma Agrária,* or Brazilian Institute for Agrarian reform (IBRA), and the *Instituto Nacional de Desenvolvimento Agrário,* or National Institute for Agrarian Development (INDA). Both of these organizations ostensibly aimed to promote colonization programs. Unfortunately, they became mere bureaucratic instruments of political clientelism. In 1966, the military issued the *Plano Nacional de Reforma Agrária* (National Program for Agrarian Reform), or PNRA. However, this plan was never implemented. In 1970, the military established the *Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária*, or National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), which merged IBRA and INDA.

The military addressed "underdevelopment" or "backwardness" in the Brazilian countryside by putting idle lands into production, encouraging the reorganization of precapitalist agrarian economies on a capitalist basis, and inducing their modernization. The traditional *latifundiários* themselves converted their landholdings into profitable agribusiness units via the intensive utilization of the "Green Revolution" technology—high-yield seeds, modern irrigation, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and mechanization. For the military, rural development, not agrarian reform, was the solution to poverty and violence. Whether intended or not, the military set in motion a

regressive process in the countryside—the implementation of agricultural modernization without agrarian reform contributed to maldevelopment. This maldevelopment further empowered the rural rich and disempowered the rural poor. Peasants and indigenous groups became the main victims of the collateral damage incurred by this model of agricultural development.

Agricultural modernization consisted of three interconnected objectives—increasing agricultural production, fostering national security, and promoting national economic integration. Agricultural production was promoted by opening new farmland frontiers in the states of Rondônia, Mato Grosso do Sul, and Pará and creating a dynamic agroexport sector to compete in the international economy. The military financed cattle breeding and coffee production, constructed roads and infrastructure, and promoted population settlements. National security was promoted by suppressing communism through counterinsurgence measures and community economic development programs. National economic integration was promoted by facilitating closer linkages between the rural and urban economies. The military targeted Brazil's key industrial centers, especially the state of São Paulo, for expansion in order to speed up national economic integration.

Successive military governments[17] maintained the overall direction of the agricultural modernization policies. Large-scale agricultural producers responded positively to these agricultural policies. They took advantage of cheap credit to expand their productive capacity. As a result, their production methods underwent considerable technical change, their yields increased considerably, and their market opportunities expanded. However, small-scale agricultural producers failed to modernize and performed poorly. They had scant access to technology, credit, and market opportunities. They were also frequently subjected to price controls, heavy taxation, a maze of regulations and export quotas, and competition from subsidized agricultural imports. For the military, the small-scale agricultural producers' role was to produce cheap food for the people flocking from rural areas to the cities. Industrialization could not be sustained without affordable food for the working class.

The military's agricultural policies continued the vicious cycle of poverty, violence, and ecological destruction in the countryside. The penetration of agricultural modernization into the Amazon contributed to the destruction of the rainforest. This destruction seriously harmed the habitat of an unknown number of wildlife species.

However, the main visible victims of agricultural development were the indigenous peoples. The destruction of the Amazon rainforest also negatively affected the livelihoods of nonindigenous people engaged in various "extractive industries," such as rubber tapping, harvesting Brazil nuts, hunting, fishing, and subsistence agriculture. The Amazon became a battleground for control over resources.

From 1964 to 1984, the military regime's export-growth development policies generated remarkable economic progress that propelled the country to the status of the eighth largest economy in the world, with well-developed industrial, agricultural, mining, banking, and service sectors. Yet, the benefits of this "economic miracle" did not yield an improvement in the quality of life of the vast majority of the population. The gap between the haves and have-nots widened (Skidmore, 1990). For the first group, economic development brought material prosperity, access to good education, health care, modern housing, and leisure. For the second group, development brought poverty, hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, and disease. Notably, development during this period led to massive chaotic urban expansion. In 1950, approximately 30 percent of the population was urban; by 1980, it was nearly 70 percent. The massive influx of rural migrants into the cities gave rise to *favelas* (shantytowns), where millions of migrants settled in shabby accommodations with inadequate access to basic services. Eventually, most of these favelados came to constitute a huge and virtually unemployable underclass. In 1970, CONTAG called for agrarian reform as a way of addressing the aforementioned problems. Regrettably, the military did not respond.

Ultimately, the military's development experiment crashed due to its own contradictions. The global oil crisis in 1973 seriously affected the Brazilian economy, since industrialization, particularly the automobile industry, required oil imported from the Middle East. The military financed oil purchases with cheap credit from abroad. It also embarked on an ambitious program of oil substitution—PROALCOL. This program financed the creation of enormous sugarcane plantations to produce ethanol. Unfortunately, the military was faced with forces beyond its control—a worldwide recession, rising US interest rates, and high global unemployment slowed the demand for Brazilian exports. The outcome was a profound economic and political crisis. Having lost the confidence of the industrial elite, and facing widespread opposition from labor, student, and peasant movements, the military relinquished power to a civilian regime in 1985 (Skidmore, 1999). The military left behind enormous

socioeconomic problems. The new democratic regime (1985–present) assumed the task of resolving them. Agrarian reform became an urgent matter. From 1964 to 1984, the military managed to settle less than 80,000 landless peasants (see Introduction: Table 0.2). In 1984, the MST spearheaded the national call for agrarian reform by mobilizing peasants, landless peasants, rural workers, sharecroppers, tenants, and unemployed urban workers. Agrarian reform was back on the political agenda.

4

Agrarian Reform under Sarney and Collor de Mello-Franco

After almost three decades of democratic rule and free-market reforms, Brazil remains a country beset with serious socioeconomic problems. There is growing skepticism today about the state's capacity to act independently of narrow, private interests (Kingstone and Power, 2008; Kingstone, 2012). At the federal, state, and municipal levels, there is a lack of effective governance, especially in the field of social policy. Moreover, the prevalence of corruption, nepotism, favoritism, and clientelism has hindered efforts to effectively address social problems. In a sign of increasing political frustration, Brazilians—the middle class in particular—have taken their dissatisfaction to the streets.[1] Among other things, they are demanding better transportation, health, education, and law enforcement services. The recent slowdown of the Brazilian economy has also intensified political discontent.[2]

As for agrarian reform, the landless peasants are increasingly frustrated with its slow pace. Even so, they have maintained their faith in democracy as the most desirable path to achieve agrarian reform. Even if constrained, democracy offers them opportunities to have their voice heard in a society that systematically excludes them. The landless peasants recognize that these opportunities will not be handed to them, but must be obtained through political reflection and action.[3] For the landless peasants, democracy is a work in progress in Brazil, and democracy means the transformation of unequal and unjust power relations. They recognize that democratic transformation is an ongoing struggle. This view is expressed clearly by Stédile (2004):

> Democracy is vital to changing social injustice. No question about it. Yet, democracy must involve changing political and economic power.

> This is an ongoing project. Politics cannot be subjugated to economics. This subjugation will not solve the inhumane situation in which millions of Brazilians live.[4]

Bishop Casaldáliga (2003) states a similar view:

> Genuine democracy is vital for making the state a vehicle for social justice. This is a difficult but not impossible task that requires continuing grassroots mobilization. Democracy that reflects the interests of the rich and powerful will not solve Brazil's social problems. Agrarian reform will not move forward without a message of radical democratic transformation.[5]

Church Activism and Peasant Mobilization

Casaldáliga's message of social justice through grassroots mobilization resonates well with the rural poor. However, this message is not new. The articulation of this message goes back to the 1960s, with the religious awakening within the Catholic Church. After Vatican II (1962–1965), the Medellín (1968), and Puebla (1979) Conferences, the Latin American Catholic Church, and the Brazilian Catholic Church in particular, became an important catalyst for progressive social change. The Church emphasized the need to speak against social injustices and to support the poor and oppressed The dramatic impact of liberation theology[6] and the emergence of new forms of political-religious expression in the Christian Base Communities (CEBs) made Catholicism more participatory and relevant to the people, and radically changed the Church's attitude toward social issues.

The transformation of the Church coincided with a period of political closure and repression in Brazil. In response to this situation, the Church provided space to those seeking to organize themselves to reassert their rights. The landless peasants were the first to welcome the Church's "preferential option for the poor," and took advantage of its extensive institutional resources to reorganize peasant activism. In 1975, the Catholic Church created the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra,* or Church Commission on Agrarian Reform (CPT), to advocate for agrarian reform and support the peasants in their struggle for land. The CPT functioned as an autonomous body and thus was able to facilitate social networking among the landless peasants.

The CPT renewed the landless peasants' strong motivation to seek societal transformation. It taught them to foster and celebrate

the *mística*[7] to advance their struggle (Poletto, 2002). The CPT's message stressed the view that land concentration maintains power and privilege, and that genuine democracy required the transformation of unequal power relations in the public and private spheres of human life. In response to this message, the landless peasants began to organize themselves across Brazil. The CPT's national presence facilitated this process. It taught the landless peasants the importance of *basismo* (participatory grassroots democracy) in the formation of autonomous organizations. It also encouraged the landless peasants to value collective leadership not only to advance grassroots democracy, but also to avoid *personalismo*—the practice of uncritically following a single leader. All of this served to energize peasant mobilization for agrarian reform. According to Bishop Balduíno (2013):

> By the late 1970s, landless peasants were demanding access to land by carrying out land occupations in many states. The CPT accompanied all of these actions. However, these land occupations did not have a national coordination. They were localized actions with limited network support. The media called these *sem terra's* occupations. Eventually, these occupations received national attention, which helped to bring the issue of agrarian reform into the national political debate.[8]

For the landless peasants, the first land occupation experiences shaped their conception of agrarian reform. They faced fierce resistance from the landholding class, which vehemently opposed land occupations. These peasants soon understood that agrarian reform was more than just a struggle for reclaiming a piece of land. Rather, agrarian reform was a struggle for inciting the genuine democratization of society. Within this context, land occupation acquired a symbolic and powerful meaning—the first step toward regaining political citizenship as the precondition to overcoming systemic socioeconomic exclusion. Since the 1970s, the landless peasants have firmly held to this principle. Yet, it has been open to criticism. Many Brazilian academics have argued that land occupation is harmful to democracy because it obstructs the legislative process (de Souza Martins, 2000; Navarro, 2006).[9] Unfortunately, these authors fail to recognize or refuse to acknowledge, that because of unjust power structures the landless peasants have no option but to resort to land occupation to overcome socioeconomic exclusion.

The Founding of the MST

The MST was officially founded in January 1984, during a national encounter of landless workers in Cascavel, Paraná, as Brazil's military dictatorship came to a close. However, the MST's origins can be traced to the mid-1970s, when the military regime expropriated large tracts of peasants' land to construct the gigantic Itaipú dam in southern Brazil along the border with Paraguay. Brazil's industrialization demanded greater energy supplies. The military, with the support of the WB, decided that the construction of large hydroelectric power stations was the logical solution to growing energy needs. The Itaipú dam displaced a large number of peasants.[10] In response, the Catholic and Lutheran churches supported the displaced peasants in their unsuccessful efforts to resist eviction. Displaced peasants "settled" into whatever idle land they could find.

In 1978, the Kaingang aboriginal peoples expelled 1,200 landless peasants from their reserve, located in Nonoai, Rio Grande do Sul. The Catholic Church supported this action, because of concerns over the negative impact of the influx of peasants on the Kaingang's culture, environment, and welfare. The local CPT asked Stédile to aid the evicted peasants. An agricultural economist by training, Stédile was familiar with land conflicts in the area from his previous work with the secretary of agriculture in Rio Grande do Sul. Having grown up in an Italian immigrant peasant family, Stédile was also familiar with Catholic peasant culture and tradition. He moved quickly to resolve the problem by entering into negotiations with the government on behalf of the displaced peasants. The government offered to settle the evicted peasants in Mato Grosso. Only 700 of the 1,200 accepted the offer—500 of them flatly refused, because they were aware that conditions in Mato Grosso were not conducive to family farming. Although the government promised a negotiated solution, it slowed the negotiation process, further radicalizing the displaced peasants. In 1979, after much reflection, discussion, and preparation, 280 landless peasants occupied the Macali and Brilhante lands, which were part of the *Fazenda Sarandi*, in Sarandi, Rio Grande do Sul. In 1962, Brizola had expropriated this *latifúndia* under pressure from MASTER to settle hundreds of landless peasants. Unfortunately, he was unable to complete the settlement program during his mandate and the military regime did not pursue it. Eventually, pressure from broad sectors of society forced the government to grant the landless peasants titles to the disputed land (Stédile, 1997: 69–97).

In 1980, the remaining 220 displaced peasants who had refused to go to Mato Grosso occupied the *Fazenda Anoni*, also located in Sarandi. Stédile knew that this *latifúndia* was *grilada* (its land title was illegally obtained). However, the government was unwilling to expropriate it. What followed was a continuous process of eviction and reoccupation. Negotiations also took place. After 12 years, the landless peasants obtained titles to the land. The occupation of the Sarandi and Anoni farms was followed by other occupations in the districts of Ronda Alta, Cruz Alta, and Passo Fundo, all in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The Macali and Brilhante experiences taught the landless peasants that well-organized and supported land occupations were the only means of gaining access to land. Land occupation "fever" started to take hold of the landless peasants and it empowered them to continue the struggle.

In most cases, land occupations were marked by deprivation, intimidation, and repression. Nevertheless, the landless peasants' determination overcame these difficulties. It was during these early mobilizations that the landless peasants established the *Boletim Sem Terra* as a media tool to counterbalance the biased reporting of their struggle in the mainstream media. In the coming years, this bulletin would become the MST's journal, *Sem Terra*. The landless peasants also received the full support of the Church, which provided material and religious assistance. In June 1981, Bishop Casaldáliga visited the Sarandi district and said mass in support of the landless peasants in the presence of over 6,000 people. Likewise, Bishop Balduíno publicly expressed his backing of the landless peasants and called upon the authorities to negotiate a peaceful solution. The CPT mobilized grassroots support in the parishes, cities, and universities. Building on a wide social network, the CPT helped the landless peasants to construct a solid base of support for land occupations. Stédile's superb organizing and negotiating skills also strengthened the incipient land occupation movement. Eventually, Stédile left his position as a rural labor organizer and became a staff member at the CPT in Rio Grande do Sul to work with, and not for, the landless peasants.

Peasant mobilization intensified in the following years. Landless peasants invaded idle lands in the states of Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais, Goiás, Bahia, and Pernambuco. In most cases, these occupations lasted only a few months, but in some cases the occupations continued for several years, until the peasants obtained land titles. These land occupations also took place within varied socioeconomic contexts. In the

south and southeastern regions of the country, there were relatively high levels of agricultural and industrial development, state capacity, social infrastructure, and technological and educational resources. These were also regions with strong family farming traditions and an autonomous peasant political culture. In the north and northeastern regions, the situation was the opposite. These regions were also marked by constant droughts, financial dependence on the federal government, and weak civil society. However, unlike in the south and southeastern regions, the north and northeastern regions had an established tradition of rural unionism, which shaped the rural movements' political culture.

These early land occupations marked the reopening of the struggle for agrarian reform. They also took place during the period of growing opposition to military rule. Social movements were on the move and the "scaling up" of the struggle for democracy expanded quickly to include academic, professional, student, rural, and labor organizations. In the rural and urban areas, the CEBs became conduits to facilitate social networking among a diverse array of "new" social actors such as NGOs. The presence of foreign-based NGOs also played a key role in linking national and international social networks. Thus, the landless peasants were in a favorable position to advance their struggle. All they needed was a national organization to coordinate the struggle for agrarian reform.

The early land occupations taught the peasants important lessons. First, the struggle for agrarian reform required concerted collective efforts. Peasants needed to reflect, work, and act together. Second, it also required organizational structures and broad social support. Peasants needed to establish their own organizations in order to advance their common objectives. These organizations also needed to be open to outside collaboration. Third, linking micropolitics to macropolitics was vital to advancing agrarian reform. Local occupation struggles could not succeed without engagement with broader issues. This linking of local to national efforts was of paramount importance for the landless peasants because they had mostly been on the defensive during the previous decades. Finally, agrarian reform required constant mobilization—peasants had to prepare themselves for an arduous, long-term struggle.

The CPT encouraged the landless peasants to reflect on the experiences of previous peasant movements to organize themselves. In 1982, after several local encounters and discussions, grassroots landless peasant organizations from 12 states met in Goiânia to discuss forming

a national organization. However, they were unable to come to an agreement. Some peasants did not see any need to establish a national organization, because of the CPT's presence. Others saw a need to establish a national, autonomous peasant organization, because the CPT was not a peasant movement, but a religious advocacy organization. Despite their differences of opinion, they issued *A Carta de Goiânia* (Letter from Goiânia), in which they committed themselves to *conquista e defesa da terra* (conquest and defense of the land).

By early 1984, there was consensus among the landless peasants of the need to establish a national organization with a collective leadership. First, the election in 1978 of Pope John Paul II forced changes within the Brazilian Catholic Church. Coming from an officially "communist" country (Poland), Pope John Paul II had an aversion to Marxist ideology. As a result, he started to crack down on bishops, theologians, and priests sympathetic to the liberation theology. Pope John Paul II also disapproved of the work of the CEBs, because their advocacy linking faith and politics to confront institutionalized injustice. In 1979, these movements had played a major role in the Nicaraguan Revolution. The "radical" political character of these religious communities threatened powerful political and religious interests. Ultimately, Pope John Paul II demobilized the CEBs to please the conservative forces inside and outside the Church.

Second, Brazil's *abertura política* (political opening) facilitated political organization outside the protection of the Catholic Church. Also, the newly established *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (United Central Workers Union), or CUT, and the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party), or PT, had reenergized class politics and solidified class solidarity. The landless peasants saw this as an opportunity to move away from the shadows of the Catholic Church. Finally, the landless peasants became convinced that the struggle for agrarian reform was first and foremost their responsibility. As such, they wanted to write their own history in the struggle for agrarian reform. Thus, the gathering in Cascavel, Paraná, in 1984 formalized the creation of the MST. Stédile summarized the founding of the MST as follows:

> In January 1984, we held an Encontro Nacional [National Congress] in Cascavel, Paraná, where we analyzed all these questions [why a national organization was needed] and resolved to set up an organization. The name was of no great importance, but the press already had a nickname for us. Every time we occupied some land the newspapers would say, "There go the Sem Terra again." Fine, since they called

> us that, we'd be the "Movimento dos Sem Terra." We were ideologically more inclined to call ourselves the "Movement of Workers for Agrarian Reform," because the idea was to build a social force that would go beyond the struggle just for land itself. But history never depends entirely on people's intentions. We got our reputation as the "Sem Terra," so the name stuck; the most we did was to invent the abbreviation—MST. (Stédile, 2002: 77–104)

The MST deliberately adopted an organizational structure based on two fundamental principles—collective leadership and political autonomy. By abolishing the roles of president, vice-president, or general-secretary, the MST intended to avoid vertical forms of political control that fostered antidemocratic values. By adopting political autonomy, the MST intended to avoid interference or control from political parties or religious organizations. Stédile explained the need to have political autonomy as follows:

> Another important decision, we took at the Encontro Nacional was to organize ourselves as an autonomous movement, independent of the political parties. Our analysis of the farmers' movements of Latin America and Brazil taught us that whenever a mass movement was subordinated to a party, it was weakened by the effects of inner-party splits and factional battles. It was not that we didn't value parties, or thought it was wrong to join them. But the movement had to be free from external political direction. It also had to be independent of the Catholic Church. Many of the farmers were strongly influenced by the Church and argued that since it had helped us so much we should form a movement of Christians for agrarian reform. Fortunately, some of the most politically aware comrades were from the Church. They had had previous experience with Ação Católica [Catholic Action] or in the JOCs [Young Christian Workers], and they themselves warned us against it—the moment a bishop comes to a different decision from the mass organization, the organization is finished. (Stédile, 2002: 77–104)

The MST's organizational structure is based on the principles of grassroots democracy—decentralized and participatory forms of self-government. The landless peasants understood that substantive democracy at the community level is the foundation for genuine democracy at the state level. From the local up to the state and national levels, the MST is organized into collective units that make decisions through reflection, discussion, and consensus. Notably, its organizational structure is in constant evolution, adapting itself to new opportunities and challenges. The basic organizational unit is the

núcleo de base (community-based political units), representing 15–20 families living in either an encampment or settlement. They elect two representatives, one woman and one man, to represent the *núcleo de base* at regional meetings. These elected representatives also attend state meetings to discuss regional issues, and elect representatives to the MST's coordination committee for each state. These same elected representatives attend regional meetings, where they elect regional representatives who then vote for members of the *Coordenadoria Estadual,* or State Coordinating Body of the MST. In total, there are 400 members of the MST's State Coordinating Bodies (around 20 per state) and 60 members of the MST's *Coordenadoria Nacional,* or National Coordinating Body (around two per state). Every MST family participates in a *núcleo de base*, and this represents roughly 475,000 families, or 1.5 million people. João Pedro Stédile, economist and author of numerous texts on agrarian reform in Brazil, is a member of the MST's National Coordinating Body, a dispersed group of some 15 leaders.

The vast majority of the MST's coordinators live in the settlements or encampments. As a result, they are fully aware of the needs and aspirations of their fellow community members. The landless peasants are also well-informed. The MST has created several community media channels, particularly radio, to provide alternative information to the landless. The MST's *Jornal Sem Terra*, *Revista Sem Terra*, and *Letra Viva-MST Informa* are widely circulated and read in the settlements and encampments.

Over the last two decades, the *núcleos de base* has provided the MST with a solid, militant grassroots political membership. It is within these political communities that class solidarity and activism are seeded and harvested. These communities are autonomous spaces, where the landless learn how to change the politics of exclusion. According to Geraldo Fontes (2004), "the MST's first step toward overcoming systemic social exclusion was to create the *núcleo de base*. It is within these political communities that the landless peasants learn to recreate, redefine, and reenergize democracy."[11]

Indeed, this is the case. The *núcleos de base* teaches the landless peasants not only to understand, but also to work together in order to transform their social exclusion. Notably, these communities shape the landless peasants' ideological commitment to the movement. This is vital because social movements are prone to ideological fragmentation that, if not addressed, contributes to their political marginalization or cooptation.

Thus, the birth of the MST coincided with the decline of the CEBs. Its creation joined the widespread, but fragmented voices for agrarian reform. The MST adopted collective leadership, political autonomy, and grassroots democracy as its key principles. However, in practice these cherished principles turned out not to be absolute. It will be will be discussed in the coming chapters, that these principles have limitations—the landless peasants are operating today within a social context marked by complex interdependency. In this context, absolute autonomy is virtually impossible to profess.

Dynamics of Agrarian Reform, 1985–1989

Agrarian reform is inherently a conflict-ridden process—it generates interpersonal and intragroup conflicts. This is because agrarian reform disrupts skewed power relations, affects competitive positions or interests, and changes individuals' expectations. These conflicts are difficult to resolve, particularly when the key player in the process, the state, fails to adequately respond to the challenges of agrarian reform. Despite its conflict-ridden character, agrarian reform remains vital for addressing rural poverty. In light of the current vibrant presence of peasant movements, Brazil cannot afford to miss the opportunity to solve one of the most unjust legacies of its past. Unfortunately, it seems that Brazilian society runs the risk of losing this opportunity.

After almost three decades of unsuccessful attempts to introduce agrarian reform, the Brazilian countryside is still facing persistent concentration of landownership, rural migration, environmental degradation, and food insecurity. Successive democratic governments have been reluctant to use the power of the state to implement an effective agrarian reform program that would increase the ability of the rural poor to gain access to land and to exercise control over land. Since 1985, agrarian reform has been marked by slowness, inefficiency, and corruption. It has also fallen victim to the power of rich landowners, technocrats, and political brokers.

Agrarian reform cannot succeed without an effective partnership between the state and peasant communities. History illustrates that state-led agrarian reform initiatives without the active participation of peasant communities, and peasant-led agrarian reform initiatives without the active support of the state; have frequently failed. History also points to the need for greater coherence in the roles, technical support, and financial commitments of the international and bilateral organizations. A multi-stakeholder approach is a necessity. However,

as is the case in many developing countries, the state not only tends to frame but also to control the parameters of partnership with peasant communities. This uneven relationship undermines collaborative efforts to effectively advance agrarian reform. In Brazil, this type of relationship has led to increasing frustration with the pace and quality of agrarian reform.

It was President José Sarney de Araújo Costa (1985–1989) who planted false seeds of hope in agrarian reform. A rich and influential northeastern landowner and long-time politician, Sarney came to power upon the death of President-Elect Tancredo Neves in April 1985. Sarney inherited Neves' political coalition, and hence his program foragrarian reform. But he was not necessarily committed to the program. He had never previously expressed any views on the subject. Nevertheless, Sarney openly declared his intention of carrying out a comprehensive agrarian reform program. José Gomes da Silva, an academic and former secretary of agriculture in the state of São Paulo, was entrusted with the task. After months of intense negotiations with the *latifundiários*, Sarney launched the first *Programa Nacional de Reforma Agrária* (National Plan for Agrarian Reform), or PNRA, to ease political tensions in the countryside. He also established the *Programa de Crédito Especial para Reforma Agrária* (Special Credit Program for Agrarian Reform), or PROCERA, with the objective of helping settled peasant families to become agricultural entrepreneurs. Sarney thought that access to land and credit would bring economic prosperity to the countryside. He paraphrased Thomas Jefferson and Franklin D. Roosevelt to justify his PNRA: "Agrarian reform is vital for rural democracy and Brazil's modernization. No modern country has developed without first dealing with its agrarian problem" (Riding, 1985).

The Brazilian mainstream press did not welcome Sarney's words. The *Journal do Brasil*, *O Estado de São Paulo*, and *Folha de São Paulo*, among many others, printed critical editorials about the "poorly conceived, enormous cost, and out of fashion" efforts to address rural poverty.[12] The *União Democrática Ruralista* (Ruralist Democratic Union), or UDR, the political umbrella of the powerful rural barons, condemned the plan on the grounds that it violated property rights.

Sarney's ambitious agrarian reform program intended to distribute over 7 million hectares of state-owned land and uncultivated private estates to settle 1.4 million landless peasants over a four-year period. Aware of the inefficiency of tiny plots, the Sarney government encouraged the formation of cooperatives. However, while implementing the plan, Sarney quickly realized that the opposition the plan engendered

from landowners, dwarfed the support it would receive from the landless peasants who were its direct beneficiaries. Landowners rejected Sarney's plan and armed themselves to defend their land against expropriation. Sarney did not have a strong backing from Congress, which itself was packed with landowners. In order to secure his political base and avoid an open confrontation with the landed elite, Sarney shelved his program. In protest, the Minister for Agrarian Reform, Nelson Ribeiro, resigned. This was followed by the resignation of INCRA's President, José Gomes da Silva. Archbishop Ivo Lorsheiter, president of Brazil's National Conference of Bishops (CNBB), correctly predicted that Ribeiro and Gomes da Silva's resignation would not only harm agrarian reform efforts, but also heighten existing tensions and violence in the countryside.

On April 14, 1985 Sister Adelaide Mozinari from the Congregation of Daughters of Divine Love, was shot to death by a hit man, on order from a rich landowner. Sister Mozinari was working with landless peasants in El Dorado dos Carajas, Pará. The killing of Sister Mozinari "shocked" Sarney, who promised that the PNRA would not be hindered by those who wanted agrarian reform to remain on paper. Despite his rhetoric, his government was unable to move forward. Like Goulart, Sarney's priority was to "fix" the national economy—recession, inflation, and unemployment. After much negotiation with the industrial and financial elite, Sarney launched his *Plano Cruzado* (Cruzado Plan) to revive the stalled Brazilian economy. However, this plan severely limited government spending, which in turn negatively affected the implementation of the PNRA; it came to an abrupt halt.

In the coming years, Sarney unsuccessfully attempted to reenergize the PNRA. It was the task of the landless peasants to once again bring agrarian reform into the political arena. In 1988, the landless peasants pressured the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and the Communist Party of Brazil (PC do Brasil) to confront the issue during the writing of Brazil's new Constitution. Together, they proposed an amendment for comprehensive agrarian reform. This amendment failed, as the UDR and its allies joined forces to kill it. Writing about the UDR's successful political victory, Alan Riding of *The New York Times* reported the following:

> The Rural Democratic Union's success in building an organization that now has 259 regional offices and close to 300,000 members reflects the wealth and power of Brazil's private farmers as well as the natural opposition of landowners to expropriation of their property. (Riding, 1988)

In order to appease the landless peasants, the Brazilian Congress approved a watered-down version of the amendment, which merely reaffirmed previous constitutional principles as the basis for future agrarian reform programs. Article 184 of the 1988 Constitution affirmed: "It is the task of the Federation to expropriate, on social grounds, for the purpose of agrarian reform, rural property which is not fulfilling its social function."[13] In the coming years, the MST would use this principle as a legal weapon, to carry out massive land occupations in order to pressure governments to implement agrarian reform.

Although well intentioned, Sarney's agrarian reform program failed to achieve its goals—it fell victim to the politics of undue influence, favoritism, and corruption. Sarney's agrarian reform program benefited fewer than 90,000 landless peasant families according to official government numbers (see Introduction: table 0.2), or less than 70,000 according to alternative numbers (see Introduction: figure 0.3). Most of these beneficiaries received land titles through colonization projects implemented in draught-prone areas of the northern and northeastern regions of the country. In the absence of adequate access to roads, markets, credit, and technology, newly settled peasants endured enormous difficulties in reconstructing their livelihoods. In the coming two decades, these difficulties would continue to hinder the efforts to make agrarian reform socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable. Sarney's failure demonstrated the power of the *latifundiários*. Subsequent governments facing the same rich landowners would also opt to derail the PNRA and underfund PROCERA. As long as rich landowners delivered more political support than landless peasants, the governments devoted few resources to the implementation of the PNRA.

In January 1985, the MST held its First National Congress in Curitiba, Paraná. The MST invited the key players in the struggle for agrarian reform—CONTAG,[14] CUT, CPT, PCB, PC do B, and PT, as well as progressive intellectuals. There was no agreement on how to proceed. The MST was skeptical that agrarian reform could be achieved by playing the *jogo político* (political game). The six invited groups favored widening the electoral base to allow the Left to gain power, and thus influence agrarian reform. They were also critical of the MST's insistence on direct pressure via land occupations. This was perceived as a contentious and counterproductive political strategy. The MST responded that land occupation was necessary to contest the *latifúndia*. Another point of contention was the type

of agrarian reform model proposed. For the MST, which held the transformational view—agrarian reform was not just about breaking up concentrated land holdings, but about breaking down the power structures that created and sustained the *latifúndia*. For the other parties, which held the populist view—agrarian reform was basically breaking up large land holdings to redistribute to landless peasants. Transformational agrarian reform required structural change; populist agrarian reform only required policy shift. The MST also insisted that transformational agrarian reform had to be community-based, in order to advance viable alternatives to agricultural capitalist development.

Sarney's failure validated the MST's skepticism of electoral politics as the best means of achieving agrarian reform. The MST strengthened its resolve of advancing agrarian reform through land occupation. In the coming years, rural unions, and CONTAG in particular, would also embrace this strategy. In short, the MST opted for land occupation as a necessary political tactic in the land struggle. However, this did not imply an outright rejection of electoral politics. Indeed, the MST entered into an informal political alliance with the Workers' Party to advance its interests in the political arena. This strategy would eventually produce uneven results.

In response to the failure of Sarney's PNRA, the MST resolved to push for agrarian reform through land occupations. It was a courageous decision considering the fierce resistance the landless peasants faced from the landowners. According to Sister Dorothy Stang (2001):

> During the Sarney administration, the rich landowners resorted to violence to intimidate the landless peasants. They hired *jagunços* [hit men] to get rid of peasant leaders, rural union representatives, lawyers, and church workers identified with the struggle for agrarian reform. The situation of violence was particularly sad in this part of Brazil [northeastern region]. The landless peasants paid a high price to gain access to land.[15]

Sister Stang's recollection is validated by empirical evidence. The CPT registered the murders of 767 agrarian reform activists from 1985 to 1989 (figure 4.1). The landless peasants also confronted police repression, judicial bias, and legislative apathy. Despite these obstacles, they were relatively well-prepared for their struggle. The landless peasants had learned from their early experiences that the struggle for

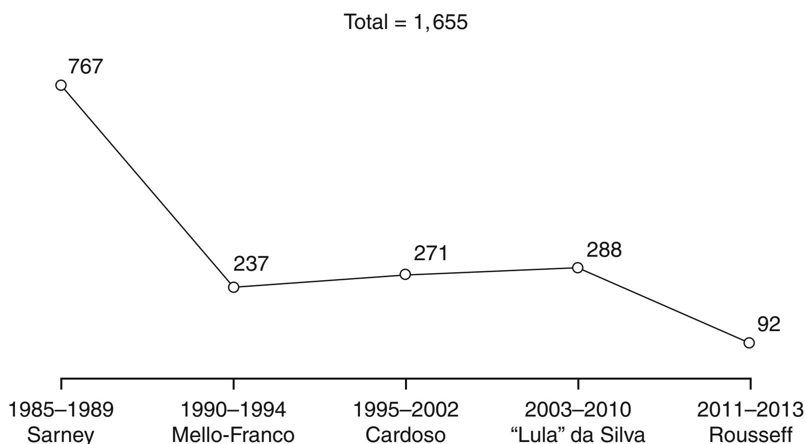

Figure 4.1 Murder of peasants in land conflicts in Brazil, 1985–2013.
Source: Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), *Conflitos no Campo Brasil*, 1985–2013.

agrarian reform required knowledge and practical skills. Specifically, it required effective *formação política* (political education). The MST invested in political education in order to strengthen its overall effectiveness. With support from the CPT, CUT, PT, and universities, the MST developed its own pedagogy of social action, based on the popular education pedagogy of Paulo Freire.[16] This pedagogy addressed the crucial problems that arose out of social exclusion. It also paid close attention to three vital dimensions of collective action—resource allocation, organizational development, and social networking. However, there was a vital dimension of political education that the MST, unintentionally, did not address—conflict management skills. Social movements tend to ignore conflicts within their ranks due to a variety of factors. The MST was no exception. The landless peasants assumed that ideological cohesiveness would overcome internal tensions and conflicts. Unfortunately, ideological cohesiveness is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve unless there are internal mechanisms to minimize intergroup or interpersonal conflicts. Even so, human nature is unpredictable, and tensions and conflicts are unavoidable. The struggle for agrarian reform awakened within the landless peasants expectations that the MST could not meet. As a result, they faced conflicts and tensions in the encampments and settlements. Nevertheless, the MST's "learning-by-doing" educational approach motivated the landless peasants to face the future with hope.

The overall objective of political education was to prepare the landless peasants for action. From 1984 to 1989, the MST trained thousands of peasants at its educational center in Caçador, in the state of Santa Catarina. Upon returning to their communities, these peasants became actively involved in linking micro to macro forms of peasant resistance. The result was very impressive—from east to west, and north to south, the Brazilian countryside started to experience a well-organized peasant mobilization for agrarian reform. In the last two years of the Sarney administration, the MST and other peasant groups carried out only 157 land occupations, involving 30,841 landless peasant families. In the coming years, this situation would drastically change. The MST embarked on an aggressive strategy of land occupation in order to "implement" the PNRA.

Dynamics of Agrarian Reform, 1990–1994

Sarney's failure brought into question the newly established democratic regime's commitment to agrarian reform. The 1989 presidential election provided the Brazilian Left with an opportunity to come to power and make agrarian reform a reality. The Workers' Party candidate was "Lula" da Silva, a former union leader and fierce critic of the military regime. "Lula" had strong support within academic, worker, student, and peasant organizations. He also had the support of influential Catholic bishops and the CEBs movement. His candidacy frightened the industrial and landholding elite. In response, they enlisted a young, wealthy, charismatic, and telegenic politician—Fernando Collor de Mello. He had been Mayor of Maceió (1979–1981), Federal Deputy (1982–1985), and Governor (1986–1989) of the impoverished state of Alagôas in northeastern Brazil. In each case, he had represented conservative interests. The *jogo político* turned out to be highly charged. In the end, "Lula" da Silva was narrowly defeated. Limited resources and his media image hampered him. He presented himself as a spokesman for the interests of the working class. Promising radical changes in the Brazilian society, he reached the runoff with a good chance of winning it. Yet, in the week before election day "Lula" da Silva's campaign crumbled due to a main factor—the powerful, conservative media torpedoed his candidacy. The influential *O Globo* television network openly praised Collor de Mello and demonized "Lula" da Silva. The conservative media effectively spread electoral fear—the PT was not prepared to run the country, its leaders had almost no administrative

experience, and a victory would result in a political and economic crisis of unforeseeable proportions. This message killed Lula's electoral campaign. The Left learned that to win the *jogo politico,* it was vital to have access to first-class political marketing, experienced (i.e., technocratic) candidates, and modern mass media.

Collor de Mello promised to accelerate the implementation of the PNRA. However, the flamboyant politician resigned after two years in office. While the country suffered a severe economic crisis, he and his friends had drained the public coffer. In 1992, Congress voted overwhelmingly to impeach him after finding evidence of corruption. It was a sad end for a politician who had promised (but failed) to fix Brazil's socioeconomic woes. Collor de Mello inherited an economy in tatters—growing deficit, unemployment, recession, and hyperinflation. He also inherited a fractious, clientelistic, and corruption-prone political machinery. In the end, he became susceptible to the same forces that he attempted to control.

Official government figures indicate that during Collor de Mello's disastrous administration, nearly 40,000 landless peasants obtained land titles. His successor, Itamar Franco distributed another 21,000 land titles (see Introduction: table 0.2). DATALUTA reported different figures—the total number of beneficiaries from 1990 to 1994 was less than 47,000 (see Introduction: figure 0.3). It also reported that the landless peasants carried out 504 land occupations nationwide (see Chapter 1: figure 1.2), involving 80,900 landless peasant families (see Chapter 1: figure 1.3). As in the previous administration, the struggle for land took a human toll—237 landless peasants lost their lives from 1990 to 1994 (see figure 4.1).

Despite his disastrous two years in office, Collor de Mello opened the door to neoliberalism in Brazil. He started a process of denationalizing the Brazilian economy as a strategy to modernize the country. This strategy would be accelerated by the subsequent administration. Neoliberalism drastically altered the debate on agrarian reform both in government and academic circles. Distributive land policy measures were interpreted as anachronistic solutions to rural inequities. The collapse of the "socialist" experiment in Eastern Europe strengthened this view. With neoliberalism, the "death of agrarian reform" thesis gained a new momentum for legitimizing the further intrusion of modern capitalism into the countryside. Thus, the new market-based or market-assisted conceptualization of agrarian reform, as advocated by influential neoliberal academics and policy-makers, vindicated the ideas of Ignácio Rangel and Alberto Passos Guimarães,

two conservative interpreters of the agrarian question in Brazil during the 1960s. Both of them proposed ending the "feudal" and "backward" agrarian order by replacing it with market-based capitalist agriculture. However, for the MST this was not a viable solution. The further intrusion of capitalist agriculture into the countryside would exacerbate human suffering and environmental degradation. Stédile (2004) summarized this view as follows:

> The agrarian question in Brazil is not only an economic problem but also a political one. As such, it transcends the mere access to land: it is a struggle for reconstructing socio-economic and environmental relations damaged by decades, if not centuries, of agricultural capitalist development. Therefore, further agricultural capitalism is not the solution to persistent material deprivation and environmental degradation.[17]

The Challenges of Operationalizing Agrarian Reform

The grassroots push for agrarian reform presented the Brazilian government with two problems—how quickly to distribute land; and how best to distribute land and settle landless peasants. The rate of distribution could be easily controlled via time-consuming bureaucratic processes. However, the question of how best to distribute land and settle landless peasants quickly became a serious problem for the government. That is, the old models of land settlement and land-use planning used traditionally by INCRA became outdated, and in most cases, counterproductive for agrarian reform.

INCRA's preferred model of land settlement and land-use was the *Agrovila*, or agricultural village. The agrovila model separated land for housing from land for farming—peasants had to walk a considerable distance to their parcel of land to work. Peasant families lived together in standardized houses clustered together at the edge of the settlements, close to main roads. The housing complex included elementary school, a health care centre, and access to transportation. However, connections to water, electricity, and communication services were rudimentary and unreliable. This early model of agricultural land settlement turned out to be a great disappointment for both the peasants and government officials.

There are two main reasons why peasants rejected the early agrovila model. First, the effective implementation of land settlement and land-use programs requires the coordinated consultation and

intervention of several stakeholders—community members, technical experts, and government officials. Unfortunately, INCRA failed to seek out strong community input in the design and implementation of the early agrovila model. Peasants resented the "top-down" approach. Second, the houses were designed for urban living and they did not provide the open interior spaces preferred by the peasants. Third, and the most serious drawback, was the distance from the housing cluster to the individual parcels of land—peasants wanted to live and to work on their land.

In response to peasants' demands to live and work on their own parcels of land, INCRA created an alternative settlement model which the peasants labeled *O Burro Quadrado*, or the "Square Donkey." The land was divided into individual lots to provide maximum freedom for peasants to organize their living and working conditions. This model also turned out to be a disappointment to many peasant communities—the houses were widely dispersed with limited access to roads, water, electricity, and communication services. This situation inhibited the efficient delivery of social and public services and access to markets. Economically, the Square Donkey model was basically suitable only for subsistence farming. The MST's leadership also rejected this model because it encouraged individualism.

Eventually, INCRA reevaluated its land settlement approach. After intense negotiations and discussions with all concerned stake-holders, including the MST's National Co-ordination Committee, INCRA offered the peasants two similar agrovila models that responded to both the individual and collective interests of the peasants. One model, the *Núcleo de Moradia*, or "Housing Nucleus," included houses clustered together in a central location with adjacent land for individual cultivation. Peasants could also choose to live away from the housing cluster, on their parcels of land. Thus, it was a mixed model of the early Agrovila and the *Burro Quadrado*. The other model, favored by the MST, the *Núcleo Habitacional*, or "Residential Nucleus," offered peasants a more integrated form of living and working together. That is, it was designed for those peasants willing to live in collective farming communities. All the houses were clustered in a central location with adjacent collective land for cultivation. This model not only facilitated the delivery of social and public services within the community, but also facilitated peasants' access to markets, and by extension access to education and social programs. Most importantly, this model of settlement enhanced solidarity and reciprocity among peasant families.

INCRA also established a unique land settlement model in the north and northeastern regions of Brazil, particularly in the states of Bahia and Pernambuco—the *Quilombo*. This model was a response to the demands of landless peasants of African origins. The Quilombo reflected the common property, communitarian, and egalitarian traditions of these peasants. Their houses were clustered in circles with the surrounding land area dedicated to communal farming. Within the Quilombo, peasants had a unique opportunity to rediscover, reassert, and celebrate their African culture, religion, and tradition.

The different models of land settlement manifested the diverse, complex, and dynamic processes of agrarian reform. Peasants had varying needs and hopes for living on the land. Some peasant families valued communal life; others preferred individual autonomy. Many men wanted to register the land in their name only; others wanted to register the land jointly with their spouses. INCRA had to accommodate these preferences. Despite their differences, these settlement models were designed with a common purpose—to make agrarian reform sustainable. In theory, these communities were designed to achieve social integration, economic efficiency, and environmental sustainability. In practice, however, these communities struggled to achieve these objectives because of the unpredictability of both human nature and government intervention. Often, these settlements faced significant internal conflicts. The dynamic and conflictive nature of some of these communities led to different forms of social, economic, and gender relations, which in turn, led to different outcomes. In some communities, peasants became militant Christian-socialist utopians; in others they became petty capitalist producers; and in many other communities, peasants became disillusioned subsistence producers. For both peasants and government, operationalizing agrarian reform became a complex process that required ongoing consultation, negotiation, and adaptation. This was certainly the case with the MST. By reflecting on a variety of political, economic, environmental, and technical issues, the MST started developing its own a model of agrarian reform. Specifically, the MST started developing a farming structure within its settlements that included a mixture of small-scale family farms, larger multi-family units, and looser cooperatives and peasants' associations.

5

Agrarian Reform under Cardoso

The 1994 presidential election gave the Left another opportunity to come to power and address the agrarian question. Unfortunately, this time the Left was split between two competing camps: Leonel Brizola's "old" Left and "Lula" da Silva's "new" Left. The MST openly supported the latter. In the end, "Lula" da Silva lost the *jogo político* for the second time. He was defeated by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, a renowned Marxist academic and exponent of Dependency Theory. As minister of finance under Itamar Franco's administration, Cardoso had been instrumental in designing and implementing the *Plano Real* (Real Plan), which tamed hyperinflation, deficit spending, recession, and unemployment, Brazil's major economic concerns then. Cardoso had also demonstrated superb political skills—he had organized a broad political coalition to support his stabilization plan. Eventually, he became the favorite presidential candidate of the middle and upper classes.

Although "Lula" da Silva started the campaign ahead in the opinion polls, Cardoso quickly caught up and won an easy first-round victory. "Lula" da Silva's criticism of the *plano real* fell on deaf ears, as Brazilians clearly saw the benefits of economic stability after suffering almost a decade of economic uncertainty. Also, Cardoso's political marketing machinery turned out to be very effective—it portrayed Cardoso as a dynamic and progressive leader, capable of consolidating Brazil's democracy by making its economy more competitive and its social structure more equitable. A gifted speaker, Cardoso sold the message of social and economic inclusion to Brazil's different electoral constituencies with absolute success. He also benefited from the inability of the Left to present a single presidential candidate. The combination of superb political organization, smart political

advertising, and a broad appealing political message, contributed to Cardoso's overwhelming electoral victory. He was elected in a single round of voting with over 54 percent of the total vote.

Cardoso came to power with solid managerial experience and a strong popular mandate. The "Philosopher-King" was ready to transform Brazil. However, there was a minor glitch—Cardoso's *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira*, or Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) did not have a majority in Congress. As such, he had to play give-and-take politics with conservative political parties such as the *Partido da Frente Liberal*, or Liberal Front Party (PFL), and the *Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro*, or Brazilian Labor Party (PTB). In addition, Cardoso could not ignore the *Bancada Ruralista* (Rural Bloc), which numbered 127 members in Congress. In contrast, the Left, and the Workers' Party in particular, could easily be ignored because of their low representation (around 50 members) in Congress.

Dynamics of Agrarian Reform, 1995–1998

Cardoso promised to make agrarian reform a reality. However, by the time he took office in 1995 the countryside was in intense political turmoil, with landless peasants carrying out occupations of unproductive *latifúndia*. The MST was targeting these large estates based on Article 184 of the Brazilian Constitution[1] and the INCRA land survey conducted in 1992. This survey indicated that 1.6 percent of all rural properties were greater than 1,000 hectares, yet they occupied more than 50 percent of the total agricultural land. More strikingly, INCRA reported that there were 150 million hectares (three times the size of France) of fallow or unproductive land belonging to 55,000 wealthy landowners. Out of this total, INCRA estimated that 125 million of these hectares were unsuitable for agriculture. The remaining 25 million hectares of fallow land (the combined territorial size of Portugal, Switzerland, Belgium, and Hungary) were considered suitable for viable agrarian reform projects. Thus, the landless peasants reasoned that the total unproductive fallow land could comfortably accommodate more than five million landless families.

Led by the MST, the landless peasants intensified the struggle for agrarian reform by carrying out 186 land occupations in 1995. The MST's land occupation strategy combined legal-constitutional tactics with an inclusive style of coalition politics that brought together church organizations, human rights groups, urban trade unions, student movements, political parties, local civic groups, and municipal officials. The

intensity of the land occupations deeply disturbed the landholding oligarchy, which responded by traditional means—violence (Hammond, 2009). In 1996, the brutal killing of 19 landless peasants by the police shocked Brazil. The killings received international condemnation and an unusual rebuke from President Cardoso. The Massacre of *Eldorado dos Carajás*, as the case became known, constituted one of the worst acts of police violence against the MST. The massacre took place when 2,000 landless peasants blocked a road near Eldorado dos Carajás in the state of Pará, to protest the slow pace of agrarian reform. According to officer Mario Colares Pantoja, the Governor of the state of Pará ordered him to use deadly force against the demonstrators (Amnesty International, 1997). Police fired directly into the crowd, killing several demonstrators at point blank range. They also used the landless peasants' own sickles and machetes to hack protesters to death. Unknown to the police, a local television station was at the scene and filmed the entire incident. Placed on the defensive, Cardoso promised an investigation and called representatives of the landless peasants to his office. After meeting with them, he promised to make agrarian reform a priority in his administration. However, the negotiations stalled after a few months. This same year, Cardoso laid the legal foundation for the eventual creation of the *Ministério do Desenvolvimento Agrário,* or Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) to better coordinate and implement agrarian reform and family farming.

If the Eldorado massacre was intended to intimidate the MST, it failed to achieve its objective. In fact, the tragic event not only emboldened the MST, but also rallied public opinion in favor of the MST (Ondetti, 2008). The MST once again accelerated land occupations. During Cardoso's first four years in office (1995–1998). The MST, along with several other peasant groups, carried out 1,928 land occupations (see Chapter 1: figure 1.2), involving 287,302 landless families (see Chapter 1: figure 1.3). These figures represented a sharp increase from those of the previous administrations. The landless peasants were on the move. Notably, land occupations were accompanied by high levels of political militancy by peasants, manifested in street demonstrations, nationwide marches, and occupations of banks and government buildings. Church organizations, left-wing political parties, academic associations, labor unions, student organizations, social movements, and NGOs endorsed these actions. Concerted political support from broad sectors of society facilitated the success of the land occupations. This support also pressured Cardoso's administration to implement the PNRA. Years of preparation had paid

off—the landless peasants were "implementing" the PNRA from the bottom up.

Much of the Brazilian political elite, especially large-scale landowners, were deeply alarmed by the radicalism of the landless peasants. Influential newspapers and magazines such as *Journal do Brasil, O Estado de São Paulo, Veja*, and *Isto É* started to print critical articles regarding the MST and Stédile in particular. These influential media channels did not share the MST's rationalization of land occupations. Rather, land occupation was viewed as a fundamental violation of property rights, regardless of whether the landless peasants occupied productive or unproductive private land. In response to this situation, the MST expanded its communication networks by establishing several community-based radio broadcasters, and strengthening the *Journal Sem Terra* and *Revista Sem Terra*. Respected progressive intellectuals were asked to write essays on contemporary political issues, and the agrarian question in particular. The MST also used alternative media channels to express its views. These included church bulletins, labor union newsletters, academic journals, newspapers, magazines, and *Letra Viva-MST Informa*. The latter was an Internet-based bulletin newsletter, which became the fastest and most-effective tool to inform MST supporters around the world.

Despite his public commitment to agrarian reform, Cardoso's main policy concern was promoting neoliberal political and economic reorganization (Sallum Jr., 1999). After all, he had come to power based on a coalition of powerful banking, industrial, manufacturing, and agribusiness interests. Cardoso's attention was oriented toward fundamentally changing the Brazilian economy by promoting policies that favored international trade liberalization, foreign investment, privatization of state industries, and fiscal and monetary reforms. In all fairness, he was also committed to promoting social programs, particularly cash-transfer initiatives, in order to address Brazil's so-called "social debt" (i.e., pervasive poverty and inequality).

Unfortunately, Cardoso did not offer a coherent and integrated agrarian reform program during his first term in office. With minor changes, he basically followed the same expropriation-by-compensation agrarian policies of the previous administrations in order to settle landless peasants. The MST's response to Cardoso's lack of attention to agrarian reform was to intensify land occupations. The response of the Cardoso administration to the MST's massive mobilization shifted over time. At first, it tried to ignore the MST and minimize its significance, labeling it a "historical anachronism."

However, subsequent to the MST's historical 100,000-person demonstration in Brasilia in 1996, Cardoso changed tactics, opening negotiations with, and attempting to, co-opt the MST, by offering quotas on land titles in exchange for the MST's demobilization. By attempting to demobilize the MST, Cardoso hoped to gain the upper hand in his plan to advance large-scale, agro-industrial complexes. The MST entered into negotiations with the government, but insisted that under no conditions would it agree to end the process of land occupations. The MST insisted that the limited quotas proposed by the Cardoso regime were inadequate to meet the needs of almost five million landless peasants families.

According to official government figures, during his first four years in office term, Cardoso settled 287,994 landless peasant families, or 276,011 according to DATALUTA figures (table 5.1). However, Cardoso's critics were suspicious of these statistics and started carefully analyzing INCRA data. They found many irregularities—INCRA's yearly settlement targets were incorrectly reported as achieved settlements; dozens of settlements were counted twice during different years; and *posseiros* were counted as settled landless peasants. Cardoso's agrarian reform beneficiaries included a large number of peasants who had been occupying land without legal titles. That is, their situations had simply been legalized. Despite these irregularities, Cardoso did settle during his first term many more landless peasant families than any previous government.

The creation of thousands of agrarian reform settlements became a serious problem for both Cardoso and the MST. By the late 1990s, there were over half-a-million peasant families living in these settlements, without access to appropriate housing, potable water, sewage treatment, electricity, health, education, and social services (Sparovek, 2003). For Cardoso, these settlements became a financial burden. Because of fiscal restraint measures mandated by the IMF, Cardoso was unwilling to provide further resources for the settled peasants. For the MST, these settlements became a logistical problem. They stretched the MST's capacity to deliver basic support to the settled peasants. The lack of an integrated and collaborative postsettlement support program exacerbated the problems of the settled peasants. While the primary responsibility for agrarian reform rested with INCRA, the responsibility for a range of support functions and assistance rested with diverse government departments. The lack of synchronization among these agencies made the implementation of postsettlement programs time-consuming and open to disagreements.

Table 5.1 Number of agrarian reform beneficiaries, 1995–2013

	Official Government Figures	*DATALUTA*
Cardoso		
1995	42,912	54,632
1996	62,044	56,132
1997	81,944	92,984
1998	101,094	72,263
1999	85,226	55,977
2000	60,521	33,621
2001	63,477	33,639
2002	43,486	26,653
Total	**540,704**	**425,901**
"Lula" da Silva		
2003	36,301	30,809
2004	81,254	36,836
2005	127,506	104,197
2006	136,358	94,895
2007	67,535	31,236
2008	70,157	28,432
2009	55,498	23,139
2010	39,479	12,541
Total	**614,088**	**362,085**
Rousseff		
2011	22,021	6,318
2012	23,075	4,854
2013	30,239	NA
Total	**75,335**	**11,172**

Source: Jornal INCRA, Baianço 2003, 2010, and 2014; and DATALUTA. Banco de Dados da Luta Pela Terra: Relatorio Brasil 2012.

Cardoso and the MST engaged in constant ideological struggles over the pace, terms, and objectives of implementing postsettlement programs. There were irreconcilable differences about how to make agrarian reform viable in the short and long-term. Both Cardoso and the MST agreed that the inequitable distribution of land and the lack of access to land were the driving forces behind poverty and hunger in the Brazilian countryside. They also agreed that securing access to land through agrarian reform was the fundamental first step to ensuring the capacity of the landless peasants to advance sustainable livelihoods. Beyond that, Cardoso and the MST disagreed on the structures and processes necessary to support sustainable livelihoods. Cardoso rejected the MST's view that the promotion of sustainable livelihoods

required changing the structure of large-scale, capital-intensive agriculture and reorienting the neoliberal state. As a result, the consolidation of agrarian reform via sustainable livelihoods became a source of ongoing contention between Cardoso and the MST. By underfunding postsettlements programs and refusing to compromise with the MST, Cardoso basically undermined the sustainability of his own agrarian reform program. Settled peasants needed properly designed, implemented, and managed community-based support programs to improve their livelihoods. Cardoso's failure to incorporate the participation of peasants in his agrarian reform program was perhaps his biggest policy mistake.

Dynamics of Agrarian Reform, 1999–2002

In 1998, the electoral scenario repeated itself. Cardoso easily defeated "Lula" da Silva for the second time. Once again, "Lula" da Silva tried to no avail to criticize Cardoso's economic policy. However, the middle and working classes did not take "Lula" da Silva's criticism seriously. Brazil was enjoying economic stability. The specters of hyperinflation and recession were no longer present, and the economy was growing at around 3 percent per year. Notably, the agribusiness sector was growing faster than the industrial sector at around 6 percent per year. This was not a surprising result, because Cardoso provided the *latifundiários* easy credit to open new agricultural frontiers and seek new agricultural markets abroad. More importantly, during his first term, Cardoso opened the countryside to foreign capital. Brazilian agricultural land became a market commodity open to international buyers. This attracted foreign agricultural entrepreneurs, agribusiness conglomerates in particular, willing to take advantage of new opportunities.

With Cardoso firmly in power for a second term, Brazil entered a new era of modern capitalist reorganization. Brazil broke away from a state-induced development model that had dominated the country for over 50 years. In the early 1990s, Cardoso had spelled out the changes required to make Brazil a more just society. His social democracy vision stressed (in theory) that:

> The real goal for contemporary social democracy concerns knowing how to increase economic competitiveness—leading to increases in productivity and the rationalization of the economy—and how to make the vital decisions concerning investments and consumption

> increasingly public ones; that is, how to make them transparent and controllable in society by consumers, producers, managers, workers, and the public in general, not only by impersonal bureaucracies of the state and the private sector (Cardoso, 1993: 286–287).

Once in power, however, Cardoso redesigned the economy to basically serve "impersonal bureaucracies"—industrialists, financiers, and big landowners. Workers, peasants, and indigenous peoples were left out of his master plan to promote inclusive social democracy. He aligned himself with political parties of the center-right and right in order to carry out the neoliberal transformation of the Brazilian economy. Obviously, this political alignment required resisting calls for progressive social reforms from worker, peasant, and indigenous organizations. Specifically, Cardoso's allies resisted calls for comprehensive agrarian reform on the grounds that it was incompatible with the fundamentals of neoliberal economic transformation. The *União Democrático Ruralista*, or Rural Democratic Union (UDR)—the political arm of the powerful landholding oligarchy—argued that changing the land-tenure system could harm agricultural development, and thereby, put at risk Brazil's food security (Gonçalves Costa, 2012). Thus, Cardoso advanced his neoliberal economics reforms by resorting to the old-fashioned politics of cooptation, clientelism, patronage, and elite consensus.

Cardoso's Agroexport Capitalist Development

The neoliberal reorganization of the Brazilian economy had a profound impact on the agricultural sector. Notwithstanding Cardoso's advocacy of a "third way" between capitalism and socialism, and his professed concern for agrarian reform. He was deeply committed to further advancing agro-capitalist development. Cardoso designed and implemented further agricultural policies that encouraged public and private investment in large-scale export-oriented farm enterprises. He also reoriented public investment in research, extension, and transportation systems in order to facilitate the export of agricultural commodities. The international investment community—hedge funds, private equity, and mutual fund firms—responded positively to Cardoso's policies. They heavily invested in the agroexport sector.

The new infusion of capital-intensive agricultural capitalism rapidly transformed Brazil's agriculture economy. The country experienced a new agricultural boom, propelled by soybean production, particularly in the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul.

Demand for Brazil's agricultural products in the international markets, particularly in China, opened opportunities for long-term growth. This "new" agricultural entrepreneurial class benefited from the government-funded agricultural research centers. Under Cardoso, the *Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária* (Brazilian Agriculture and Livestock Research Company), or EMBRAPA, was fundamentally restructured to primarily serve agribusiness.

Eventually, Cardoso's bet on agribusiness paid off. According to Matthey, Fabiosa, and Fuller (2004):

> From 1992 to 2002, Brazilian net exports of soybeans, soybean meal, and soybean oil increased 444, 65, and 288 per cent, respectively, giving Brazil a 30 to 40 per cent share of world trade in these commodities. Over the same period, Brazil switched from being a net importer of corn and cotton to being a net exporter, providing 7.7 and 5.8 per cent, respectively, of corn and cotton traded in 2003. (p 1)

Indeed, the increase in Brazil's agricultural production was impressive. According to Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture, from 1996 to 2006, Brazil's total value of crop production rose from R$23 billion reais to R$108 billion reais, or 365 per cent. Moreover, the rapid expansion of cattle ranching, particularly in the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, drastically changed rural Brazil. It contributed to Brazil becoming the world's largest beef exporter in less than a decade. Currently, more than 200 million cattle occupy around 495 million acres, or 200 million hectares of land in Brazil. The cattle industry not only contributed to the deforestation of the Brazilian amazon, but also hindered efforts to advance agrarian reform. Thus, the further expansion of modern, export-oriented agriculture and cattle ranching industries generated great profits, while worsening the living conditions of the rural poor.

For the landless peasants, capital-intensive agriculture posed a new threat. It diverted government attention and scarce financial resources away from agrarian reform programs. In response, the landless peasants intensified their struggle for land. However, this was taking place under a different socioeconomic context than that of the previous decade. Brazil was well-integrated into the global economy. With strong support from the capitalist class, Cardoso had accelerated the implementation of his neoliberal economic agenda, on the grounds that it was vital for preparing the country to compete successfully in the new global economy. This was a rather puzzling decision for a

man with a sharp grasp of international socioeconomic affairs. In the mid-1990s, there were signs of the dangers of neoliberal globalization, particularly in Southeast Asia, where unregulated, speculative financial investments were causing socioeconomic instability. In any case, Cardoso's policy led to the rapid denationalization of the Brazilian economy on a large scale. Previously state-owned corporations such as TELEBRAS (telecommunications) and EMBRAER (aircraft) came under private control. Foreign investors welcomed Cardoso's neoliberal policies—Brazil was open for business. The developmental state was transformed into a facilitator-manager of private, market-assisted development. Thus, the landless peasants were confronted with the new reality of global capitalism. Peasants alone could not confront the challenges of global capitalism. Therefore, the MST redefined agrarian reform as everybody's struggle. The MST took this message to the wider Brazilian society.

In 1999, Cardoso issued a policy document on agrarian reform titled *Agricultura familiar, reforma agrária e desenvolvimento local para um novo mundo rural* (Family Agriculture, Agrarian reform, and Local Development toward a New Rural World). This document integrated previously loose policies and practices with a clear ideological direction—the promotion of the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA). This program promoted a more "participatory, equitable, and socially inclusive" rural development. The following paragraph summarizes the content of the document:

> The objective of the program is to promote sustainable socioeconomic development at the local and regional levels by decentralizing the productive base and energizing the economic, social, political, and cultural life of rural communities. This can be achieved by investing in the expansion of family agriculture, promoting land redistribution, providing education, and encouraging a multiplicity of income generating economic activities, not necessarily agricultural-based. (INCRA, 1999: 2)

In many respects, Cardoso's agrarian reform objectives did not differ from the MST's. Both programs recognized the importance of family farming, the need to promote sustainable agriculture, and the need to diversify income-generating activities as the foundation for revitalizing rural communities. However, Cardoso and the MST differed on the policy instruments to achieve these objectives and the ultimate goals of agrarian reform. Cardoso advocated neoliberal policy instruments as the main means of advancing agrarian reform. These

included offering limited credit to individual landless peasants for land purchases at market-value prices, providing technical assistance, with an emphasis on resource use efficiency and output growth, shifting responsibility for agrarian reform from the federal to the state governments, and encouraging family farmers to gain social and economic opportunities by producing and competing in the capitalist market economy. This was the best alternative for peasants to raise their incomes. Notably, Cardoso held the view that the ultimate goal of agrarian reform was poverty reduction. This could be achieved by incorporating the peasant economy into the globalized capitalist economy.[2]

The MST advocated socially-oriented policy instruments as the means of advancing genuine agrarian reform. These included comprehensive land redistribution; redesigning, reorienting, and democratizing scientific knowledge, technological innovation, and technocratic planning in order to effectively advance sustainable agriculture; providing meaningful credit to family farmers; protecting local agricultural markets; limiting the size of rural properties; and providing suitable education to rural communities. For the MST, the ultimate goal was not just to break up concentrated land ownership, but also to break down the structures that create human suffering and environmental degradation. Agrarian reform was an instrument of socioeconomic development. These two opposite views of agrarian reform became irreconcilable. Cardoso refused to accept the MST's view that agrarian reform required changing the structural underpinning of poverty and inequality inherited from five centuries of exploitation. As such, his *Novo Mundo Rural* advocated a policy shift, not structural change. Cardoso was determined to maintain the dominant capitalist agricultural model of the previous decades, if not centuries, believing that globalization had buried the agrarian question.

Despite his strong objections, Cardoso could not ignore the MST's legitimate demands and experiences. Indeed, he incorporated some of these into his agrarian reform program. For instance, Cardoso established the *Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar* (National Program for Strengthening Family Farming), or PRONAF. This program stressed the importance of family farming for the Brazilian economy as an inhibitor of rural migration, generator of rural employment, and producer of local basic food staples. Cardoso provided financial credit, technical assistance, educational resources, and marketing skills to household farmers to improve their productive capabilities. He also established the *Programa de Cooperativismo*

and Associativismo Rural (Cooperativism and Rural Association Program), or PCAR. The PRONAF and PCAR reflected the MST's agricultural visions and experiences of cooperativism. However, there were fundamental differences. First, these programs were administrated by urban-based development experts with no direct involvement in the rural communities. Second, these programs embedded the neoliberal approach to rural economic development, and responded to the clientelistic interests of the rural political bosses. Third, these programs lacked consistent funding because they were low priorities for the government.[3] On several occasions, Cardoso's minister of finance, Pedro Malan, publicly expressed his concern with the high cost of agrarian reform.[4] What he failed to say was that almost one-third of the cost consisted of compensation to landowners. Finally, Cardoso's PRONAF and PCAR lacked the transformative element of the MST's community-based agrarian reform strategy, because they were intended to alleviate poverty without addressing its structural dimensions.

Cardoso also established the *Cédula da Terra* (Land Title) and *Banco da Terra* (Land Bank), projects funded by a US$ 90 million loan from the World Bank. These two projects were highly controversial because they encouraged individual landless peasants to become small property landowners by borrowing money from the Land Bank, in order to buy land directly from private landowners (Binswanger-Mkhize, Bourguignon, and Van den Brink, 2009). These landless peasants had to demonstrate previous farming experience and a potential to earn a maximum yearly income of US$ 15,000. Those who qualified were eligible for loan of up to US$ 40,000 (Mansfield, 2008: 166).

The new landowners were obliged to pay back the loan within 20 years. The *Cédula da Terra* and *Banco da Terra* programs were aimed not only at relieving the state of its responsibility to implement agrarian reform, but also at depoliticizing agrarian reform. The ultimate objectives of this market-assisted agrarian reform were to reduce rural poverty without changing Brazil's skewed agrarian structure, and undermine the MST's social base and land occupation strategy. Moreover, for Cardoso, the introduction of these programs was a logical response to a financial imperative—he estimated that the cost of settling a landless peasant family was around R$40,000 or CAN $19,000 (1999 exchange rates), and concluded that the government could not afford to settle the country's landless peasant population.[5]

In addition to the loan from the World Bank, Cardoso funded these programs by basically reducing funding for INCRA (Servolo de Madeiros, 2001). In 1999, for instance, INCRA's overall budget was reduced by 53 percent—from R$1.9 billion to one billion. INCRA's funding for land expropriation was reduced from R$600 million to R$200 million; and INCRA's special line of low-interest credit to newly formed cooperatives was completely abolished. The privatization of agrarian reform forced many desperate landless families to take out high-interest loans, which turned out to be extremely difficult or impossible to repay. The project was also designed to balance the government budget, in order to comply with IMF requirements of social spending reductions. The project turned out to be unattractive and unattainable for the vast majority of the landless peasants.

The MST responded to Cardoso's agrarian privatization plan by expanding nationwide land occupations. From 1999 to 2002, the MST, along with several other peasant movements, carried out 1,917 land occupations, involving 280,622 landless peasant families. This situation forced Cardoso to settle 287,994 landless peasant families during this period. Massive land occupations had become the best tool to pressure the government to implement the PNRA. Cardoso also passed comprehensive land registration, taxation, and transfer legislation. Specifically, he instituted legislation to tax unproductive land. The MST had long advocated these measures and the landless peasants welcomed them. However, the landless peasants were skeptical of the effectiveness of these measures because of the corruption-prone government's bureaucratic machinery. Regardless, the landless peasants' "use it or lose it" pressure tactics forced wealthy landowners to rethink their speculative habits—land was for cultivation, not speculation.

The MST's striking efforts to "implement" agrarian reform from the bottom up via nonviolent means received widespread attention at home and abroad. Foreign universities, research centers, and NGOs competed to host prominent MST representatives, particularly Stédile, as guest lecturers. For the MST, these invitations were opportunities not only to strengthen its international network, but also to share ideas and experiences. The MST demonstrated that it was possible to promote progressive social change by embracing a nonviolence strategy.[6] The MST understood that nonviolent popular struggles were conducive to effective and transformative forms of democratic citizenship. They tended to stir peoples' consciousness regarding injustices in the public and private spheres of human life.

They were also effective conduits for promoting dialogue, tolerance, and understanding. All of these were essential elements for cultivating a culture of peace, which was fundamental for devising transformative visions of progressive social change. The MST also understood that in the context of Brazil, nonviolent popular struggles were valuable alternatives to counter the forces of structural poverty and violence.[7] Nonviolent popular struggles allowed the poor the opportunity to raise their voices and reassert their rights. Yet, as the MST demonstrated, nonviolent actions, nonviolent struggles, or nonviolent resistance are not easy journeys—there are no assurances of success.[8] Nonviolence cannot always force authoritarian or democratic regimes to accept changes. Because of strong of public support in Brazil and the active work of the *Friends of the MST* abroad, the MST managed to minimize repression by the central government. However, at the state and municipal levels, Cardoso's allies, particularly state governors and powerful landlords, had more freedom to open frivolous judicial processes and organize violent repressions against the landless peasants, with almost impunity. In July 1997, Cardoso's *Chefe da Casa Militar,* or Chief of Military Household, a general comptroller over all issues regarding the military and police forces, expressed concern about the participation of MST activists in the then ongoing police officers' strikes, as part of a supposed plot to "destabilize" the military (Martins and Zirker, 1999; 2000). Eventually, all of these pressures led to the criminalization of land occupation and the repression of peasant movements.

Cardoso Years of Violent Confrontations

During his second term, Cardoso took a more confrontational attitude toward the MST. He sensed that the MST had become a serious threat to his administration. Although Cardoso offered lip service to agrarian reform in general, he considered the MST "a threat to democracy" (Keen and Hayes, 2009: 526). Cardoso compared the MST's demands for subsidized credit to someone "who enters a bank as a robber" (Cardoso, 2006: 210). In a memoir written after his term, Cardoso expressed sympathy for the landless peasants, stating that "were I not President, I would be probably out marching with them," but also that "the image of mobs taking over privately owned farms would chase away investment, both local and foreign" (Cardoso, 2006: 210). However, Cardoso never branded the MST as a terrorist group—a step taken by his then minister of agricultural development, Raul Jungmann.

During his two terms in office, however, Cardoso expressed his annoyance with the continuous land occupations, street protests, and government-building takeovers. Cardoso also expressed his annoyance with the MST's criticism of his neoliberal model. Despite negotiating at irregular intervals with the MST, Cardoso's government actively worked to slow the pace of agrarian reform. According to Stédile (2006):

> The movement [MST] understood, at the very beginning of Cardoso's second term, that it was suffering a great reversal of agrarian reform. Many successes achieved during the previous decade of struggle for agrarian reform–like the conquest of acreage, lines of credit, infrastructure for production, social infrastructure for housing, schools, sanitary facilities, a series of benefits for the settlements, were being destroyed by Cardoso's neoliberal regime. The MST could not accept this and had to fight back.[9]

Faced with this reality, the MST intensified street protest and land occupations in the spring of 2000. A number of these occupations sought to unite landless peasants with homeless and unemployed urban workers. The MST's pursuit of both political activism (land occupation) and economic activism (cooperative formation) also motivated the urban and rural poor to join the movement. However, Cardoso remained unmoved by the peasant militancy and resisted calls for comprehensive agrarian reform. In addition to the slow pace of agrarian reform, the MST had other reasons to intensify protests. Cardoso's radical restructuring of the economy involved the massive privatization of lucrative mines, telecommunications, energy, and other key industries; the deregulation of financial markets; and the liberalization of trade and capital flows. These measures severely eroded the economic base of nationalist populist constituencies composed of local producers and industrial workers. In the absence of effective political opposition to Cardoso's neoliberal policies from the traditional urban trade unions and left-wing political parties, the MST decided to mobilize the forces of popular resistance. The MST filled the political vacuum left by the decline of organized labor and student movements during the early 1990s. The transition to democracy and the advent of neoliberalism basically had sedated these traditional movements. The MST overcame this situation by establishing alliances with urban-based popular movements; especially those movements connected to housing, environmental, women, and human rights issues (Janoski, 2005). This was also a strategic move

by the MST, because, as Stédile explained, the concrete struggle for agrarian reform would "unfold" in the countryside, but it would be eventually decided in the city, where the necessary "political power for structural change" rested (Boucher, 1999: 325).

Thus, the MST engaged itself in large-scale land occupation struggles. In response, Cardoso set up a *gabinete de crises* (crisis response team) with a mandate to monitor the MST. This crisis response team used infiltration, wiretapping, and profiling as tools to report to Cardoso. According to the respected magazine *Valor*, Cardoso's crisis team was made up of academics, bureaucrats, and police informers working together on the fourth floor of the *Palacio do Planalto* (Presidential Palace). Using an enormous wall map, this team recorded land occupations, the number of landless peasants involved, the number of hectares of land, and the names of key landless peasant leaders. They also detailed the names of domestic and international supporting organizations (*Valor*, June 9, 2000). Cardoso used this information to prosecute MST members and to prevent the granting of land titles to landless peasants engaged in land occupations. In May 2001, Cardoso signed Provisional Presidential Decree No. 2109–5 making land occupation illegal. Violators were subjects to severe penalties, including immediate eviction and ineligibility to receive land titles for up to four years. The decree gave judges additional measures to protect landowners, including the issue of "pre-occupation" arrest warrants against key peasant organizers.

However, the monitoring and criminalization of the struggle for agrarian reform did not deter the MST, which continued to defy the government by carrying out new land occupations. By late 2001, Cardoso was confronting not only the MST, but also a new wave of landless peasants' movements.[10] He unsuccessfully attempted to manipulate some of them as a counterbalance force to the MST. Despite their ideological and strategic differences, these peasant movements were united by a common objective—gaining access to land. The landless peasants entered the new millennium defying the neoliberal state and advancing agrarian reform through land occupations. Cardoso responded by expropriating rural properties with dubious ownership claims and transferring them to the landless peasants. As the government granted more land titles, landless peasants became more involved in land occupations across Brazil. Government officials and big landowners fiercely denounced land occupations. They condemned the MST's occupations of agricultural facilities owned by large corporations. The MST considered activities

of these corporations to be at variance with Brazil's principles of the social function of land. All of these factors led to growing clashes between big landowners and landless peasants. Ultimately, the big landowners put pressure on Cardoso to take a "harder line" against the MST and those "criminal" individuals and organizations inciting land occupations (Hammond, 2009). Fierce reaction against the MST and other peasant groups also came from the courts, which traditionally have been filled by conservative judges closely linked to the *latifundiários*. MST coordinators, Stédile and Rainha in particular, became well-known figures in Brazilian courts. They were constantly called to court to respond to the most frivolous, bizarre, and unsubstantiated charges such as "inciting violence, disrupting peace and order, ideological deviation, trespassing of private property, illegal gathering, and disorderly conduct." In most cases, these accusations did not stand in court, mainly because of strong reaction from civil rights groups, the Church, and international solidarity networks. Congress also opened several *Commissão Parlamentar de Inquérito* (Investigative Parliamentary Commission), or CPI, to look into the MST's activities in the countryside. All of these events placed an enormous financial burden on the MST, forcing the movement to rely on the financial support of solidarity groups, particularly from abroad, to meet these costs. In response to the criminalization of land occupations, the MST responded by expanding its international solidarity network. Eventually, this network became known as the *Friends of the MST*. The MST also benefited from the generous contributions of several Catholic foundations and NGO organizations from abroad, particularly from Europe and Canada. For instance, the *Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace*, popularly known as *Development and Peace*, has financially supported the MST's work for almost three decades through the *Associação Nacional de Cooperação Agrícola* (National Association for Agricultural Cooperation), or ANCA.[11]

Despite international action, Brazil experienced systemic violence in the countryside during the Cardoso's regime. In 2001, Amnesty International reported that:

> Conflict over land rights continued to generate violence, as land activists were harassed, threatened, and killed by military police carrying out evictions, or policing demonstrations. They were also attacked by gunmen hired by landowners, with the apparent acquiescence of the police authorities. (p3)

The state of Pará, one of Brazil's most resource-rich states, and home to powerful agribusinesses and cattle barons, became the most violent region in the 1990s. There were bloody conflicts between large landowners and agrarian reform activists. According to the CPT (2013), from 1985 to 2001, 272 landless peasants were murdered in Pará with impunity—only four of these cases came to trial. In most cases, impunity prevailed because of government officials' ties to landowners; police officers' ties to landowners; and landowners' ties to judges. During Cardoso's years in office, the murder of landless peasants over land claims continued to be common in Brazil, and those accused rarely faced trial for their crimes. The landless peasants experienced the full force of structural violence in their struggle for agrarian reform.

Conclusion

First, during his eight years in office (1995–2002), Cardoso used over 20 million hectares of public and expropriated land to settle a total of 540,704 landless peasant families (see Introduction: table 0.2), according to government data, or 425,901 according to DATALUTA (table 5.1). Most of them were settled in the center-south and northeast parts of the country, in areas with low land fertility, and distant from main markets. Most of these new settlers suffered from poor access to basic resources to make the land socially and economically viable in the long-term.

Second, Cardoso claimed that his PNRA was *a reforma agrária mais grande do mundo* (the world's biggest agrarian reform program). He used the above numbers to claim that his administration had defeated the *latifúndia* and advanced social justice in the countryside. Unfortunately, there is not much empirical evidence to support this claim. From 1995 to 2002, land redistribution was accompanied by further land concentration. That is, the expansion of small-scale farming was counterbalanced by the expansion of large-scale farming. In 1995, the Gini index of land inequality was 85. In 2002, it was 86. Brazil remained a country with an enormous concentration of landownership. The *latifúndia* remained basically unchanged.

Third, Cardoso's market-assisted agrarian reform did not succeed (Mendes Pereira, 2004). This program reflected Cardoso's efforts to integrate peasant agriculture into the global economy, while undermining the MST's social base and land occupation strategy. Indeed, Cardoso's market-assisted agrarian reform was a counterreaction

to the MST's push for popular agrarian reform. The MST strongly resisted Cardoso's policies by intensifying street protests and land occupations.

Four, Cardoso's neoliberal economic reforms radically transformed rural Brazil. His agroexport capitalist policies successfully promoted large-scale commercial enterprises with foreign capital. The further expansion of Brazil's agricultural frontiers propelled the country to the status of an influential agricultural superpower. However, this success contributed to the widespread destruction of Brazilian ecosystems and environmental degradation, especially in the Amazon rainforest region. Also, the expansion of capital-intensive agriculture in Brazil led to further land concentration and displacement. This pattern of agricultural growth questions the long-term sustainability of agricultural development in Brazil.

Finally, the MST's successful mobilization for agrarian reform demonstrated that a well-organized and politically conscious peasant movement, with a democratic collective leadership that could successfully challenge the neoliberal state. The MST's success rested on its capacity to take direct action, with broad popular support. The retreat of traditional leftist parties and movements created a political opposition vacuum in postauthoritarian Brazil. This was less a product of structural changes in the economy, and more the result of internal political and organizational deficiencies of these social actors. The MST filled this vacuum—it became the main force of opposition to the Cardoso administration. Eventually, Cardoso responded to the growing influence of the MST by criminalizing and militarizing the land conflict. The human toll of this conflict from 1995 to 2002 was high—271 landless peasants lost their lives (see Chapter 4: figure 4.1). By promoting a narrow agrarian reform agenda, Cardoso missed a great opportunity to make agrarian reform an important policy instrument for progressive social and human development. By the late 1990s, Cardoso's neoliberal policies led the country into a severe crisis. This offered an opportunity for the MST and the Worker's Party to politically capitalize on the situation. This topic is explained in the next chapter.

6

Agrarian Reform under "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff

In 2002, "Lula" was once again the PT candidate, backed by a number of influential Brazilian intellectuals and a constellation of social movements, including the MST. This time, however, the "eternal" Brazilian presidential candidate for the Workers' Party was well prepared. In the previous three presidential elections, Lula da Silva had failed to get elected in part because the powerful industrial and rural oligarchy successfully presented a unified front behind conservative charismatic candidates. Also, the neoliberal fever of the 1990s was at its highest peak, and this, too, severely weakened "Lula" da Silva's leftist challenge. However, the 2002 presidential election, took place in a different political climate marked by increasing popular disenchantment with the neoliberal program of privatization, fiscal discipline, and deregulation. The implementation of this neoliberal agenda by the previous governments had "modernized" the Brazilian economy at tremendous human cost.

By early 2000, Brazilians had lost faith in Cardoso's neoliberal policies and "Lula" da Silva presented an appealing alternative. Cardoso had bet on neoliberal globalization to bring prosperity and stability to Brazil. However, immediately after he assumed his second term in office, the Brazilian economy crashed. Cardoso's policies fell victim to unpredictable financial forces resulting from a combination of internal and external factors, particularly the unregulated flow of speculative, short-term global investments. The IMF came to the rescue with a US$45 billion stabilization program, which forced Cardoso to implement painful fiscal and monetary discipline. "Lula" da Silva adeptly exploited this disenchantment with the status quo and saw it as an opportunity to finally come to power. This time round, however,

"Lula" da Silva was very careful with his message to the electorate. He promised simply *mudança* or change. He was vague about what kind of changes he would commit to, and carefully avoided controversies that would lead to "market fear" among international investors. From his past electoral experiences, "Lula" da Silva had learned that if he wanted to be Brazil's president, he needed not only to polish his political image, but also to dilute his political program to attract a wider electoral constituency. He adopted a more pragmatic platform, courted powerful business leaders, pledged to end political corruption, clientelism, patronage, and promised to work with the IMF to meet fiscal targets. "Lula" da Silva also toned down his social proposals such as comprehensive agrarian reform. In sum, the former union organizer presented himself as a mature, capable leader with a solid grasp of socioeconomic affairs and a commitment to social justice via grassroots participation in the political process. During the last three months of the presidential campaign, the MST halted land occupations to avoid negative publicity against "Lula" da Silva's campaign. He preached both the politics of "financial discipline" and "social inclusion" to the electoral audience. The message of "financial discipline" appealed the upper and middle-classes, while the message of "social inclusion" reverberated well among the poor and destitute. The political marketing trick worked and "Lula" da Silva decisively defeated Cardoso's protégé, José Serra with 61.5 percent of the vote.

Dynamics of Agrarian Reform, 2003–2006

"Lula" da Silva's electoral victory marked a new chapter in Brazilian politics, when he assumed power in January 1, 2003. "Lula" da Silva's inauguration brought thousands of his supporters to Brasilia. He had promised to eradicate poverty, generate employment, and create a more just and egalitarian Brazilian society. For the first time, an autonomous working class-based political party had come to power in a free and competitive election. His electoral victory forced the PT to face up to several social and economic challenges, including those that any party confronts when it takes control over the apparatus of the state for the first time. Also, the PT's lack of majority seats in the Brazilian Congress forced "Lula" da Silva to enter into a coalition with conservative parties in order to advance his agenda. Eventually, this would become problematic—it generated a complex vote-buying corruption affair, or *mensalão*, that almost brought down "Lula" da Silva's government in 2005.

The MST saw "Lula" da Silva's election as a golden opportunity to make agrarian reform a reality. The MST had faithfully supported the PT since its inception and expected better relations with "Lula" da Silva's government than with previous governments. Stédile was particularly enthusiastic, and stated in a public interview: "Agrarian reform is like a soccer game and the *latifundiários'* team will lose. The government is playing on our team" (*Veja*, July 30, 2003). Stédile was very confident. He understood that the "correlation of forces" in the struggle for agrarian reform had changed with the election of "Lula" da Silva (Stédile, 2004: 1). He was also very confident in the PT's historical commitment to agrarian reform. And indeed, both during and immediately after his election, "Lula" da Silva solemnly promised the MST to settle 100,000 land peasant families per year. He also promised to increase funding for post-settlement programs. For the MST, this was critically important, because over half a million settled peasants were confronting serious problems with access to proper housing, education, health, electricity, and sewage treatment. The MST was aware that mere redistribution of land was not enough to make agrarian reform viable. Settled peasants needed access to basic social, educational, and commercialization resources in order to become productive. A successful agrarian reform program must be comprehensive and participatory, and designed with the interests of peasants in mind.

Soon after taking office, Lula's designated minister for agrarian reform, Miguel Rossetto, requested the assistance of Plínio de Arruda Sampaio, Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, Guilherme Delgado, Ariovaldo Umbelino de Oliveira, Leonilde Mediros, Sérgio Pereira Leite, Pedro Ramos, and Fernando Gaiger de Silveira, to submit a proposal for agrarian reform. These were well-known scholars and activists who had been assisting the MST, PT, and CPT for a number of years. They soon started working on the plan in close collaboration with diverse peasant movements, advocacy groups, government officials, and other academics. This process was unique because it was the first time that landless peasants were formally consulted on a national plan for agrarian reform. The final document, titled *Proposta de Plano Nacional de Reforma Agrária* (Proposal for a Agrarian Reform Program), was submitted to Minister Rossetto on October 2003. It was a well-written and detailed plan that recommended the implementation of an integrated agrarian reform program. The proposal contained five important policy areas: (1) land redistribution; (2) better support for settled peasant families; (3) improved land registration and

taxation legislation; (4) collaborative capacity building; and (5) sustainable rural development. It also included the most current data on a variety of issues, ranging from the estimated number of landless peasants to the amount of land available for redistribution. Lula used this proposal to create his *Plano Nacional de Reforma Agrária II* (National Plan for Agrarian Reform II), or PNRA II, which set an achievable goal of settling 400,000 landless peasant families, granting land titles to 500,000 *posseiros*, and providing credit to 127,000 family farmers over a four-year period.

The MST welcomed the PNRA II as a well-conceived and realistic program. During "Lula" da Silva's first year in office, he managed to fill key posts in INCRA and CONAB's bureaucracy with relatively well-educated peasant activists, including many from the MST. Whether intentionally or not, "Lula" da Silva had started a process of leadership co-optation of popular movements. This process eventually expanded as "Lula" da Silva's administration required experienced "grassroots" political activists in order to design, implement, and manage his social inclusion projects. By bringing social activists into his government, "Lula" da Silva weakened many social movements. He also disempowered the main national labor unions, CUT and CONTAG, by co-opting their leadership. Many of them became ministers or high officials in the "Lula" da Silva administration. As a result, CUT[1] and CONTAG became basically political arms and agencies of "Lula's" government. Notably, CONTAG's role shifted from promoting radical agrarian reform to pursuing rural development. However, the MST resisted co-optation. Its political autonomy could not become compromised, because it could have spelled the end of the movement.

Two years passed and "Lula" da Silva had failed to explain clearly how his administration was going to implement the PNRA II. There were serious doubts within the MST and CPT about the government's program for agrarian reform. Tens of thousands of landless peasants were "encamped" under inhumane conditions waiting for "Lula" da Silva to respond to their legitimate claims. The MST soon became disillusioned with the overall slow implementation of the PNRA II, and started questioning "Lula's" commitment to agrarian reform. Land redistribution had stagnated, agribusiness expanded and, most disconcerting, the criminalization of land occupation and the repression of peasant movements continued. The MST's biggest frustration with "Lula" da Silva was his open support for agribusiness. During the previous decade, the Brazilian economy had experienced a huge

crop commodity boom, with huge expansions in soybean, maize, cotton, sugar cane, and eucalyptus plantations—the last mainly for paper production. However, this had come with a huge human and environmental price, which the MST strongly denounced. Modern monoculture relies heavily on chemical inputs, genetically modified seeds, and labor exploitation. Despite the human and environmental costs, "Lula" da Silva embraced agribusiness. This was a puzzling development for the MST.

It turned out that "Lula" da Silva's main policy concern was not with agrarian reform, but with reforming Cardoso's neoliberal polices in order to tackle economic recession, rampant unemployment, fiscal deficit, foreign debt, and a myriad of social problems plaguing Brazilian society. Agribusiness was important to address these issues, because of its demonstrated potential to generate necessary income for the government. "Lula" da Silva named Antonio Palocci as a minister of finance, and Henrique Meirelles, as president of the Central Bank. Both of them were Wall Street favorites, who advocated continuation of Cardoso's neoliberal policies with some social adjustments. This message cleared up prior distrust and skepticism within the international financial investment community. "Lula" da Silva's economic team used a combination of tight fiscal and monetary policy measures to stabilize the economy with relative success. Brazilian economy began to experience growth once again (figure 6.1). The combination of high interest rates, budget cuts, improved tax-revenue collection, and increased agricultural exports, generated surplus for

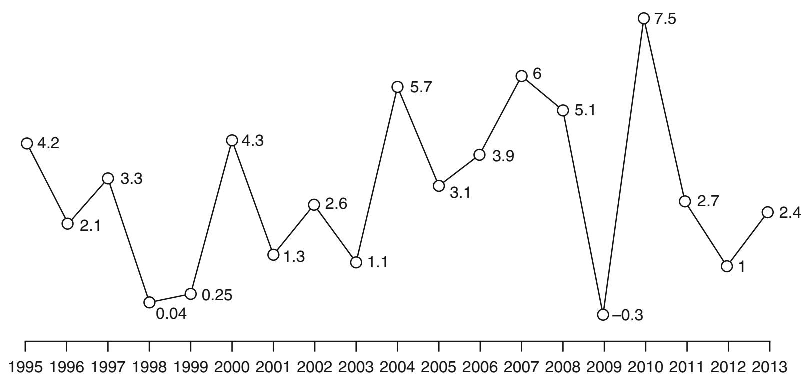

Figure 6.1 Brazilian GDP annual growth, 1995–2013.

Source: Banco Central do Brasil.

the government. "Lula" da Silva continued with Cardoso's denationalization of the Brazilian economy in order to make it more competitive in the global economy. He also sought new markets for Brazilian exports in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.

This was a time of suffering, endless waiting, disillusion, and finally frustration. The reliance of the MST national leadership on its "close ties" with "Lula" da Silva to secure positive changes was a tragic illusion with very negative results for all concerned. All around the MST, there was a growing rejection of "Lula" da Silva's embrace of the ruling class, the IMF and foreign investors. By June 2004, less than one-third of the population supported "Lula" da Silva's economic policies. Public employees protested by organizing strikes. Thousands of long-term members of the Workers' Party cancelled their membership in the party. Dissident Workers' Party congress members expelled from the party formed a different new party. But the MST did not participate in any of these protests. The MST's national leadership remained confident in "Lula" da Silva.

Ultimately, "Lula" da Silva's continuation of neoliberal economic policies shattered the confidence of the landless peasants, workers, students, and popular movements. Social Security reform also alienated pensioners. For "Lula" da Silva the latter was critically important for improving the financial health of the country. After all, he stressed, 12 percent of the total government budget in 2002 was consumed by social security payments to pensioners and this amount was increasing every year. However, he received strong support from domestic and foreign bankers and investors—the main beneficiaries of the changes he implemented in the Brazilian economy. They started selling the "Brazilian brand" around the world—"a coming world power, a profitable place to invest, and a progressive and responsible democracy." "Lula" da Silva's introduction of his *Fome Zero*, or Zero Hunger, social program helped this image. The conditional cash transfer *Bolsa Família*, or Family Allowance, an integral part of the Zero Hunger program, made the Brazilian brand very popular around the world. The origins of the *Bolsa Família* came during the Cardoso administration with the creation of small-scale social programs, such as the *Bolsa Escola,* or School Allowance, which was conditional on school attendance only. The administration of "Lula" da Silva redesigned the program in order to fight long-term poverty. The *Bolsa Família* program encouraged poor families to become responsible for their children's education and health, in exchange for a monthly cash allowance from the government. Eventually, the

program became the centerpiece of President "Lula" da Silva's social welfare policy. Improvements in the financial situation of the country during the first two years of the "Lula" da Silva's administration facilitated the implementation of the *Bolsa Família*. According to the Brazilian government, 14 million poor families were enrolled in the program in 2013 (MDS, 2014).

In the countryside, the *Bolsa Família* basically restrained the poor from seeking structural change. For "Lula" da Silva, the *Bolsa Família* was politically, commercially, and financially very advantageous for his administration. Politically, the *Bolsa Família* built a solid Worker's Party electoral base among the destitute. Commercially, the *Bolsa Família* transformed the destitute into a new class of low-end consumers. Financially, it required minimum expenditure to reduce absolute poverty (0.4 percent of Brazil's GDP). Despite its immediate benefits, the *Bolsa Família* did not have a significant impact upon labor market participation, child nutrition, teenage pregnancy, or educational achievement among the destitute. However, these issues did not overly concern "Lula" da Silva, because his priority was to promote a neoliberal economic agenda with a human face. Over time, even "Lula" da Silva's critics within the political opposition in Congress came to realize the immediate benefits of cash-transfer programs.

The success of the *Bolsa Família* came at the expense of agrarian reform. "Lula" da Silva, rejected the MST's criticism that the structural (and political) roots of poverty and inequality could not be eliminated by the introduction of limited welfare programs. The MST demanded more funding for agrarian reform initiatives, to no avail. Moreover, "Lula" da Silva's support for the expansion of capital-intensive agribusiness undermined the MST's calls for comprehensive agrarian reform. The MST, and other peasant movements, responded to the slow pace of agrarian reform by continuing land occupations. During his first term in office (2003 to 2006), the landless peasants carried out 2,307 land occupations (see Chapter 1: figure 1.2), involving 273,289 landless peasant families (see Chapter 1: figure 1.3). This situation forced "Lula" da Silva to settle 381,419 landless peasant families. CPT and DATALUTA disputed this figure and indicated that it was inflated by the mere regularization of the situation of *posseiros*—the normalization of untitled or unregistered peasant properties. "Lula" da Silva used the same statistical trick as Cardoso to inflate his achievements. Moreover, most of these landless peasants were settled in public lands with limited and underfunded post-settlement support programs. This approach to agrarian reform minimized government settlement

costs, avoided expropriation of private land, and confrontation with the powerful latifundiários and agribusiness interests. "Lula" da Silva even refused to fully dismantle the much-criticized Land Bank and Land Title experiments implemented during the Cardoso's administration with financial support from the World Bank. These two programs were folded into the *Programa Nacional de Crédito Fundiário e Consolidação da Agricultura Familiar,* or National Program for Land Credit (PNCF) and Family Farming Support Program (CAF). These programs received funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and were basically redesigned market-assisted agrarian reform programmes (Pereira and Sauer, 2011). To be fair, "Lula" da Silva's first act in government was to stimulate peasant production through the Zero Hunger program. This program was aimed at providing the minimum food necessities to the poor and disenfranchised through government food vouchers and community involvement. Peasant producers played a key role in this program by directly selling their crops to CONAB, the main agency in charge of distributing food to the poor. Although well intended, the Zero Hunger program rapidly became an effective instrument of political control aimed at disempowering the poor and disenfranchised. The MST's leadership expressed misgivings about the long-term effectiveness of this program, based on the view that the best way for "Lula" da Silva to fulfill his commitments to the poor and disenfranchised was to provide them with resources that enable them to improve their material welfare. Agrarian reform was a key factor in this process.

"Lula" da Silva's reluctance to live up to his commitment to comprehensive agrarian reform caused constant frustration and anger within the MST and CPT, and even the class collaborationists CUT and CONTAG. Frustration within the traditional PT political base itself, particularly within the intellectual wing of the party, also caused trouble for "Lula" da Silva. Even so, he maintained tight control on the levers of power within his party, outflanking the radical Left wing, which represented about a third of the official delegates at various PT congresses. With firm control of the party's political machinery, "Lula" da Silva managed to cement his neoliberal policy agenda.

By the end of his first term in office, "Lula" da Silva was very popular among key sectors of the urban electorate. Brazil was enjoying financial stability, economic growth, and consumer confidence. The IMF and World Bank's endorsement of "Lula" da Silva's neoliberal policies and programs further cemented his credibility within influential financial circles, at home and abroad. Brazil entered a new

era of economic prosperity, basically predicated on an expanding agribusiness sector, a reenergized mineral extraction industry, massive foreign investment, and a growing consumer class. All of this eventually helped "Lula" da Silva to remain in power for another term. In the 2006 election, "Lula" da Silva was easily reelected with over 60 percent of the votes, defeating Geraldo Alckmin from Cardoso's PSDB. The MST reluctantly supported "Lula" da Silva's reelection. He was now in a position to further legitimize his "new developmentalism" socioeconomic agenda.[2] This agenda rejected the Washington Consensus and proposed a "new developmentalism" or "Post-Washington Consensus," based on a new form of development that placed the state at the center of the development process. Brazil's ruling class, particularly those with large landownership and agribusiness interests, welcomed "Lula" da Silva's activist state. After all, they had always prospered under state intervention. Unfortunately, for the landless peasants "Lula" da Silva's activist state was less inclined to act on matters of agrarian reform.

Dynamics of Agrarian Reform, 2007–2010

By the beginning of his second term, there was no question of "Lula" da Silva's commitment to agribusiness. To the MST, he was clearly saying: "*Reforma agrária não. Agronegócio sim,*" or "Agrarian reform no. Agribusiness yes." According to Stédile (2006):

> The MST's analysis of the "Lula" da Silva government's policies had demonstrated that "Lula" had favored the agribusiness sector much more than family-owned agriculture. His agricultural policy was clearly pro export-oriented agribusiness. There was no question about this: none at all. Agrarian reform suffered from this. In fact, it became a low priority in "Lula" da Silva's government overall neoliberal policies.[3]

For the MST, which had invested years of effort into the political fortunes of the PT, this realization was hard to swallow. The fetishism of agribusiness had taken strong hold of "Lula" da Silva's socioeconomic policies, effectively preventing comprehensive agrarian reform. That is, agribusiness had become one of the central pillars of "Lula" da Silva's "new developmentalism" ideology. And there was no turning back. With this move, the PT had committed one of the greatest betrayals in modern Brazilian political history. Before

coming to power, "Lula" da Silva consistently supported radical agrarian reform, as a first step in building a more just and egalitarian society. After coming to power, he changed his mind and subordinated agrarian reform to the imperatives of his agribusiness and social assistance political agenda. "Lula" da Silva reloaded Cardoso's agribusiness policies by basically removing the agrarian question from serious consideration. He was committed to making Brazil a new agricultural superpower. On the one hand, the Ministry of Agriculture pushed the agribusiness agenda with the full support of the Ministry of Finance and the landholding class. On the other hand, the Ministry of Agrarian Development promoted sustainable family farming, with unenthusiastic support from the Ministry of Finance. The Zero Hunger program provided an additional palliative measure to deal with the shortcomings of post-settlement and the collateral damaged inflicted by agribusiness.

In Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, the expansion of agribusiness further exacerbated land conflicts between rich landowners and indigenous communities. The Guarani, Kaiowa, and Terena, the three largest ethnic groups in the region, became vulnerable to the displacement forces of agribusiness. In 1988, the Brazilian constitution recognized indigenous peoples' traditional land rights. It specifically stated that indigenous peoples were entitled to enough land to preserve their culture and way of life. However, the Sarney, Collor de Melo, Cardoso, and "Lula" da Silva governments did not make any formal efforts to establish a process of land demarcation in order to protect or restore traditional indigenous property rights (Hutchison et al., 2006). Moreover, agribusiness interests strongly opposed indigenous land demarcation. As a result, the expansion of sugar cane and soybean farming, along with cattle ranching and eucalyptus plantations, took a terrible toll on indigenous communities (CPT, 2013). Indigenous peoples fought back by reasserting their rights, reestablishing their organizations, and reconfiguring their political agendas.

Under "Lula" da Silva, the agrarian question was replaced by the indigenous question in the political arena. Indigenous peoples became militants, willing to give up their lives to defend their historical land rights. However, they faced serious obstacles to resisting agribusiness. For one thing, China's growing appetite for agricultural commodities had made Brazilian agribusiness appealingly unstoppable. Brazil had entered a new phase of agricultural capitalist development, pushed by the gravitational forces of global commodity markets. The financial benefits of agribusiness pleased "Lula" da Silva, and his government

became an active supporter of agribusiness corporations and biotechnology research. Despite peasant and indigenous opposition, "Lula" da Silva fully embraced genetically modified organisms (GMOs) by 2008. With this, he sealed his commitment to agribusiness.

The MST did its best to contest "Lula" da Silva's agribusiness agenda by intensifying occupations of unproductive land. However, the MST also embarked on a new strategy of occupying productive land, and this did not go well. That is, the occupying of agribusiness farms and biotechnology research centers turned public opinion against the MST. This was certainly the case with the occupation and destruction of the Aracruz Cellulose's biotechnology research farm in Rio Grande do Sul in 2006. Landless peasants had accused this company of promoting "green deserts" (i.e., eucalyptus plantations) at the expense of family farming. The 2006 FAO's Second International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development provided the landless peasants an opportunity to act. Thousands of peasant activists from all over the world descended on Porto Alegre to participate in the conference. Led by the Brazilian *Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas*, or Peasant Women's Movement (MMC), more than 1,500 women peasant activists from many nationalities occupied the nearby biotechnology research farm. In less than one hour, they destroyed several facilities, including dozens of "green houses" containing over 8 million eucalyptus seedlings (WRM, 2006). The MST supported their action and the Brazilian government condemned it. The main Brazilian media, linked to the big landowners and agribusiness interests, used the destruction of Aracruz Cellulose's research facilities to turn public opinion against the MST. Other similar occupations generated further mixed results for the MST. The struggle for agrarian reform was embarking on an unclear path.

From 2007 to 2010, landless peasants carried out 1,497 land occupations, involving 162,322 landless peasant families. This situation forced "Lula" da Silva to settle 232,669 landless peasant families. The sharp drop of land occupations from the previous four years demonstrated the difficulties the MST were facing to motivate landless peasants to join the struggle for agrarian reform. "Lula" da Silva's *Bolsa Família* program had successfully distracted the landless peasants from engaging in the struggle for agrarian reform. Similarly, "Lula's" policies of pragmatic neoliberalism and pro-poor social and educational programs had appeased the urban lower classes. As a result, popular movements entered into a period of hibernation. Any resistance to the neoliberal order was localized and fragmented.

The MST responded to this new context by reframing the struggle for agrarian reform within the broader struggle against neoliberal globalization. However, this required redefining the agrarian question by incorporating new themes and issues, while forging new forms of resistance with urban-based social movements, particularly environmental and human rights movements. In coordination with Via Campesina-Brazil, the MST pushed for a new strategy of advancing agrarian reform by adopting food sovereignty—the collective rights of peoples to promote their own food systems outside the control of the corporate market-oriented food regime.[4] This strategy, however, has faced some challenges. First, food sovereignty rejects the dominant global neoliberal agriculture mode of production, distribution, and consumption. Second, it suggests advancing an alternative food regime within the confines of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Third, food sovereignty calls for changing power relations that buttress human suffering and environmental degradation. Finally, it exhorts the need to promote solidarity, reciprocity, and cooperation among peasants all over the world in order to further advance food sovereignty. All of these are important objectives to ending food insecurity or vulnerability, but they are difficult to operationalize within the context of the struggle for agrarian reform in Brazil or elsewhere. First, peasants and small farmers are vulnerable to the gravitational forces of export-oriented agricultural commodity relations. Second, the international institutions and agencies of the new neoliberal global order promote individual, not collective, economic rights. They also influence state policies favorable to corporate agribusiness interests. Third, constructing local-based food systems within a sustainable framework requires devising new forms of agricultural practices and land use. Thus, the MST, and other Via Campesina linked movements in Brazil, faced structural obstacles to the pursuit of food sovereignty. These movements understood that overcoming these challenges required two interconnected strategies. They needed to promote the globalization of peasant struggles, and they needed to search for new forms of organizing local food production, distribution, and consumption systems that meet peoples' needs. Ultimately, peasant movements understood that the pursuit of food sovereignty required transforming state-capital-community relations.

From 2007 to the present, the MST has used the banner of food sovereignty to advance agrarian reform. Food sovereignty has helped the MST to redefine both the politics of land occupation and the

politics of cooperative formation. However, the balance of political forces between "Lula" da Silva's neoliberal regime and the MST did not favor agrarian reform. "Lula" da Silva failed to advance agrarian reform because it was incompatible with his overall agribusiness strategy and his links to the landholding oligarchy. His policies exacerbated the polarization within the Brazilian class structure and economy—between exporters and local producers; between financiers and manufacturers; and between big farmers and family farmers. This polarization was sharply evident in the countryside, where agro-exporters received the lion share of the farming credits and subsidies, while small farmers and cooperative producers received inadequate financial support. With limited access to credit, technology, and markets, the latter faced a precarious future.

Dynamics of Agrarian Reform, 2011–2013

By 2010, both the Brazilian economy and "Lula" da Silva's popularity were at their record high levels. The country was enjoying enormous economic confidence at home and abroad. The middle class expanded. Between 2005 and 2010, around 40 million people joined the middle class, which by 2010 was the biggest social class in Brazil, with a total of 103 million people, or 54 percent of the country's total population. The rise of Brazil's new middle class inevitably reflected the steady fall in poverty and inequality. "Lula" da Silva's pro-poor social programs had played a key role in this process. Pro-growth policies of access to credit, education, and formal employment, particularly in urban areas, contributed to this remarkable socioeconomic change. Economic confidence was further cemented by the discovery of offshore oil in Rio de Janeiro and Santos, that promised to make Brazil a major oil exporter. Brazil was also producing millionaires. According to *Forbes* magazine:

> Brazil has been adding 19 "millionaires" per day since 2007—and that statistic will likely be repeated over the next three years as Latin America's economic superpower continues to deliver stellar GDP growth and consumption rates, according to bankers. (Castano, 2011)

In 2011, the same magazine listed Eike Batista as the richest Brazilian on the planet, with total assets of over US$ 30 billion dollars. A well-connected entrepreneur and speculator, Batista made most of his fortune during the "Lula" da Silva administration.

Because of his ineligibility to run for a third consecutive term, "Lula" da Silva selected his chief of staff, Dilma Rousseff, as his natural successor. Rousseff had been a loyal supporter and confidant. She promised to extend "Lula" da Silva's policies within the context of monetary and fiscal discipline. The Workers' Party elite and Brazil's industrial and financial sectors also supported Rousseff. In the 2010 presidential election, she convincingly defeated José Serra from Cardoso's PSDB. Because of its historical link with the Workers' Party, the MST supported Rousseff.

Dilma Rousseff occupied the *Palácio do Planalto* in Brasília in January 2011, following her overwhelming electoral victory in October 2010. Since coming to power, however, she has confronted three major challenges. First, the global financial crisis of 2008 has cooled off the Brazilian economy. Economic growth was anemic from 2011 to 2013, averaging 2 percent per year (figure 6.1). Rousseff responded to this situation by encouraging domestic consumption with lower interest rates. Unfortunately, the "new" Brazilian middle class is deeply in debt and unable to further increase their purchasing power.[5] In early 2014, the São Paulo stock exchanged dropped 16 percent and wiped out billions in investor wealth. It was reckoning day for the speculators, such as Eike Batista, who was forced to declare bankruptcy. Second, Brazil's poor socioeconomic infrastructure has undermined economic competiveness. For example, the transportation of crops from the modern agribusiness farms located in Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul to foreign markets has overwhelmed Brazil's main ports, located in the states of São Paulo and Paraná. Finally, Brazil's "urban question" has undermined confidence in the Rousseff administration. The country has suffered from substandard access to basic transportation, health, educational, and social services. This crisis has existed for a long time. However, the macroeconomic neoliberal policies implemented during the Cardoso and "Lula" da Silva administrations exacerbated the crisis. For instance, the promotion of affordable automobile ownership has caused serious social, economic, and environmental problems for the urban population. According to Brazil's Department of Transportation (DETRAN),[6] the country registered 77.8 million new transportation vehicles in 2013. In 2011, it was 70.5 million. In the cities, this increased traffic jams and undermined transportation safety. Certainly, addressing the urban crisis requires addressing the agrarianagr question. Unfortunately, the agrarian question was not a policy priority for Rousseff. Like her predecessor, she basically ignored the question. Agrarian reform disappeared

from her government's policy agenda. From 2011 to 2013, she settled 75,335 landless peasants families, including the granting of titles to *posseiros*. Under 11 years of Workers' Party rule, the MST suffered a serious setback in their struggle for agrarian reform. In June 2011, Rousseff launched an expanded version of "Lula" da Silva's Fome Zero program. The *Plano Brasil Sem Miséria*, or Brazil Without Extreme Poverty, promised to lift 15 million Brazilians out of extreme poverty, by the end of 2014, through monthly cash transfer to families.

From Cardoso's Neoliberalism to "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff's Extractive Capitalism

The "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff administrations not only continued Cardoso's neoliberal policies, but also reoriented the country towards extractive capitalism. Brazil's economy became highly dependent on primary agricultural commodities and raw materials exports.[7] For example, in 2005 Brazil exported US$ 55.3 billion dollars in raw materials and US$ 44.2 billion in manufactured goods. By 2011, Brazil had tripled its raw material exports to US$ 162.2 billion, while its manufactured exports had increased to a mere US$ 60.3 billion (Banco Central do Brasil, 2014). This situation demonstrated the relative stagnation of the manufacturing sector and the impressive expansion of the extractive sector of the economy. Brazil's export sector benefited enormously from growing global demand for energy (fossil and biofuel), minerals, and agro-food products, particularly from China and the other "emerging" economies. From 2000 to 2010, Chinese imports of soybeans—the major agroexport—represented 40 percent of Brazil's total exports, while Chinese imports of iron—the key mining export—constituted 30 percent of Brazil's total iron exports. China's importation of petrol, meat, pulp, and paper represented 10 percent of Brazil's total exports. Under the "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff administrations, Brazil basically reverted to a quasi-monoculture economy dependent on a single market. Extractive capitalism has greatly benefited Brazil's agriculture and mining sectors, and has provided the government with high revenues. However, the ascendancy of the agriculture and mining sectors has caused enormous social, economic, and environmental costs on both peasant communities and indigenous peoples—the main victims of extractive capitalism. From 2004 to 2012, 112 square kilometers of the Brazilian rain forest was lost to deforestation (INPE, 2013). Deforestation has been accompanied by dispossession, assassination, and marginalization

of indigenous peoples. Cattle, soybean, and sugarcane corporations employ unskilled labor, mostly dispossessed peasants and indigenous peoples, under conditions analogous to slavery (CPT, 2013). Moreover, the transformation of Brazil into an extractive capitalist economy has enlarged the scope for political corruption. Competition for mining contracts, land grants, and giant infrastructure projects has encouraged agro-mineral business elites to payoff the "party in power" to secure competitive advantages. This was particularly the case with the Worker's Party, whose executive leadership was composed of upwardly mobile professionals, aspiring to elite class positions, who looked toward business payoffs for their "initial capital"—a kind of "primitive accumulation by corruption."

Agribusiness, Family Farming, and the Environment

Despite political rhetoric in favor of family farming, the "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff administrations have been the biggest promoters of Cardoso's agribusiness agenda. Since the 1990s, the Brazilian government has provided agribusiness corporations and big landowners with favorable access to state and private agricultural financing. Indeed, the distribution of state agricultural credits has been biased against family farming. From 2001 to 2012, the Brazilian government increased credit for commercial agricultural producers from R$ 14.7 billion to R$ 102.7 billion. Meanwhile, PRONAF, the government credit program for family farmers, increased from R$ 5 billion to R$ 12 billion (Banco Central do Brasil, 2014). The astonishing difference demonstrates the Brazilian government commitment to agribusiness. The main global agribusiness players, such as ADMs, Cargill, ConAgras, IBPs, Smithfield Foods, Tysons, Carrefur, and Chiquitas, have set down strong roots in Brazil. They have become influential corporate agribusiness players, with strong connections to the political establishment. Without question, the imposition of agribusiness with active government support has undermined the long-term viability of small-scale farming in Brazil. Agribusiness corporations have extended their control over access to productive land (Fernandes and Clements, 2013). With this, agribusiness has effectively suppressed the struggle for agrarian reform. The MST is no position to promote substantive political change, let alone consolidate agrarian reform. The new context the MST faces raises important questions about its viability as the leading force of resistance to the still-dominant neoliberal model. Perhaps this situation will ultimately force the MST

to reexamine its long-standing support for the Workers' Party. The electoral support given to the Workers' Party by the MST has not benefited the landless peasants.

Conclusion

First, during 11 years in office (2003–2013), the "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff administrations used over 20 million hectares of public and expropriated land to settle a total of 689,423 landless peasant families, according to government data. DATALUTA disputed these figures and estimated that the total number was less than 400,000 (see Chapter 5: table 5.1). The gross disparity reflected the old statistical trick of including the granting of land titles to *posseiros*. Moreover, post-settlement programs during the same period remained underfunded. As such, "newly" settled peasants suffered from lack of access to productive resources to make the land socially and environmentally sustainable.

Second, the "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff administrations embraced Cardoso's neoliberal policies as a model for reconfiguring Brazil's economy, to the benefit of foreign and domestic capital. Indeed, they embraced the entirety of Cardoso's neoliberal agenda, including widespread privatization and tight fiscal policies. With the rise of agro-mineral global prices, the "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff governments pushed a narrowly focused agro-mineral export strategy.

Third, they also aggressively promoted the expansion of agribusiness with foreign capital. Food producers, food processors, oil companies, and other corporate agribusiness giants forced their way deeper into Brazilian agriculture. The outcome was an economic boom predicated on an extractive economy dependent on primary crop exports to limited markets, China in particular. The rapid expansion of agribusiness transformed Brazil into a global agribusiness superpower.

Fourth, the "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff administrations facilitated the provision of financial and commercial credit, transportation and technical assistance to agribusiness interests, while providing limited financial and technical assistance to agrarian reform beneficiaries. By privileging agribusiness expansion, while underfunding family farming and criminalizing land occupations, the "Lula'" da Silva and Rousseff administrations seriously undermined the struggle for agrarian reform. The introduction of pro-poor social programs politically restrained the landless peasants. Within this context, the MST faced

difficulties in reorganizing the forces of resistance. Therefore, it did not have the capacity to consolidate, let alone advance, the politics of agrarian reform.

Finally, the rapid expansion of agribusiness into the "new" Brazilian agricultural frontiers of the Amazon region caused serious social, economic, and environmental problems. Agribusiness corporations acquired land, then produced crops and livestock with cheap peasant and indigenous labor. This undermined peasant and indigenous livelihoods. Agribusiness restructured the Brazilian agricultural economy in a way that was unfriendly towards small-scale farming. In summary, the "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff regime established a "new developmentalism" strategy based exclusively on the interests of large agribusiness and mineral extractive elites, to the detriment of small businesses, small-scale farm producers, and peasant and indigenous communities.

7

Cooperative Experiences

After almost three decades of intense peasant mobilization for agrarian reform, Brazil continues to have a very skewed distribution of land. Indeed, agrarian reform has had a minimal impact on land inequality, because land redistribution has been accompanied by land concentration. That is, the expansion of small-scale farming has been counterbalanced by the expansion of large-scale farming. However, this outcome does not mean that the struggle for agrarian reform has been in vain. On the contrary, agrarian reform has had a positive impact on the countryside—it has reinvigorated rural communities. From 1979 to 2012, the Brazilian government created a total of 9,070 agrarian reform settlements, benefiting 933,836 landless peasant families. Most of these settlements were in the north and northeast regions of Brazil (Table 7.1 and Figure 7.1).

These settlements have been instrumental in renewing the Brazilian countryside. In the north, south, east, and west regions of Brazil,

Table 7.1 Number of established agrarian reform settlements and landless peasant families settled, 1979–2012

Region	*No. of settlements*	%	*No. of landless peasant families settled*	%
North	2,079	22.9	404,242	43.3
North-East	4,123	45.5	310,332	33.2
Center-West	1,237	13.6	137,636	14.7
South-East	815	9	45,412	4.9
South	816	9	36,214	3.9
Total (Brazil)	**9,070**	**100**	**933,836**	**100**

Source: DATALUTA. Banco de Dodos da *Luta* Pela Terra: Relatorio Brasil 2072.

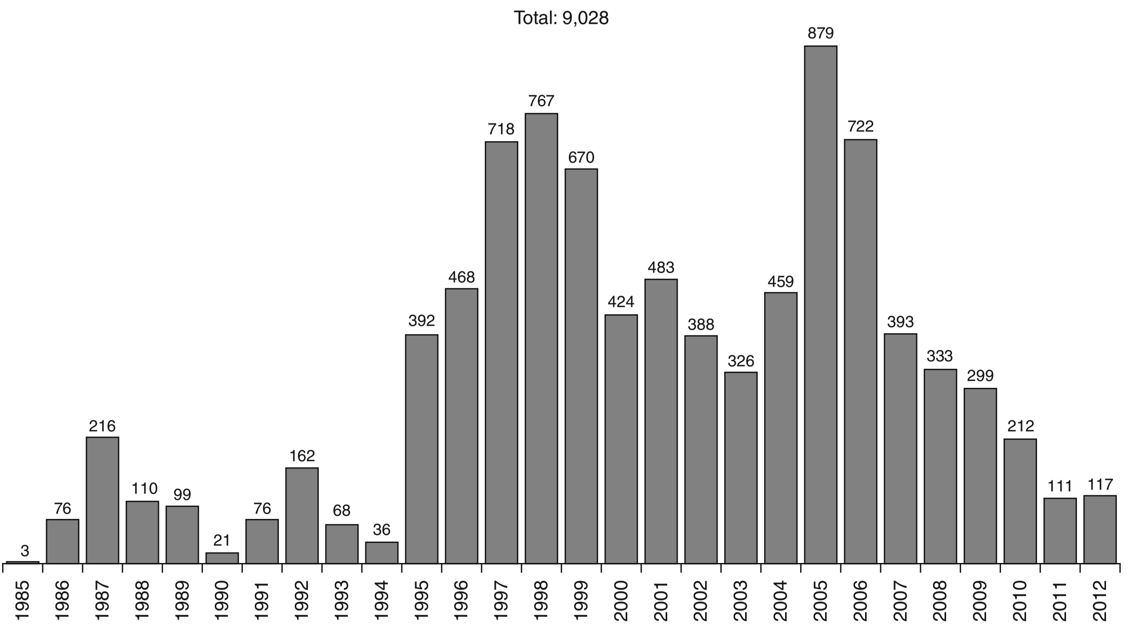

Figure 7.1 Number of established agrarian reform settlements, 1985–2012.

Source: DATALUTA. Banco de Dados da Luta Pela Terra: Relatorio Brasil 2012.

agrarian reform settlements have inserted new life into the countryside. Even in remote settlements, such as those located in the rural districts of Rio Formoso and Condado, in the state of Pernambuco, landownership has provided peasants with opportunities to reconstruct their livelihoods. As a settled peasant (2004) stated:

> I have worked on this land all my life. Two decades ago, this land started losing its people, particularly the youth. Most of them were moving to the big cities of Recife, São Paulo, or Rio de Janeiro. I thought then that the land would become a ghost place. Only the elderly were staying behind. I also thought about moving out but I could not do so because I had to look after my extended family. Then, a decade ago we [the peasants] started to organize ourselves with the help of the MST and the Church. We wanted our own land. Other people outside the community joined the struggle. Some of them were children of peasants who had left this land a long time ago. The struggle for land was really tough but we all succeeded in the end. Now we have a piece of land and this community has been reborn. I am happy to see children playing again; we have weddings, festivals, and religious celebrations again. We are producing for local markets. Sure, life is still tough. Some people who came to these communities from the cities did not adapt well to the peasant rhythm of work. Peasant life is not easy. Even so it is very rewarding. Agrarian reform has given us an opportunity to put food on the table on a daily basis.[1]

Despite facing enormous obstacles, settled peasants are determined to create vibrant, sustainable communities in the countryside. Agrarian reform has led to the creation of new communities and the revitalization of existing communities. This, in turn, has inserted new a socioeconomic dynamics into the Brazilian countryside. Agrarian reform has improved the social welfare of peasants. At its most basic level, it has enhanced food security in rural communities. This assessment is contained in a 2004 evaluation report. After evaluating key indicators of rural sustainability (access to credit, education, technology, and markets), the authors conclude that agrarian reform has had an overall positive impact on the lives of the *assentados* (settled peasants). The following paragraph summarizes clearly the report's key finding:

> In practically all aspects, the settled peasants themselves have perceived a significant improvement in their present quality of life when compared to their previous situation. Despite their precarious nature, the settlements offer peasants a relatively promising future. (Leite, 2004: 216)

The precarious nature of the *assentamentos* refers to the living conditions confronting hundreds of thousands of peasant families—lack of appropriate housing, potable water, sewage treatment, electricity, health, education, and social services. These problems were also identified in a 2003 agrarian reform evaluation report funded by the Brazilian government (Sparovek, 2003).[2] In addition to identifying significant infrastructure problems, the 2003 and 2004 reports also recognized that settled peasants had very limited educational skills and, in many cases, lacked farming experience. Notably, these two reports clearly indicated that the precarious situation of the newly settled peasants is due primarily to limited government funding for settlement programs.

The main finding of these Brazilian reports, that peasants' overall quality of life had improved in spite of insufficient government support, it was also noted in previous studies carried out by FAO (1992 and 1995). The FAO studies also found that newly settled peasants had a remarkable capacity to overcome significant structural difficulties. The peasants developed extensive socioeconomic networks, which enabled them to make agrarian reform viable. Socially, agrarian reform has incorporated the previously dispossessed landless population into the ranks of small-scale producers. Politically, agrarian reform has expanded democratic citizenship. Economically, agrarian reform has reenergized local economies and created employment opportunities. Peasants have become producers, sellers, and consumers. Culturally, agrarian reform has stimulated the creation of new schools, social services centers, community media channels, and art centers. Environmentally, agrarian reform has enabled peasants to become environmental stewards by practicing small-scale organic farming. All of these changes have contributed to the slow, but firm democratization of the polity and economy in the countryside. Almost three decades of peasant mobilization for agrarian reform has progressively changed rural Brazil. And the MST has played a key role in this process.

The MST adopted cooperativism as a vital tool for consolidating agrarian reform, thereby enabling settled peasants to improve their material welfare. After almost 30 years, the MST has established over 1,900 production, commercialization, and services associations; 100 collective and semi-collective agricultural cooperatives; 32 trade services cooperatives; three credit cooperatives; 98 small and medium agro-industrial food processors of fruits and vegetables, dairy, cereals, meats, and confectionery; and a highly innovate organic seed

research center (BIONATUR).[3] Most of these cooperatives have succeeded financially. The 1992 and 1995 FAO studies reported that a cooperative member earned a monthly average income between 3.7 to 5 times the minimum wage, with the most profitable cooperatives located in the Southern region of the country.[4] Notably, the settled peasants have accomplished these feats with limited resources, while facing open hostility from the rural landholding elite and receiving inadequate support from the government. However, cooperativism has not been an easy journey for the peasants—it has been inherently conflictive process.

The MST has confronted, and continues to confront, external and internal obstacles that inhibit its cooperative potential. Despite the challenges, the MST has established a cooperative model that is contributing to the consolidation of agrarian reform. This model contains social, economic, political, and ecological principles (Robles, 2007). Notably, this model embraces a cultural view of the economy as a complex space of social relationships. Within this space, peasants pursue sustainable rural livelihoods through labor activities that do not merely seek the maximization of monetary gain.

The MST has rekindled cooperativism among the settled peasants—cooperativism has helped them to improve their quality of life. The pooling of ideas, experiences, and resources has enabled peasants to build up capital, land, and labor. This, in turn, has facilitated the organized planning of production, diversification of production, and flexibility in resource use. Yet the MST cooperatives have not achieved consistent results—some have struggled to survive, while others have been very successful. The uneven performance of the cooperatives is due to a variety of factors that vary from region to region, and from cooperative to cooperative. They include issues of organization, leadership, and administration; soil fertility; rainfall patterns; and access to credit, technology, and markets. However, the main factor that has hindered social entrepreneurship has been the economic conditions within which the cooperatives must operate. These conditions are characterized by expanded market liberalization, reduced state protection, and limited access to markets. Brazil is a market economy with an oligopolistic agricultural sector—cooperative producers must deal with financial creditors, agricultural suppliers, commercial wholesalers, and regulatory agencies to bring their products to market. Some cooperative producers are relatively well prepared to operate within this context, while others are not. Agrarian reform may have provided them with the freedom to produce, but not necessarily the

freedom to commercialize. The growing number of supermarkets in Brazil, and Latin America in general, has drastically limited commercial opportunities for small-scale producers. In 2000, supermarkets controlled between 50 to 60 percent of the total agri-food retail sector in Latin America. In Brazil, they controlled 75 percent (Reardon and Berdegué, 2002; Coleman, 2004). Without access to markets, cooperative producers cannot become sustainable. Regrettably, conventional approaches to cooperative formation tend to display a rather superficial understanding of this problem. That is, they stress the view that it is merely an organizational and logistical problem that can be addressed by developing adequate market surveys, feasibility studies, and sound business plans. This is an inadequate view because it fails to stress the broader picture of the structural dimension of the problem—the market power of agribusiness. The following case studies illustrate the different outcomes of peasant-led cooperative experiences.

The COPAVI and COAPRI Experience

The *Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária Vitória*, or Agricultural Producers Cooperative of Vitória (COPAVI), in the state of Paraná, and the *Cooperativa dos Assentados e Pequenos Produtores da Região de Itapeva*, or Family Farmers' Cooperative of the Itapeva Region (COAPRI), in the state of São Paulo, are two MST cooperatives that have effectively improved the welfare of their members and families. They have done so by pooling local resources, promoting agricultural diversification, embracing environmental stewardship, and reinvigorating class-consciousness. COPAVI and COAPRI have demonstrated that well-managed cooperatives elicit the attention, collaboration, and support of research centers, development organizations, and government agencies. That is, well-managed agricultural cooperatives can not only overcome the competitive challenges of the present-day free market business environment, but can also strengthen the overall capacity of peasant movements.

Each MST cooperative has its own particular history. However, COPAVI and COAPRI share a relatively common history of highly motivated and politicized peasants who banded together to reconstruct their livelihoods (Brenneisen, 1994; Ferreira de Souza, 2006). Both cooperatives have the good fortune of being located in the prosperous Southern region of Brazil, with highly developed physical, educational, and technological infrastructure. During the 1980s

this region experienced intense peasant mobilization characterized by massive land occupations, evictions, and reoccupations (Fernandes, 1994). Led by the MST and supported by the Catholic Church, landless peasants were determined to advance agrarian reform.

COPAVI was established in 1993, when 23 peasant families decided to collectively farm the 236 hectares of land expropriated by INCRA from the *Fazenda Santa Maria*, in the northern rural municipality of Paranacity, state of Paraná. In the early 1980s, rural unions led the struggle for agrarian reform in this area. They supported the occupation of unproductive land, including the *Fazenda Santa Maria*. These occupations were not successful, because of weak organization and lack of political support. After being evicted from the occupied land, the landless peasants regrouped under the direction of the MST.[5] They reoccupied the land, including the *Fazenda Santa Maria*. This property was expropriated in 1992. Because of the small size of the property and the relatively large number of families, the peasants decided against dividing the land into small plots. Such individual plots could only have supported subsistence farming (Ferreira de Moura, 2006; Christoffoli, 2000). Today, COPAVI is an incorporated entity under Brazilian cooperative legislation. It is one of the few MST cooperatives to export agricultural products, selling to markets in Asia and Europe. COPAVI is also one of the highest income-generating MST cooperatives, with an average monthly family income of R$925 (Brazilian Real) or CAN$485 (2012 figures).

COAPRI was established in 1997. It is an extensive regional umbrella cooperative organization that coordinates production and provides services to peasant settlers working collectively, semi-collectively, and individually.[6] This cooperative is located on land expropriated from the *Fazenda Pirituba*, in the southern rural municipality of Itapeva and Itaberá, state of São Paulo. The occupation of the *Fazenda Pirituba* in 1981 marked the beginning of the struggle for agrarian reform in the state of São Paulo (Fernandes, 1994). At over 17,500 hectares, this *latifúndia* was one of the largest in the state of São Paulo.

The *Fazenda Pirituba* belonged to a São Paulo-based agribusiness that went bankrupt in the mid-1940s. Eventually, the state of São Paulo took possession of the *latifúndia* and “lent” it to an Italian entrepreneur, who then divided the land into several properties and leased them. In the 1960s, the state of São Paulo demanded the return of the *latifúndia* from the Italian entrepreneur with the objective of settling landless peasants from the region. There followed several

years of lawsuits and countersuits between the two parties. During this time, landless peasants occupied the land, were evicted, and then reoccupied the disputed *latifúndia*. Finally, in 1985 the government of the state of São Paulo issued a decree for the immediate expropriation of 3,851 hectares of land to settle 180 landless peasant families.[7] During the settlement process, the strong collective spirit that existed within the encampments fractured. As a result, some of these families opted for collective farming, others for semi-collective farming, and still others for individual farming (Olegário da Costa, 2001). However, most of these families wanted to be affiliated with a cooperative to improve their farming, purchasing, and marketing skills and power. COAPRI fulfilled this function. Currently, most cooperative members farm collectively. COAPRI is also a high income-generating MST cooperative, with an average monthly family income of R$890 or CAN$472 (2004 figures).

COPAVI and COAPRI have developed a simple grassroots cooperative model that is both holistic and transformative. It promotes sustainable livelihoods by attacking the root causes of human suffering and environmental degradation—the social, economic, and environmental factors that trap individuals, families, and communities into poverty, inequality, and exclusion. Rather than tackling each of these factors individually, COPAVI and COAPRI have integrated these factors into a coherent strategy that enables individuals, families, and communities to improve their welfare. Ultimately, they have learned that the consolidation of agrarian reform through cooperativism is an ongoing lifelong commitment to political and economic democracy.

COPAVI and COAPRI's strategy is based on three interconnected principles and practices of cooperative management—*organização* (organization), *participação* (participation), and *formação* (education). The members of these two cooperatives have learned that to be effective this strategy requires flexibility, creativity, and perseverance. Above all, it requires contextualizing cooperative management to the realities of rural Brazil.

Cooperative Formation

Organization is the vital first step in cooperative formation. Cooperative structure must be based on participatory democratic principles and practices in order to effectively serve all cooperative members. This type of structure has been the key to COPAVI's and COAPRI's successes. The members of these cooperatives are well aware that cooperatives are quite different from corporations. In the cooperative, there

are neither salaried workers nor trade unions; the workers are the owners and managers of the cooperative; the surplus, or profit, must be shared according to the involvement of members in the cooperative, and not according to the amount of capital owned by each cooperative member; and decisions are made in general assembly because there is no board of directors. Member control means that the members of the cooperative actively participate in the decision-making process. Participation in the cooperative decision-making includes the right of members to determine the composition of the group, the division of labor among them, the remuneration to be paid for their work, and their level of support to the MST.

Participatory cooperative management has enabled COPAVI and COAPRI peasants to achieve greater organizational effectiveness and has provided the impetus for reaching long-term common objectives. At the individual level, participatory cooperative management has enabled the peasants to overcome resistance to change, reluctance to share power, and patterns of domination and exclusion. At the collective level, it has enabled them to revamp bureaucratic structures and practices, improve accountability and incentive mechanisms, maximize resource use, and value strategic planning.

Cooperation is an idea that is simple in theory, but difficult in practice. Most cooperative scholars agree that cooperation is essential to advancing economic democracy. Unfortunately, the dilemma of putting cooperation into practice frustrates these scholars—conflicts over individual versus collective interests frequently undermine cooperative efforts. However, these conflicts can be managed by establishing efficient organizational structures that provide cooperative members with the means to balance individual and collective objectives. The peasants of COPAVI and COAPRI have established such structures through their own efforts. They did so by formally adopting the model of organization that they had learned in the encampments. This model stressed equality, solidarity, and reciprocity. Notably, it also included consensual collective decision-making. This model encouraged men and women to work together as equal partners to promote the consolidation of agrarian reform. In short, the peasants created cooperative structures that embodied grassroots democratic values and practices learned during the process of land occupation.

Effective organization requires active participation. During their time in the encampments, the peasants of COPAVI and COAPRI learned that they could not effectively reach their objectives by engaging in "free-riding" collective action.[8] They were encouraged to value

active participation as the means of strengthening group cohesion and commitment to the cause. That is, they embraced empowering forms of participation.[9] They brought this experience of participation from the encampments to the settlements, and ultimately to the cooperatives. Their participation in the cooperatives became the stepping-stone to their participation in wider society. Participation then became the means they employed to overcome systemic social exclusion. They had previously been systematically excluded from participation in the polity and economy—now they were active participants.

Active participation requires popular education. During their time in the encampments, the above-mentioned peasants learned to educate themselves, in order to reassert their rights and obligations. Popular education taught them not only to read and write, but also to identify their strengths, abilities, and aspirations. They were encouraged to engage in-group discussions in order to understand and find answers to conflicts between individuals and groups. Thus, popular education gave the peasants meaning and direction for their lives and struggles. As with organization and participation, the peasants of COPAVI and COAPRI brought this experience of education to the settlements, and ultimately to the cooperatives.

By the time the peasants decided to establish collective and semi-collective cooperatives, they were relatively well prepared to face the challenges of putting the theory and practice of cooperativism to work. They were also aware of the main objective of cooperativism—the reconstruction of social, economic, political, cultural, gender, and environmental relations broken down by unjust structures of capitalist power. As Maria Nazareth da Silva Carvalho (2004) explained:

> The MST prepared us very well for both the struggle for land and the struggle on the land. During our experience in the encampments, we developed a strong sense of solidarity and class-consciousness among ourselves. Our culture of solidarity, cooperation, and work was very strong. The movement taught us how to organize, participate, and educate ourselves in order to advance our main objective—agrarian reform. So when we received our piece of land and most of us decided to join collective cooperatives, we were prepared to do our best to make sure the cooperative would not fail. Actually, we had most of the necessary skills to make the cooperative work—planning, organizing, farming, and commercializing skills. The only skills we did not have were administrative and technical. However, we soon started preparing ourselves for this. Many of us took extension education courses with teachers from CONCRAB or NGOs. We had to gain administrative

> and technical skills to achieve the main objective of our cooperative—the construction of a more egalitarian and just rural society based on social and environmental harmony.[10]

Cooperative Outcomes

The outcomes of cooperation for the COPAVI and COAPRI peasants have been very gratifying. The use of democratic management methods and techniques have helped the peasants to achieve their main objectives. These "best cooperative practices" yield "best cooperative results." Participatory cooperative management becomes effective only when cooperative members are sufficiently confident and empowered to place their collective objectives into a concrete strategic plan of action. The peasants of COPAVI and COAPRI were prepared to put this principle into practice and achieved remarkable results. They reduced chronic rural poverty, created meaningful employment, enhanced environmental stewardship, and stimulated gender awareness. In summary, the consolidation of agrarian reform pursuit through cooperativism lifted these peasants out of their previous condition of socioeconomic exclusion.

Socially, COPAVI and COAPRI provided the previously landless peasants with stability to sustain and enjoy individual, family, and community life. Previously, the inability to earn or produce enough to support themselves and their families forced peasants to become migrant workers. For most of their lives, they lived at the margin of society, unable to control their own lives, and facing constant poverty, hunger, and hardship (de Moraes Silva, 1998). In the cooperative their situation drastically changed—they became settled individuals with strong family and community bonds. They had control over their lives. They learned skills to improve their welfare, strengthen family relationships, build their political consciousness, and promote social justice. In sum, the cooperatives provided the peasants with opportunities for establishing new forms of social relationships. These relationships, in turn, strengthened community life and stimulated social development.

Economically, COPAVI and COAPRI provided the peasants with more than meaningful and permanent employment—they provided the peasants with opportunities to overcome labor alienation.[11] They understood that labor alienation was an obstacle to human emancipation, and that collective labor was the best way to overcome such alienation. They took the process of production into their own hands, pooling their land, capital, and labor together. They became both

creators and beneficiaries of wealth, rather than exploited workers, or worse—economic victims. This was achieved by making the cooperatives economically viable—this is the ultimate test of all cooperatives (Christoffoli, 2000). The peasants were aware of this challenge and were determined to meet it. They controlled their production costs, maximized output, and managed and invested their resources efficiently. They also embarked on valued-added agricultural production and nonagricultural entrepreneurial activities to generate further income.

Wealth creation requires strategic planning, and strategic planning is a virtual necessity for the cooperative. It may not be a recipe for cooperative success, but without it a cooperative is much more likely to fail. A strategic plan must also be realistic and attainable so as to allow cooperative members to think strategically and act operationally. Strategic planning, in turn, requires intensive consultation and collaboration. Specifically, it requires access to knowledge, skills, and information. The peasants of COPAVI and COAPRI engaged in strategic planning by identifying resources, defining targets, assigning responsibilities, and establishing partnerships. The active participation of outside agricultural and cooperative experts committed to cooperative production facilitated strategic planning. Community-based strategic planning identified potential production costs, market opportunities, and commercial risks. These factors helped the peasants to formulate and implement realistic strategic plans to maximize the use of capital, land, and labor resources. The involvement of the whole family in formulating and implementing strategic planning strengthened the peasants' resolve.

Based on strategic planning, the peasants organized labor into production and service sectors. Men and women were encouraged to join these sectors based on their interests and experiences. They were encouraged to work in groups in order to promote active participation and interaction. Group work exposed peasants to different approaches and ways of thinking. It also promoted a sense of belonging, to combat anonymity, isolation, and even shyness. Working together also gave peasants the opportunity to learn from and teach each other (Viana da Silva, 2003).

Strategic planning and a strong collective work ethic helped the peasants to overcome obstacles to competitiveness in terms of the quality, quantity, and timing of production. By overcoming production constraints, meeting market demands, promoting economic diversification, and improving distribution networks, the peasants

maximized the value of their labor. As a result, COPAVI and COAPRI achieved relatively high profit margins. Peasants planted a variety of grains, vegetables, and fruits to not only meet their needs, but also to sell to local and international markets. They also established small-scale dairy and banana processing facilities, and natural herb medicine processing units.

In addition to strategic planning and a strong collective work ethic, the economic viability of these two cooperatives was facilitated by active support from foreign NGOs, university and research centers, and government agencies. They provided COPAVI and COAPRI with vital resources to carry out the strategic planning, enhance administrative and technical knowledge, and overcome commercialization constraints. Location also contributed to the enhancement of the productive capacity of the cooperatives—they were strategically located close to large urban centers with excellent access to communication, transportation, and commercial infrastructure. Thus, the combination of endogenous and exogenous factors stimulated the coordinated and efficient process of cooperative production. The outcome was increased productivity and income. The selective investment of profit stimulated further economic diversification and expansion. All of this energized the social and economic lives of the local communities, providing incentives for the youth to stay in the countryside.

Politically, the cooperatives prepared peasants for active political citizenship. They became involved and informed citizens, capable of advancing progressive political agendas. They learned that political activism without effective organization leads to frustration. They also learned that community-based political activism is vital for changing traditional, restricted conceptualizations, and practices of democratic participation. Given the dominant understanding of democracy as related primarily to electoral politics or participation in political party organizations, the peasants learned to embrace a more transformational view of democracy that stressed a more balanced distribution of power in society.

Despite democratic transition and consolidation, a cursory examination of Brazilian democracy shows that the country continues to be plagued by structural poverty, social exclusion, political corruption, and clientelism. In order to address these deficits, the peasants learned that democracy is more than free and fair elections; it is also about creating an active political culture, and ample opportunities for incorporating the poor into the political process. Thus, the peasants

engaged in the transformation of traditional democratic politics by embracing the politics of grassroots democratic transformation. In Paraná city and Itapeva, the peasants are no longer subjects of local political domination and exploitation. They developed strong class-based politics and identity, which allowed them to reassert their political and economic rights.

Culturally, COPAVI and COAPRI prepared peasants for lifelong humanistic learning. The creation of elementary schools, recreation centers, and community radio stations enhanced peasants' educational skills, recreational activities, physical development, and access to information. Peasants learned to value humanistic education as a way of thought and action that places the dignity of each human being ahead of other concerns, and emphasizes life on the land as the most important focus of human experience. Humanistic education invited peasants to rediscover and appreciate their cultural identities and traditions. It also encouraged them to embrace life as a constant commitment toward building better human relationships through solidarity, reciprocity, and equality. Their interaction with international social activists encouraged them in this pursuit.[12]

By rediscovering their cultural identity as rural workers and producers, peasants also rediscovered and redefined their class-consciousness. They understood that as a particular social class, they shared a common history and social situation. They also understood that they had to act together to change their unjust social situation. Despite a common history and social situation, the peasants of COPAVI and COAPRI did not develop a homogenous expression of class-consciousness. On the contrary, they developed both materialistic and nonmaterialistic expressions of class-consciousness that reflected particular social and religious worldviews. Ultimately, these expressions of class-consciousness led to different meanings of community. For some, the cooperative symbolized efforts to establish the "Kingdom of God" on earth; for others, it symbolized efforts to establish genuine socialism.

In terms of gender relations, COPAVI and COAPRI taught the peasants to value the equal participation of women and men in cooperative production. Women received education and training to assume leadership and managerial positions in the cooperatives. Greater involvement of women strengthened the effectiveness of not only the cooperatives, but also family and community life. Certain women with leadership skills, confidence, and experience became mentors and interlocutors for other women. Women's empowerment stimulated change within

their families and communities. It also motivated women to learn about issues and make decisions to improve their quality of life. The empowering of women, by women, prepared women to confront gender discrimination, poverty, and powerlessness.[13]

The participation of women in cooperative production facilitated the interaction of workplace-related gender consciousness and household class relations. Women learned to appreciate their commonalities and differences with men. By reflecting and working together, women learned about their past and planned about their future. In the cooperatives, they felt visible and heard. Together with men, they had control over access to the means of production and the fruits of their labor.[14] New gender awareness and practices contributed to the development of a more inclusive, progressive peasant class consciousness, marked by a strong egalitarian social change impulse. Progressive gender relations placed women's participation on equal footing with men in the process of cooperative production. Caution, however, is necessary on this issue. The COPAVI and COAPRI experiences in gender relations are unique. In other contexts, the development of gender relations has led to uneven outcomes (Valenciano, 2006; Gonçalves Costa, 2012). Changing gender relations is a long-term project that requires active dialogue, reflection, and understanding.

Environmentally, the cooperatives taught the peasants that humans are not separate from nature; humans are part of nature and depend on its resources to live and reproduce. The adoption of agroecology motivated peasants to become environmental stewards. During the process of cooperative production and community formation, the peasants learned to restore their relationship with nature by practicing ecosystem conservation and stewardship. In order to care for the environment, the peasants committed themselves to the use of agroecology, which involves applying ecological principles and practices to the design, implementation, and management of sustainable food systems. They learned the skills to practice sustainable agriculture, organic farming, appropriate technology, and biological pest control to produce food. Specifically, they learned the benefits of crop rotation, the use of crop residues, polyculture, cover crops, and animal manures. All of these alternatives reduced or eliminated the use of expensive industrial inputs, maximized rural labor, and strengthened the overall structure of the cooperatives. COPAVI and COAPRI became guideposts for healthier, more environmentally friendly and self-reliant farming. All of the cooperatives' agricultural production used organic methods. Ultimately, ecological restoration and

stewardship became an integral part of cooperative culture and production. Indeed, they became embedded in the mindset of the peasants of COPAVI and COAPRI.

Agroecology bridged the gap between peasants and researchers, and between rural producers and urban consumers. COPAVI and COAPRI producers promoted agroecology as a healthy alternative to chemically oriented agricultural production. They also promoted agroecology as an integral part of the struggle for agrarian reform. By marketing food free of hormones, antibiotics, and pesticides, the peasants attracted middle-class consumers, who were oriented toward "natural" and "healthy" organic food. These consumers became more sympathetic to the cause of the landless peasants. The growing demand for organic food products in Brazil, particularly in the south and southeastern regions, provided the peasants with access to new markets.[15] They discovered that organic farming offered many opportunities for small-scale organic producers. With the collaboration of national and international NGOs, the peasants of COPAVI and COAPRI established fair trade channels, or alternative markets, to sell directly to consumers. Indeed, the peasants abolished the well-connected, deep-pocketed brokers or middlemen, who traditionally benefited the most from peasants' labor. By controlling the processes of production, distribution, and commercialization; the peasants made cooperative production sustainable. They demonstrated that agroecology, when efficiently organized and properly supported, brings about social and economic benefits to the community in an equitable manner.

In conclusion, COPAVI and COAPRI achieved stability, maturity, and—crucially—viability. They achieved these objectives by developing effective organizational structures based on democratic management principles and practices. Participatory cooperative management stimulated strategic planning, which in turn motivated the peasants to become actively involved in the design, implementation, and management of cooperative organization and production. Strategic planning identified resources, opportunities, and risks. As a result, peasants were challenged to reexamine the culture of cooperation in order to consciously embrace collective objectives. The involvement of all family members in the life of the cooperatives strengthened the pursuit of these objectives. COPAVI and COAPRI also took advantage of solidarity networks to further strengthen their organizational structures, production infrastructure, and commercialization channels. Ultimately, all of these internal and external factors created favorable

conditions for the co-operatives' sustainability. As peasant Hilda Martins de Souza (2004) explained:

> We all worked very hard to make this cooperative viable. Actually, we did so from the very beginning of our decision to organize the cooperative. We were convinced that cooperativism was the best approach to meet our common objectives. We were also convinced that all family members had to become actively involved in the life of the cooperative in order to strengthen our resolve. So, we constructed our cooperative not by copying the Cuban or Spanish model, but by creating a model of our own. We learned to work collectively to make sure the cooperative would not fail. We also learned to overcome our personal differences and insecurities. So, we were well prepared to face the challenges of cooperative organization and production. We had a strong collective energy. We had also a strong political consciousness, a culture of cooperation, and loyalty to our movement [MST]. Once we had a clear idea of our collective objectives, we put them down in a concrete plan of action. We divided production responsibilities by groups. Within these groups, men and women worked together to advance cooperative production in a sustainable and viable manner. After years of hard work, we are all happy with the results. Our cooperative has improved our quality of life. You can see this for yourself. We have a decent place to live, we have food on the table, we have access to education and health services. In other words, we are citizens with basic human rights. This is what agrarian reform is all about. The cooperative is just a tool to make agrarian reform sustainable and viable.[16]

The COOPERSAN and COOPVARIVE Experience

The *Cooperativa Agropecuária dos Produtores Familiares do Assentamento Mosquito e Region do Vale do Rio Vermelho*, or Family Farmers' Cooperative of Mosquito and Red River Valley Region (COOPVARIVE) and the *Cooperativa Mista Agropecuária dos Productores Familiares de São Carlos e Entorno da Serra Dourada*, or Family Farmers' Cooperative of São Carlos and Serra Dourada Region (COOPERSAN), both located near the city of Goiás Velho, state of Goiás, are two cooperatives that shattered peasants' belief that cooperativism is capable of consolidating agrarian reform. For these peasants, cooperativism was a difficult and unrewarding journey. They learned that cooperativism is a complex, conflictive, and divisive process. Ultimately, the peasants learned that the outsourcing

of cooperative management, the lack of participatory strategic planning, and the inability to manage tensions and conflicts seriously undermined their cooperative efforts. They also learned that old forms of political patronage and clientelism are difficult to overcome in the countryside.[17]

The COOPVARIVE and COOPERSAN experiences also illustrate the challenges that peasants face in consolidating agrarian reform in the "other Brazil." Unlike the highly industrialized and diversified economies of the states of Paraná and São Paulo, the economy of the state of Goiás is predominantly agroexport. Over the last three decades, the rapid expansion of soybean cultivation and cattle ranching has reinforced the state's agroexport character. The expansion of capital-intensive agriculture has not only monopolized fertile land, but has also further marginalized and displaced small-scale agricultural producers. The state has favored large-scale agricultural producers at the expense of small-scale agricultural producers. Because of this bias, small-scale producers have faced serious production constraints, including lack of access to credit, technology, transportation, extension education, and, most importantly, access to markets. Moreover, small-scale producers in the state of Goiás have received very little support from universities, research centers, and NGOs.

In contrast to its enormous influence in the states of Paraná and São Paulo, the MST has a weak presence in the state of Goiás. This is due in part to the traditional allegiance of landless peasants and rural workers to the *sindicatos rurais* (rural labor unions) and CPT.[18] Since the 1980s, FETAEG[19] and CPT have actively organized and supported landless peasants in the state of Goiás in their efforts to advance agrarian reform. These peasants occupied, were evicted from, and reoccupied uncultivated land. In most cases, they succeeded in obtaining land titles. Unfortunately, FETAEG's involvement in the struggle for agrarian reform has been opportunistic, motivated primarily by the desire to maintain its traditional political influence in the countryside. This is because the MST has, in most cases, eclipsed political parties and rural unions as progressive agents of rural change. In response, these actors have reinvigorated their efforts to win the support of the rural poor. Like many other peasant movements and rural unions, FETAEG has "cloned" the MST's political praxis without much success. Its encampments and settlements lack both the MST's effective organizational structure and motivational spirit of struggle.

Thus, the struggle for agrarian reform significantly differed from region to region. The landless peasants, rural workers, and small-scale

agricultural producers from the state of Goiás have operated in a different socioeconomic context than their counterparts in the states of Paraná and São Paulo. Indeed, they have operated in unfavorable conditions of highly entrenched and skewed forms of political, economic, and cultural domination (de Morais Pessoa, 1999). As a result, the struggle for agrarian reform in the state of Goiás has produced a different outcome than in the states of Paraná and São Paulo.

COOPVARIVE was established in 1998, when 49 settled peasants from the *Fazenda Mosquito* and surrounding areas decided to leave the MST and accept a cooperative project promoted by FETAEG. The CPT did not object to this decision.[20] The *Fazenda Mosquito* was the site of the first occupation, and eventually the first settlement, in the state of Goiás. Supported by the MST, rural unions, and the CPT, 34 landless peasant families occupied this *latifúndia* of 1,890 hectares on May 2, 1985. The occupation soon gained the support of another 10 peasant families (i.e., "squatters") living on the farm. The "owner" of this *latifúndia*, Urbano Berquió, a wealthy and powerful local citizen, took immediate legal action and evicted the landless peasants. There followed a series of reoccupations, reevictions, and street protests. The landless peasants were determined to have their piece of land, even in the face of state repression. They enjoyed widespread support from the Church and progressive rural and urban social sectors. Facing enormous political pressure, President Sarney instructed INCRA to look into the legal status of the property. INCRA soon discovered that most of the *Fazenda Mosquito* had been obtained fraudulently (*grillagem*). By the end of 1986, INCRA expropriated the *Fazenda Mosquito* and granted land titles to 36 landless peasant families. This event triggered a series of other land occupations of unproductive *latifúndia* located near the city of Goiás Velho. All of these occupations intensified the struggle for agrarian reform in the state of Goiás.

COOPERSAN was also established in 1998, when 86 settled peasants, including 48 MST members, from the *Fazenda São Carlos* decided to accept the same type of cooperative project promoted by FETAEG. The CPT also did not object to this decision. The *Fazenda São Carlos* of 5,804 hectares was first occupied on October 8, 1992. The "owner" of this *latifúndia,* Sebastião Rodrigues da Cunha, a wealthy local landowner, evicted the landless peasants by force. There followed a series of ongoing reoccupations, reevictions, and rural protests. Ultimately, stiff peasant resistance, coupled with strong support from the Church, MST, and rural unions, forced INCRA to act. As

with the *Fazenda Mosquito*, INCRA discovered that the *Fazenda São Carlos* was also *grilada* (its land title was illegally obtained). In 1994, President Franco expropriated the *Fazenda São Carlos* and settled 155 landless peasant families. Eventually, FETAEG convinced the settlers to establish several cooperatives on the settlement, including COOPERSAN.

Unlike the peasants of COPAVI and COAPRI, the peasants of COOPVARIVE and COOPERSAN held diverse, competing ideological allegiances. After the land occupation period, the majority of the peasants associated with FETAEG, fundamentally disagreed with peasants associated with the MST, the minority. The former advocated a traditional, passive approach to community building that stressed the view that the culture of cooperation emerges spontaneously with little deliberate facilitation. This approach also stressed traditional, hierarchical forms of community organization and administration. The latter advocated a progressive, active approach to community building that stressed the view that the culture of cooperation must be consciously created and fostered within the context of a concrete social struggle. This approach also stressed grassroots participatory democracy as the best tool to effectively promote and advance community building.

As a religious advocacy organization, the CPT attempted to bridge the ideological gap between the two competing groups. Regrettably, the CPT lacked the basic tools to manage the growing tensions and conflicts affecting the peasants of the *Fazenda Mosquito* and *Fazenda São Carlos*. As a result, the strong collective spirit of solidarity that existed among the peasants during the occupation period fractured permanently.[21] This situation hindered collective efforts to advance cooperativism. For example, on the *Fazenda Mosquito*, peasants survived by engaging in subsistence farming for 12 years before deciding to establish a cooperative. On the *Fazenda São Carlos*, many of the peasants declined to join cooperatives and instead opted to farm independently.

There was another serious problem that confronted the peasants of the *Fazenda Mosquito* and *Fazenda São Carlos*: INCRA used the "Square Donkey" model to settle the peasants. The land was divided into individual lots to provide maximum freedom for peasants to organize their living and working conditions. Their houses were widely dispersed with limited access to roads, water, electricity, and communication services. Moreover, the hilly terrain of the two settlements created further complications—during the rainy season,

transportation became difficult. For women and youth the "Square Donkey" layout provided limited opportunities for socialization and active participation in community life. Ultimately, physical isolation and labor marginalization from cooperative production reinforced unequal gender relations. These factors also discouraged the youth from remaining in the countryside.

Thus, the peasants of the *Fazenda Mosquito* and *Fazenda São Carlos* confronted ideological and logistical constraints not favorable to cooperative organization. Nevertheless, the idea of cooperativism, as advocated by FETAEG, attracted them. This cooperative model differed from the MST's. Indeed, FETAEG's model reflected a more traditional type of cooperativism. Ultimately, FETAEG's model proved unsuitable and disempowering for the peasants. Its poor design, implementation, and management undermined the peasants' efforts to improve their welfare.

Cooperative Formation

Agrarian reform has created a growing demand for Brazilian academics, researchers, consultants, community organizers, and international NGOs. In fact, the "reappearance" of the peasantry has reenergized social science teaching and research in general, and the field of rural studies in particular. Motivated by altruistic or nonaltruistic reasons, many such actors have joined peasant movements, rural unions, or government research centers to become professionally involved in agrarian reform. These actors play an important role in agrarian reform. Academics and researchers inform and guide agrarian reform policies and programs; consultants provide necessary knowledge and skills for program design, implementation, and, in many cases, management of programs for settled peasants. Community organizers provide organizational, educational, and motivational skills to peasant communities, and NGOs provide support for peasant movements and rural unions in academic, government, and social forums. Thus, agrarian reform has created a complex and extensive "market" that links a variety of actors providing their services to peasant movements and rural unions. Because of their limited capacities and skills, these movements and unions must enter into partnerships with agrarian reform experts in order to advance their interests. It was in this context that the business partnership between FETAEG and *Treinamentos e Serviços de Marketing Ltda* (CAG) emerged. Located in the city of Campinas, state of São Paulo, CAG offered general training and consulting services, with limited

experience in community development. How FETAEG and CAG came to establish a business partnership is not very clear. However, there is clear indication that personal relationships shaped such a partnership.[22]

Motivated by the desire to reinforce its influence in the countryside, FETAEG became interested in cooperative formation. To this end, FETAEG established the *Secretaria de Política Agricola,* or Office for Agricultural Development, to coordinate production in its settlements. FETAEG also lobbied the Brazilian government for funding. In 1996, President Cardoso approved funding for the cooperative project. With the professional assistance of CAG, FETAEG prepared a cooperative plan along the lines of International Cooperative Alliance's (ICA) sustainable rural development approach. FETAEG also hired CAG to market, and eventually to administer, the cooperative project in the settlements. However, without the peasants' consent, the project could not move forward. Aware of this situation, CAG hired a charismatic individual who ultimately convinced peasants in 15 settlements of the benefits of cooperativism. As peasant Damacio Rodrigues da Silva (2004) explained:

> FETAEG's cooperative project was a prepackaged project. This is true. There is no question about it. FETAEG hired CAG to sell the cooperative project to us. In early 1998, a representative from CAG came to our settlement and spoke to us about the cooperative project. His name was Ângelo, and he was a pretty good talker, who expressed himself in a *linguagem caipira* [common, simple language]. We all could understand what he was talking about. Ângelo was not like one of those INCRA technicians, who tend to speak in a difficult, technical language. Ângelo told us wonderful things about cooperativism—it was the best strategy to get us out of poverty; cooperativism could make us relatively rich in a few years, allowing us even to buy our own truck! We were really impressed by the project. Without question, Ângelo was an effective "dream seller." Also, at this time, we were desperate to improve our living conditions. We were all engaged in subsistence farming. The ideological split within the settlement also prevented us from moving forward with the struggle to make land sustainable. In the end, 26 families in this settlement [*Fazenda Mosquito*] decided to accept in good faith FETAEG's cooperative project. For me, this decision was the worst mistake I made in my whole life, and I deeply regret it.[23]

What Rodrigues da Silva and many other peasants regretted is that the FETAEG plan started out well enough, but went horribly wrong.

FETAEG prepared the cooperative plan and also wrote the constitution of the 15 cooperatives with very little community consultation. The "Green Factory," as the cooperative plan was called, was presented as a small-scale, diversified farming approach to poverty eradication. It included the growing of cereal crops, fruits and vegetables, sugar cane, and flowers. The "Green Factory" also included the raising of hogs, cattle, chickens, and fish. Based on the total available productive assets and resources of all cooperative members, the project forecast a return of four to five times the minimum wage per month, per member. Peasants were very much impressed with this potential income and eagerly accepted the FETAEG's cooperative plan.

The constitutions of COOPVARIVE and COOPERSAN were identical. They reflected a traditional cooperative leadership structure that emphasized vertical forms of authority. Membership in the cooperatives was restricted to those holding land titles, thus effectively excluding most of the women.[24] Overall, there was little or no input from the peasants in the proposed cooperative project or the constitution. All they did was to endorse the project in good faith and, at FETAEG's insistence, accept CAG as their cooperative administrator. Eventually, these two decisions proved fatal to the peasants' collective interests. By accepting a poorly designed cooperative project and outsourcing its management, the peasants unknowingly became mere cooperative objects. They became victims of political clientelism, favoritism, and opportunism.

The "Green Factory's" shortcomings were threefold. First, it focused primarily on economic objectives. Its economic rationale was based on a highly optimistic cost-benefit analysis. The quantitative data collected, analyzed, and presented was clearly intended to validate the cooperative project's long-term economic viability. For example, production, transportation, and commercialization costs were grossly underestimated. Moreover, the cost-benefit analysis did not consider the limited, competitive, and low-income nature of the local market. It also did not consider the production constraints associated with the poor resource bases of the *Fazenda Mosquito* and *Fazenda São Carlos*, including poor soil fertility, low education skills, semiarid climate, and limited physical infrastructure.

Second, the project did not have a clear strategy for achieving economic viability. It described the promotion of cooperative production in terms of collaboration, participation, and empowerment, without describing how these terms would be operationalized. More importantly, the "Green Factory" failed to describe how cooperative

members should organize themselves to combine and share their responsibilities, resources, and capabilities to advance their collective interests. Directing and managing a cooperative requires effective control and allocation of production resources within a structured process of membership participation. Members must be fully aware of their responsibilities within the overall process of cooperative production. In the absence of such awareness, daily management of the cooperative becomes problematic and conflictive. Unfortunately, the "Green Factory" project failed to incorporate the fundamental principle of informed membership participation in its program.

Third, the project did not consider the importance of capacity building and solidarity networks. Grassroots capacity building is crucial for cooperative success, because it provides individuals and communities with the understanding, skills, and access to information, knowledge, and training that enable them to perform effectively. Well-equipped individuals and communities contribute to the effective organization and operation of cooperative structures, processes, and procedures. They also facilitate the equitable management and effective promotion of human relationships in cooperative production. Social networks are vital for cooperative success, because they facilitate access to resources, skills, knowledge, and advocacy. For the organized poor, social networks motivate and allow them to compare, share, and reevaluate their experiences of struggle with broader constituencies. In the absence of capacity building and solidarity networks, the "Green Factory" project was not equipped to confront the structural constraints of cooperative production. Regrettably, this shortcoming placed the members of COOPVARIVE and COOPERSAN in a situation of permanent dependence on FETAEG and CPT, which were themselves not equipped to provide cooperative assistance and support.

Thus, the "Green Factory" was a poorly designed project that did not consider fundamental, sound cooperative principles and practices. It was a "top-down" cooperative project without a clear strategy. The project failed to identify potential obstacles to cooperative organization, administration, and production. This proved eventually to be fatal to the economic viability of COOPVARIVE and COOPERSAN. Once the peasants opened the prepackaged cooperative project, they tried unsuccessfully to assemble it and make it function. They discovered that the "Green Factory" project was not only poorly designed, it was also unable to advance their collective interests. Eventually, this discovery shattered the peasants' lives and dreams.

Outcomes of Cooperativism

The outcomes of cooperation for the COOPVARIVE and COOPERSAN peasants were not very gratifying. At the macro level, the use of a poorly designed, implemented, and managed cooperative model undermined the peasants' collective efforts to improve their livelihoods. They learned that "poor cooperative practices" yield "poor cooperative results." The peasants lacked not only an autonomous and suitable cooperative project, but also the necessary knowledge, skills, and support to make this project viable. Regrettably, they also lacked cooperative preparation and resolve. In the face of global capitalist hegemony, agricultural cooperatives cannot succeed without a strong democratic, militant class-based peasant identity and resolve.

At the micro level, the "Green Factory" project failed for basic economic reasons—insufficient capital, heavy operating expenses, financial mismanagement, low productivity, and inadequate sales. Construction of the infrastructure was very slow and expensive. For example, the chicken slaughtering plant, dairy processing plant, hog barns, and warehouse and administrative facilities took more time and money than had been budgeted. The slow disbursement of government funding and the overuse of legal, business, and technical consultants further contributed to cost overruns.

On the *Fazenda São Carlos*, chicken slaughtering and dairy processing plants were constructed, but never or rarely utilized. In fact, the chicken slaughtering plant was never used—the peasants never raised any chickens. They ran out of money to construct commercial chicken barns. The collection of milk was made difficult by the settlement's "Square Donkey" layout. It took most of the day to collect milk from all the settlers, and without a proper refrigerated truck, the milk rapidly spoiled in the 40°C temperatures. In addition, during the six-month dry season, the cows did not produce much milk. Nearby commercial, capital-intensive milk processing plants, with appropriate infrastructure and technology, produced milk cheaply. The *Fazenda São Carlos* could not compete. On the *Fazenda Mosquito*, the construction of a commercial hog barn did not meet the standards required to successfully raise the breed of pig chosen. The Camborough breed required particular care and attention that the peasants were not familiar with. As a result, most of the pigs became ill and many died, resulting in significant cost overruns. By 2002, the hog barn was empty. Ironically, FETAEG sponsored a course on caring for hogs the following year. The course was offered not in the countryside, but in the city of Goiás Velho.

There were additional major problems associated with transportation costs, low labor productivity, and access to markets. The *Fazenda Mosquito* and *Fazenda São Carlos* are both located approximately 25 km and 35 km from the city of Goiás Velho, which has a population of only 27,000 (2014 figures). Unforeseen fuel expenses and poor roads added to production costs. Trucks broke down frequently, requiring costly and time-consuming repairs. Unreliable and costly transportation seriously disrupted production and distribution. This situation was further compounded by low labor productivity. In the absence of a well-organized, trained, and supervised labor force, production was inefficient. The peasants were familiar with planting traditional crops, but had little education or preparation for commercial livestock farming. They were used to taking orders from their employers and had no experience in problem-solving or working from technical manuals. Their unfamiliarity with the type of farming they were embarking on, and the weight of responsibility for the outcomes, caused psychological stress and weakened their motivation. In other words, the introduction of capital-intensive approaches, relatively complex technologies, and the lack of adequate training and preparation, ultimately disempowered the peasants.

The small surrounding population base and poor roads meant local markets were small and hard to access. Moreover, medium and large-scale agricultural producers dominated these limited markets. They were aggressive competitors, determined to maintain their market advantage. They were able to offer bulk discounts to store owners in exchange for exclusive supplier rights. The only market left to the peasants was farmers' markets, which were limited in scope and operation.

The failure of the chicken, hog, and dairy plants illustrated the inherent shortcomings of the "Green Factory" project. This project was a miniature model of large-scale, capital-intensive commercial farming, poorly transplanted to the Brazilian countryside. It did not take a step-by-step approach to cooperative formation. Its vision, mission, and, most importantly, viability, were not clearly identified, discussed, and assessed. Ultimately, high production costs made peasant production uncompetitive in the restricted local markets.

By 2001, the peasants of the *Fazenda Mosquito* and *Fazenda São Carlos* were aware of the serious financial difficulties facing their cooperatives. With assistance from CPT staff, the peasants were able to understand the main conclusions of a financial report submitted by CAG this same year (GAG, 2001). The report indicated that government-allocated funding for the "Green Factory" project had literally

reached its limit. It also indicated several cost overruns due to delays in infrastructure construction and unforeseen production expenses. CAG welcomed the change of the executive and board in both cooperatives as a positive sign that things could turn around. In 2002, the CPT submitted a more comprehensive report of the situation of the 15 cooperatives established by FETAEG. This report also indicated cost overruns, low labor productivity and morale, limited participation of women in cooperative production, commercialization bottlenecks, and organizational or structural weaknesses in the management of the cooperatives. Unfortunately, this report failed to recognize the main cause of these problems—the poor design, implementation, and management of the "Green Factory" project (CPT, 2002).

Impending failure caused dissension among the peasant families. This precluded any unified effort to correct their situation. The CPT, FETAEG, and the peasants themselves lacked the conflict management skills needed to overcome their differences. Peasants began leaving the cooperatives; many were unwilling or unable to accept their financial responsibilities. Far from creating sustainable rural livelihoods, they were now deep in debt and could only fall back on subsistence farming. For these peasants, agrarian reform had provided minimal food security, but no relief from chronic poverty. In the face of this failure, some families decided to leave the land altogether. 12 peasant families left the *Fazenda Mosquito* and 15 families left the *Fazenda São Carlos*. All of these families eventually moved to urban centers.[25]

The successes and failures of cooperative formation taught the peasants many important lessons. Perhaps the most valuable lesson is the need to advance an integrated cooperative agenda that meets peasants' needs. The peasants learned that the principal means to advance such an integrated cooperative agenda is to nurture the culture of cooperation and solidarity within a framework of responsible democratic participation.[26] This culture is necessary to organize cooperatives that go beyond the logic of profit accumulation and market competition to include the social economy. The peasants also learned to view cooperative formation as an ongoing "learning-by-doing" process that requires constant adaptation, creativity, and endurance. Some peasants are more inclined to engage in cooperative life than others. Ultimately, the peasants learned that successful cooperative formation requires active support from the state and society at large. Without this support, the cooperatives are not capable of overcoming the challenges of stiff market competition from the global economy.

8

Popular Agrarian Reform

In almost three decades of land struggle from 915,000 to 1.3 million families (depending on whose statistics one chooses to believe) have been settled or resettled on the land—no mean feat. In addition, notwithstanding the lack of access to capital and modern technology and the significant structural and political constraints placed on small-scale peasant production based on family labor, many farms on these settlements have been brought into production. Lifting many, if not most, resettled families out of poverty and converting many of them (mainly via cooperativism) into productive members of Brazilian society, vastly improving the social condition of the rural population. However, the MST has always been more than a movement to reconnect rural landless workers or peasants to the land. From the beginning it sought to advance a new and specific type of agrarian reform, based on a new economic model and transformative social change—another system, a new world, a better form of society in which the fruits of collective cooperative activity are equitably shared and not appropriated for the benefit and enrichment of the powerful few.

From the outset a major aim of the MST was to help bring about an agrarian reform predicated on not only land redistribution, but changing the model used to guide government policy and shape agricultural production, and also to effect a change in the underlying and operative capitalist system. On this front, however, there have been precious few advances to date, and the minimally progressive changes that have been achieved under the government of “Lula” da Silva and his successor (a reduction in the incidence of extreme poverty, a narrowing of the income gap among different social classes, public investment in industrial and human development, and an associated

improvement in the social condition of a larger part of the population) in no way involved the MST and other rural mass movements. Almost 25 years of land struggles have not produced any substantive change in the social structure of landholding to the social condition of the rural landless workers and their families in society, or toward a new world in which both the common and the social product of Brazilian society are more equitably shared by all.

And the fundamental reasons for this lack of progress and change are clear enough. As Stédile has stated on different occasions any gains in this regard would depend on the balance of class forces, and mobilizing the forces of resistance into collective action based on a strategic and political assessment of the forces at play in different conjunctures of the popular movement (Stédile, 2014). But the simple, if sad fact, is that the MST has not been able to advance the struggle at this level at all—to generate the forces of resistance against the prevailing model or the operative economic system. The steady albeit incremental progress made by the movement over the years have been limited to reconnecting a significant number of dispossessed "peasants" with the land (resettling them on the land on the basis of direct collective action—agrarian reform "from below"). But the MST has been much less successful in moving from land settlements to expanding production and building sustainable livelihoods for the families settled or resettled on the land.

The tactic of land occupation has succeeded in resettling hundreds of thousands of landless rural workers and peasants on the land, and converting them into potentially productive members of Brazilian society—counteracting, and to some extent reversing, the destructive forces of capitalist development. But the problem remains as to the position and role of small producers and family farms in the political economy of Brazil's agricultural production system and the larger society. From the perspective of the leadership of the MST to settle this problem what is needed is more than agrarian reform—a change in the model that shapes the role of agriculture and food production and the system underlying this model. And it is also understood that the MST by itself—even in alliance with other rural mass movements and other organizations—is not in a position to effect any substantive change at this level. Such change clearly requires a different form of organization and a different strategy—the articulated unity and mobilization of diverse forces of resistance in the popular movement. And this dictates a careful reassessment of all the forces at play—as Stédile has argued in the past, the correlation of forces in the class

struggle—and arguably also the formation of an international organization capable of countering the global power of capital and to construct a counter-hegemonic force both within Brazil and beyond—to unite the so-called antiglobalization movement and support the diverse forces of resistance building in different parts of the world system. This is the subject of this chapter.

The MST, Capitalism and Democracy

The MST is often portrayed by Brazilian intellectuals such as José de Souza Martins and Zander Navarro, as harmful or a menace to Brazil's democratic institutions. According to de Souza Martins (2000: 18–19), this judgment is based on the MST's "refusal to recognize the institutional legitimacy and actions of the government and the state, and its aggressive and confrontational approach to social change" (de Souza Martins, 2000: 18–19). In the same vein, Navarro argues that the MST's calls for agrarian reform, direct democracy, economic justice, and a humanistic form of socialism—are merely a mask used by the movement to "suppress the market economy, the rule of law, and representative democracy" (Navarro, 2006: 311). In effect, all these critics equate democracy not only with the rights, freedom of private property, and the institutional trappings of electoral politics, but with capitalism (the market economy), as well as support of the existing order, thus viewing social movements as inherently antidemocratic (Arruda, 2003). Needless to say, many others—including the authors of this book—view movements such as the MST very differently, as profoundly democratic in its commitment to "people power" and a justified distrust of parliamentary or liberal representative democracy, which can easily (and often is) manipulated by groups that tend to be well represented in the legislative chambers of state power.

To support the view of the MST as profoundly democratic in a nonlegalistic way, the proof is the way it has been very active over the years in improving the quality of democracy in Brazil by organizing the poor at the grassroots level and in raising not only their class-consciousness, but an awareness of their basic rights as well. The MST has also always been active in providing active support for supporting local candidates in both local and national elections, lobbying and negotiating with state officials, collaborating with public authorities to implement various development projects, and running court cases to defend its members while advocating for progressive legal reforms.

The critics of the MST in their charges of antidemocratic, "Marxist-Leninism" and professed concern for democracy choose to ignore is that the MST represents and seeks to advance the interests of a major disenfranchised segment of society. The rural landless poor who have for so long been offered as sacrificial lambs at the altar of capitalist development have been championed by the MST. As for the landed oligarchy or the agribusiness elite, whose interests are well represented in the massive media campaigns against the MST over the years, constitute a powerful segment of the dominant political class, with a disproportionate influence over the PT regime and its policies. This influence reflects the total absence of any political representation of the small-landholding peasant or family farmers in legislative power, and the overrepresentation of the agrarian elite and their conservative allies, who collectively control of over a third of the seats in the lower chamber. This multiparty coalition known as the *"bancada ruralista"* has been the largest voting bloc in Congress since Brazil's redemocratization in the 1980s.[1] For all intents and purposes the Workers' Party regime, and "Lula" da Silva in particular, have been beholden to this bloc in a nefarious political alliance that has survived since 2003. A number of observers and analysts, including the authors, attribute the current predicament of the MST—that faces an imbalance of forces tilted against it, like never before—to the concerted efforts of "Lula" da Silva's administration, at the behest of its conservative and neoliberal allies and with the connivance of the mass media, to weaken and outflank the MST—to both undermine public support for substantive agrarian reform and weaken the MST in its social base within the rural poor.

The question of whether the MST should be viewed as democratic or not: a sober review of Brazilian politics over the course of the "Lula" administration, and an evaluation of the options available to the MST within the oligarchic system of governance—would suggest that the movement's oppositional politics as well as its strategy and tactics are grounded in practical considerations rather than dogmatic ideology (Carter, 2010b: 5). In fact, the evidence suggests that it is the Brazilian State—prompted by the rather undemocratic and both elitist and classist views of the MST's most vocal critics and right-wing ideologues—that has acted in a rather undemocratic manner in seeking to demonize and criminalize the MST's public activism,[2] in the use of court orders barring the movement from carrying out marches and other peaceful demonstrations.[3]

Via Campesina and the Struggle for Social Transformation

The conditions that led the MST to admit its inability to advance the agararian struggle under then current conditions, which included a recalcitrant state that was captive to powerful interests and the status quo, also led it to join other like-minded organizations across the world to form Via Campesina. This is an international movement of small-scale family or "peasant" farmers united in the struggle against the corporate agribusiness model and the capitalist global food regime. Founded in1993,[4] Via Campesina emerged as an international movement of small-and-medium-sized family farm agricultural producers, rural landless workers and peasant farmers, women farmers, indigenous people, rural youth migrants, and agricultural workers in defense of the global commons of land and water, small-scale sustainable agriculture, food security and sovereignty, and the values of social justice and human dignity. Via Campesina today comprises of about 150 local and national organizations in 70 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Altogether, it is estimated to represent almost 200 million farmers. Although viewed by some analysts as part of an emerging "global civil society" and an associated "antiglobalization" movement it is, as Annette Demarais describes in her study of the movement—an autonomous, pluralist, multicultural, and multiethnic global movement independent from any political, economic, or other type of affiliation.

The principal objective of Via Campesina is to—develop solidarity and unity among small farmer organizations, in order to promote gender parity and social justice in fair economic relations; the preservation of land, water, seeds, and other natural resources; and agricultural production-based on small and medium-sized producers that are sustainable, in terms of both the environment and livelihoods. It also promotes food sovereignty, defined as the right of peoples, countries, and states to define their agricultural and food policy without the "dumping" of agricultural commodities by multinational corporations into foreign countries, thereby destroying the forces of agricultural production, local markets, and the livelihoods of small landholding farmers that produce most of the country's food requirements, up to 75 percent of the food consumed in Brazil. More broadly, food sovereignty for the MST "is not just a vision but is also a common platform of struggle that allows to keep

building unity in our diversity…agrarian reform and food sovereignty commit us to a larger struggle to change the dominant neoliberal model…" (MST, 2006).

To this end, the MST (and Via Campesina) wants to organize food production and consumption according to the needs of local communities, giving priority to production for local consumption over exports and food sovereignty. Food sovereignty includes the right to protect and regulate the national agricultural and livestock production and to prevent the dumping of agricultural surpluses and low-price imports from other countries, which implies the agency of the State is acting in the interests of the people rather than the agrarian elites and agribusiness operators. Rather than converting peasant farmers into capitalist entrepreneurs so as to improve their access to capital and distant markets, the solution offered by the World Bank—landless workers, peasants and small farmers need access to land, water, and seeds as well as other productive resources, and adequate public services. In this connection, Via Campesina promotes a model of peasant or family-farm, small-scale agriculture based on sustainable production with local resources and in harmony with local culture and traditions. This implies the need to reorganize agricultural production and abandon both the global food regime and an agroexport model that is destructive of local production, the environment, and livelihoods. As for the State it means "play[ing] a strong[er] role in policies of agrarian reform and food production," with reference to "defin[ing]…their agrarian, agricultural, fishing, and food policies in such a way as to guarantee the right to food and the other economic, social, and cultural rights of the entire population," as well as abandoning a policy of incentives to the huge estates that produce commodities for the global market such as soybeans, corn, meats, sugar, and ethanol (MST, 2006).

Organizing for Change in the Current Conjuncture

The fundamental challenge confronted by the MST in the current conjuncture is twofold. On the one hand, to sustain the gains made vis-à-vis the land question—helping to settle or resettle millions of rural landless on the land. It is imperative for the MST to construct an alternative and viable model for organizing agriculture and the production of food for both local and far-flung markets—to increase the

productivity of small-scale agriculture and move from subsistence to commercial or simple commodity production to generate the incomes needed for the peasant farmers and the rural dwellers to sustain their livelihoods. On the other hand, it is evident that the process and forces of capitalist development militate against the Via Campesina, and that to sustain the advances made regarding the agrarian question and the construction of an alternative model—it is imperative that a solution is found for bringing about substantive change in the broader social system. In order to bring about "another world" in which the needs of people are put ahead of private profit, and the perquisites of private property are subordinated to the fundamental principles of equity and solidarity regarding the distribution of the fruits of social cooperation and economic development. This is a fundamental issue of organization and how to effectively mobilize the forces of resistance—what to do and how to do it.

July 2012

In the face of a destructive capitalist development process, a hostile or unresponsive state, and an unfavourable correlation of class forces, led to the MST joining other progressive forces in forming a new united front in the popular mass movement for agrarian reform and social change—to coordinate the struggle against the neoliberal model; the Coordinadora de Movimientos Sociales (CMS). This coordinating force or directorate brought together organizations from 23 sectors and social movements, including CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores), UNE (la União Nacional dos Estudantes), Vía Campesina, the churches, and those organised under the banner of "the cry of the excluded" (*el Grito de los Excluidos*).

The aim of this organization is to unify the struggle and to move beyond mere criticism of the neoliberal model to collective action against it, and to advance a new political development project to recover Brazil's national sovereignty. This means, among other things, breaking with the IMF and ensuring that public revenues are not used to pay the interests on accumulated external debt to foreign investors and creditors. It also means giving absolute priority to the generation of jobs and employment, to guarantee the right to decent work to all Brazilians, and ensuring a more equitable sharing of national income so that everyone, not just a privileged few or an emerging middleclass of high consumers, can live better and enjoy the fruits of national development. In addition, the project

will reestablish the active role of the state with regard to productive investment of fiscal resources, strengthening the system of industrial production of consumer goods, and to guarantee the universalization or extending public services and goods such as health-care and education to the entire population.

The CMS views its role in the current conjuncture as, stimulating all sorts of struggles to reactivate the mass movement. But it also wants to strengthen and unite the struggle to create a movement of the unemployed—to bring together the landless, the homeless, and the jobless. To this end—to take stock and bring together the unemployed, to raise political awareness of this important issue, and to bring this process to a head—Via Campesina Brazil (and the MST) proposed to organise a national "jornada" focused on the "unemployment question," which took place in July, 2012.

July 19, 2012: Agrarian Reform in the Twenty-First Century—Toward a New Vision

Via Campesina, with the active participation of the MST, has embarked on a series of meetings and forums, international workshops, and seminars directed toward the building of a new vision for the movement and to redefine strategies for achieving it. The latest event took place in West Sumatra, Indonesia, in July 2012 at the international workshop and seminar "Agrarian Reform and the Defense of Land and Territory in the 21st century: The Challenge and Future."

Via Campesina and global agrarian reform delegates of the international workshop, representing 26 countries from across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe, joined the 14th anniversary celebration of Serikat Petani Indonesia (Indonesian Peasant Union), the local host of the conference. There were also an additional 2,500 participants, with members of SPI from 15 provincesaround Indonesia.

August 20–22, 2012: Brazil's Social Movements Agree to Work Together in the Struggle for Change

From the 20 to the 22 of August 2012, there was a gathering and historic meeting of some 5,000 representatives of all the mass rural movements under the leadership of Joao Pedro Stédile who, still believes that the government is divided, thereby providing a window of opportunity for advancing the class struggle for land and transformative social change—to unify the demands of all the movements so that they would have greater strength in numbers and unity.

The meeting and subsequent union of rural workers and peoples included representatives from the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura—CONTAG), the National Federation of Family Farmers (a Federação Nacional dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras na Agricultura Familiar—FETRAF), rural social movements linked to Via Campesina Brazil such as the MST and the Movement of Women Peasants (Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas—MMC), the Movement of Family Farmers (Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores—MPA), and the Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens (MAB). Thegathering also included representation from the Movements of Artisanal Fishermen (Movimentos de Pescadores e Pescadoras Artesanais do Brasil), the African-Brazilian Landless Communities (Movimentos dos Quilombolas) and, significantly, the Brazilian Indigenous Movements (Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil—APIB) and the Conselho Indigenista Missionário—CIMI), which marked the emerging articulation of the agrarian question with the indigenous question, imperative in the current conjuncture. Regarding the latter the gathering also included, the participation of the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), Cáritas and the Pastoral da Juventude as well as dozens of other state or regional movements.

The meeting was indeed a historic event at a particularly difficult conjuncture that some observers have described as the most difficult in the MST's history. The aim was to assess the correlation of forces in the class struggle and to formulate a concerted strategic and political response—to mobilize the forces of resistance toward agrarian reform and the transformative social change necessary to consolidate and sustain any advances on the diverse fronts of the struggle. Most significantly, from the standpoint of leading the MST and the popular movements beyond the current impasse, was the apparent unity achieved among diverse social and political forces representing different forms of organization, ideologies, and political currents. In this sense, the "encuentro" was indeed historic, harking as far back as November 1961, in Belo Horizonte (MG) when the first National Congress of Peasants (I Congresso Camponês do Brasil) was celebrated under the banner of agrarian reform ("Reforma agrária: na lei ou na marra!"), the last time (according to Stédile) that such unity had been achieved.

What made this meeting (the Encontro Nacional de Trabalhadores Rurais) and unity possible fifty years on? According to Stédile, in his summary of the strategic assessment made by the leadership about

the balance of class forces in this conjuncture, there were seven main factors, each heavily debated.

First, capitalist agriculture has retaken the offensive in the countryside, bringing together in opposition and resistance both the social base of the rural landless workers movement and the indigenous communities threatened by the latest incursions of finance and extractive capital in their territories These incursions included the imposition (by transnational corporative forms) of—capital and agribusiness of a capitalist development production model, the exploration for and the extraction of natural resources, and the further encroachment on the commons and the degradation of a fragile ecosystem. As a result of these developments, all of the groups and the population that is directly dependent on the subsistence form of agriculture livelihood are uniting against a common enemy—an alliance of financiers, investors, transnational corporations, large landowners, and different classes of business proprietors.

Second, rural and indigenous movements were convinced that the Brazilian state actively supported the interests of the agribusiness and agroexport sectors. They also understood that the judicial and legislative branches of the state are thoroughly subservient to these interests.

Third, the federal government is divided. Although agribusiness and agroexport interests have a predominant influence over government macroeconomic policy, the government is forced to take into account other interests, including those of the small-scale producers and family farmers, which are represented to some extent within certain ministries and government programs (the conservative agrarian elite wields considerable power over the legislature).

Fourth, there is a growing realization that the corporate agribusiness model, based on the intensive use of pesticides, not only results in the reduction of plant and animal diversity—but it also endangers both the environment and nature, as well as human health. Scientists in these areas have denounced the use of pesticides and agrotoxins that produce life-threatening diseases and cancers that kill.

Fifth, the country needs a national development project that meets the interests of the Brazilian people and not just corporate profits. In this project, the democratization of land ownership and the organization of food production is fundamental.

Sixth, it is necessary to reorient public policy as a priority to preserve the environment, produce healthy food with a guaranteed market, an income, and employment for the population.

Seventh, it is necessary to prioritize the democratization of access to education at all levels, on the agenda of the rural social movements. What is needed is a massive literacy program to lift the 14 million Brazilian adults who still cannot read and write out of the dark. For this, there must be radically improved access to secondary and higher education to more than three million young people living in rural areas.

All of these conditions for uniting the struggle were programmed for debate at the three-day *Encontro Nacional de Trabalhadores Rurais* to the purpose of designing an agenda for the mobilizations planned for 2013 and to agree upon a single action program for rural development that would serve as an alternative model to export-driven agriculture.

A New Vision and an Alternative Model

Brazilian agriculture is based on corporate capitalism, the capitalist development of the forces of production, and corresponding social relations. The agricultural production model is that of large-scale capitalist enterprise, corporate capital, and agribusiness (a system of production based on an alliance between the State, global capital, and the local agrarian elite, geared to the world market). The basic problem with this model is that since it is designed to serve the common interests of global capital and the agrarian eliteit leads to the enrichment of a small class of big landlords and agribusiness operators; and the exclusion of millions of small producers and their families. It is profoundly exclusionary, resulting in grossly uneven and inequitable development and the growth of inequalities and poverty that require state action to contain and ameliorate. Another major problem with the corporate agribusiness model is that it is unsustainable both in terms of the livelihoods of the vast majority of small producers and more broadly the ecosystem on which economic activity and the entire production apparatus, not to mention society, rests.

The current economic model, based on agribusiness and financial capital, is designed to transform food, seeds, and all natural resources into commodities so as to guarantee profits and appease the greed of the agribusiness elite, the investors, capitalists, and the large transnational companies. The big economic groups in this capitalist class have the power that enables them not only to profit from the exploitation of labor in the production of food and other agricultural

products. But it also gives them first rights convert the commons into private property and thus appropriating the lion's share of the rent derived from the extraction of Brazil's biodiversity and its wealth of natural resources—the land, water, minerals, and other renewable, and nonrenewable resources. In pursuit of private profit, they also promote the destruction of the forests and, by means of monoculture, degradation of the soil. Their profit-making concerns and operations also promote a generalized increase in the exploitation of workers, the precarization of labor, a fundamental disrespect for the rights of workers, as well as leading to unemployment, poverty, and violence. Generally, agribusiness promotes the concentration of society's wealth in the hands of a few—especially bankers and transnational corporations, while increasing inequality and poverty of the population.

In the urgent need to combat the oppressive and destructive logic of capitalist development Via Campesina Brazil (Via Campesina-Brazil, 2008) has denounced the current agribusiness corporate agricultural model, which:

1. Favors the interests of transnational companies, which form partnerships with landowners to control Brazil's agriculture and make huge profits via the production, food trade, the sale of seeds, and agricultural inputs.
2. Prioritizes monoculture that requires the use of large quantities of poison and toxic substances, with a negative effect on the quality and integrity of the land and the environment, rural livelihoods, and the health of the population.
3. Stimulates the monoculture of eucalyptus and pine species that destroy biodiversity, pollute the environment, creates unemployment, and the disintegration of peasant and indigenous communities.
4. Encourages the production of ethanol for export, which in turn promotes the expansion of sugarcane monoculture, thus bringing about a rise in food prices and the concentration of land ownership in foreign companies.
5. Spreads the use of transgenic seeds that destroy biodiversity and eliminate Brazil's native seeds, damage the health of farmers, and the quality of food for consumption, transfers of political and economic control of technology, and seeds to the multinational corporations that dominate the global economy.
6. Promotes the destruction of the Brazilian ecosystem, especially the Amazon rainforest, through the expansion of the livestock and the planting of soybean, eucalyptus, and sugarcane, as well as the extraction and export of timber and minerals.

In this connection, the Via Campesina Brazil opposes and stands against the multinationals, big landowners, the politicians, parties, and parliamentarians who defend their powerful economic interests in passing laws that will worsen the situation. For this reason Via Campesina-Brazil (2008) and the MST is against and actively opposes:

1. The law of concession of public forests, which will mean the privatization of biodiversity, and Bill 6.424/05, which reduces the legally protected Amazon natural reserve area from 80 to 50 percent.
2. The provisional Measure 422/08, which provides legal title and security for the lands invaded by the landowners in the Amazon to a maximum of 1,500 hectares (where the Constitution determines a maximum of 50 hectares).
3. The provisional measure that repeals the obligation of contracting workers to register within three months. Via Campesina condemns the impunity existence of slave labor, the exploitation of child labor, the failure to ensure workers' rights, and the extension of social security to field workers.
4. The Constitutional Change Project 49/06, which proposes the reduction of special border area for the benefit of transnational corporations and international economic groups.
5. The project of damming the Rio São Francisco river, it is designed to benefit only the hydrobusiness interests and production for export. The project does not meet the needs of people living in semiarid region of the northeast.
6. The privatization of water, monopolized by multinational companies like Nestle, Coca-Cola, and Suez.
7. The current energy model based on the construction of large hydropower plants, mainly in the Amazon, which places control of energy production in the hands of multinational corporations and favors large companies that consume more energy.

In the context of this protracted and ongoing struggle, Via Campesina proposes to mobilize the forces of resistance against this model and the destructive forces that it unleashes. Specifically the concern and aim is to:

1. Construct a new agricultural model, based on family farming in agrarian reform, income distribution, and the retention of people in the rural areas of the country.
2. Challenge and fight against the concentration of ownership of land and natural resources, with defined limits on a maximum size of land ownership.

3. Ensure that domestic agriculture is controlled by the people, that is food production as a matter of popular sovereignty under control of national agribusiness cooperatives that encourage the cultivation of healthy food.
4. Diversify agricultural production, encouraging multicrop production that respects the environment and uses agroecological production technologies.
5. Preserve the environment, biodiversity, and all sources of water, with special attention to the Guarani Aquifer, thus fighting a major cause of global warming.
6. Not to allow the deforestation of the Amazon and the biosphere, preserving the country's stock of natural resources, using natural resources in a sustainable way, and to the benefit of the people, not to profit the few.
7. Preserve, disseminate, multiply, and improve indigenous seeds of different biomes, to ensure access to them for all farmers.
8. Fight for the immediate passage of a law that determines the expropriation of all properties where there is slave labor, and the institution of heavy fines on landlords who do not meet the labor laws and social security.
9. Demand the implementation of the proposed National Water Agency, which would provide work, investments in all municipalities in the semiarid regions of the country, and solving the problem of water supply for local people.
10. Prevent the transformation of water into a commodity and ensure water management as a public good, accessible to everyone.
11. Promote a new energy policy to ensure energy sovereignty and prioritize development for all, using sustainable forms of energy production.
12. Ensure the federal government authorizes INCRA (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform) to resume and expedite the "regularization" of all the areas belonging to the Afro-Brazilian communities.
13. Promote the immediate demarcation of all Indian reservations and the expulsion of all invading ranchers, especially those in the area of Raposa Serra do Sol reservation and on lands of the Guarani people in Mato Grosso do Sul.
14. Ensure that the government honors the commitments to the implementation of agrarian reform signed in July 2002, thereby fulfilling its political agenda. It must promote the immediate settlement of all families in camps and build at least 100,000 homes per year in the field to stem the rural exodus.
15. The construction of a fairer society, with equality, and democracy, where wealth is shared among all.

Conclusion

Brazil as much of Latin America is at the crossroads of fundamental change—of diverse cross-cutting forces generated by a system in crisis, that is taking multiple forms and that has assumed both global and local proportions. In the vortex of this crisis-established ways of doing things as well as existing institutions are weakened, creating both forces of change and new opportunities to mobilize these forces in the direction of progressive change or genuine development. Of course, these forces can also be mobilized in an entirely different direction, transforming what has been viewed in this book as an agrarian question into a series of fundamentally political questions—What is to be done? What form should agrarian reform and social change take? What is the fundamental agency of such change in the current conjuncture? What role can or should governments (and more broadly the State) and social movements (and the MST)—play in the process? Is such change best brought about through agency of public policy or grassroots collective action? Does it imply the actions of a government that has been democratized in its relation to society (to serve the people rather than special interest groups or the dominant class)? Or do the prospects for progressive change and genuine national development—development that is inclusive and equitable, and sustainable in terms of both livelihoods and the environment—require the agency of antisystemic social movements such as the MST, the confrontation of class power with people power? Can such change and development be delivered by a postneoliberal state in pursuit of a more inclusive form of capitalist development? Or does it require more substantive change in the form of the economy as well as the state—to abandon the currently operating system (capitalism)? If so, what are the prospects for such change and what form would it take and what agencies would be required?

The MST itself has confronted these questions numerous times in different conjunctures of the land and broader class struggle that it has waged over the years—most recently at the VI National Congress of the movement in February 2014. In this conjuncture, the position taken by the leadership was not much, if any, different from the position that it took in 1885 at its foundational Congress or in 2006 (MST, 2006). In 1985, the MST conceptualized the problem it faced as a matter of agrarian reform and social transformation. In 2006, after two decades of the land struggle, the MST Congress, made reference

to an agrarian reform that included a cosmic vision of the territories of communities of peasants, the landless, indigenous peoples, rural workers, fisherfolk, nomadic pastoralists, tribes, afrodescendents, ethnic minorities, and displaced peoples, who base their work on the production of food and who maintain a relationship of respect and harmony with Mother Earth and the oceans (MST, 2006).

And today, what does the MST leadership view as another major turning point in its history, another conjuncture of change and opportunity? Perhaps the best answer is given by João Pedro Stédile in an interview (2014), regarding the challenges to the movement presented by the current conjuncture (Stédile, 2014). Stédile's answers to the questions put to him were echoed in the action plan elaborated and discussed at the MST's VI National Congress in the following month (February 10–14, 2014), held under the banner "Fight, Construct the Popular Agrarian Reform." As Stédile sees it, agrarian reform in Brazil today is blocked not only by the political power of agribusiness and the agrarian elite of Brazil's capitalist class (*a burguesia brasileira*), but also by the advance of capitalism in the countryside under the presidency of Dilma Rousseff. To be precise, extractive capital has advanced, capital accumulated in the process of extracting Brazil's wealth of minerals and agrofood products, particularly biofuels in which Brazil has emerged as a world leader in capitalist production. Due to this advance, Stédile explains, Roussef's election and ascent to political power accentuated an already unfavorable correlation of class forces regarding the possibility of social change toward agrarian reform. In this situation,[5] the MST can do little more than mince its steps toward popular agrarian reform, continue ongoing efforts toward building an antihegemonic bloc, (a coalition of class forces on the Left)—and hold a popular plebiscite on the governing regime's policies set for September 2014.

What are we to conclude? Our conclusion is that both neoliberalism and capitalism are in crisis—and a crisis always creates forces of change that can be mobilized toward the Right and the Left—but so is the MST. The MST has had success in resettling many families on the land and mobilizing the forces of resistance to the capitalist development of the forces of agricultural production, and its notable capacity to navigate the winds of change. Despite this, the MST has been seriously weakened by the attacks waged against it by the government and its allies, and it has been totally outflanked by the government's postneoliberal antipoverty social policies. At the same

time, the ability of the MST to organize and connect with other forces of resistance both within Brazil (other rural social movements), outside the country, and to play such a leading role in Via Campesina, provides reasons for hope, if not optimism. In the drama currently unfolding in Brazil and elsewhere under conditions of a system in crisis and the demise of the neoliberal model the MST remains a major protagonist in the ongoing class struggle for agrarian reform and substantive, if not transformative, social change.

Conclusion

On October 12, 2009, FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf stated that food production needs to increase by 70 percent in the coming four decades in order to feed a much larger global population, projected to rise to 9.1 billion in 2050, from 6.7 billion in 2009. According to Diouf:

> The combined effect of population growth, strong income growth and urbanization . . . is expected to result in almost the doubling of demand for food, feed, and fibre. Agriculture will have no choice, but to be more productive . . . The challenge is not only to increase global future food production, but to increase it where it is mostly needed and by those who need it most . . . There should be a special focus on smallholder farmers, women, and rural households and their access to land, water, and high quality seeds . . . and other modern inputs. (2009:1–2)

Diouf noted that global agriculture faced some difficult challenges to increasing food production—the growing scarcity of natural resources likeland and water, and the increasing effects of climate change, notably droughts and floods. Diouf also mentioned that food production would face increasing competition from the agro-biofuel market, which was projected to increase by nearly 90 percent, in the following 10 years. In response, Diouf argued that these challenges could be overcome by advancing a common agenda that better facilitated North-South and South-South cooperation, at a cost of US$44 billion a year in development assistance. The FAO's 2013 report, "State of Food Insecurity in the World," contained essentially the same conclusion, with additional emphasis on economic growth and social programs. According to FAO (2013), the combination of economic growth, cash-transfer social programs, technological and educational resources are the key to substantial—and sustainable—increases in

agricultural production and consumption necessary to achieve world food security.

Yet, historical experience demonstrates that increased food production does not necessarily lead to decreased hunger. The "Green Revolution" is perhaps the best example of this proposition. The introduction of high-yielding crops, better agricultural technology, and rural extension education led to an impressive increase in food production, but it did not lead to a substantial reduction in hunger. This was most notably the case in South East Asia. In India, the Green Revolution was cited as a great success, when it dramatically increased food production. However, the number of hungry and malnourished people in India did not decrease, and peasants did not benefit from the Green Revolution due to lack of access to basic resources. Thus, there are valid reasons to question FAO's current prescribed policy solution to ending world hunger. For one thing, FAO fails to recognize that the main cause of persistent world hunger is the lack of access to fundamental resources, notably land. The current farmland grab in developing countries by transnational corporations is exacerbating this situation. Without access to land, poverty, and hunger will continue to persist in the developing world. Ultimately, correcting this situation requires comprehensive agrarian reform, which, unfortunately, is not a present priority for governments in the developing world. Moreover, agrarian reform has been difficult to advance in light of the encroachment of agribusiness into the developing world. Within this context, there are many lessons to learn from Brazil's agrarian reform experiment. Specifically, this experience reveals important findings regarding peasant mobilization, agrarian reform, and cooperative formation.

First, the Brazilian agrarian reform experiment has been characterized by the ad hoc redistribution of land, with poorly funded and uncoordinated postsettlement support programs. Under intense political pressure by landless peasant movements, notably the MST, successive postmilitary governments settled landless peasants mostly on public lands, far away from main economic centers. Agrarian reform has had a limited impact on landlessness and poverty in Brazil—the country continues to have one of the most unequal distributions of land in the world, and one of the highest levels of rural poverty in the world. The Gini index of land inequality remains high at 87 percent and 80 percent of the total rural population still lives in abject poverty. While more than 1.3 million peasants (official government numbers) have received land titles to date, another 4–5 million are

still landless. Over 80 percent of Brazil's total arable land belonging to the *latifundiários* (those who own farms over 1,000 hectares) remains uncultivated. Since 1985, the rapid expansion of agribusiness has reinforced Brazil's historic pattern of skewed land concentration. The promotion of capital-intensive agribusiness has seriously undermined agrarian reform efforts. Land redistribution has been matched by increased land possession. That is, the expansion of small-scale agricultural farming has been counterbalanced by the expansion of large-scale agribusiness farming. The Brazilian state has facilitated the opening of new agricultural frontiers, such as those in Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, by providing financial, technical, and marketing resources. Moreover, successive Brazilian governments, including the "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff administrations, have demonstrated a lack of genuine commitment to agrarian reform. They have reluctantly settled peasants and failed to adequately fund postsettlement programs. Newly settled peasants have suffered from lack of access to educational, financial, technological, and marketing resources. This situation has hampered efforts to firmly settle peasants on the land. The MST has challenged the state to confront the precarious situation of newly settled peasants. In response, the state has established several programs such as PRONAF, PROCERA, and PCAR. These programs have incorporated many of the landless peasants' demands. Unfortunately, these have been underfunded programs, administrated by urban-based development experts with no direct involvement in rural communities. The participation of the landless peasants in designing, implementing, and administering these programs has been minimal. As a result, PRONAF, PROCERA, and PCAR have not fully met the needs of settled peasants and they have remained in a vulnerable situation. The introduction of the Zero Hunger project, and the *Bolsa Família* in particular, have alleviated some of the challenges facing newly settled peasants. However, this social program has not offered a long-term solution to the problem of inadequate postsettlement government support policies. Anecdotal evidence indicates that a considerable number of disillusioned peasants have already left the countryside, selling, or leaving behind the land they were granted. If the state fails to address the underfunding of postsettlement programs, many more newly settled peasants are likely to leave the countryside.

Second, the MST has been the main force behind the push for agrarian reform in Brazil. Peasant mobilization has a long history in Brazil. The MST is a nation-wide landless peasant movement, best

understood in the context of five centuries of struggle. This movement embodies the aspirations of millions of landless peasants. It is a family-based landless peasant movement committed to the pursuit of a more just, egalitarian, and peaceful Brazilian society. The MST rejects neoliberal development as a viable approach to promoting progressive social change. It advocates cooperation, not competition, to better the material welfare of individuals, families, and communities. The MST is not a political pressure group seeking agrarian reform via the *jogo político*, or political game, but a landless peasant movement committed to advancing a new and specific type of agrarian reform, based on a new economic model—another system, a new world, a better form of society. The MST promotes political and economic activism in order to vigorously contest centuries of systemic socioeconomic exclusion. The MST practices the politics of land occupation to advance access to land. It also practices the politics of cooperativism to consolidate agrarian reform. The MST's pursuit of both political and economic activism promotes the real exercise of democratic citizenship in the countryside. Notably, this movement uses nonviolent means to advance its objectives. Its community-based model of agrarian reform is truly transformative—it teaches the landless peasants to become active agents of social change, and trains them to become creative subjects of wealth creation, rather than its objects, or worse—its victims. Despite many strengths and advances, the MST is currently at an impasse. It faces serious obstacles to effectively sustaining, let alone furthering, agrarian reform. Specifically, it does not have the capacity to substantially change Brazil's unjust agrarian structure. The MST has effectively mobilized, organized, and trained landless peasants for agrarian reform. However, long-term, ongoing mobilization, organization, and training require human and material resources. Unfortunately, the rapid expansion of encampments and settlements has stretched the MST's limited resources, thus hampering its momentum and effectiveness. The MST has also faced serious barriers to advancing its interests in the formal political arena. Its historic dependence on the Workers' Party has not served it well. Regrettably, the Workers' Party promotion of "pro-poor" social programs has eroded the MST's social base. In fact, these programs have basically distracted the poor from the struggle for agrarian reform. Moreover, the MST continues to confront a powerful, well-organized, and well-funded political opponent, the landholding elite. Powerful landowners are opposed to advancing agrarian reform, because they perceive it as a threat to their interests. Indeed, they have systematically

hindered any modest state efforts to further advance agrarian reform. For example, they have used their influence to effectively prevent the increase of government funding for postsettlement agrarian reform programs, the demarcation of indigenous lands, and the introduction of environmental conservation laws to protect the Brazilian Amazon rainforest. The MST also suffers from a lack of broad political support in urban areas, which has hampered its capacity to effectively pressure the state.

Third, the MST has embraced cooperativism as a strategy to consolidate agrarian reform. However, cooperative formation has not been an easy task. The MST's experience of cooperativism has often been a difficult and conflictive process. Interpersonal and group conflicts have caused tensions and divisions within the settlements. The collective spirit tends to be strong during land occupation, but often weakens during land settlement. During cooperative formation, the collective spirit may either disintegrate or rebound. The main cause of interpersonal or group conflict within the MST is usually disagreements over objectives and practices of community life. As the COPAVI, COAPRI, COOPERSAN, and COOPVARIVE experiences demonstrate, peasant cooperatives may empower or disempower the rural poor. Cooperative success or failure depends on several factors—location, land settlement layout, soil fertility, rainfall patterns, and access to credit, technology, markets, and extension education. However, the key factors separating cooperative success from failure are collaborative strategic planning and a militant, holistic cooperative ideology. Strategic planning requires the active involvement of all cooperative members. It also requires the active participation of progressive academics, researchers, and technicians. In the case of COPAVI and COAPRI, strategic planning facilitated the pursuit of a cooperative vision centered on social equity, economic fairness, gender equality, and environmental stewardship. In contrast, the COOPERSAN and COOPVARIVE experience indicates that the promotion of cooperative formation within the context of old forms of political domination perpetuate social exclusion, administrative mismanagement, and gender inequalities.

Finally, the MST has embraced food sovereignty, as conceptualized by the Via Campesina,[1] as an alternative strategy to advance and consolidate agrarian reform. Food sovereignty provides a holistic conceptualization of agrarian reform in light of the new challenges brought about by global neoliberal capitalism. Food sovereignty includes comprehensive agrarian reform as the fundamental step

to building local agriculture and food production systems that go beyond market-oriented corporate control. It also includes the right to protect and regulate the use of land, grazing, water, seeds, livestock, and fish populations in order to build a sustainable local agricultural economy. However, the MST has faced difficulties in advancing food sovereignty due to the well-entrenched power of agribusiness. Global agribusiness has transformed Brazil into one of the world's most dynamic agricultural markets, accounting for one-fifth of the total global food production. In doing so, it has fundamentally shifted the balance of power in favor of the landholding elite. The Brazilian state has embraced agribusiness as an integral part of an integrated extractive capitalist development model. The power of extractive capitalism has restricted the MST's capacity to advance food sovereignty.

How then food sovereignty, or agrarian reform in particular, can move forward? This is an important question that requires serious reflection. For one thing, the Brazilian experience demonstrates that the pursuit of food sovereignty is a difficult but not impossible task—it requires determination, patience, and, above all, hope in a better future. The MST by itself—even in alliance with other rural movements and organizations—is not in a position to effectively challenge the power of extractive capitalism. Such effective challenge clearly requires a different form of organization and a different strategy. Specifically, it requires the unity and mobilization of diverse forces of popular resistance. Effective challenge will come about from a broad, cohesive, and committed antiglobal capitalism movement, both within Brazil and beyond. A comprehensive strategy for effectively advancing food sovereignty must take into account all the rural and urban forces at play. The MST needs to build and harness widespread grassroots political support among all sectors of Brazilian society in order to advance food sovereignty. It needs to reach out to environmentalists, peace movements, human rights groups, labor unions, and other subordinated groups and classes. The MST also needs to reconsider its historic relationship with the Workers' Party, which has not served it well. When the Workers' Party was in opposition, it vigorously represented the MST's interests. However, since coming to power, the Workers' Party has given only lukewarm support to the MST—agrarian reform has not been a policy priority. Moreover, the Workers' Party has failed to move away from traditional ways of doing politics—it has continued to practice the politics of clientelism, nepotism, and favoritism. Perhaps it is time for the MST to play a more direct role in establishing alternative mechanisms that

more effectively link social movements and progressive political parties. Fundamental structural changes will be brought about by a combination of both external and internal political pressure on the state. Social movements on their own cannot promote far-reaching structural changes, but they are very effective at mobilizing the masses. Progressive political parties on their own cannot advance the genuine societal transformation, but they are useful in channeling popular demands into the political system. As such, the MST can play a better role in devising better political mechanisms for blending the different dynamics and expectations of social movements and progressive political parties. This is important to devisemore effective common agendas and strategies capable of advancing far-reaching structural changes. If it is to become a truly just society, Brazil cannot avoid implementing comprehensive agrarian reform. Unfortunately, historical experience demonstrates that this is a difficult political task. In view of Brazil's well-entrenched power structures, the struggle for agrarian reform is likely to continue for many years, if not decades.

Notes

Introduction

1. The global financial crisis primarily affected investors in North American and Western Europe, where speculative financing, particularly in real estate, took place. For more on this, see Berberoglu (2012); Foster and Magdoff (2009); Kliman (2012); McNally (2010), and Tabb (2012).
2. The concept of food security has a long history that goes back to 1974 (World Food Conference). The FAO played a key role in this conference, which set the goal that "within a decade, no man, woman or child will go to bed hungry." The concept acquired its present definition in 1996 (World Food Summit). This conference called upon nations "to raise levels of nutrition and standards of living and thereby contribute toward ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger. There can be no higher purpose." By this time, almost 800 million people were chronically undernourished, including 192 million children.
3. The term "land grabbing' is a controversial issue—it basically refers to the large-scale investments in the acquisition of farmland in developing countries by transnational companies for the primary purpose of biofuel production and by some nation-states to meet their need for food security (White and Dasgupta, 2010).
4. In this book, we employ the concept of "agrarian reform" rather than "land reform." The former has a broader meaning than the latter. Agrarian reform not only involves changes in land ownership (that is land redistribution); it also involves the promotion of institutional support systems to provide landless peasants, farmers, and rural workers equitable access to productive resources (that is educational, financial, technical, and commercialization services) in order to secure their livelihoods and improve their quality of life.
5. The Gini index of land inequality is a numerical measure, where 0 = Absolute Equality and 100 = Absolute Inequality.
6. "Agribusiness" refers to the large-scale, well-organized production of food, farm machinery, and supplies as well as the storage, sale, and distribution of agricultural commodities, for profit. Agribusiness marks the rise of modern techno-farming, which has the tendency of removing independent farmers

from production decisions and forcing them to sign production contracts with corporations. This steadily decreases both the number of farms and the percentage of independent farmers. One of the biggest agribusiness enterprises is the Archer Daniels Midland company (ADM), based in Decatur, Illinois. ADM calls itself "supermarket to the world" and operates more than 270 plants worldwide.

7. Settled peasants receive land-use leases from the Brazilian government for 20 years. During this time, they are not allowed to sell the land and the state reserves its rights over the land. After 20 years, the settled peasants acquire full ownership and property rights and they can sell the land, if they so wish.
8. Official government data on agrarian reform is notoriously unreliable and subject to political manipulation. DATALUTA provides alternative data on agrarian reform in Brazil. DATALUTA is a Nucleo de Estudos, Pesquisa e Projetos de Reforma Agrária (Centre for Agrarian Studies), or NERA, project based at the São Paulo State University (Unesp) and funded by a consortium of Brazilian research agencies. Led by Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, DATALUTA has obtained a solid reputation for data accuracy. DATALUTA cooperates with the CPT in the publication of CPT's highly respected annual report: *Conflitos no Campo*.
9. In Brazil, the Portuguese word *camponês* (peasant) is rarely used. Indeed, the MST is not strictly a peasant movement. The landless peasants do not identify themselves as *camponeses sem terra*, but as *trabalhadores rurais sem terra*, or landless rural workers. The name of the movement also denotes its class-based identity. Unlike some other Latin American countries, the Brazilian peasantry has a long tradition of rural unions. *Sindicatos rurais*, or rural unions, were historically subordinated to organized political parties. This is not the case with the MST. Although the MST supports the Workers' Party (PT), it is an autonomous and highly heterogeneous rural movement of landless peasants, unemployed rural and urban workers, displaced indigenous migrants, and other marginalized groups.
10. Vía Campesina is a movement made up of close to 30 peasant organizations around the world. It advocates family farm-based sustainable agriculture and was the group that first coined (in 1996) the term "food sovereignty." For more on this concept see Martinez-Torres and Rossett (2014).
11. An exception to this (a relatively successful cooperative experiment in Latin America) has been Costa Rica, where the state, under the José Figueres Ferrer administration (1953–1957), played an active role in supporting cooperativism as an instrument of economic democracy.
12. Ethnographic research is an important tool to studying peasant communities. However, it has its limitations when examining broad-based peasant movements, because it does not provide a full picture of the macroforces that shape and reshape peasant communities.
13. This took place in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2011, 2012, and 2013. For one of the authors, Wilder Robles, the ethnographic research was the most personally rewarding experience. By entering the landless peasants' world, Robles experienced firsthand the conditions under which they live in the *acampamentos* (encampments) and *assentamentos* (settlements).

14. Robles also visited during the aforementioned years other regions of Brazil, notably encampments and settlements in the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Mato Groso, Bahia, Alagoas, Pernambuco, and Ceará.
15. By 2014, there were over 408 master's theses and doctoral dissertations written about the MST in Portuguese, Spanish, and English. Of these, 35 masters' theses and 15 doctoral dissertations dealt with cooperatives in some form or other. However, none of them directly explored the relationships among peasant mobilization, agrarian reform, and cooperative formation. Some of these works will be cited in the upcoming chapters.
16. The "political opportunity" approach contends that the context in which "new" social movements emerge influences, or frames, their success or failure. The chances of a particular protest movement achieving success is discussed in terms of the "opportunities" that are available at the movement. For more on this, see McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly (2001).
17. The English historian E. P. Thompson (1924–1993) was the first to develop the concept of moral economy. This concept basically argues that peasants tend to rebel when elites, state authorities, or market forces violate the terms of the "subsistence ethic"—the social arrangement that structures the availability of food, the prices of subsistence commodities, and the proper administration of taxation. For more on this, see Scott (1977; 1987).
18. The concept of community is troublesome in the social sciences. The definition of rural communities is even more problematic. In Latin America, these communities are mirrors of the contradictions of capitalist development, that is, they constitute local spaces with complex forms of domination. Their traditional subordination to the broader social order corresponds to a complex historical process of socioeconomic disintegration and integration. Rural communities have undergone agrarian reforms (and counter-reforms), migration patterns, economic changes, and political upheavals. In sum, they are contested social spaces where change is either resisted or promoted.
19. This process is already underway. See the VI National Congress of the MST, which met in February 2014 under the banner "Fight, Construct the Popular Agrarian Reform." The significance of this development for the ongoing struggle for agrarian reform will be discussed in the concluding chapter of the book.

1 The Agrarian Question Today: The Politics of Poverty and Inequality

1. The image and metaphor of a "global village" (Black Knippers, 1999) to describe the world is misleading. It is based on the idea that the world as we know it has shrunk to such an extent by virtue of the information and communications technological revolution. However, it is evident that in this new world people remain very much divided and disconnected, unable to share the benefits from global capitalist development. Notwithstanding the integration of many economies and societies into one system, the seven billion

plus people that make up the world do not by any stretch of the imagination constitute a "village" or a "community." Rather it is a complex blend of class-divided societies with different contexts.

2. This concern was first expressed in the mid-1990s, leading to proposals of a more socially inclusive form of development. The United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence (2007) and the World Bank Development reports in 2007 and 2010 respectively underscored this security concern. For more on this, see Kapstein (1996) and Karl (2000).
3. In its simplest definition, neoliberalism is a radical economic doctrine that advocates free market capitalism, that is, economic liberalization, free trade, free markets, privatization, deregulation, and a minimalist state. The Mont Pelerin Society and the Bilderberg Group—private international organizations composed of influential intellectuals, business leaders, and government leaders—are credited with spreading neoliberalism globally (Nef and Robles, 2000). The expansion of international trade, the signing of free-trade agreements, the introduction, and rapid advance of new communication technologies, and the financial liberalization of investment also led to the global spread of neoliberalism.
4. In 1944, 730 delegates from 44 countries gathered in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, to sign an agreement governing commercial, financial, and monetary relations among independent nation-states. This gathering also led to the creation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction (IBRD), which currently is part of the World Bank Group and Development, popularly known as the World Bank.
5. The poverty-environmental degradation relation is controversial. Some scholars argue that poverty in developing countries leads to environmental degradation, (that is the depletion of land and forest resources), while others argue that environmental degradation is related to material affluence.
6. According to Davis (2006:13) 43 percent of the global South's population live in slums.
7. Thus, for example, the Panos Institute report on the WB's Poverty Reduction Strategy Programs (PRSPs) notes, "most PRSPs, for all their emphasis on "pro-poor" growth, do not include decisive measures to redistribute wealth and promote equality. Agrarian reform, for example, is studiously avoided in the majority of plans, despite its importance for the reduction of rural inequality and poverty" (The Panos Institute, 2002, 16).
8. As De Janvry et al. (1998: 5ff.) outlines, this agrarian reform program was implemented in stages: (1) the placement of the modernized estates in the nonreform sector under threats of expropriation, providing land ceilings for the non-reform sector, organizing the reform sector into communal or state collective form (ejidos, et cetera), and distribution of holdings as individual tenures; (2) individual titling of collective lands, ejidos, and state farms; and (3) providing rural development for individual beneficiaries and access to idle lands for the landless and the micro-landholders (minifundistas).
9. A major survey of agrarian reform settlements found that 96 percent of these communities had originated through some form of land struggle (Leite 2004: 40–43). On average, peasants had to mobilize for four years in order to gain

access to land, due to a complicated legal and bureaucratic process (Carter and Carvalho 2009).

10. This explains the fact that more than 70 percent of all land distributed between 1985 and 2006 took place in the Amazonian agricultural frontier, including the neighboring states of Mato Grosso and Maranhão, where land values tend to be much lower than in the rest of Brazil and no expropriation is necessary (Carter and Carvalho, 2009).
11. In the 1990s, this situation became a serious issue in Mexico, where over 750,000 small and medium-sized family farmers experienced serious financial stress.
12. On the theorization of these "new social movements" see Brass (1991) and Veltmeyer (1997). In the 1980s, the theory of "new" social movements displaced class theory in the analysis of social movements. However, by end of the 1990s, this new social movements theory had all but disappeared, replaced by the development and political discourse on "civil society" (Veltmeyer, 2007).
13. The classical conceptualization of the "agrarian question" was framed in political, not economic, terms. Its main theorists, including Marx, Lenin, Kautsky, and Mao Zedong, were basically concerned with the potential role of the peasantry in the transition to capitalism, and later to socialism (Bernstein, 2010). In Latin America, and Brazil in particular, the agrarian question has a narrow and more specific definition. The term refers to the socioeconomic conditions that underlie the systemic dispossession, exploitation, and exclusion of peasants from the land. It also includes the peasants' historical struggle to reassert their rights to the land and their livelihoods. The agrarian question remains an unresolved issue in Latin America.
14. In its simplest definition, the "indigenous question" in Latin America refers to the historical struggles of indigenous peoples for land, self-governance, and cultural rights. The agrarian and indigenous questions are intrinsically linked.
15. Peasant, indigenous, and workers movements are not a new phenomenon in Latin America. Indeed, these movements have a long and rich history that goes back five centuries. They have been decisive agents of historical transformation, as transpired in the Haitian (1804), Mexican (1910), Bolivian (1952), Cuban (1959), and Nicaraguan (1979) revolutions.
16. On this red or pink tide of left-leaning "progressive" regimes in South America over the past decade—Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay—see Barrett, Chávez and Rodríguez-Garavi (2008); and Petras and Veltmeyer (2005).
17. John Williamson, an economist at the Institute for International Economics, coined the term "Washington Consensus" (Williamson, 1990). The Washington Consensus was an initiative of the US government, the World Bank, and Wall Street to address the socioeconomic woes of Latin America during the 1980s. The Washington Consensus promoted a set of market-oriented policy reforms that the state-directed economies of Latin America needed to adopt following the crippling debt crisis of the 1980s.

2 Rural Development and Social Movements

1. In the tradition of radical agrarian studies, the dynamics of this development process are conceptualized and referred to as the "agrarian question." For an excellent review of studies of this "question" see Bernstein (2010).
2. In its annual World Development Report, the World Bank for many years analyzed the development process with reference to a threefold typology of countries that were "advanced" (industrialized), "developing" (industrializing), and "underdeveloped" (agriculture-based).
3. The origins of this crisis were complex, but included the dramatic increase in oil prices, growing deficits, declining productivity, and soaring inflation. In the United States, growing expenditures on the Vietnam War exacerbated the crisis.
4. This development was theorized by Arthur Lewis (1954), in terms of a dualist model of an "expanding capitalist nucleus" based on unlimited supply of surplus labor, which served as a lever of capital accumulation.
5. World Bank economists argue that these remittances serve not only to balance payments on the national capital account, but act as a form of development finance—a means of lifting many rural households out of poverty. For more on this, see Delgado Wise, Márquez, and Rodríguez (2009).
6. In response to the Cuban Revolution, US President John F. Kennedy established the Alliance for Progress in 1961. This development program aimed to establish better economic cooperation between the United States and Latin America in order to bring prosperity to the region.
7. From the early 1960s to the late 1970s, military dictators governed many Latin American countries with the open support of the United States.
8. Evo Morales eventually came to power in 2006, with broad popular support.
9. In a genuine, inclusive democracy, the extent of democratic participation is more important than the institutions of democracy. Moreover, the foundations of truly genuine democratic institutions emerge from the real exercise of political citizenship through collective consciousness-raising. Genuine democracy not only prevents the subjugation of politics to economics, but also protects group and individual rights, and assures opportunity for meaningful participation in the political process. Genuine, inclusive democracy values social justice and protects public goods.
10. Traditionally, the dominant ideologies of early social movements were anarchism, socialism, communism, and nationalism. Initially, social movements referred specifically to the European labor movements of the nineteenth century, that advocated the construction of a new social order via revolutionary change. The arrival of the Welfare State institutionalized the demands of labor movements, thus softening their revolutionary orientation. These movements assumed new identities as political parties competing for power within the confines of parliamentary and representative democracy. Eventually, they became political pressure groups interested in influencing policy issues.

11. Eric Wolf's (1999) writings provide a similar approach to peasant rebellions and revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba, Mexico, Algeria, and Vietnam.
12. Postmodernism and poststructuralism are useful tools in understanding the complex nature of social change, and social movements in particular. They are known for their criticism of absolute truths or identities and "grand narratives." However, in most cases their language is highly abstract and prohibitive. Moreover, they are ahistorical. French philosopher Michael Foucault (1926–1984), and particularly his concept of power, greatly influenced postmodernism and poststructuralism theories.
13. Since its inception, most of these popular organizations have functioned as local welfare agencies for the poor and destitute. They have also tended to embrace narrow social agendas—community self-help programs, neighborhood literacy campaigns, basic health education, and limited forms of political action. With the exception of the Christian Base Communities (CEBs) movement, these community-based movements have not been effective in bringing about structural change. As Brohman (1996) observed, they lack a unified strategy and broad vision of social change.
14. This view is not original. Indeed, the Christian Base Communities movement of the 1970s, embedded a similar emancipatory sociopolitical message permeated by a Christian understanding of human salvation.
15. These authors advanced the incorrect argument that social struggles had moved away from national and international struggles to a global struggle within the context of an emerging global society. As such, the state was no longer the center of power contestation.
16. The Directory of Development Organizations, a UK-based organization, has recently listed 47,000 major international development organizations operating all over the world. A brief reading of the description or mission statements of some of these organizations indicates that the vast majority of them have adopted the SLA approach as a descriptive and prescriptive tool of development work. Some of these organizations include Lutheran World Relief, World Vision, Oxfam, Catholic Relief Services, Mennonite Central Committee, and Overseas Development Institute.
17. The theory of SLA stresses seven concepts and principles: (1) people-centered—it focused on the needs and aspirations of the poor; (2) participation—it encourages the poor to define and advance their own livelihood goals, priorities, and strategies; (3) diversification—it promotes a diversity of income-generating activities; (4) intervention—it advocates target strategic action to expand capabilities, assets, and activities; (5) sustainability—it promotes the preservation and enhancing of the natural ecosystem; (6) empowerment—it expands the assets and capabilities of poor people; and (7) good governance—it advocates transparency and accountability.
18. In line with this view, economists at the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2010) have concluded that the poverty experienced by so many rural inhabitants is to a large degree the result of the neoliberal policies implemented by many governments in the 1980s and 1990s. Policies that advanced the interests of the dominant class (the holders of economic

and political power). In the words of the Human Development Report (2010), there exists a "direct correspondence between the advance of globalization, neoliberalism, and the advance of poverty social inequality, social inequity." (UNDP, 2010: xv). "The most explosive contradictions," the Report adds, "are given because the advance of [neoliberal] globalization marches hand in hand with the advance of poverty and social polarization. It is undeniable," the Report continues, "that the 1980s and 1990s (were) the creation of an abysmal gap between wealth and poverty, and that this gap constitutes the most formidable obstacle to achieving human development." (UNDP, 2010: xv)

3 The Politics of Agrarian Reform in Brazil: A Historical Background

1. In modern Brazil, the *latifúndia* refers to privately-owned large estates that either are not in use or are underutilized in terms of agricultural potential. In reality, most of these large estates are merely used for speculative land purposes.
2. This was the case with the indigenous populations, who unsuccessfully resisted colonization. Eventually, they fell victims to mistreatment and disease.
3. Interview conducted by Robles with 20 MST members in the settlement of El Dorado, Santo Amaro, and Bahía, May 16, 2001.
4. Unlike peasants in other Latin American countries, Brazilian peasants did not descend from complex agrarian communal civilizations. They had their origins in slavery, ethnic miscegenation, and European immigration.
5. Around 3.7 million poor European and Japanese immigrants arrived in Brazil between 1884 and 1945. These included—1.4 million Italians, 1.2 million Portuguese, 600,000 Spaniards, 190,000 Japanese, 170,000 Germans, and 100,000 Russians.
6. Vargas founded PETROBRAS, the government-owned Brazilian oil company, in 1953. PETROBRAS is renowned for its leadership in the development of advanced technology for deep-water and ultra deep-water oil production.
7. The principle of the social function of private property was established as official Catholic doctrine in Pope Leo XIII's Rerum Novarum encyclical in 1891.
8. It was during this time that the family of Luis Ignácio "Lula" da Silva moved to the State of São Paulo from the small town of Garanhuns, in the state of Pernambuco.
9. Peasants are not adventurous people. On the contrary, they are careful decision makers, they are protectors of tradition, and they like to avoid uncertainty. They migrate only in extreme circumstances.
10. Well-connected, unscrupulous large landowners have historically carried out *grilagem* by cleverly falsifying documents to take possession of public land.

It has also included the expulsion of *posseiros*. Since the 1960s, *grilagem* has exacerbated landlessness and deforestation. Under pressure from the MST, the Brazilian government has attempted to remedy the situation. Armed with new land registration mechanisms, the government investigated *grilagem*. In 1999, it published its first report, which identified almost 100 million hectares of land of questionable ownership.

11. Brizola's view reflected the view of the Catholic Church. Concerned by growing poverty and marginalization in the countryside, progressive bishops, such as Olinda and Recife's Dom Hélder Cámara, encouraged peasants to organize themselves to reassert their basic rights. Dom Hélder was instrumental in establishing the Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (National Conference of Brazilian Bishops), or CNBB, in 1952, and the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (Latin American Episcopal Conference), or CELAM, in 1955. Dom Hélder died in 1999, leaving behind a rich legacy of advocacy work on behalf of the poor.
12. Interview conducted by Robles with Francisco Raymundo da Paxião, July 28, 2004, in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Chicão's knowledge of peasant mobilization in Brazil during this period was quite impressive. A peasant organizer with limited education, he was committed to agrarian reform. He became instrumental in articulating peasant mobilization in the state of Minas Gerais. As such, he became a target of the *latifundiários* and repressive state forces. Currently, he resides in Belo Horizonte and leads the Associacão Nacional dos Perseguidos Políticos, or National Association of Political Prisoners (ANPP).
13. Recently declassified US government documents clearly demonstrate the US involvement in Goulart's overthrow ands the military coup, which was instigated by the US in the battle against communism. Within four hours of the coup, which deposed a democratically elected nationalist, President Lyndon Johnson congratulated the coup makers for the "restoration of democracy."
14. The PCB split into two competing groups during this period. A dissident group established the Partido Comunista do Brasil (Communist Party of Brazil), or PC do B. This split also affected the peasant movement in general.
15. Julião sought refuge in Mexico, where he remained until 1979. He returned to Mexico in 1987, where he died in 1999. Coincidentally, Stédile met Julião in Mexico during the mid-1970s, while pursuing graduate studies at the Universidad Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM).
16. As in Chile and Argentina a few years later, the Brazilian Catholic Church initially supported the military takeover. However, it soon reconsidered its support. In the face of the military's widespread use of torture, the Catholic Church had no option but to condemn the brutality of the regime.
17. From 1964 to 1985, Brazil was governed by: Alencar Castello Branco (1964–1967), Arthur da Costa e Silva (1967–1969), Emílio Garrastazu Medici (1969–1974), Ernesto Geisel (1974–1979), and João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo (1979–1985).

4 Agrarian Reform under Sarney and Collor de Mello-Franco

1. Since June 2013, Brazilians have organized massive street protests. In particular, they have protested against the exorbitant expenses incurred by the government to hold the 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympic Summer Games. Official estimates place the cost of the 2014 FIFA World Cup at US$11 billion (Ernst & Young Terco, 2011) with another US$7 billion for the 2016 Olympic Summer Games (McGuirk Wagar, 2009). The real total cost is likely to be around US$20–24 billion.
2. In a recent June 2014, public opinion survey conducted by Pew Research Center, 72 percent of Brazilians were dissatisfied with the overall state of affairs in the country, 67 percent with the country's economy, and 61 percent with the expenses for the World Cup and soccer and Summer Olympic Games.
3. Interview by Robles with 45 landless peasants, August 26, 2002 in Fazenda Santa Rita, São José dos Campos, São Paulo.
4. Interview by Robles with Stédile, April 26, 2004 in São Paulo.
5. Interview by Robles with Dom Pedro Casaldáliga, May 28, 2003 in Mato Groso, Brazil. Dom Pedro was the Bishop of São Felix do Araguaia in the state of Mato Grosso for over two decades. Currently retired, Dom Pedro received many death threats for his stance on behalf of the peasants and indigenous peoples. The military named him the "Red Bishop."
6. Liberation theology was a radical movement that emerged in Latin America during the 1970s, as a response to the structural poverty and violence in the region (Gutierrez, 2010).
7. From the perspective of the sociology of religion, the definition of *mística* involves the religious representations, symbols, traditions, and practices associated with popular religion. In the context of the MST, the *mística* involves all of these elements. However, it has a peculiar characteristic—the mística among the landless peasants is a living experience of politico-religious celebration and inspiration of their struggle. Since its inception, the MST has recognized the *mística* as an integral part of its Catholic identity. The MST's education Sector has included the teaching of the *mística* in its educational programs (MST, 2000).
8. Interview by Robles with Dom Tomás Balduíno, August 19, 2003 in Goiás Velho, Goiás, Brazil. Dom Tomás was Bishop of Goiás for over two decades. He is founder, and currently honorary President, of the CPT (Poletto, 2002).
9. The ideas espoused by these two academics have received widespread attention in Brazil's mainstream media. De Souza Martins is a professor emeritus of the Universidade de São Paulo and former advisor to the Cardoso government. Navarro is a professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul and a Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. De Souza Martins writes regular columns published in Brazil's leading newspapers. Ironically, he was an advisor to the MST and

the Church's Commissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), prior to their personal fallouts with these organizations in the late 1990s.

10. From the 1970s to the present, more than 34,000 square kilometers of land, an area bigger than Belgium, has been flooded by dam construction in Brazil, affecting the lives of over 1 million people. Dam construction gave birth to an antidam movement, which is known today as the *Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragems*, or Movement of Dam Victims (MAB).
11. Interview by Robles with Gerardo Fontes, member of the MST's International Relations Sector, April 26, 2004 in São Paulo.
12. This is based on reading the editorials of these newspapers from July to December 1985. Also during the same period, the editorial sections of the two leading Brazilian magazines, *Veja* and *Isto É*, expressed in most cases high skepticism and outright opposition to Sarney's agrarian reform program.
13. According to Article 186 of the constitution, the social function is performed when rural property simultaneously meets the following requirements: (1) rational and adequate use; (2) adequate use of available natural resources and preservation of the environment; (3) compliance with the provisions which regulate labor relations; (4) exploitation that favors the well-being of the owners and workers.
14. During much of the 1980s, the MST faced political competition from the National Confederacy of Agrarian Workers (CONTAG), heir to the 1960s Peasant Leagues, which sought to address the issue of agrarian reform strictly by legal means, by favoring trade unionism and striving after wrestling concessions from bosses to rural workers. However, the more confrontational tactics of the MST allowed it to gather a capital of political legitimacy that soon outshone CONTAG, which limited itself to trade unionism in the strictest sense, acting until today as a rural branch to the trade union central CUT.
15. Interview by Robles with Sister Dorothy Stang, July 20, 2001 in Anapu, Pará, Brazil. Sister Stang, a Catholic nun of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, worked with the landless peasants for over three decades. In 2005, a hit man on the orders of a rich local landowner murdered Sister Stang.
16. Paulo Freire's, popular education has had an enormous influence in Latin America and beyond. It is a vital tool for instigating *conscientização*, or consciousness-raising, which is essential to facilitating conditions for human liberation. Advocates and critics of popular education have stressed its positive or negative influence on grassroots development. See Kane (2000).
17. Interview with Stédile by Robles, April 26, 2004, city of São Paulo.

5 Agrarian Reform under Cardoso

1. This constitutional article calls for the state to expropriate uncultivated land, or land not fulfilling its "social function," for the purpose of agrarian reform.

2. This view was clearly expressed by Cardoso's minister for agrarian reform, Raul Jungmann in a lecture held at the Center for Latin American Studies, University of California, Berkeley on February 25, 2000. Jungmann's lecture was titled "The Agrarian Question in Contemporary Brazil." He ignored the agrarian question as irrelevant in an age of global capitalism, and stressed that Cardoso's main concern was with poverty reduction. The following paragraph illustrated this view: "As a matter of fact, currently Brazil does not have a *strictu sensu* agrarian question. Land concentration is partially a statistical fraud and is partially being dismantled. *Latifundia* have been politically defeated and no longer hold veto power over ongoing legislative and land-related changes. Conflicts, on the other hand, dwindle, although the number of land encroachment cases has moderately grown during the last four years."
3. This was particularly the case with PRONAF, which offered insufficient credit to family farmers. From 1995 to 2008, the average credit loan to a family farmer was R$3,500 (Brazilian Real) or CAN$1,700.
4. Cardoso explained this view on several occasions. See *Folha de São Paulo*, May 3, 1999; *O Estado de São Paulo*, June 5, 1999; *O Globo*, July 20, 1999; and *Correio Braziliense*, February 8, 2000.
5. At the time, the loan had a 19 percent annual interest rate, lower than the market rate of 27 percent, but far too high for a poor peasant to pay back.
6. Since its inception, the MST has used nonviolence to advance its objectives. Nonviolence refers to a method or tactic that avoids the use of armed violence for dealing with societal conflicts. Historically, nonviolence strategies have been a powerful tool for social protest.
7. Because of its complex and well-entrenched power structures, Latin America has often resorted to armed insurrections to deal with social grievances. Unfortunately, the outcomes of violent insurrections have often reproduced oppressive forms of social control.
8. Over the last three decades, there have been a few isolated cases of violence blamed on the MST. Perhaps the most published case was in 2002, when some MST members occupied the farm of then-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso in the state of Minas Gerais. The occupation was publicly condemned by the then Left opposition leader "Lula" da Silva and other preeminent members of the PT Party. The farm was damaged and looted in the occupation. Damage included the destruction of a combine harvester, a tractor, and several pieces of furniture. Overall, 16 MST members leaders were charged with theft, vandalism, trespassing, resisting arrest, and forcible confinement.
9. Interview by Robles with Stédile, August 25, 2006, São Paulo.
10. Among the most important and radical of these new movements was the *Movimento de Libertação dos Sem Terra* (Movement of Liberation of the Landless Peasants), or MLST. Unlike the MST, the MLST explicitly advocates a socialist agrarian revolution along the lines of Mao Zedong's ideology.
11. The MST is a movement. As such, it technically has no assets and cannot be sued. The MST created ANCA as an arms-length legal entity to coordinate

its financial operations and receive funds from abroad. ANCA allows the MST to avoid potential lawsuits from disgruntled landowners. However, individual MST members can be sued.

6 Agrarian Reform under "Lula" da Silva and Rousseff

1. The co-optation and virtual control of the class collaborationist labor confederation, CUT by the "Lula" da Silva's administration led to the eventual formation of a new militant confederation ConLuta (founded in May 2006), based mainly on public sector workers and disenchanted CUT. Unfortunately, it has failed to make significant inroads in the labor movement or forge an effective alliance with social movements, including the MST.
2. This agenda is discussed in Chapter 2. For more on this, see Bresser-Pereira (2009), Leiva (2008), and Sunkel and Infante (2009).
3. Interview by Robles with Stédile, August 25, 2006 in São Paulo.
4. This concept of food sovereignty was defined at the Via Campesina 2007 Forum for Food Sovereignty held in Sélingué, Mali. More than 500 delegates from more than 80 countries adopted the "Declaration of Nyéléni," which stated that: "Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral, and fisheries systems determined by local producers." For more on this, see Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe (2011); Windfuhr and Jonsén (2005); and Boyer (2010).
5. Much has been said in recent years of Brazil's expanding middle class, constituting an "emerging market" and part of a growing "global middle class." However this image ignores the reality lived by millions of Brazilians below the radar of the mass media—the forty million impoverished slum dwellers, five million landless peasants, tens of thousands of dispossessed indigenous peoples, and thousands of unpaid "slave laborers" living in debt peonage, and the millions of public school teachers, working two, three or more shifts up to 13 hours a day to earn a decent pay.
6. http://www.detran.sp.gov.br.
7. For more on this, see Petras and Veltmeyer (2014).

7 Cooperative Experiences

1. Interview by Robles with Dom José Rosa, August 11, 2004 in *Assentamento* Amaraji, Rio Formoso, Pernambuco, Brazil. Dom José has eight children and 11 grandchildren. A very resourceful and hard-working small-scale farmer,

he has been able to earn the equivalent of 3.5 times the minimum monthly wage by planting and selling food staples to the local markets. Robles revisited this community in 2012 and Dom José was still farming in the community. Seven of his children had moved to Rio Formoso to live close to their parents. All of them had become small farmers.

2. This study is the most comprehensive evaluation of agrarian reform in Brazil, so far. Its publication generated great debate among Brazilian scholars. Spavorek's research team interviewed 14,414 peasants on 4,430 settlements created between 1985 and 2001. The study validated agrarian reform. Nearly, every settled peasant family stated that their life was much better than it was before. However, the study recognized that agrarian reform did not substantially increase income of the settled peasants.
3. Information provided to Robles by Antonio Miranda, MST's Production, Cooperation, and Environmental Stewardship Sector, during a personal interview on July 28, 2013 in São Paulo, Brazil.
4. As far as Robles is aware, there are no current comprehensive studies on the economic efficiency of the MST's cooperatives. Certainly, this is a very interesting topic for analysis. However, it is difficult to gain access to financial information for a variety of reasons.
5. This story was recounted during an interview by Robles with 18 COPAVI members on September 2, 2004, Parancity, state of Paraná. In August 2013, Robles revisited COPAVI and noted the significant progress achieved by the cooperative members in terms of access to housing, education, employment, and health services.
6. Member cooperatives include—COPROCOL, or Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária Coletiva, (semi-collective cooperative); COPADEC, or Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária "Derli Cardoso;" COPANOSSA, or Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária "Nossa Senhora Aparecida;" and COPAVA, or Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária "Vó Aparecida" (collective cooperatives). These cooperatives were established in the late 1980s.
7. This story was recounted during an interview by Robles with 20 COAPRI members on August 20, 2004 in Itapeva, state of São Paulo. In July 2013, Robles revisited COAPRI and was impressed by the progress achieved by the cooperative members in terms of access to housing, education, employment, and health services.
8. Social movements tend to attract "free-riders" who are merely interested in obtaining the benefits of collective action whether or not they are committed to the movement's overall objectives.
9. Participation theory has been shaped by the Western experience of political democracy. The three main perspectives on participation are the conservative theory of participation (1950s–1960s), the radical theory of participation (1970s–1980s), and the liberal theory of participation (1990s onward). The first stresses participation within institutionalized and consensual politics; the second stresses participation outside institutionalized and elitist politics; and the third stresses participation within grassroots and civil society politics. See Pateman (1976); Melucci, Keane and Mier (1989).

10. Interview by Robles with Maria Nazareth da Silva Carvalho, a COAPRI member, August 28, 2004 in Itapeva, state of São Paulo.
11. This is a Marxist concept but its roots can be traced to ancient times. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, alienation meant "separation from God," or having "fallen from Grace." For Marx, labor alienation was linked to the development of capitalism—workers lose control of their lives by losing control over their own work.
12. Every year, COPAVI and COAPRI are visited by academics, researchers, politicians, students, peasants, and activists from home and abroad.
13. Interview by Robles with 10 female COAPRI members on August 24, 2004 in Itapeva, state of São Paulo.
14. Interview by Robles with 8 female COPAVI members on September 3, 2004 in Parancity, state of Paraná.
15. According to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), there were 1.9 million organic farm producers worldwide in 2013. See: http://www.ifoam.org.
16. Interview by Robles with Hilda Martins de Souza, a member of COAPRI on August 28, 2004 in Itapeva, state of São Paulo.
17. Interview by Robles with a group of 15 former COOPVARIVE and COOPERSAN members on August 30, 2004 in city of Goiás Velho, state of Goiás.
18. The CPT has had an enormous influence in the state of Goiás because of the deeply traditional Catholic character of its rural population. Landless peasants and rural workers are more comfortable working with Catholic priests or Catholic lay workers than with secular peasant political organizers.
19. The *Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura do Estado de Goiás*, or Federation of the Rural Workers of the state of Goiás (FETAEG), is a member of the *Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura*, or National Confederation of Rural Workers (CONTAG).
20. Interview by Robles with Aguinel Fonseca, CPT Coordinator, on August 6, 2005 in city of Goiás Velho, state of Goiás.
21. Interview by Robles with 10 settled peasants, Fazenda Mosquito, on August 8, 2005 in city of Goiás Velho, state of Goiás.
22. In 2004, FETAEG and CAG rejected requests from Robles for access to information regarding the total amount of funding for the project. However, anonymous CPT officials familiar with the project, estimated that the 15 cooperative projects had a total budget of R$10–14 millions, or C$ 5–7 million. They also estimated that CAG was entitled to 5–8 percent of this total for its management services. These are conservative numbers given the financial scope of the project, which required the purchase of expensive machinery.
23. Interview by Robles with Damacio Rodrigues da Silva, a former president of COOPVARIVE, *Fazenda Mosquito*, on August 30, 2004 in city of Goiás Velho, state of Goiás. Robles revisited peasant Rodrigues da Silva in April 2013. He is currently a subsistence peasant farmer.
24. Traditionally, INCRA registered land titles in the husbands' names only. This changed in the early 1990s, when the MST demanded the inclusion of the names of husbands and wives on land registration titles.

25. In August 2013, Robles revisited the *Fazenda Mosquito* and *Fazenda São Carlos*. The cooperative experiment is literally over and most of the settled peasants either left the land or dedicated themselves to subsistence farming.
26. Interview by Robles with 20 former COOPVARIVE and COOPERSAN members on August 16, 2013.

8 Popular Agrarian Reform

1. Navarro has sought to downplay this class power of the agrarian elite. Navarro, for instance, equates the diminished visibility of a single large landholding association, the Democratic Ruralist Union (*União Democrática Ruralista*, UDR) to the demise of an entire agrarian class, ignoring the breadth of organizations representing rural elite interests, as well as the many informal ways through which this sector has traditionally exercised its influence and power.
2. An incisive depiction of the state government's efforts to criminalize the landless movement took place in January 2008. Close to 1,000 police officers, supported by 100 vehicles, helicopters, horses, and police dogs surrounded the Annoni settlement where 1,500 MST activists from Rio Grande do Sul were holding their 24th state congress. The ostentatious police apparatus was assembled to carry out a court mandate to investigate whether MST participants were responsible for stealing the equivalent of 120 dollars, a watch, and a photo camera from a nearby ranch. After a tense standoff, the police investigators found none of the allegedly missing goods. For a useful analysis of recent legal efforts to curtail the MST, see Scalabrin (2009).
3. Carter (2011) cites a case in December 2007, when the High Council of Prosecutors of Rio Grande do Sul unanimously approved a secret report that called on the judiciary to take unprecedented measures aimed at "outlawing the MST." The decision was followed by various efforts to outlaw the MST and both criminalize and curtail MST activities. These included the indictment of eight landless activists under a National Security Law sanctioned by Brazil's military regime, along with various court orders barring the movement from carrying out marches and other peaceful demonstrations. By early 2009, the state government of Rio Grande do Sul renewed efforts to restrict MST activities, by notably shutting down all schools setup in its landless camps.
4. In May 1993, the first Conference of La Via Campesina was held in Mons, Belgium, where it was constituted as a world organization. Its first strategic guidelines and structure were defined. The Second International Conference was held in 1996 in Tlaxcala, Mexico. The third conference was held in 2000 in Bangalore, India; and the fourth in 2004 in Sao Paolo, Brazil. The fifth Conference of Via Campesina was held in 2008 in Maputo, Mozambique.
5. With this correlation of class forces "the working class is practically paralysed, its large-scale [land] occupations and mobilizations greatly diminished while international and financial capital appropriates our natural and agricultural resources and multinationals such as Monsanto [and Cargill, Bungue and Dreyfuss] encounter practically no obstacles in advancing its projects (*seu ideário*)" (Stédile, 2014).

Conclusion

1. The Via Campesina, the main promoter of food sovereignty, today is made up of around 150 peasant organizations from more than 70 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Altogether, it is estimated that the Via Campesina represents over 200 million peasant farmers. Certainly, the Via Campesina is an important international channel for the discussion of current peasant issues and problems, and the articulation of appropriate responses to them. It could also be considered a new space of global "citizenship" (Borras and Franco 2009). However, the Via Campesina has not yet effectively exercised this new form of political citizenship to advance the global campaign for food sovereignty, due to political forces beyond its control.

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Index

agriculture
agrarian reform, 3–15, 22–9, 32, 41, 45, 50, 59, 65–7, 73, 75–84, 85–7, 100–2, 104, 106–20, 122–3, 125–9, 131–42, 143–61, 164, 169, 171–4, 176–9, 184n12, 184n16, 186–7, 190–1, 197n4, 198n7–8, 199n15, 199n18–19, 200n7–9, 205n12, 207n12, 207n14, 207n1, 208n2, 201n2, 212n1
agribusiness, 6, 21, 32, 81–2, 108, 111, 113, 122, 128–9, 131–6, 138, 140–2, 148–50, 174–6, 180–2, 184, 186, 190–1, 194, 197–8n6
agrofuel, 3, 189
credits, 28–9, 60, 82, 95, 97, 111, 115, 117–19, 128, 132, 137, 140–1, 145–7, 160, 193, 208n3
monoculture, 3, 13, 139, 192
policy, 21–2, 28, 38, 45, 60, 64, 69–84, 98, 108, 111, 114–16, 123, 129, 132–4, 138–9, 171, 175–6, 180, 190, 194–5
productivity, 1, 38, 67, 82, 106, 108, 111–12, 114, 117, 127, 135, 140–1, 149, 167–8, 176–7, 189
Amazon, 81–3, 113, 123, 142, 182–4, 193, 201n10
assassination, 139–40
biofuel, 139, 186–7, 189, 197n3
Bretton Woods, 18–19, 38, 200n4
budget, 117, 130, 167, 211
cuts, 129
deficit, 1, 38–9

capital, 76, 112–13, 151, 153–4, 160, 171, 173, 176–7, 180, 202n4–5
capitalism, 23, 45, 56, 64, 66, 101, 115, 175
class, 18, 38–9, 113, 181, 186
crisis, 1–2, 38–9, 47, 53, 104, 186–7, 202n3
development, 10–11, 14, 18, 24–7, 37–8, 40, 48–50, 53, 63, 69–71, 75, 98, 101, 134, 172, 174, 177, 180–2, 185–6, 194, 199n18, 199n1
extractive, 139–40, 194
financial, 1–2, 20, 62, 212
flows, 40, 119
foreign, 80, 111, 123, 141
free market, 2–3, 200n3
global, 1–2, 18, 20, 58–9, 114–15, 167, 181, 193, 208n2
intensive, 6, 110–13, 123, 131, 160, 167–8, 191
-labor relations, 38–40, 70, 72, 207n13, 211n11, 212n5
petty, 104
restructuring, 38–9, 58, 61–2
social, 28, 61–2

capital—*Continued*
speculative, 2–3, 114, 117, 138, 197n1, 204n1
transition, 38, 201n13
Cardoso, Fernando H., 7, 14, 99, 105–23, 125–6, 129–34, 139–41, 164, 206n9, 208n2, 208n4, 208n8
Central America, 29, 40
church
Catholic, 5, 53, 75, 81, 86–9, 91–2, 145, 149, 161, 177, 205n11, 205n16, 206–7n9
Commission on Agrarian Reform, 86
Lutheran, 88
civil society, 1, 29, 39, 55, 57, 61, 90, 175, 201n12, 210n9
COAPRI. See *Cooperativa dos Assentados e Pequenos Produtores da Região de Itapeva*
Collor de Mello, Fernando, 7, 14, 85, 100, 101–3
colonialism, 3–5, 49, 65, 67–9
commodities, 2, 68–9, 111–13, 128–9, 134–6, 139, 175–6, 176–7, 181, 184n10, 197–8n6, 199n17
communities
indigenous, 28, 56–8, 68, 134–5, 142, 179, 182, 186
Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária Vitória (COPAVI), 148–59, 162, 193, 210n5, 211n12, 211n14
Cooperativa dos Assentados e Pequenos Produtores da Região de Itapeva, or Family Farmers' Cooperative of the Itapeva Region (COAPRI), 148–59, 162, 193, 210n7, 211n10, 211n12–13, 211n16
cooperatives, 104, 143–69, 184, 198n11, 211n22, 212n25
agricultural, 15, 64, 146, 148, 157–8, 167
credit, 146
financial support to, 117, 137
formation, 9, 11, 13–15, 64, 95, 119, 136–7, 148, 150, 161–4, 168, 190, 193, 199n15
housing, 47
management, 148, 150–1, 153, 156, 158–60, 169
members, 147,150–1, 153–4, 165, 169, 193, 210n5–7
model, 147, 163, 167
movement, 10
performance, 147, 155
production, 32, 154, 157, 163, 166, 169
profit, 147
state, 10
strategy, 10
trade service, 146
COPAVI. See *Cooperativa de Produção Agropecuária Vitória*
corn, 1, 113, 176
corporations, 1, 3–4, 38–9, 42–3, 45–6, 58, 74, 76, 114, 120–1, 134–5, 139–40, 150–1, 150, 175, 180, 182–3, 190, 197–8
costs
economic, 116, 139–40
environmental, 129, 139–40
social, 95, 139–40
crisis
capital, 1–2, 38–9, 47, 53, 104, 186–7, 202n3
financial, 1–2, 21, 138, 197n1
food, 1–3

debt, 28, 39, 77, 80, 138, 169, 209n5
crisis, 41, 201n17

default, 41, 47
foreign, 5, 73, 129, 177
relief, 57
social, 108
deficit, 1–2, 38–9, 44, 101, 105, 129, 155, 202n3
deforestation, 68, 113, 139–40, 184n6, 204–5n10
development
human, 4–5, 44, 54–7, 62, 80, 123, 171, 203–4n18
rural, 14, 21, 26, 40–1, 59–62, 81, 114, 127–8, 135, 164, 181, 200n8
state-led, 21, 26–7, 53, 60, 94
sustainable, 11, 13–14, 22, 59–4, 60–1, 64, 185, 114
dispossession, 2, 56, 68, 139–40, 146, 172, 201n13, 209n5

elite, 27, 43–6, 61, 65–7, 69–70, 73–81, 83, 96, 100, 108, 112, 132, 140, 142, 147, 174, 176, 180–1, 186, 192–4, 199n7, 212n1
environment, 2–3, 9–10, 28–9, 37, 45, 48–51, 53, 57, 65, 88, 94, 97, 102, 104, 119–20, 123, 129, 138–42, 146, 148, 150, 152–3, 157–8, 175–6, 180–2, 185, 192–3, 200n5, 207n13, 210n3
ethanol, 3, 83, 176, 182
Europe, 1, 19, 40–2, 50, 52–3, 68, 70, 101, 121, 149, 175, 178, 197n1, 202n10, 204n4–5, 213n1
exports, 2, 27, 65, 68, 82–3, 112–13, 123, 129–30, 133, 136–7, 139, 141, 149, 160, 176, 180–3

FAO. *See* Food and Agriculture Organization

farming
family, 3–4, 13, 23, 28, 88, 90, 104, 107, 114–16, 128, 132, 134–7, 140–1, 148–50, 159, 171–6, 179–80, 183, 197–8n6, 198n10, 201n11, 208n3, 208n8
food
crisis, 1–3
insecurity, 2, 21–2, 94, 136, 189
prices, 1–2, 8, 176, 182, 199n17
production, 60, 76, 82, 112, 132, 136, 146, 157–9, 172, 175–6, 180–2, 184, 186, 189–90, 194, 197–8n6
riots, 1–3
security, 1–2, 10, 60, 112, 136, 145, 169, 175, 189–90, 197n2–3
sovereignty, 10, 22, 33, 136, 175–7, 184, 193–4, 198, 209n4, 213n1
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 1–3, 10, 62, 135, 146–7, 189–90, 197n2
Franco, Itamar, 7, 14, 85–104

G8. *See* Group of Eight
globalization, 56, 9, 20, 48, 58–9, 63, 115
anti-, 49, 59, 173, 175
neoliberal, 114, 125, 136
Group of Eight (G8), 1–2

hunger, 1–3, 83, 110, 130, 132, 134, 153, 190–1, 197n2

indigenous
activism, 45, 49–50
communities, 56–7, 134, 180, 82
labor, 142, 209n5
lands, 28, 83, 193
organizations, 28, 3, 43, 64, 112, 179–80

indigenous—*Continued*
peoples, 22, 25, 66, 81–2, 112, 139–40, 175, 186, 206n5
resistance, 67–8, 135, 201n14–15, 204n2
rights, 65, 134
industry
agro-, 109, 146–7
deindustrialization, 23
development, 45, 90, 171–2, 202
extractive, 83, 133
growth, 111
industrialists, 5, 79, 112
industrialization, 39, 71–6, 82, 88
privatization, 108
society, 38, 40, 53
urban, 25
workers, 119
investment, 111
financial, 129, 200n3
foreign, 40–2, 56, 76, 108, 133
international, 112, 118, 197n3
local, 118, 184
private, 112
productive, 178
of profits, 155
public, 112, 171
in R&D, 39, 112
speculative, 114, 125

justice, 56
injustice, 51, 70, 80, 85, 91, 117
social, 25, 32–3, 47–8, 59, 86, 122, 126, 153, 175, 202n9

labor
child, 183
demand, 74
division of, 39
family, 23, 90, 107, 128, 132, 140, 148, 171
farm, 21
market, 45
migrant, 21
peasant, 158, 168
precarization, 182
productivity, 39, 169
protest, 57
regulation, 39
rural, 65, 74, 77, 142, 157
slave, 65, 183–4, 209n5
wage, 24
land
access to, 2, 7, 12–13, 15, 21, 24, 28, 33, 70, 79, 82, 87, 89, 94–7, 109, 140–1, 176, 189–90, 192, 200–1n9
dispossession, 2
distribution, 110, 162, 171
grabbing, 2, 77, 197n3
occupation, 98, 120, 162, 193
reform, 98, 122, 127–8, 191, 197
Landless Rural Workers Movement. See *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)*

marginalization, 5, 22–3, 48, 57, 139–40, 163, 205n11
market
access to, 103, 147–8, 158, 160, 168, 176, 193
-assisted, 26–8, 101–2, 114–16
free, 2, 3, 18, 53, 148, 200n3
mining, 45–6, 61, 83, 139–40
Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), 9–15, 24–6, 32–7, 48, 55, 59, 63–4, 66, 69, 84, 88–94, 97–100, 102–11, 114–41, 145–52, 159–63, 171–9, 183, 185–7, 190–5, 198n9, 199n15, 204–5n10, 206n7, 207n14, 208n6, 208n8, 208–9n11, 211n24, 212n2–3
MST. See *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*

organic, 146–7, 157–8

peasant
landless, 5–7, 9, 12–15, 21–4, 28–33, 37, 56, 59, 63–8, 73–8, 84–110, 113–23, 127–43, 146, 149–50, 153, 158, 160–2, 171–9, 186, 190–2, 197n4, 198n9, 198n13
PNCF. See *Programa Nacional de Crédito Fundiário e Consolidação da Agricultura Familiar*
poverty
alleviation, 21, 60
extreme, 1, 43, 49, 139, 171–2
pro-poor policies, 21–2, 43–6, 132, 137–8, 141–2
Programa Nacional de Crédito Fundiário e Consolidação da Agricultura Familiar (PNCF), 132

religion, 50, 70–1, 86, 89–92, 104, 145, 156, 162, 206n7
rice, 1–2
Rio Formoso, 144–5
Rousseff, Dilma, 34, 99, 125–42, 186, 191

SEMAPA. See *Servicio Municipal de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado*
Servicio Municipal de Agua Potable y Alcantarillado (SEMAPA), 46
da Silva, Luis Ignácio "Lula", 14, 34–5, 43, 78, 99, 100, 105, 110–11, 125–42, 171, 174, 191, 204n8, 208n8, 209n1
SLA. *See* sustainable livelihoods approach
State-Led Agrarian Reform (SLAR), 26–7
Stédile, João Pedro, 24, 88–93, 117, 119–21, 127, 172, 178–80, 186, 205n15
supermarket, 148, 197–8n6
sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA), 11, 59–64, 114, 203n16–17

tariffs, 2, 28
trade
agreements, 21, 43
fair, 158
free, 57, 60, 200n3
global, 17, 37, 59, 113
liberalization, 39, 106, 108, 119
unions, 71–2, 119, 150–1, 207n14

welfare, 6, 9, 18, 38–9, 56, 60, 72, 88, 131–2, 142, 146, 148, 192, 202n10, 203n13
Worker's Party, 9, 34, 72–5, 92, 98, 100, 106, 123, 125, 130–1, 138–41, 174, 192–8
World Trade Organization (WTO), 58
WTO. *See* World Trade Organization