Leadership Development and *Formação* in

Brazil's Landless Workers Movement (MST)

By

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Acknowledgements

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Diagram 1: Reference map of Brazil and its 27 states

Source: http://www.ibge.gov.br/ibgeteen/mapas/index.html, under Brasil (estados e regiões); image titled brasil_regioes_gde.gif

INTRODUCTION

While democratization has largely deflated social movement activity in Brazil, the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, known in English as the Landless Rural Workers' Movement or simply the MST, managed to maintain high levels of mobilization and political impact in the post-transition period. Most scholars attribute the MST's success to its highly contentious land occupations, but this is only half of the story. The role of the MST's political education and technical training mechanisms in the movement's development of a strong leadership base is largely ignored in both scholarly and popular literature. The MST successfully counters the trend toward cooptation of its leaders by deepening and expanding its leadership base through the development of these mechanisms. These critically overlooked internal movement mechanisms produce and reproduce this movement and, as this paper argues, contribute significantly to increased militancy at all levels of leadership, discipline and overall effectiveness that helps the movement capitalize on external political opportunities.

Social movements are characterized by their ability to mobilize large numbers of people into action to achieve structural and cultural transformation on a local, national and/or international scale. By engaging a variety of social actors and sectors, social movements unite people through shared strategy, common principles, collective goals, and actions. While the most visible manifestations of movements occur when they are in motion, movement making consists of many facets that exist beyond the view of most observers. Many observers mistakenly perceive movements as erupting spontaneously. Many movements, however, are rooted in conscious, long-term grassroots movement

building efforts. These efforts include community organizing, holding public events, meetings and demonstrations as well as political education and training sessions, courses, and group and individual study. Some social movements, like the MST, while punctuated by public protests and events, result from continuous and systematic efforts at the development of a core of leaders who study, plan and carry forth movement activity. The example of Rosa Parks in the context of the much-studied American civil rights movement provides an excellent example of this point.

On December 1, 1955, an African-American woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on that famous Montgomery bus. Popular accounts go on to explain how this individual act sparked the broader American civil rights movement. Among the missing background information to this account was Parks' participation in the local NAACP chapter and the role of institutions like the Highlander Folk School located in rural Tennessee, which served as a meeting and training ground for a generation of leaders, like Parks herself, who were key in the expansion of the civil rights movement.

This paper seeks to highlight the role of core political and technical training to social movement literature, and to point to its crucial role in the production and reproduction of social movements. In particular, this paper will consider Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement (MST) as a case study of the importance of systematized methods of leadership development and training, in this case institutionalized from within. When discussing these processes, institutions and methods of political and technical training, this paper will utilize the Portuguese term *formação*. Without a sufficient English word to convey the richness of *formação*, the term will be used here to encompass the layers of consciousness-raising work, political education, and leadership

development that occur within the MST. Some *formação* work in the movement overlaps with its education work, for example, the training of leaders in politics and agricultural management, supplemented with literacy programs.

The MST case, while specific to the historical trajectory of Brazilian democracy, contributes to the contentious politics literature by focusing on internal mechanisms that propel movements and provide an institutional foundation for the generation of new knowledge and alternative proposals to the neoliberal project. Also, knowledge of the principles and experiences of the MST can enrich grassroots conversations among movement-makers worldwide as they struggle to sustain their motions towards justice.

This paper seeks to make substantive contributions to both social movement theory and the growing literature on Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement. In terms of social movement theory, this paper in part answers the call put forward in the literature for more research into the causal mechanisms and processes that shape episodes of contentious politics.[1] This study also seeks to deepen the theoretical discussion on the role of leadership in social movements. Leadership, like movements, is not spontaneous or simply based on an individual's personal characteristics. Instead, some movements like the MST work actively to identify, train and multiply their leadership base. The empirical case study of the MST presented here offers insight into several relevant theoretical puzzles that have emerged in the study of social movements, including:

- What internal mechanisms account for the strength of the MST movement?

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[1] See Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Doug McAdam, "Beyond Structural Analysis: Toward a More Dynamic Understanding of Social Movements," in Mario Diani and Doug McAdam, eds., *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 281-98.

- How does leadership development function in a large, national movement made up of state and local communities?
- How do these mechanisms propel the movement forward?
- What does the MST contribute to the long history of theorizing about the importance of cadre training in the political organization of leftist movements?

This paper argues that while the external political context of a social movement, namely the MST, directly impacts the movement's course, internal mechanisms of leadership development prepare the movement to respond to external forces and give it internal strength. The development of this argument and the presentation of evidence to support it will be organized as follows. First, the analysis of *formação* will be placed into a theoretical framework by discussing social movement theory, leadership and social movements, the historical and philosophical influences on the training of MST cadre, and the emergence of social movement schools. The paper then turns to a brief history of the MST with a focus on the movement's origins, goals, activities, grassroots participation, and geographical reach. The next substantial section provides a comprehensive discussion of the development and institutionalization of the MST's *formação* sector, or collective that conducts the movement's *formação* work, and the emergence of its related courses and schools. This section further defines the concept of *formação* and describes the MST's levels of leadership. Then, there is a short review of the contribution of MST's *formação* to pedagogical methods. The paper's discussion of the history of *formação* is divided into three periods—1986 to 1990, 1990 to 2000 and 2000 to today—with a discussion of the goals, major initiatives and results of the work of the sector in each period. There is then a brief overview of the MST's latest achievement in the area of *formação*, which is the construction of the *Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes*, the

MST's National, as well as other current *formação*-related campaigns.

By focusing on the development of the *formação* sector and its institutionalization, this study highlights the movement's strategic response to what it understands as the "crisis in the Brazilian left." Since the 1990s, this crisis has emerged with the implementation of neoliberal policies in Brazil, which received widespread acceptance from much of the political left, as well as the right and center. By documenting the MST's political education and training processes and institutions, this paper argues that the development of such internal mechanisms further explains the movement's ability to slow cooptation, expand its base and sustain unity over their nearly three decades of existence. Through a historical institutional analysis, this paper examines how the movement has constructed its own institutions for the advancement of its leadership base. The paper will describe the movement's evolved organizational structure as well as the principles that guide its work. There will also be a brief discussion of how these MST institutions relate with other members and institutions of Brazilian and international civil society.

Evidence suggests that while social movements respond to external political opportunities and constraints, the MST is able to make opportunities out of constraints. This paper discusses the unexpected impact of Workers Party President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. As a long-time ally of President Lula, the MST could not push hard on him, particularly in the beginning of his first term, so it instead capitalized on the rise in hope for change in terms of mass campaigns, the training of new leaders and renewed efforts to organize the movement internally at its base. Turning inward instead of challenging Lula

in the early period of his presidency, which would result in its isolation, the MST strengthened its "organicidade" and leadership development mechanisms.

Much scholarly attention has been paid to the impact of external forces on the MST (i.e. media, protest, repression, public opinion, ability to bring land reform into public debate to affect land reform policy).[2] This paper, however, seeks to analyze a significant set of *internal* mechanisms that propel the movement. The existence of a comprehensive national network of courses and training institutions points to a key component in the movement's broader success in mobilizing landless populations to make political and economic demands. Unlike Gabriel Ondetti, whose analysis uncovers a clear causal mechanism for MST activity through quantitative analysis, data presented here cannot neither definitively declare *formação* a causal mechanism, nor quantitatively determine the level of its impact.[3] However, it is undeniable that these political education mechanisms contribute significantly to increased militancy of all levels of leadership, discipline and a collective process for uniting a common vision for change.

It is beyond the scope of this project to deeply analyze the impact of ideological and technical training on participating individuals or communities, including the socialization of movement members during movement activities and trainings, though these are important topics. A thorough analysis of such would have required survey research with training course participants that would yield a quantitative data set for analysis as well as more comprehensive and more numerous qualitative interviews.

[2] See John L. Hammond, "The MST and the Media: Competing Images of the Brazilian Landless Farmworkers' Movement," *Latin American Politics & Society* 46.4 (2004), 61-90; Maria da Glória Gohn, *Mídia terceiro setor e MST: Impactos sobre o futuro das cidades e do campo*, (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 2000; and Gabriel Ondetti, "Repression, Opportunity, and Protest: Explaining the Takeoff of Brazil's Landless Movement," *Latin American Politics & Society* 48.2 (2006), 61-94.
[3] Ondetti (2006).

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the questions posed above, data from qualitative interviews as well as secondary texts in both the English and Portuguese language supplied the majority of the data used in this analysis. Additionally, I conducted research in MST library archives, on the internet, and of internal MST documents. This research topic grows out of the author's ten years as a student, researcher, ally and friend of MST, during which time I have visited Brazil six times for durations that varied from two weeks to three months. Informal conversations and formal interviews with movement members and leaders, guided tours, site visits and participant observations of movement training activities in the northeastern states of Ceará, Bahia, and Pernambuco, as well as the southern states of Espírito Santo, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul inform this research. In terms of *formação* schools of the movement, I have visited the *Centro de Formação Paulo Freire* in Caruaru, Pernambuco (2000), *Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes* in Guararema, São Paulo (in 2007, 2004, 2003) and the *Centro de Formação Maria Olinda* (CEFORMA) outside of the small city of São Mateus in Espírito Santo (2004, 2003). A Graduate Research Grant from CUNY Graduate Center supported archival research conducted in January 2007 at the ENFF library whose holdings include 20,000 texts, MST documents, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers and books from throughout the movement's history. The Graduate Center Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this portion of the research.

Much of my work with the MST has been to introduce North American audiences, of individuals and organizations, to the work of the movement. In particular,

my prior work with organizations of the working, poor, unemployed and homeless in the United States has led me repeatedly to ask how the MST attracts, inspires, trains and retains its membership—and more specifically its leadership. When one asks an MST leader, "who is the leader of the movement" the answer that inevitably comes is "there are thousands of leaders in the MST. It is a movement of leaders." With this paper, drawing from my perspective from US grassroots anti-poverty organizations, I hope to shine a light on the processes and institutions that help propel the largest social movement in our hemisphere.

This study perhaps establishes a framework through which to examine other social movements. Many US social movements who study the MST's experiences and/or participated in the World Social Forums in Brazil in 2003 and 2004 have increasingly focused their efforts on leadership development and training.[4] As a scholar in the field of political science and political sociology, I would like to contribute to the social movement literature by illuminating the often-neglected area of leadership development.

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[4] See the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (FL), www.ciw-online.org, United Workers Association (MD), www.unitedworkers.com, the Poverty Initiative (NYC), www.povertyinitiative.org, the University of the Poor (national), www.universityofthepoor.com, the Movement Strategy Center (CA), http://www.movementstrategy.org/, and Social Justice Leadership (NYC), http://www.sojustlead.org/.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND STATEMENT OF THE ARGUMENT

According to the theory of collective action advanced by Sidney Tarrow and his research cohort, movements operate within a complex context of changing political opportunities and constraints.[5] Movements utilize opportunities in order to advance movement goals and are set back by constraints. This formula portrays movements as shifting back and forth from offensive to defensive political positions depending on external political forces. The emphasis on collective action within social movement literature in the form of protests, land occupations, and other actions overlooks much of a social movement's work. This emphasis is present in social movement literature generally as well as in many studies of the MST in particular. Within a massive social movement made up of thousands of communities present throughout the Brazilian countryside and urban peripheries, it is equally important to study how movements can create their own opportunities and how these internal mechanisms react to external constraints.

Consistent with Tarrow's understanding of social movements, evidence from the MST suggests that constraints are sometimes converted into opportunities to advance internal mechanisms. Further, these mechanisms propel knowledge creation from within the movement itself by allowing movement leaders to contemplate their social movement practice, lifting it to the level of theory through reflection and study and then applying it again in practice (practice->theory->practice). This process leads to the creation of new knowledge. "Advances" or "victories" then can be defined not only in terms of "gains"

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[5] Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

made externally against opponents, but also in terms of internal advances that are equally

critical to the growth and sustainability of the movement. Some examples might include

increased scientific knowledge of agroecological practices to be implemented in

settlement production or the training of twenty new leaders through a youth training

course, which might not have immediate external impact, but will surely strengthen the

movement overall.

Brazilian Social Movements

During the twentieth-century, social mobilization and social movements in Brazil

surged several times only to be met with repression and leadership cooptation, therefore

bringing a decline in activity. For example, the military dictatorship following the coup

of 1964 led to a cycle of social movement repression. From the late 1970s through the

1980s, economic problems, rising inflation, and unemployment reinvigorated civil

society, leading to the birth of several key movements still relevant today—the MST, the

Central Workers Union (CUT), and the Brazilian Workers Party (PT).[6] The pre-

democracy period can be characterized as exploding with movements on the streets with

campaigns for open elections and citizen rights.

With democracy came significant change to Brazilian political and social life. In

terms of social movement activity, some Brazilianist scholars characterize the process of

democratization as having taken the wind out of the sails of social movements. In this

analysis, new democratic competition together with the emerging neoliberal economic

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[6] For brief historical background of this period, see Kenneth Erickson, "Brazil: Corporative
Authoritarianism, Democratization, and Dependency," in Howard Wiarda and Harvey Kline, eds., *Latin
American Politics and Development*, 2nd ed. (Westview, 1985), 205-07; and Frances Hagopian, "Politics in
Brazil," in Gabriel Almond & G.B. Powell, *Comparative Politics Today: A World View*, 8th ed. (Longman,
2004), 523-30.

model beginning in the mid1980s brought new tactics for elites. As the tactic of overt

repression utilized during the dictatorship waned, elites began a process of co-opting

movement actors into political party structures and thus decreasing the intensity of

popular political demands.[7] On the other hand, scholars like Kathryn Hochstetler,

advance the theory that social movements in this period served to "deepen democracy."

With their shift from a demilitarization to a "citizenship" or the "right to have rights"

frame, these postdemocratic movements began to democratize not only the political

regime, but also society as a whole.[8] These movements sparked a new cycle of protest

that appears different from previous movement activity because of their new access to the

state and the rise in participatory strategies.[9]

Hochstetler supports this claim by describing the MST as a standout example of

the continued robustness of Brazilian social movements. She emphasizes the

movement's use of institutional channels to demand agrarian reform as well as its

participatory and contentious strategy of land occupation. In the 1990s, the MST was

able to maintain and even expand its base with the gradual spread of the primarily

southeastern movement into a national movement. Today, the MST estimates its

membership at approximately 1.5 million members. While scholars and movement

activists attribute the movement's origins and perpetuation to its principal land

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[7] See quantitative account of this decline in Ana Maria Doimo, *A vez e a voz do popular: Movimentos sociais e participação política no Brasil pos-70* (Rio de Janeiro: Relume-Duman, 1995), 120; see also Scott Mainwaring, "Grassroots Popular Movements and the Struggle for Democracy: Nova Iguaçu," in Alfred Stepan, ed., *Democratizing Brazil: Problems of Transition and Consolidation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 169 and Ruth Correa Leite Cardoso, "Participação política e democracia," *Novos Estudos* 26 (1990), 16.

[8] Evelina Dagnino, "Culture, Citizenship, and Democracy," in in Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar, eds., *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures: Re-Visioning Latin American Social Movements* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 47-48.

[9] See Kathryn Hochstetler, "Democratizing Pressures from Below? Social Movements in the New Brazilian Democracy," in Peter R. Kingstone and Timothy J. Power, eds., *Democratic Brazil: Actors, Institutions and Processes* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 167-68.

occupation strategy, this paper proposes that the increasingly institutionalized processes of *formação* or political and technical training also served as a key mechanism in the mobilization of landless populations, the creation of space for democratic debate, the building of landless capacities and skills, the widespread commitment to movement goals, and the deepening of political understanding among movement participants and leaders, therefore contributing to their ability to analyze their reality in order to act.

In terms of Brazilian working-class contention over the last three decades, Salvador Sandoval concludes that while economic stabilization and restructuring weakened the mobilization capacity of the traditional labor movement, what he calls "alternative forms of worker contention" began to fill the void.[10] Highlighting the MST, Sandoval reviews 1990s data on MST land occupations, family participation and arrests and points to the increase in levels of MST militancy.[11] Sandoval attributes some of the movement's success to its agility and use of tactics that effectively attract both rural and urban supporters.[12] While his analysis traces the increase in contention, he does not offer adequate explanation as to *why* there has been an increase in MST militancy. This paper seeks to uncover the missing mechanisms that helped buttress the movement over time.

Explaining the MST: External and Internal Forces

Scholars who study the MST attribute the movement's success to many factors. Some scholars focus on a variety of external forces that affect the movement's impact

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[10] Salvador Sandoval, "Working-Class Contention," in Mauricio A. Font et al., eds., *Reforming Brazil* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004), 206.
[11] Ibid. 208.
[12] Ibid. 209.

and ability to mobilize.[13] Gabriel Ondetti identifies an external causal mechanism of the

MST's increased collective action in the mid1990s. He argues that rising political

opportunities due particularly to the neoliberal restructuring of the agricultural sector, the

decline in conservative influence on national government and two very public massacres

of landless workers that intensified MST protests.[14] Ondetti does not, however, answer

how a sprawling movement might capitalize internally on such political opportunity.

Since a movement does not simply "expand," Ondetti's piece leaves questions

unanswered: what organizational structure and internal mechanisms *sustained*, not

simply caused, movement intensification?

　　　　Other scholars focus their studies on internal aspects of the movement. Wendy

Wolford, in her 2003 article, argues that the MST owes a lot of its success to the high

levels of involvement of members who achieve their original goal of accessing land.

Wolford also hinges movement success on the MST's ability to create "imagined

communities" through cultural practices that act as productive mediators between MST

settlers and the Brazilian state.[15] This paper adds to this anthropological/sociological

study of cultural practices an institutional analysis of mechanisms that develop leaders

and political consciousness.

　　　　One of the most studied internal aspects of the MST has been its work in the area

of primary, secondary and adult literacy formal education and the MST-designed and

administered training system for MST teachers. With the land struggle comes the fight

for state support for the creation of rural schools in MST communities. The experiences

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[13] For studies on the influence of media as an external force, see Hammond (2004) and Gohn (2000).

[14] See Gabriel Ondetti, "Repression, Opportunity, and Protest: Explaining the Takeoff of Brazil's Landless Movement," *Latin American Politics & Society* 48.2 (2006), 61-94.

[15] See Wendy Wolford, "Producing Community: The MST and Land Reform Settlements in Brazil," *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 3.4 (2003), 500-21.

with education over the years led to the development of the MST's own *Pedagogia da Terra*, or Pedagogy of the Land, which has made a significant contribution to the study and development of democratic/participatory pedagogical methods.[16] National institutions such as state and local universities and the National Land Reform Education Program of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (with the Portuguese acronym PRONERA) and international institutions such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the Catholic Church have recognized the quality of this work and partnered with the MST on projects to support these efforts.[17] Through this formal education system—fought for and maintained by the MST with state support within MST territories (settlements and encampments) —180,000 children have received an education in 2,000 schools, while thousands of adults have received literacy training.[18]

Despite the existence of the MST's elaborate system of political education and technical training that serves as the movement's leadership development mechanism at the local, state, regional, national, and international levels and its resulting large base of leaders, few studies, particularly in the English language, examine how the development and impact of these internal mechanisms help maintain unity and even expand its leadership base. It should be noted that the studies that do exist on leadership

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[16] See the report by Erineu Foerste "Pedagogia da Terra: Um estudo sobre a Formação Superior de Professores do MST" accessed 11/23/07 at www.anped.org.br/reunioes/27/gt08/t084.pdf and Liam Kane, "Popular education and the Landless People's Movement in Brazil (MST)," *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 32.1 (2000), 36-51.

[17] Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford, *To Inherit the Earth: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for a New Brazil* (Oakland: Food First Books, 2003), xiv and "Parceria entre UnB e MST forma primeira turma," *Carta Maior, Brasil*, Nov 18, 2005. Accessed 9/16/2007 at: http://www.lpp-uerj.net/olped/mob_exibir_noticias.asp?codnoticias=9445

[18] MST National Leader, personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007. For more on the trajectory of the MST's Education Sector and construction of a system of MST schools, see Roseli Salete Caldart, "O MST e a occupação da escola" in *Pedagogia do Movimento Sem Terra*, (São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2004), 221-314.

development within the movement are generally initiated by MST leaders themselves,

underscoring the movement's own awareness of the significance of this process.[19]

Leadership and Social Movements

The study of leadership within social movements remains slim despite its

importance to social movements themselves. There have been recent attempts to

understand the role of leadership in social movements.[20] A recent edition of *American*

Behavioral Scientist contends that movement scholars still have an incomplete

understanding of the "central dynamics of leadership and their importance to social

movements."[21] Featured articles make an important critique of the historic focus within

American social movement literature on the individual leader, which draws from the

Weberian tradition of narrowing analysis to an individual's leadership characteristics.

Expanding this focus, the *ABS* scholars also consider the tasks and work of leaders,

different forms of leadership and the relations between leaders and social structure and

culture. The analysis presented in this paper draws inspiration from these authors, adding

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[19] See Claudilene Pereira de Souza, "Vivendo e Aprendendo a Lutar: Lutas de Massa e Formação Política no Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)," MA thesis, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2004 and Ana Maria Justo Pizetta, A construção da Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes: Um processo de formação efetivo e emancipatório, MA thesis, Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, MG, 2005.

[20] For example, see articles by Ron Aminzade, Jack A. Goldstone, and Elizabeth Perry, "Leadership dynamics and dynamics of contention," in Ron Aminzade et al., eds., *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 126-53 and Aldon D. Morris and Suzanne Staggenborg, "Leadership in Social Movements," in David A. Snow, Sarah Anne Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004),171-96. For Latin American examples, see Calderón, Fernando, *Movimientos sociales y política* (México: DF Siglo XXI, 1995), Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez, eds., *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992) and Gustavo Esteva and M.S. Prakash*, Grassroots Postmodernism* (London: Zed Books, 1998).

[21] Jo Reger, "New Dimensions in the Study of Social Movement Leadership," *American Behavioral Scientist* 50.10 (2007), 1303.

to the understanding of the systems and institutions of leadership development in which individual leaders participate.

James Petras makes a similar critique about the lack of leadership studies in his 2002 article analyzing the role and social dynamics of the MST's political leadership.[22] Here, Petras characterizes the emergence of new peasant sociopolitical movements (NSPMs) by their class character, form of leadership and organic ties to their social base. While Petras does advance ten general hypotheses of why the MST's model of leadership is successful for movement building and unity, his study does not adequately pursue the question of how leaders *become* leaders and what mechanisms support the creation of leadership at a mass scale within the MST. Each of Petras' ten hypotheses take for granted the existence of a pool of class-conscious leaders within the MST ranks who carry with them common visions of change.

Historical Influences on *Formação* in the MST: Theories of Revolution and Radical Transformation and their Emphasis on Leadership and Cadre Training

While the political education and training programs of the MST are born out of the movement's practical experience over the years, they were not born in isolation or by simple happenstance. Instead, MST leaders have closely studied the history of political thought and philosophical reflection on the importance of leadership and cadre formation within the varied processes of building political organization within leftist revolutionary movements. Some thinkers studied by the MST include Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, Mao Tse-Tung, Ho Chi Minh and Antonio Gramsci. Latin American revolutionary thinkers studied include José Martí, Simon Bolívar, Che

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[22] James Petras, "The Social Dynamics of the MST: Ten Hypotheses on Successful Leadership," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 39.1 (2002), 41-82.

Guevara, José Carlos Mariátegu, Augusto C. Sandino, Farabundo Martí, Julio Antonio Mella, Carlos Marighella, Florestan Fernandes, among others.[23]

During the period when the MST was first created, Gramscian thought deeply penetrated the Latin American left, influencing leftists' thinking about how to achieve social transformation. Rather than subscribing to the old revolutionary logic advanced by Western Marxists like Lenin who believed in the need for a frontal assault on state power or a "war of maneuver," a new generation of revolutionaries shifted toward the logic of constructing new power centers within existing society.

By employing Gramsci's definition of hegemony, these revolutionaries understood power to include the non-coercive aspects of class rule present in what he called civil society. Within civil society the dominant class used agencies of socialization to generate mass consent of its own values and beliefs. Thus, following this logic, modern revolutionaries would need to construct new power relations and power centers in order to create and defend its own of counter hegemony. Such counter hegemony would develop new cultural practices, values and social organization.[24] This process occurs within a strategy that can be understood within the Gramscian metaphor of the "war of positions."

Internalizing this strategy, the MST seeks to build new power relations by accumulating the force of diverse social actors from throughout Brazilian society that will

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[23] From the preliminary syllabus of the Via Campesina *Dirigente* course held at ENFF in Fall 2007. Personal communication with course participant, 1/8/07; for summaries of thinkers, see also Ademar Bogo, *Teoria da Organização Política I: Escritos de Engels, Marx, Lenin, Rosa e Mao* (São Paulo, Editora Expressão Popular, 2006); Ademar Bogo, *Teoria da Organicazao Politica II: Escritos de Mariátegui, Gramsci, Prestes, Che, Ho Chi-minh, Marighella, Alvaro Cunhal, Agostinho Neto, Florestan Fernandes* (São Paulo, Editora Expressão Popular, 2006); and Caio Prado Júnior and Florestan Fernandes, *Clássicos sobre a revolução brasileira* (São Paulo, Editora Expressão Popular, 2002).
[24] Raul Burgos, "The Gramscian Intervention in the Theoretical and Political Production of the Latin American Left," *Latin American Perspectives* 29(1) (2002), 14.

present a challenge to the legitimacy and knowledge of elite opponents. João Pedro

Stédile, a member of the MST's National Coordination Committee, asserts that social

movements are capable of easily removing or toppling governments; however,

historically this tactic has been a mistake, particularly when the social movements lack

viable national development projects based on the interests of the people. Stédile

continues:

> We need social movements to build up permanent organized forces. Power isn't just in the state. Power is diluted into multiple forms beginning at home and spreading to the community and society. It is in the schools, churches and the media as well as the state. This is something we learned from Antonio Gramsci. Changes must begin at the base of society.[25]

At the center of this strategy is the creation of capacity building mechanisms to

train masses of new citizen leaders who can build a consensus of a more just society.

Through courses, training programs, and schools, MST grassroots leaders pass through

the institutionalized process of MST political education and technical training where

leaders can read and study classics in political thought and culture, reflect upon their own

practice, create and document the dialectic between struggle and knowledge, and

therefore leverage power in future movement activity.[26]

The debate over the importance of the formation of a leadership cadre within

transformational movements on the left has taken place in both theory and practice. As

Gramsci's concept of "contradictory consciousness" notes, there is "no automatic

correspondence between social position and political action. Thus political

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[25] Luke Stobart, "The MST, Brazil and the Struggle for Land," 2004. Accessed 1/4/08 at: http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/article.php?article_id=8976.
[26] Bogo (2006a), Bogo (2006b) and Prado Júnior and Fernandes (2002).

intervention…is needed to win the battle for hegemony against competing political leaderships and rival social forces."[27] V.I. Lenin developed the concept of professional revolutionaries, or cadre, who should be trained and skilled in order to be able to answer the great questions of 'what is to be done' within social movements. For Lenin, this small core of intellectuals, generally originating from middle class, urban settings, would make up a vanguard party and lead the masses to revolutionary victory.[28] Gramsci argued that such intellectuals should be found from within the ranks of the working class and peasantry itself, from what he called organic intellectuals.

Repression and assassination of leaders from social movements around the world, such as Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr., teach valuable lessons of leadership to modern movements. These actions against leaders can have varying outcomes—from halting movement progress to transforming leaders into inspirational martyr figures.[29] Learning from assassinations and repression in international movements, as well as their own experience, the MST has a principle of not putting forward dominant charismatic leaders that can then be targeted for such violence. In his book-length interview with Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, Stédile asserts that any working class organization needs organizational principles, non-hierarchical collective leadership, training of cadre, democratic unity and discipline, base/grassroots work, and mass struggle (with militants).[30] The MST, rooted in a principle of collective leadership,

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[27] Colin Baker, Alan Johnson and Michael Lavalette, *Leadership and Social Movements* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 7.

[28] See V.I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?", in *Lenin Collected Works*, *Vol. 5*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 347-530.

[29] For more on this topic, see Clifford Bob and Sharon Erickson Nepstad, "Kill a Leader, Murder a Movement? Leadership and Assassination in Social Movements." *American Behavioral Scientist*, 50(10) (2007), 1370-94.

[30] João Pedro Stédile and Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, *Brava Gente: A trajetória do MST e a Luta Pela Terra no Brasil* (São Paulo: Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 1999), 40-3.

seeks to expand its leadership base to include tens of thousands of organic intellectual leaders with the capacity not only to carry the leadership tasks of a national movement, but also to provide new knowledge, theory and practice upon which a collective platform for change can be constructed. The MST defines a revolutionary organization and the cadre it needs as being able to "seek forms of confronting enemies, accumulate forces, elevate the levels of consciousness of the masses and multiply cadre to take on the tasks that are increasingly difficult within the revolutionary process."[31] Revolution, then, is implicitly defined as the ongoing, bottom-up construction of hegemony, rather than the top-down culminating moment of a frontal attack on the state.

Within our globalized world, where societies are increasingly based on technological and scientific development and access to knowledge and information, leadership within social movements is not simply the ability to rally more masses to participate in social movement activities. Instead, social movement leaders increasingly must study, practice, and theorize about their experience, so that they can implement improved practice in a process that creates new knowledge. If for example, the MST decides to fight against genetically modified seeds, their practice of agroecological production must be studied, experimented with, scientifically analyzed, etc. This means that the MST leaders must possess scientific knowledge in addition to any indigenous or traditional agricultural knowledge they might have from their life experience. Globalization also intensifies the need for movement actors to synthesize, write their reflections, and share them with global allies.[32]

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[31] MST document, "Relatório do I seminário das coordenações pedagógicos dos cursos do MST," March 2005. *Translation by author.*

[32] For a discussion of the MST's participation in global movement networks, see Dawn Plummer, "Poor People's Movements in Transnational Networks: Implications for Two Movements of the Excluded in the

Social Movement Schools

Though scarce, there has been some theoretical work that studies the phenomena

of social movement schools or cadre training schools. Cadre training schools historically

led by political parties, unions and social movements around the world implement ideas

about leadership.

> Generally, working class organizations that strive to transform the organizational
> structures, economies, politics, ideologies, within the Marxist framework need
> some sort of organization through which to direct their activities.   In *The
> Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels suggest the creation of coalitions against
> the bourgeois that will eventually form permanent associations –essentially the
> call for the creation of class-based and political party organizations. Therefore,
> movements create Cadre Leadership schools.[33]

Bob Edwards and John McCarthy define social movement schools or "movement

mentor organizations" (MMOs) as organizations that "encourage, support, and facilitate

collective action, but typically are not the organizational vehicles of that action."[34] The

authors point to three different kinds of movement schools, one that functions primarily

within a single movement and another type (like Highlander Folk School) that often

serves various movements at the same time. The final type has formal affiliation with a

nonmovement organizational sponsor (like the Quaker Church's AFDC) that mentors an

array of progressive movements from within religious bodies.

United States and Brazil." Paper presented at the 2006 Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association,
March 18, 2006, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.
[33] Georges Labica, "A formação de quadros: elementos teóricos e práticos" in *A política da formação de
quadros* (São Paulo: ENFF Cadernos de Estudos, 2007), 49. *Translation by author.*
[34] Bob Edwards and John D. McCarthy, "Social Movement Schools," *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 7, No. 3.
(Sep., 1992), pp. 548-549.

The authors compare two US-based sets of institutions—the Highlander Folk School and American Labor Colleges of the 1920s and 1930s—drawing conclusions that are quite relevant here despite the obviously different American context. It is important to mention that Myles Horton (head of Highlander) shared his methodology of adult education with Brazilian Paulo Freire,[35] whose methods inspire the contemporary MST. In comparing the two American MMOs' successes and failures, they attribute the Highlander's success to its ability to remain autonomous without any link to any political party or church, while the International Workers of the World (IWW) linked Labor Colleges declined due to sectarian infighting and party affiliation. They also suggest that the recreation of formal education structures bring with it the challenges and failures of dominant institutional school forms. Very similar to the MST's schools, "Horton's conception of Highlander was that of a folk institution facilitating collective action by using nonformal adult education to build upon and support the cultural strengths of indigenous peoples…this concept comes from his time spent looking at Scandinavian Folk Schools in Denmark."[36]

Horton offered much reflection on the importance of social movement schools. He believed that since movements themselves ebb and flow, the role of movement schools are heightened during "slower" times, preparing and training for when things intensify again.[37] Edwards and McCarthy conclude from their comparison that even severe repression and broader movement conflict does not necessarily weaken social

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[35] For more on Horton and Freire's shared methods and philosophy of adult education, see Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, Temple University Press, 1990.
[36] Bob Edwards and John D. McCarthy, "Social Movement Schools," *Sociological Forum* 7.3 (1992), 549.
[37] See Myles Horton, *The Long Haul* (New York: Anchor, 1990).

movement schools. These schools exist outside of the movements themselves and can sustain themselves throughout long movement cycles.

Using this definition, it is observable that within the Brazilian context, there exist a variety of social movement mentor organizations (particularly within the Catholic Church and the labor movement) that provide a range of services to Brazilian movements. The MST's network of cadre development institutions, however, represents something new, having been born from *within* an autonomous social movement. Edwards and McCarthy perhaps limit the potential of social movements by limiting the role of movement schools. While autonomy is crucial, an autonomous movement like the MST demonstrates the role of social movement schools in the expansion of the movement's leadership base and therefore their overall effectiveness.

In a cursory study of international programs for the training of social leaders, Fernando Rosero Garcés and Sebastián Betancourt suggest that the expression "training of social leaders" should now be used in a way that is not restricted to the training of leaders. They believe that such training requires complex processes of education and training for change, which include the genesis and development of management agents and at the same time, a vast range of educational practices, as well of values and of instrumental knowledge and aptitudes of various types. As such, it is becoming an increasingly central element in social organizations. These authors conclude that the MST represents a new level of social movement, where leadership training, the production of alternative proposals for a more just society and the creation of new

knowledge merge.[38] Here, the creation of new knowledge contributes to the

transformation of the consciousness of movement members. Beyond its impact on MST

members, the movement seeks to create a counterhegemony that will eventually surpass

the hegemony imposed by elites.

Garcés and Betancourt go on to suggest that "new leaders" created out of social

movement training processes produce what they call "new social executives." These new

social executives "combine protest with proposals and bring pressure to bear by dialogue

with those responsible for public policy."[39] Thus, these new leaders are more capable

than previous social movement leaders and are able to create political alternatives from

the bottom up, instead of past models of top-down social transformation.

The bottom-up model allows them to spread their influence throughout civil

society locally, nationally, and internationally. In a globalized world, this is an uneven

and nonsequential process, where movement actors exchange experience and network on

all of these levels simultaneously. This process is obviously limited by the capacities of

movement leadership, driving movements to train more and more leaders in a variety of

specializations. In the case of the MST, these authors suggest that whereas earlier cases

of political education within social movements may have primarily consisted of

consciousness raising activities that aim to convince members of the need to 'take

control' of the state in order to eradicate injustice, the MST's model of training which

includes socio-political, technical and administrative training allows for the reflection on

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[38] See Fernando Rosero Garcés and Sebastián Betancourt, "Social Leaders in the Twenty-first Century: Challenges and Proposals, Nov 2001." Accessed 1/4/08 at http://www.alliance21.org/2003/article.php3?id_article=456
[39] Ibid. 28.

practice to develop new knowledge and theory that can be accumulated.[40] With the

accumulation of forces, the MST believes that they will be able to create a

counterhegemony that will filter into all sectors of society.

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[40] Ibid.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LANDLESS WORKERS' MOVEMENT (MST)

Today, Brazil continues to represent an extreme in economic and social exclusion. According to IPEA (*Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada*) data from 2005, the wealthiest ten percent of Brazilians possess forty-six percent of the country's total income, while the poorest fifty percent of Brazilians hold only thirteen percent. Rural income distribution is even more extreme, where the concentration of wealth is historically tied to the concentration of land into the *latifúndios* inherited from as far back as colonial times. Unlike most other countries, Brazil has yet to dismantle this historic maldistribution through the implementation of a comprehensive agrarian reform program. According to IBGE (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*) data on rural Brazil from 1996, one percent of landowners own forty-five percent of the arable land, while another thirty-seven percent own only one percent of the land.[41]

Within this context, the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais dos Sem Terra* has grown over the last nearly three decades from a series of isolated land occupations in southeastern Brazil into a national movement organized in 23 of the 27 Brazilian states. The movement is grounded in the concrete political, social and economic realities of each local community, state and region. In recent years, scholars and journalists have begun to comprehensively recount and analyze the movement's colorful history and evolution.[42]

In fact, the MST has been much studied. In Brazil, the movement at the local, state

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[41] Miguel Carter, "The Landless Rural Workers Movement & the Struggle For Social Justice in Brazil," in *Rural Social Movements in Latin America: Alternative Visions for Sustainable Livelihoods*, eds., Carmen Diana Deere and Fredrick S. Royce (forthcoming), 5.

[42] For thorough accounts of MST's history and evolution, see Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, *MST, Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra: Formação e Territorialização* (São Paulo: Editora Hucitec, 1999); Stédile and Fernandes (1999), Wright and Wolford (2003) and Sue Branford and Jan Rocha, *Cutting the Wire: The Story of the Landless Movement in Brazil* (London: Latin American Bureau, 2002).

and national level has been the subject of hundreds of student theses and dissertations, academic and media articles and books. This section will offer only a brief overview of the movement's origins, political context, goals, activities and development to contextualize the later discussion of the MST's cadre/leadership development mechanisms.

From 1965 to 1984, Brazil's military regime aggressively pursued policies to modernize the agrarian sector, to break the traditional pattern of oligarchic domination prevalent in the Brazilian countryside, and to demobilize workers. By the late 1970s, the rapid mechanization of agriculture pushed rural wage earners, leaseholders and sharecroppers off large agricultural estates.[43] In agrarian countries such as Brazil, agroindustry, dominated by multinational corporations, began to harvest export crops and profits from the countryside instead of land, jobs and food for the rural poor.

Newly established institutional and structural linkages between rural civil society and the state created new social forces, bases for solidarity and identity formation, organizational resources, expectations, access to urban allies, and targets for collective action.[44] Segments of the liberation theology-inspired Catholic Church, which traditionally had been allied with the state, began to organize rural workers in opposition to corporatist unions between 1979 and 1985.[45] In reaction to the dictatorship, emerging

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[43] See Anthony Pereira, *End of the Peasantry: The Rural Labor Movement in Northeast Brazil, 1961–1988* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997).

[44] See Peter P. Houtzager and Marcus J. Kurtz, "The Institutional Roots of Popular Mobilization: State Transformation and Rural Politics in Brazil and Chile, 1960–1995," *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 42.2 (2000), 394-424.

[45] For more on the early influence and support of the Catholic Church, see Ivo Poletto and Antônio Canuto, eds., *Nas Pegadas do Povo da Terra: 25 Anos da Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (Sao Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2002); Madeleine R. Adriance, *Terra Prometida: As Comunidades Eclesiais de Base e os Conflitos Rurais* (São Paulo: Edições Paulinas, 1996); Vanilda Paiva, ed., *Igreja e Questão Agrária* (São Paulo: Loyola, 1985); Michael Lowy, "The Socio-Religious Origins of Brazil's Landless Rural Workers Movement," *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine* 53.2 (2001), 32-41.

struggles for democracy marked the end of the 1970s and early 1980s. As part of this

new protest cycle, the increased mobilization of contentious activities such as strikes,

public demonstrations, and acts of civil disobedience, gave shape to the variety of

political and economic demands of the emerging rural workers movements.[46] These

efforts resulted in the formation of several major social movements: the MST, CUT, and,

as Brazil responded to the oil shocks of the 1970s by expanding its network of

hydroelectric projects, the Movement for Those Affected by Dams or *Movimento de

Atingidos por Barragens* (MAB).[47]

Democracy became official with the enactment of the new Federal Constitution in

1988. The MST and other rural workers movements succeeded in pressuring for the

inclusion of agrarian reform clauses in Constitution calling for the expropriation of

unproductive lands. Democratizing pressures from below also created new institutional

mechanisms (external to the movements), while pressuring the state to activate existing

constitutional guarantees. Even as political opportunity began to narrow in the late

1980s, the MST expanded throughout Brazil and worked to strengthen its internal

organization. The movement's basic characteristics, principles and organizational

structures established early on, were not significantly altered in later years.[48] The

movement's ideology has been characterized as reflecting the southern peasant cultural

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[46] For more on protest cycles, see Tarrow (1998).

[47] For more information about MAB, see http://www.mabnacional.org.br/. For more on the MST's early formation and shift from a regional to national movement, see Branford and Rocha (2002); Fernandes (2000); Mitsue Morissawa, *A história da luta pela terra e o MST* (São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2001); Zander Navarro, "Democracia, Cidadanía e Representação: Os Movimentos Sociais Rurais no Estado do Rio Grande do Sul," in *Política, Protesto e Cidadanía no Campo: As Lutas Sociais dos Colonos e Trabalhadores Rurais do Rio Grande do Sul* (Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, 1996); Gabriel Ondetti, "Opportunities, Ideas and Actions: The Brazilian Landless Movement, 1979-2001," PhD Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002; and Wright and Wolford (2003).

[48] Gabriel Ondetti, "Repression, Opportunity, and Protest: Explaining the Takeoff of Brazil's Landless Movement," *Latin American Politics & Society* 48.2 (2006), 66.

roots of the early leadership as well "an eclectic mix of leftist radicals such as Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Paulo Freire, Mao Tse-Tung and Mahatma Ghandi.[49] From the late 1980s until the election of Worker's Party President Lula, hostile governments made it necessary for the MST to concentrate their efforts on internal issues such as improving collective production methods within MST settlement communities.[50] The growing focus on internal leadership development and political education and training will be discussed below.

Since its official formation in 1984, the MST organized landless migrant farm workers, sharecroppers, laborers, and the unemployed to challenge the political and economic power of landowners by employing collective action repertoires that include land occupations, collective negotiations with state officials, the construction of tent cities in downtown squares and public spaces, the occupation of government buildings, public meetings, state-and nationwide marches and hunger strikes.[51] The MST has three principle objectives—to win land, land reform, and social transformation for a more just society. Both scholars and movement activists note that the movement was born and is perpetuated by its principal activity of land occupations. The MST has carried out over 2,000 occupations of fallow land, usually owned by large landowners (or *latifundários*) or multinational corporations, where groupings of landless families erect plastic tent communities (called encampments) to meet their immediate needs for shelter and land as well as press for their long-term need for government sponsored land reform, access to

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[49] Wendy Wolford, "The Difference Ethnography Can Make: Understanding Social Mobilization and Development in the Brazilian Northeast," *Qualitative Sociology* (2006) 29, 336.

[50] See Leonilde Medeiros, et al., *Assentamentos rurais: uma visao multidisciplinar* (Sao Paulo: Editora da UNESP, 1994); Eliane Cardoso Brenneisen, *Relações de poder, dominação e resistência: o MST e os assentamentos rurais* (Cascavel: Edunioeste, 2002).
, (Cascavel: Hdunioeste, 2001); and Branford and Rocha (2002).

[51] João Pedro Stédile and Frei Sérgio, *A luta pela terra no Brazil* (São Paulo: Editora Pagina Aberta Ltda, 1993), 28.

credits, basic infrastructure, schools and healthcare. Data from 2002 to 2005 shows that

the number of families living in these encampments swelled to an estimated 117,482

families in 2003 and 127,872 families in 2005 from the 2002 number of 67,298 families

with the hope of land reform promised by President Lula.[52] Today, over 400,000 settled

families in 23 Brazilian states have won land titles through their participation in the MST

and now live in 1200 settlement communities that exist on approximately 20 million

acres of land.[53] On these settlements, members have established nearly 500 agricultural

cooperatives and associations.[54]

    While President Lula's election promised progress to poor Brazilians, once

elected Lula was forced to divide his power among all parties who assisted in his

victory—including those of the political center and right. The power of the militant anti-

land reform movement[55] and its influence on the legislative and executive branches

together with the pressure of the agrobusiness lobby has hampered Lula's attempts and

decreased his political will to redistribute land. Since democratization in the 1980s, the

bancada ruralista or the multiparty Congressional caucus represented by members of the

rural elite organized to promote antireform, agrobusiness interests, has occupied the

largest voting block, thus stopping attempts to make significant advancements in the area

of land reform.[56]

    In April 2004, the MST decided to take an aggressive step in order to push Lula to

[52] MST website. 2006. "Acampamentos – 1990 a 2006." Accessed 1/9/08 at:
http://www.mst.org.br/mst/pagina.php?cd=897.
[53] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.
[54] MST document, "MST Em Dados," January 2003.
[55] This radical right-wing group called the Ruralist Democratic Union (UDR) has armed paramilitary militias as well as Congressional influence due their ties to the *bancada ruralista*. The participation of elected deputies and senators who promote the agrobusiness interests give power to this front.
[56] Miguel Carter, "The Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) and Democracy in Brazil," (Oxford: Working Paper #CBS-60-05, Centre for Brazilian Studies, University of Oxford, 2005), 18. Accessed 1/10/08 at : http://www.brazil.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/Miguel%20Carter%2060.pdf

expropriate unproductive land and also remember the nineteen MST members assassinated at Eldorado dos Carajás, Pará in April 1996. The movement launched a national campaign of land occupations called a *Jornada de Luta* and *abril vermelho* (or red April). According to data from the National Secretariat of the CPT who monitors land conflict the MST occupied 89 farms in 15 states. President Lula did expropriate thirty-five new rural areas in that first week of April, thus doubling the number of areas since the beginning of that year, though federal government officials did not attribute their actions to the pressure mounted by the mobilizations.[57]

In the MST's evaluation of the Lula government to date, they praise some important social policy advances including the *bolsa família* program (cash assistance to the very poor), government assistance in finding markets for some agricultural goods produced on settlements, and the augmentation of health programs. However, President Lula's promises to the MST and other rural movements, who helped mobilize their base for his successful election, remain only promises.[58]

How the MST is Organized

Since the beginning of the movement, the MST has worked to develop and evolve an organizational structure through which to work at the local, state and national levels. This form developed out the of MST's experience as a mass movement carrying out occupations and encampments, which led to more and more organizing work, consciousness-raising activities, and leadership development. The organizational structure is infused with principles and practices that go beyond simple task completion.

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[57] Tiago Ornaghi, "No 'abril vermelho', governo acelera as desapropriações," *Folha Online*, 04/09/04. Accessed 1/10/08 at http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/brasil/ult96u59924.shtml.
[58] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.

Scholars such as Petras and Wolford analyze these principles and practices as the movement's sociopolitical culture or the creation of imagined communities.[59] The MST itself sees these practices as creating new, more egalitarian social relations among "new men" and "new women."

Based in a principle of collective leadership, the MST is organized into collective units from the local level, to the state, regional and national levels that at least in principle make decisions through debate, reflection and consensus. The organizational units at the base of the movement are called *núcleos de base* or base nuclei, which consist of around 10 to 15 families. These *núcleos de base* are organized in encampments and settlements and are responsible for addressing the issues that arise in daily community life. Each member of the *núcleo*—men, women and youth—then participates in a sector (the MST's word for committee) and is responsible for the organizational and educational aspects of camp life. Sectors include, for example, health, education, *formação*, food, agricultural production, the environment, gender relations, culture, youth and *frente de masses* (literally means "the front of the masses" and refers to those who carry out grassroots organizing to recruit new members). These structures are developed and agreed to in the highest decision-making body, called general assemblies, where all camp residents participate.[60] Principles that guide the organization of the camp are democracy, the participation of everyone in decision-making, the division of tasks and collective leadership.[61]

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[59] See Petras (2002) and Wolford (2003).
[60] Marta Harnecker, *Landless People: Building a Social Movement* (São Paulo: Editora Expressão Popular, 2003), 87-9.
[61] Stédile and Sérgio (1993), 39.

These structures encourage participation, collectivity and accountability among members. Collectivity in the MST is defined through its work with large committees and general assemblies. The principle of the de-concentration of leadership from one to many as well as the division of tasks among a collective exists at all levels of the movement. Starting at the base of the movement among the groups of encamped families, each *núcleo de base* elects two representatives (generally a man and a woman) to represent them on the overall coordination commission that oversees camp operations and sectors.

This organizational structure will eventually evolve and serve as the representative and participatory governance structure of permanent settlement communities, negotiations with the state, and long marches. In this way, the spaces of the MST implement and institutionalize collective decisions, contributing to their local communities the movement's overall vision and innovative structures for political participation. Through experience and practice, landless members renew social relations and political culture, thus thickening rural civil society through collectivity.[62] It is a goal of the movement that members of coordinating bodies live in settlements and encampments so as to not create distance between the leadership and the base of the movement.

Life in camps also offers opportunities for education that were previously difficult to access. Encamped families organized into an education sector mount a school for grade school education and adult literacy. Members also reflect on their environments and the challenges they face as well as teachings on citizenship rights. These discussions begin to articulate the camp's demands that will be taken to state institutions. These

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[62] For a more detailed account of the movement's organizational structure from the local to national level, please see Fernandes (2000), 245-56.

experiences construct the *sem terra* or "landless" identity that is empowered with

knowledge of the right to land and agrarian reform. In the mid-1990s, the MST opened a

debate on "democratization of the land" throughout the movement.[63] These educational

opportunities create an internal, popular public sphere that can be compared and

contrasted to the dominant public sphere of political elites.

The MST, as an autonomous movement, interacts with Brazilian society in

attempts to mobilize support for agrarian reform to be implemented in collaboration with

political society. Movement members collectively confront, negotiate and build

partnerships with the state and other members of civil society. While public opinion and

the Brazilian Supreme Court uphold the occupation of unproductive land as a legitimate

tactic, the media backed by landholding elites, conservative political forces and

agroindustry continues to portray them as illegitimate.[64] Land occupations have,

however, successfully challenged undemocratic land use and promoted land reform

through:

> (1) the occupation of lands that are unproductive and thereby subject to
> expropriation by the state;
> (2) the occupation of lands that are productive of food but also organized by low
> wages, lack of employment rights and poor environmental practices whose
> current ownership is, therefore, of at least questionable legality under the social
> provisions of the Constitution;
> (3) the occupation of lands which, the movement argues, should be taken by the
> state in lieu of the millions of dollars owed by their owners to the government;
> (4) the occupation of devolved lands belonging to the state but illegally occupied
> by large landholders through chains of corruption stretching back generations;

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[63] Hochstetler (2000), 176.
[64] A March 21, 1997 poll by *O Globo* taken during a massive MST mobilization showed that 85 percent of
the population supported the invasion of land as a legitimate tactic for such purposes as long as it is done
without violence.

(5) the simultaneous and coordinated occupation of sites that are hundreds and
even thousands of kilometers apart as a means of highlighting the issues and
showing the movement's organizational power, and finally
(6), the occupation of particular ranches, in some instances on up to twenty-two
occasions that are deemed of special significance.[65]

Land occupations, and sometimes the occupation of government buildings such as

INCRA (the government organ responsible for land reform), push land reform onto the

local, state and national political agenda. This process brings members of state and civil

society into a debate about land use, historic inequalities, development agricultural, the

future of the domestic market, work practices, public policy, environmental concerns, and

social welfare and development. This process also provides a channel for the MST's

counterhegemonic vision for Brazil's rural communities. In these cases, the MST

develops new institutional channels via the judicial system to hear land disputes and

determine if an evaluation should be executed in order to determine if it is productive and

should be redistributed. In the absence of other institutional mechanisms, this process

facilitates landless access to land.

The MST also collaborates in the creation of external participatory publics with

labor, student, church urban and other rural social movements during major

mobilizations, meetings and campaigns. These participatory publics represent the effort

of some elements of Brazilian civil society to develop what Avritzer calls a "collective

project for society" that emphasizes the role of peasant and small farmers in the domestic

agricultural market as well as vibrant rural community life.

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[65] George Meszaros, "No Ordinary Revolution: Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement," *Race & Class* 42(2) 2000, 10.

The first stage of the movement's development was the construction of the *sem terra* or "landless" identity, demonstrating to the rural poor that they have a right to land, agrarian reform and a more just society and that this can be fought for through their mass collective action and land occupations. The movement frames the conditions and struggles of the *sem terra* through its symbols—the widely recognized red flag featuring a man and woman of the movement, movement songs, and other materials. The MST's ability to mobilize tens of thousands of Brazilians to cooperate through farming, to raise political consciousness through study and political participation, and to mobilize in the streets, in encampments and large gatherings has shaped its reputation as one of the most important and exciting popular movements in the world. The MST carries out mass public campaigns, encampments, and marches to bring visibility to the issues raised, maintain dialogue with society through the media, and leverage power for negotiation with the state.

In recent years, "the MST criticizes a neoliberal system that has brought social exclusion to the limit of dehumanization, producing and maintaining landless, homeless and jobless people."[66] The MST identifies not only the need for land, but also the need for a more just economic model that incorporates the economic, social and cultural needs of the people. In order to advance this vision, the MST believes it must win land, then social rights, beginning with access to formal and informal education.[67] The MST's main slogan from 1995 to 2000, "Agrarian Reform: A Struggle for All," represents a strategic move toward expanding their transformative vision to include all sectors of society to promote the "sense of citizen participation in the construction of a democracy with social

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[66] Ilse Scherer-Warren, "Movimentos sociais no mundo globalizado: o caso do MST," in *Movimentos Sociais Rurais: Identidades, Símbolos e Ideais, Cadernos de Pesquisa* 24 (2000), 41.
[67] Ibid. 42.

content."[68] Today, the MST's struggle for land and agrarian reform has developed an alternative development model of the rural community to meet the needs of rural people including infrastructure, housing, schools, health clinics, and cultural outlets. This model is perceived by the movement as a solution to joblessness, landlessness and homelessness caused by rural exodus and rapid urbanization motivated by a neoliberal logic. Most importantly, these communities create employment for rural people with government support through agrarian policies that provide access to credit, technical assistance and markets for their products.[69] While President Lula's promise to settle over 400,000 by the end of his term in 2007 remains largely unfulfilled, the MST has successfully returned the highly contentious issue of land reform to national political agenda.[70]

Starting in the 1970s and 1980s, national rural movements began to collectivize their struggles at the international level by forming transnational peasant movements and networks, in which the MST plays a crucial role. With the objective to strengthen the struggle for land, land reform and against the *latifúndio*, the MST, the National Articulation of Rural Women Workers or *Articulação Nacional de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais* (ANMTR), the Pastoral Land Commission of the Catholic Church or *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* (CPT), the Movement of Small Farmers or *Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores* (MPA), MAB, the Catholic Church's Rural Youth Pastoral or *Pastoral da Juventude Rural* (PJR) and the Federation of Agronomy Students in Brazil or *Federação dos Estudantes de Agronomia do Brasil* (FEAB) came together to form a

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[68] Ibid. 39.
[69] For data on these outcomes, see Beatriz Heredia, et al., "Impactos regionais da reforma agrária: um estudo a partir de áreas selecionadas," in *Assentamentos rurais e as perspectives da reforma agrária no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Núcleo de Estudos Agrários e Desenvolvimento Rural, Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro, 2004).
[70] Reuters, Brasília, "Brazil Pledges Land to 400,000 Families," *New York Times*, Nov. 22, 2003, p. 5.

national network named *Via Campesina Brasil* or Peasant Way-Brazil. Via Campesina

International was formed in April 1992 as an international network of peasant and small

farmers and utilizes the internet as a key form of outreach and communication.[71]

Supporters of the MST around the world have also organized into Friends of the MST

chapters, particularly in Europe and the United States.[72]

　　　　The need to develop new leaders has also been present in the life of the movement.

As the MST's work progressed and the movement gained visibility over time, the demand

for *formação*, for the development of new leaders continued to grow.

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[71] De Souza (2004), 10; for more on Via Campesina, go to http://viacampesina.org/main_en/index.php.
[72] For more information on international Friends of the MST groups, see http://www.mstbrazil.org (for US)
and a list of international links at http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=node/49.

DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF *FORMAÇÃO* IN THE MST

By employing an institutional analysis, this section seeks to gather and synthesize a body of research that looks at the internal mechanisms of *formação*, which is discussed here as the political and technical training of leaders within the Landless Workers' Movement. An extensive discussion of the process of ideological training and the absorption of such training at the grassroots level will not be covered here. While there will be a brief reference to the philosophical and pedagogical contributions made by the MST's work in the area of *formação* and education in general, elaboration of this topic is better suited for the academic fields of education.

This section will argue that over the years while *formação* system remains loose, flowing and interconnected, it has become increasingly prioritized and institutionalized by the movement due to ongoing external pressures and challenges. In interviews, MST leaders were hesitant with the use of the term "*institucionalização*" or "institutionalization." This response is due to this Portuguese term's association with becoming of or being taken over by the state. A clear distinction should be made that the term "institutionalization" used in this discussion refers to the development of internal MST institutions that function autonomously from the state.

As the movement has become increasingly prominent on the national and international stage, movement leaders have reflected on the growing need for skilled and capable leaders not only to execute the tasks of a national movement with thousands of productive agricultural communities, but also to analyze and reflect upon Brazilian reality and be able to put forward realistic proposals based in experience to transform it.

In its nearly three decades of existence, the MST has developed an elaborate

system of *formação* alongside the trajectory of its combative tactics. Political *formação*

is defined in one of the documents of the MST's National School as:

> "…the process of raising the level of consciousness of the militants,
> movement members, and the masses. *Formação* is the force that
> makes ideas, strategies, the program, the methodology and the
> organizational principles and structures commonly known and
> collectively constructed. It is information made into knowledge, a
> material force that transforms nature and society and is never simply
> scholarship or academicism. *Formação* happens when militancy is put
> into practice and when there is a deep commitment to the cause. To
> participate in *formação*, one must know the leaders, care for them,
> accompany them through good and bad times, and contribute to their
> overall development of leadership abilities. Leaders must understand
> and take in the contents and methodology of *formação* in order to
> creatively multiply leadership, instead of being the simple
> reproduction of obedient followers…[73]

These processes of informal and formal *formação* occur at all levels of leadership

within the movement, take different forms, and occur in a variety of spaces. These

efforts help propel the movement's work and deepen the grassroots commitment to its

goals.

Processes of Informal *Formação*: *Mística* and Movement Life

Many processes of training and political education happen largely outside of the

realm of formal book learning, or classroom-based course study within the movement.

Before MST members participate in courses, they learn informally from their experience

of living and working within the movement's sociopolitical and organizational culture.

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[73] Ranulfo Peloso, "Formação política de militantes: a experiênca do Cepis—SP," in *A política da formação de quadros* (São Paulo: ENFF Cadernos de Estudos, 2007), 44. *Translation by author*.

Among the practices that serve to inform and create class consciousness and a sense of agency within the trajectory of Brazilian history is what the MST calls *mística*.[74] *Mística*, which draws from Catholic ritual and the spiritual mysticism of liberation theology, is the "representation through words, art, symbolism, and music of the struggles and the reality" of the MST.[75] *Mística* can also refer to the "more abstract, emotional element, strengthened in collectivity, which can be described as the feeling of empowerment, love, and solidarity that serves as a mobilizing force by inspiring self-sacrifice, humility, and courage."[76] *Mística* is used to represent historical events, MST actions, values and homage to fallen activists. In a society where thirty percent of rural Brazilians remain illiterate, a discussion of political education within the MST must mention the role of *mística*.[77] Evandro Costa de Medeiros asserts, "*mística,* while a celebration permeated by an intentional consciousness, is characterized as a process that mobilizes, educates and politicizes the landless subjects, contributing to the consolidation of a cultural identity and ideological unity."[78] Daniela Issa calls the praxis of *mística* a "pedagogy of empowerment" that also serves as the MST's cultural contribution to the Gramscian theory of counterhegemony.[79]

Performance of *mística* occurs at the start and/or close of the day within courses, within community life, or during large-scale celebrations. *Mística* can range in size and number of participants. One example of a small-scale ritual could be before a daylong

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[74] For a theoretical analysis of *mística* in the MST, see the book written by MST author Ademar Bogo, *O vigor da mística* (São Paulo: Caderno de Culture #2, MST, 2002).

[75] Daniela Issa, "Praxis of Empowerment: Mística and Mobilization in Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement," *Latin American Perspectives* 24 (2007), p. 125.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Statistic from interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.

[78] Evandro Costa de Medeiros, "A mística como instrumento pedagógico na formação política dos militantes do MST," *Revista GeoNotas*, Oct/Nov/Dec 2001. Accessed 1/5/08 at: http://www.dge.uem.br/geonotas/vol5-4/evandro.shtml

[79] Issa (2007), 125.

study or meeting at an MST course, a movement member discusses of the significance of the colors in the MST flag followed by the slow raising of the flag as participants join in the signing of the MST anthem. Larger performances can have many, even hundreds of participants. One such large performance occurred at a celebration of the MST's twentieth anniversary in Itapeva, SP, where MST members acted out the history of Brazil using music and costumes of indigenous peoples, African slaves, and Portuguese colonizers intermixing to create the nation. This performance then weaved the MST's history into this story with the rush of MST men, women, and children wearing red MST t-shirts and hats, joining together one at a time to create a visually strong force for justice.[80]

Other informal processes and spaces of political education are apparent in many concrete actions of the movement. Much learning occurs through listening, watching, talking, and participating directly in movement activities such as preparing for and carrying out land occupations, marches, and daily life in the movement.

In terms of formal processes and spaces of political education, the focus of this section, the MST over its three decades of work has developed a system of local, state, regional, and national schools that offer a progression of short and long courses for technical and political training to all levels of its leadership.

Levels of Leadership: *Base, Militantes,* and *Dirigentes*

The MST understands its internal leadership as existing at various levels depending on the leaders' level of consciousness and commitment. The first level is the "base" or grassroots, which consists of all workers who identify with the movement—the

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[80] Field notes from MST's Twentieth Anniversary celebration in Itapeva, SP in June 2004.

families who enter the movement while living in MST encampments and settlements and feel part of it. *Militantes* or militant MST leaders generally have a larger commitment to the movement and sustain its organization. They often work in sectors or collectives beyond the settlement level, sometimes leaving their settlement and going to other states to help organize. They form the second level of the MST's leadership hierarchy. *Dirigentes* or leaders/directors are responsible for understanding the reality and needs of the base and shaping the direction of the movement. They are also responsible for assuring that there is continual dialogue between the base and the leaders in order to maintain unity throughout the movement. *Dirigentes* have a lot of responsibility within the MST, having been elected to serve as a leader at the state or national level.[81]

The Contribution of MST's *Formação* to Pedagogical Methods

The MST's decades of work in the area of education and *formação* makes a significant contribution to the development of liberationist pedagogical principles and methods. While a full examination of these contributions is outside of the scope of this project, some discussion of these developments is necessary as they are derived directly from the experience of the internal institutions of the movement.

The MST has developed fundamental principles upon which all of their educational work—with both children and adults—is based. As mentioned earlier, these principles and practices draw from thinkers and practitioners like Freire, Pistrak, as well as Gramsci, José Martí, and the Russian Anton Makarenko.[82] Some beliefs that emerge from these historical teachers of the oppressed as well as from MST experiences are as

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[81] MST document. "Vamos organizar a base do MST," (São Paulo: *Cartilha* No. 2., 1995).
[82] Harnecker (2003), 191.

follows. There is a belief in people as agents of change, who must first understand their own reality as a point from which to begin social transformation (for this reason the *formação* sector developed a "Brazilian Reality" course). As one MST leader wrote, "the MST innovates in its practice by recovering the collective subject, strengthening the identity of workers, and recuperating dignity, so that they may participate in the historic process of their liberation."[83]

The relationship between teachers and students is nontraditional in the sense that both learn equally from one another. Teachers serve only as guides to this process. Instead of the classic teacher-student model, where the teacher organizes the classroom experience and dictates its direction, the students actively participate in all aspects of the organization of the school including group work, collective decision-making, planning, reflection, and collective evaluation or activities. This emphasizes the important MST principle of self-organization. These collective processes create new forms of social relations and promote the democratic participation of each student[84]. Courses prepare students for both practical and intellectual work.

The MST believes that people learn by doing as well as by reflecting on it in a collectivity. The MST's educational work "recovers and encourages values such as solidarity, discipline, camaraderie, collective work, collective leadership, responsibility, and love for the people's causes."[85]

The MST puts these principles into practice through its organizational method employed during courses. Much of this method reflects the organizational structure developed in encampments and settlements. The MST believes that it is not enough to

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[83] De Souza (2004), 3-4.
[84] Harnecker (2003), 193-94.
[85] Ibid.

change the curriculum and methodology of a classroom. "The way that a school is organized and the social relations thus generated are as important as the contents and the methods."[86] Students are organized into groups of ten that form a study circle for reading aloud and debating (similar to the *núcleos de base* in encampments). Each group elects a representative who will participate on the coordinating body together with the teachers/coordinators. Each student also signs up for committees, similar to sectors, whose tasks maintain the school (such as cleaning, organizing the library, agricultural work to maintain the food supply for the school, etc). Each day is broken into two segments, generally five hours for study and three hours for work (their tasks). All students participate in a process of "criticism/self-criticism" where they can reflect on their own participation and the participation of others in the school in a productive, positive, and yet still critical way. There are also opportunities for all students to meet in general assemblies. Students write a final research project on a topic that will be useful to them when they return to their community.[87]

The Development of the *Formação* Sector of the MST

While the *frente de massas* or "front of the masses" sector is responsible for organizing new families to occupy land and therefore expand the MST's base, it is the *formação* sector that is responsible for the political, ideological, and technical training of these new members to ensure their continued participation. "In the last 10 years, outside

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[86] MST document. "Como fazemos a escola de educação fundamental", *Caderno de Educação* #9, Rio Grande do Sul, 1999, 3.
[87] Field notes from visit to ENFF, SP and CIDAP, ES in June 2004.

of occupations, which is the principle motor of the movement, *formação* is the most important sector of the MST. When we aren't struggling, we are studying."[88]

The institutionalization of *formação* over the years should not be confused with a simple bureaucratization of the movement. Instead, a stable mechanism has evolved through which the movement can coordinate efforts to adequately train new leaders and create more intellectual space for emerging and veteran leaders. This space allows MST members to reflect on past experience, create new knowledge and implement their findings into practice.

In the words of one student of the process, the task of the *formação* sector, which evolved soon after the birth of the movement, is to "construct and consolidate the political consciousness and the ideological strength of MST militants and leaders so that they can confront difficult moments and find solutions to problems faced daily within the movement."[89] Institutionally, the *formação* sector is responsible for coordinating *formação* activities at all levels of the organization, including the organization of courses and the administration of state, regional and national schools, courses and activities directed at the needs that arise from local encampments and settlements for technical agricultural and business administrative training, and the development of educational materials. This sector, as discussed below, organized at all levels of the movement over time, thus reflecting its importance and integration into the movement.

The history of *formação* can be divided into three periods: 1986 to 1990, 1990 to 2000, and 2000 to today.[90] In this time, the MST has developed three levels of *formação*: *formação de base*, the training of *militantes* and *dirigentes*, and the university training f

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[88] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.
[89] De Souza (2004), 4.
[90] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.

MST leaders. Below is a discussion of the goals, major initiatives and results of the work of the sector in each period.

Formação in the MST, 1986-1990

In the early period of the movement's emergence and consolidation, the tactic of land occupation served the movement's primary goal of achieving land for the landless. Meeting this immediate economic goal alone however did not automatically produce movement leaders and members prepared to take this struggle into the political realm and bring about the social transformation of the root causes of landlessness. MST leaders during this time increasingly came to the conclusion that political-ideological *formação*, in tandem with concrete struggle, would be necessary in order to support a more long-term struggle for social transformation.[91]

This period emphasized *formação de base* or the grassroots training of its emerging leadership. Since many emerging leaders came out of varying organizing traditions—from the church, from urban movements, and from the labor movement—the MST began to standardize *formação* in order to work with specific values and bring unity to the movement.[92] In the beginning, the MST worked in partnership with the union movement (CUT), the church, and other popular education entities (such as the *Centro de Educação Popular do Instituto Sedes Sapientiae*-Cepis) to organize leadership-training courses for the emerging *militantes* in the states where it was already organized.[93] These

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[91] De Souza (2004), 15.
[92] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.
[93] Horácio Martins de Carvalho, "A presença ativa do MST nas lutas sociais pela reforma agrária no Brasil (1984-2002)," Curitiba, September 2003, 45.

courses focused on how to solve the immediate needs of encampments and settlements, in order to find solutions to the day-to-day organizational problems.[94]

The courses organized in partnership with unions, called *escolas sindicais*, incorporated theoretical study and practical work that helped participants articulate their struggle. Each of these courses was given a name to celebrate a notable movement leader. The five states of the South (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo and Mato Grosso do Sul) took part in the Margarida Maria Alves School. The states of Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Bahia, Sergipe and Alagoas named their school Eloy Ferreira Silva School. The school in Maranhão and Pará was named after Padre Josimo Morais Tavares.[95] These first regional *escolas sindicais* addressed basic themes such as how society functions, modes of production (Stage 1), political economy, exploitation within capitalism and agricultural cooperation (Stage 2), unionism (Stage 3) and methodology for grassroots organizing (Stage 4).[96]

At the national level, the first *formação* courses where held with the National Coordination Committee during their periodic meetings. During this time, the MST still had not created a *formação* sector and so charged leaders based in the National Secretariat in São Paulo with overseeing both the national and regional courses.[97]

In 1987, the MST began its first training course for youth. This *Curso de Monitores*, organized for sixty youth and was held in six sessions or stages that met for ten days. In between course sessions, participants worked on with *formação* and organizing activities in their home states. The topics debated during this course included

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[94] Justo Pizetta (2005), 30.
[95] Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, *A formação do MST no Brasil* (Petrópolis: Voces, 2000), 175.
[96] Justo Pizetta (2005), 31.
[97] Ibid. 30.

the history of humanity, Brazilian history, the history of land struggle, the history of revolutions, methodology, the agrarian question and international experiences with land reform. These youth participants were trained so that they could return and take leadership roles in the MST in their home states.[98]

In the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, the *escolas sindicais* joint project between the unions and the MST became strained, as the union movement suffered a setback when Lula lost his 1989 bid for president. Also, by this point, the MST had advanced significantly in its organization and stabilization as a movement and wanted to develop its own space and process for the *formação* of its leaders.[99]

In 1988, within a drive toward more internal organization, the MST structured some of its sectors, including the national *formação* sector. This sector was charged with political-ideological *formação* within the movement, with a focus on developing an organizational consciousness among its members.[100] With the MST expanding into a national movement during this period, the MST sought ways to encourage its members to utilize cooperative production methods and therefore created mobile schools called *Laboratórios Organizacionais de Centro e do Campo*, or "Rural and Central Organizational Laboratories."[101]

Since the MST at this stage in the development of the movement did not have many settlement communities, it more easily targeted communities and leaders for training. For two or three months at a time, these *Laboratórios* would bring *dirigentes* with a background in *formação* to accompany the school while also assisting with the

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[98] Ibid. 31.
[99] Ibid. 32.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.

organization of the settlement in matters of production, education, *formação*, and their

experience with cooperation.[102] Taking from theoretical and practical reflections of

liberationist education thinkers in the area of such as Brazilian Paulo Freire and Russian

M.M. Pistrak, these courses became internal movement spaces for the elaboration and

evolution of the MST's organizational and pedagogical principles.[103] These processes

produced an increased number of *militantes* and *dirigentes* with greatly improved

leadership and organizing skills. The first *Laboratório de Centro* took place in 1988 in

Palmeiras das Missões, RS and the first *Laboratórios Organizacionais de Campo* took

place in 1989 in Nova Cantú, PR. Here participants studied administration, typing,

accounting, etc., together with more political themes, augmenting their capacity for

successful agricultural production. [104]

Formação in the MST, 1990-2000

During this second period, the MST recognized that it needed to cater its

Laboratórios to the needs and realities of specific settlements. Therefore, they developed

a new *formação* methodology called *Mini Laboratórios*, which later became known as

Formação Integrada à Produção (FIPs). During these courses, participants came from

around a region and stay in an MST settlement for up to thirty days. The courses took

place from six to nine months with various sessions. This new method allowed

participants to offer their volunteer labor to existing settlements, letting participants and

settlers exchange ideas and experience. The focus here was to improve cooperative

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[102] Interview with MST National *Formação* Sector Leader, Guararema, SP, 1/23/2007.
[103] For more on these two thinkers, see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000 and Pistrak, *Fundamentos da escola do trabalho*, Editora Expressão Popular, São Paulo, 2000.
[104] Justo Pizetta (2005), 32.

production, solve problems, and make settlements function well. These methodological innovations taught the MST that courses are not simply the preparation of ideas for delivery to participants, but rather that the courses are spaces for participants to develop their own curriculum, live together, and share experiences. They learned the value of theory tied to practice.[105]

The second period is also marked by the creation of the MST's own National School for *formação* in Caçador, Santa Catarina.[106] The building, originally owned by the Catholic Church, was purchased and converted into the MST's Training and Research Center (*Centro de Formação e Pesquisa Contestado*-CEPATEC). CEPATEC transformed into the MST's National School, and in 2001, was moved to Guararema where the MST had been constructing its own campus facility.

At this first MST National School, the MST developed several new courses. One was a *Formação de Militantes* or Militant Training course where MST leaders could be trained to take on national level tasks. Another course was a new *Curso de Militantes*, Militants course that began in 1991. This course lasted a full sixty days with two sessions per year and later became the Basic Militantes course of the National School, which still is offered today. Here participants learn the MST anthem, about the history of the movement, the significance of its symbols, and the history of land struggle in Brazil and Latin America. Course participants also studied Brazilian and Latin American thinkers who put forward analysis and proposals for a more just Brazil (including Che Guevara, Milton Santos, Paulo Freire, Florestan Fernandes, etc.)[107]

Low education levels proved to make learning as well as the development of

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[105] Ibid. 33.
[106] Morissawa (2001), 205.
[107] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.

settlements difficult for many landless, therefore leading to the addition of primary and

secondary school courses in teaching and Technical Training in the Administration of

Cooperatives (TAC).[108] According to an MST leader from this period, this training

"created a new kind of leader" due to its methodological innovations—a leader who more

adequately assesses the situation on the ground, draws from their experience, and

develops solutions to problems. These courses produced a generation of leaders who

today are active in leadership positions and sectors of the movement throughout Brazil.

Approximately ninety percent of all MST dirigentes at this stage participated in these

courses.[109]

In 1991, another more advanced *Curso de Militantes* later transformed into the

Curso para Formação de Dirigentes da Escola Nacional was created for those leaders

who had already completed the others. It started out as a fifteen-day course with four

sessions and later changed to a thirty-day course that meets for three sessions.[110] The

first of the *Curso Prolongado*, or Long Courses was organized in 1992 in states where the

MST was present. These courses then grew to include participants from the larger

regions and were designed to create a new militancy within the movement. These

courses lasted for nine or ten months, allowing for the development of a common mode

of work and values among participants. The Long Courses followed the methodology

that had evolved thus far of study, work, organizing, and living together.[111]

As the movement began to win more and more land, it began opening regional

Centros de Formação or Training Centers (see Appendix 1: Chart of MST *Centros de*

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[108] Morissawa (2001), 206.
[109] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.
[110] Justo Pizetta (2005), 34.
[111] Ibid.

Formação). As the movement prioritized the training of technicians to help settlements advance and teachers for settlement primary and secondary schools, the MST decided in 1995 to construct the Technical Institute for Training and Research in Agrarian Reform (Iterra) in Veranópolis, Rio Grande do Sul. Iterra organizes educational and research activities that respond to the needs of the movement. The school, operated by a small staff and the volunteer labor of its students, is a live-in facility where students study for up to months at a time. The idea for Iterra grew out of the first *Curso de Pedagogia*, or Pedagogy course for settlement schoolteachers from 23 states held in Braga, RS in 1989 with the support the Department of Rural Education (DER) of the Foundation for Developing Education and Research (*Fundação de Desenvolvimento Educação e Pesquisa*-FUNDEP).[112]

In 1996, the Josué de Castro School was created within Iterra in order to promote education, research, and capacity-building through formal courses in primary and secondary education, as well as teacher training courses, a course in Settlement Administration, a course for health technicians and communication technicians to MST participants.[113] By developing partnerships with universities, college and graduate courses emerged, including *Pedagogia da Terra* and a course with a specialization in Cooperativism.[114]

In 1995-96, discussions of a more expanded MST National School began to happen within the national *formação* sector. This school, a dream of MST leaders, would help advance the level of their cadre and multiply its leadership at all levels. The sector

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[112] Ibid. 35.
[113] Harnecker (2003), 205.
[114] Justo Pizetta (2005), 35.

made the official decision to construct such a school at a meeting in Espírito Santo in 1996, which began the planning process from 1996-1998.[115]

The year 1995 brought both the MST's Third National Congress as well as the beginning of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration, after Cardoso defeated Lula in 1994 in the first election round. The MST came to the decision that it not only needed to assert the issue of land concentration into the national debate by using its classic tactics of marches and land occupations, but also that it again must make efforts to improve its internal organization and *formação* processes. Within this context, the MST launched an internal campaign called "Let's Organize Our Base" in 1995.[116]

In 1996, the MST organized a new "train the trainers" course called *Curso de Formação de Formadores* with the intention that these trained leaders could then return to their states and reinvigorate grassroots organizing (*trabalho de base*). This course had two sections, one in the north and northeastern regions and the other in the south that met for thirty days. During these courses, leaders studied, but also designed and administered small *cursos be base* in area settlements and encampments with the supervision of their teachers. This course continued in 1999, adding two more levels to the course (each lasting thirty days). Participants added their reflections on their work back in their home communities to the curriculum.[117] The MST's approach embodies the Freirian concept of learning as a collaborative process in which teachers and students learn from one another, instead of the kind of top-down concept of learning advanced by traditional pedagogy.

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[115] Interview with MST National *Formação* Sector Leader, Guararema, SP, 1/23/2007.
[116] MST document. "Vamos organizar a base do MST," Cartilha No. 2, São Paulo, 1995.
[117] Justo Pizetta (2005), 36.

***Formação* in the MST, 2000 to Today**

The post 2000 period has brought many important advances to the MST's work with *formação*, including national *formação* campaigns to deepen study, organization, and training within the movement, the completion of the MST's National School in São Paulo, progress in the area of state-funded projects, and the development of two new stages of training for *dirigentes* and *militantes*. Throughout its years of struggle, the MST has remained committed to its goal to pressure the government to provide for its citizens, particularly in the areas of education, health, and policies that promote small agriculture. By partnering with the state on specific projects, such as teacher training, the MST achieves this objective while also maintaining the use of its methods and its influence over the projects' progress.

In 2000, in preparation for its Fourth National Congress, the MST carried out another extensive evaluation of itself and the changing national context, and concluded that there was a new historical context of the land reform struggle. Externally, the MST began to evaluate that peasants' primary enemy was no longer the *latifúndio* of traditional landholders, but rather the growing agroindustry whose actors include multinational corporations. In this changed economic structure, land occupations of large landholdings would no longer be the best tactic to achieve land reform. A document of the MST's *formação* sector made clear that forms of low-intensity warfare used against movements, the rising influence of the corporate-owned media, and the activity of state intelligence were increasingly demoralizing, criminalizing and dividing social movements.[118]

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[118] MST Setor de Formação, "Programa nacional de formação de militantes e da base do MST." Porto Velho, RO: Fundação Rio Madeira, 2001), 4.

One significant example of these fears becoming a reality was the establishment of a Congressional investigation (or *Comissão Parlamentar Mista de Inquérito da Reforma Agrária e Urbana*-CMPI da Terra) supported by the *bancada ruralista*. Beginning in September 2003 and concluding in November 2005, this "CMPI da Terra" or land investigation, set out to "to analyze the progress of agrarian reform, the social movements of workers and landowners, and the causes of rural conflicts and violence in order to identify concrete solutions to the agrarian reform problems in Brazil."[119] In reality the CMPI da Terra set out to investigate MST institutions, more specifically ANCA (*Associação Nacional de Cooperação Agrícola* or the National Association of Agricultural Cooperation), CONCRAB (*Confederação Nacional de Cooperativas de Reforma Agrária* or the National Confederation of Land Reform Cooperatives) and Iterra, which were accused of having misused public funds. The final report suggested changes to the law so that land occupation would be considered a heinous crime and a terrorist act.[120] While the Commission rejected this version of the final report, the two years of investigation provided material for two years of negative media coverage and unproved accusations, which undoubtedly influenced the public's opinion of the MST.

In 2002, when it became apparent that Lula, of the Workers Party, would be elected president, the MST believed it was time for MST leaders to deepen their understanding of these adversaries and their tactics. Internally, the MST made the case that despite ongoing *formação* efforts, the movement suffered from multiple weaknesses

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[119] MST website, "[6/4/05] MST Update #91: CPMI of Land--ideological platform of the fight for Agrarian Reform." Accessed 1/9/08 at http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=mstinforma91

[120] For analysis of this investigation see Sérgio Sauer, Marcos Rogério de Souza, and Nilton Tubino, "O Parlamento e a criminalização dos movimentos de luta pela terra: um balanço da CPMI da Terra." Accessed on 1/9/08 at:
http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:OUUjE2BrlLgJ:www.nead.gov.br/tmp/encontro/cdrom/gt/1/Sergio_Sauer_1.pdf+resultados+da+CMPI+da+Terra&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=3&gl=us&client=safari

that could lead to its defeat. These weaknesses included a low-level of consciousness at its base, a fragility of the movement's internal organization, as well as too much centralization in its method. Therefore, the *formação* sector and the movement as a whole launched the "National Program for *Formação*" in order to adequately respond to these challenges.[121]

The "National Program for *Formação*" proposed to augment *formação de base* as well as improve the organizational structure of *núcleos* led by trained *militantes*. Regional, state, and local coordinators or monitors carried out this program. The program had an emphasis on youth in the movement, as well as on bringing a permanent process of *formação* back to the base. The goal was to create 23,000 new leaders with strong ties to the grassroots who could help bring increased organization, more democratic participation, and better planning of the work of the movement to decrease spontaneity. In the movement's years of experience, spontaneous action did not bring the same level of success as thoroughly planned and organized action. When actions are spontaneous, members are less likely to anticipate negative outcomes, such as violence brought by hired gunmen or a lack of supplies, and are thus less able to appropriately respond and achieve their goals. One MST state program leader asserted that this program marked a "shift in the movement's strategy from thinking about amount of territory to the quality of our leaders and our organization."[122]

In the years 2003-2004, the MST was in a difficult state with President Lula's slow land reform progress coupled with peaked expectations from Brazil's poor. The MST intensified its *frente de massas* activity, organizing a surge of encamped families

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[121] Ibid. 2-5.
[122] Interview with MST National *Formação* Sector Leader, Guararema, SP, 1/23/2007.

waiting for Lula to fulfill his promises. According to MST data, the number of

encampments nationwide jumped from 526 encampments in 2002 to 633 and 661

encampments in 2003 and 2004 respectively. This surge resulted in more than doubling

of the numbers of encamped MST families between 2002 and 2006 (see Chart 1).

Chart 1: Surge in the Number of MST Encampments and Families Under Lula

Year	Number of MST Encampments	Number of Families
2006		150,000
2005	778	127,872
2004	661	114,776
2003	633	117,482
2002	526	67,298
2001	585	75,334
2000	555	73,066

Source: MST website, "Acampamentos - 1990 a 2006," http://www.mst.org.br/mst/pagina.php?cd=897

While this surge in encampments occurred throughout Brazil, MST data from 2003

shows that Pernambuco (143 encampments), Bahia (64 encampments), Paraná (60

encampments), Sergipe (56 encampments) and São Paulo (51 encampments) were the

most active with over 50 encampments in each state.[123]

As many social movement leaders took government posts, the MST benefited

from the refreshed leadership and links to its base that resulted from the recent National

Program for *Formação*. As Lula's lack of land reform action became apparent, the MST

felt it would isolate itself if it intensified direct action, especially since Lula appeared to

the general public to be supportive of the movement's goals. The MST therefore decided

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[123] MST website, "Acampamentos 2003." Accessed 1/9/08 at:
http://www.mst.org.br/mst/pagina.php?cd=882. Please note variation in 2003 data may be due to the delay
in calculating data.

to launch a National March from Goiânia to Brasília in 2005 with 12,000 MST marchers from around the country to drum up support for its improved land reform proposal.[124] While this march did draw substantial political and material support from unions, churches, nonprofits, and elected officials, these allies did not turn out in force in Brasília like they had in a similar national mobilization of 100,000 demonstrators in 1997. This time nearly the same number of marchers who began the march ended up in the nation's capital. The march did, however, have a strong *formação* component as marchers listened to discussions and lectures on radio headsets, debated topics in *núcleos*, and participated in *místicas*.[125]

This period also brought advances in linking *formação* and the state's educational system. In response to pressure brought by social movements, particularly from the MST, the Cardoso government launched a federal government program in 1997-98 called PRONERA (Program Nacional de Educação da Reforma Agrária). This program funds universities to conduct literacy, high school, and university level courses for rural people living in land reform settlements and encampments. Due to continued pressure from social movements, President Lula has promised an increase in PRONERA funds from R$44 million in 2007 to R$100 million in 2008. Growing partnerships with universities in addition to the implementation and augmentation of PRONERA funds creates the third stage of *formação* for the leadership—university level training.[126] While the *Centros* benefit from PRONERA funds, it is their goal to seek complete financial autonomy from

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[124] Ibid; see also, Friends of the MST website, "[5/20/05] MST Update #90: National March for Agrarian Reform Arrives in Brasília." Accessed on 1/9/08 at http://www.mstbrazil.org/?q=mstinforma90

[125] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.

[126] Ibid; Since 1999, the MST has worked hard to develop partnerships wit universities to offer extension courses, courses for youth leaders, etc. For more on how the MST's university partnerships contribute to the higher learning of *militantes* and *dirigentes*, see Justo Pizetta (2005), 36-39.

the state by becoming self-sustaining institutions through the sale of agricultural

products, grants, and student contributions.[127]

Examples of this advance include courses within the movement organized in

partnership with a university, where students learn to read and write, finish high school

and begin university studies at the same time as maintaining the MST content, method

and organization structure. Rural social movements submit grant proposals for courses

and when funds are released, participate in courses designed in collaboration with, in the

case of the MST, the *formação* sector, for social movement participants in the areas of

pedagogy, agronomy, history, geography, law, etc. While these funds do not go directly

to movements, are never enough to cover all costs, and are released only intermittently,

these opportunities allow peasants the opportunity to enter the university. These courses

also employ the methods developed in MST C*entros de Formação*. This program is

assisting in the preparation of yet another generation of qualified leaders.[128]

Another partnership with the government has supported internal work at MST

Centros de Formação. In 2004-05, the Lula government and the Ministry of Culture led

by minister Gilberto Gil launched a project called "Puntos de Cultura" or Points of

Culture. This project supported the creation of sixteen "points of culture" where

televisions, video players, internet access, and musical instruments could be made

available to rural people throughout Brazil. The MST strengthened their *Centros* by

housing these points of culture in existing *Centros*, thus adding to the educational

possibilities of these already existing hubs. They also received used computers from the

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[127] MST document. "Relatório do I seminário das coordenações pedagógicos dos cursos do MST," March 2005.
[128] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.

Banco do Brasil that were distributed to these *Centros* to create "digital inclusion stations" that can help teach children and youth build computer and internet skills.[129]

Over time, it appears that while the movement's *centros*, schools and institutes receive funding from multiple sources, including international nonprofit organization and foreign government sources as well as Brazilian state and federal government sources. With the goal of financial autonomy, the MST seeks to diversify its funding sources so as to avoid outside control over these institutions' activities, method, and focus. By seeking funding for a variety of projects—from grants for technical agricultural training and management to education and literacy grants—the MST is able to maintain these hubs of political education. A major source comes from the funding of international projects supported by mostly European nongovernmental organizations and governments. The strategy behind the construction of the state and regional *Centros* supported by such grants is to produce a movement hub that will benefit not just one isolated settlement, but rather all surrounding settlements and members in that region.[130]

Today, courses of *formação de base* continue to take place in the five major regions of Brazil including the Northeast, South, Central East, Southeast, and the Amazon region. These courses last sixty days where eighty to one hundred young people study and work in the *Centros de Formação*, students plan and plant a garden to grow their food, do practical organizing work in neighboring encampments and settlements, and participate in the *formação de base* course.[131] Since 2001, the *Curso Básico de Militantes da Escola Nacional* shifted from the fixed location of the National School in Caçador to traveling to different communities throughout the regions. This traveling

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[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

course allows MST leaders to study and reflect on their work in the surrounding community, instead of studying in the removed and static environment of a *Centro* or the National School. It also allows the course to take on a much more national character, since participants no longer have to travel so far, for example from the north and northeast, in order to participate.[132]

Also in 2001, the MST sold the National School facility in Caçador back to the Catholic Church in order to shift its focus to the construction of the new campus facility in Guararema.

In sum, data from 2003 notes that between 1984 and 2002 the size of *formação* activities grew. The total number of participants in short, medium or long-term courses was 102,180 (1984-1989: 17,020 people; 1990-1994: 24,930 people; 1995-2002: 60,220 people). The average number of people per year grew during each time period from 2,837 in the first period, to 4,986 in the second and 7,529 in the third (see Appendix 3: Training Courses for *Militantes* and *Dirigentes* from 1984 to 2002).

MST's Florestan Fernandes National School

Construction began in 2000 on the MST's National School in Guararema, São Paulo (60 kilometers from the city of São Paulo), which bears the name of Brazilian sociologist Florestan Fernandes. The *Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes* or the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF) was inaugurated in January 2005. The National School embodied the movement's values through its collective construction, focus on study, and adjacent space for agricultural production. This project represents collaboration between over 800 MST members who collectively built the structures as

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[132] Justo Pizetta (2005), 36.

participants in volunteer brigades from MST settlements and encampments from throughout the country.

ENFF has also provided the occasion to deepen other partnerships with civil society including professors, supportive elected officials, architects, engineers and artists.[133] Beyond volunteer labor, ENFF received support from photographer Sebastião Salgado who offered proceeds from his "Terra" exhibit to be used to purchase the land on which ENFF is built, as well as grants and loans from the European Union, European Friends of the MST groups, and the US-based Idyll Foundation, among others.[134] ENFF also facilitated the creation of a new support network called "Network of Professor Friends of the MST."[135]

ENFF now serves as a *formação* center and a center of movement planning as well as the most visible MST center in Brazil. Just as elites create their own educational spaces and think tanks, the MST as a social movement has opened a space that can serve as a pole of critical thought and knowledge production. The national *formação* sector bases its operations largely out of ENFF and is responsible for the programming of courses on the ENFF campus as well as eighty courses throughout the nation. In 2005, the ENFF consolidated as a hub for the higher education of MST leaders through partnerships with universities. College, graduate and university extension courses were planned out of ENFF and took place throughout the year (see Appendix 2: MST Training Courses at ENFF in 2005 for a list of courses that took place).

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[133] For a full analysis of the history leading up to and the process of building ENFF, see Justo Pizetta (2005).

[134] See the book of photograph from this exhibit, Sebastião Salgado, *Terra: Struggle of the Landless* (London: Phaidon, 1997). To view photos online, go to: http://www.landless-voices.org/vieira/archive-04.phtml?ng=e&sc=3&th=55&se=0

[135] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07.

ENFF gives strength to the second, more specialized stage of *formação* for *militantes* and *dirigentes* beyond the *formação de base*. This second stage includes specific courses with a stronger base in theory in the areas of, for example, political economy, working class struggles of Brazil, the history of land struggle in Brazil, and about specific issue-areas in the movement such as food sovereignty. Many of these courses, though not all, take place at ENFF in São Paulo. For these courses, the MST invites university professors and specialists to teach the *dirigentes* and *militantes*. These courses generally take place during three to four session of about fifteen days of intensive study, followed by a return to the home community for three months. For the home portion students receive tasks and reading homework to complete before they return for the next session. At the end of the course, students complete a written research paper reflecting on a topic relevant to their work in the movement. Through this method of work and study, the sector continues to build the skills and qualification of its leaders.[136]

The MST intends that ENFF will serve not only to train MST leaders, but also other Brazilian and even international leaders of the working class. From July to November 2007, ENFF hosted a training course for youth leaders connected to Via Campesina from throughout Latin America (and four representatives of the US). The goal of the course was to "develop a political-ideological course with a class of one hundred *dirigentes* from all of the countries and movements of Latin America."[137] Students studied Latin American history, political theory, and organizational methods, among other things.

In 2006, ENFF held courses and seminars for a total of 2,190 leaders, involving

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[136] Ibid.
[137] Youth Course Participant from the US, personal communication, 1/8/08.

126 professors. The school also hosted over 1,005 visitors. Plans for 2007 were projected to surpass these numbers and expand the MST's reach to new sectors of civil society. Additional courses planned for 2007 included intensive English for MST *militantes,* a course on the Southern Cone, a national course of pedagogical coordinators of all courses, a course for politically engaged members of the faith community, a production of theory course, Portuguese courses for Friends of the MST from Holland, and a Train the Trainers course, among others.[138]

Today's Formação *Sector*

Today, the national *formação* sector is made up of a collective of forty-two people, two representatives from each participant state. These leaders are what the MST calls *liberados nacionais* or leaders "liberated to do national tasks," who receive a monthly *ajudo de custo* or stipend and travel to all the states to accompany the *formação* courses. There is then a smaller executive committee made up of thirty people that deals with the *formação* of *militantes* and *dirigentes.* Members of this committee come from different sectors of MST work and are appointed by the National Coordination Committee.[139] At the state level, states are divided into regions. Depending on the number of MST families living in each region of the state, there will be one or more representatives elected to serve on the state level *formação* collective.

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[138] Field notes from planning meeting at ENFF, SP in January 2007.
[139] Interview with MST National *Formação* Sector Leader, Guararema, SP, 1/23/2007.

Other **Formação** *Campaigns*

Other *formação* campaigns and initiatives carried out during this period include collecting books for MST libraries, encouraging all MST members to study as well as a campaign to carry out an internal scan of the movement. In 2007, the MST launched a national "Campaign in Solidarity with MST Libraries" to collect books and help decentralize *formação* in the movement. By December 2007, they had received 50,000 donated books that will be redistributed to movement *Centros*.[140]

In 2007, the MST also launched another campaign called "All Landless in School," which encourages all MST members and leaders of all ages to participate and study in school related activity, be it literacy training, learning to read and write, keeping children in elementary school, taking advanced classes, etc. This campaign is perpetuated through the production and distribution of posters, debates in MST communities and encouragement from leaders.

In 2002-2003, the MST in partnership with the State University in São Paulo (UNESP) carried out what they called a "Mutirão do MST," or collective work project of the MST, which was a research project that sought to talk with and survey each family of the MST. The questions were designed to take a census of the movement, and, in keeping with the MST's emphasis on collaborative learning and planning between leaders and the base, to get reflections on movement participation from the grassroots. All MST leaders were asked to visit a designated number of families. The most important result of this effort, since national tabulation became quite difficult, was the direct contact with MST families. The process also served as *formação* for everyone who

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[140] Interview with MST National Leader, New York, 12/16/07; For more information, see http://www.mst.org.br/mst/especiais.php?ed=46

participated. Finally, the MST was able to use some of the questionnaires in assessments

of some of the states.[141]

Externally, since about 2005, in acknowledgment of the decline in social

movement activity, the MST has increased its work and articulation with other sectors of

civil society. With the increase in *formação* activities, more MST leaders are carrying

out the task of building partnerships, particularly with social movements based in urban

centers and peripheries with a focus on urban youth. As a link to other sectors of civil

society, ENFF planned to carry out three courses with urban youth in 2007.[142]

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[141] Ibid.
[142] Interview with MST National *Formação* Sector Leader, Guararema, SP, 1/23/07.

CONCLUSIONS

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Within social movement literature, there has been a call for further research into the causal mechanisms and processes that shape episodes of contentious politics. Social movement analysts often respond to this call with the study of tactics and strategies utilized by movement actors and their opponents, the marking of pivotal moments that dictate a movement's ebb and flow and the impact of external political opportunities and constraints on a movement's direction. In the case of Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement (MST), the tactic of land occupation has been deemed the motor or the spark that invigorates the movement. While land occupations successfully recruit new MST members, solidify their commitment to the immediate economic goal of land acquisition, and deepen democracy by making institutional channels for change available to the excluded, this tactic alone cannot explain movement expansion over time, nor does it explain the existence of thousands of MST leaders who have directed the activities of this national movement over the past nearly three decades.

The study presented here seeks to deepen recent efforts to understand the role of leadership in social movements. This study goes further to suggest that social movements, in this case the MST, identify, nurture, produce and reproduce leaders through the development of their own internal, systematized political education and training institutions and methods. By using a historical institutional approach, this study explores the path that leads a politically and economically excluded *sem terra* from a land occupation to a leadership position, demonstrating along the way how leadership development functions and evolves in a large movement by generating trained leaders

capable of asserting their citizenship rights, organizing and guiding the advancement of community and movement goals. In a movement that sees itself as a "movement of leaders," leadership development mechanisms reinforce commitment to movement goals from the *dirigente* level through to the base.

In the face of countless internal and external challenges, the analysis presented here argues that the movement's ability to multiply and train its leaders provides a significant pillar of strength and another clear explanation for its success. These internal mechanisms of leadership development prepare the movement to respond to external forces and give it internal strength. The study also argues that the development of such internal mechanisms further explains the movement's ability to slow the cooptation of its leaders into political parties, to expand its base and to sustain unity over nearly three decades.

Research presented above reveals that leadership training occurs in both formal and informal educational settings. Movement members learn informally by participating in daily organizing activities and mobilizations, but they also learn formally by participating in MST-designed and administered training programs and courses that cover a range of political and technical topics.

While the MST partnered in its early days with allied labor, church and popular education organizations to train its initial base of grassroots leaders, movement leaders soon realized the need to develop autonomous spaces and methods for problem-solving and the technical and skills training of their emerging leadership. They also learned that in order to deepen the commitment of movement members to long-term goals, they would need to work more with history and political-ideological training. A study and

training program for national leaders was also initiated in the beginning, indicating the MST's desire for a diversified training plan for all levels of its leadership.

In 1988, the MST created the *formação* sector that became primarily responsible for the advancement of training mechanisms within the movement. In the early 1990s, the MST realized that its methodology of holding courses at fixed training centers alone was limited, and therefore it began to organize traveling courses catered to the needs and realities of specific settlement and encampment communities. Training experiences from this period also taught the movement the value of studying theory and tying it to their practice. Due to low education levels in the Brazilian countryside, they also learned the value of offering primary and secondary schooling alongside political and technical skill building. As the MST won land titles and began to form settlement communities, early courses focused training on themes of cooperative production and settlement administration. As encamped members became settlement residents, the MST consolidated a generation of leaders, many of whom later became today's *dirigentes*, out of this organizing push via their participation in these early courses and mobilizations.

The institutionalization of *formação* training over the years has not simply been the bureaucratization of the movement. Instead, a stable mechanism evolved through which the movement coordinates efforts to adequately train new leaders, and creates more intellectual space for both emerging and veteran leaders. Such spaces, which took the form of MST *Centros de Formação,* schools and institutes, emerged throughout Brazil to serve as state and regional hubs for training and the exchange of experience. These hubs allowed MST members to reflect and study their own realities—through the study of history, economics, social structures, etc.—as well as the experience of other

movements and thinkers. These hubs provide space for the creation of new knowledge, which is later implemented into practice.

Over the years, this system remained flexible and responsive to local, state and national movement needs and was increasingly prioritized and institutionalized by the movement as it has continued to face external pressures and challenges. Thus, leaders who pass through this system are more capable than previous social movement leaders and are able to create political alternatives from the bottom up, instead of simply implementing past models of top-down social transformation.

The creation of "social movement schools" *within* the movement, culminating with the construction of the Florestan Fernandes National School in São Paulo, proposes a new model of leadership development. By developing within an autonomous movement, these hubs of knowledge creation and reflection of practice are less likely to be separated from movement goals. Instead, these institutions have shown themselves prepared to respond to the emerging needs of the local community and the national movement and to serve as a repository of movement experience and lessons learned.

From 1990 to now, the MST has formed a diversified network of institutions internal to the movement that carry out a variety of courses for the training of movement members and leaders. As the *formação* sector grew, with its various institutions and courses as well as sectors increasingly organized at the state level, the MST prioritized leadership training at all levels—with the grassroots, the *militantes*, and the *dirigentes*. This diversification of training encouraged a high quality of training for the various generations of leaders.

As mentioned above, the number of participants in *formação* activities has grown in connection to the creation of additional institutions and courses. From 1984 and 2002, the total number of participants in short, medium or long-term courses was 102,180 (1984-1989: 17,020 people; 1990-1994: 24,930 people; 1995-2002: 60,220 people) (see Appendix 3: Training Courses for *Militantes* and *Dirigentes* from 1984 to 2002). This data does not consider recent advances since 2002, most notably the MST National School which trained 2,190 leaders in 2006 alone. By participating in leadership training, MST leaders are better equipped to respond to problems and challenges they face in the movement. Training allows them to unpack and analyze these challenges and to improve their ability to understand power relations, politics, and economics at all levels. For an oppressed people, academic and technical study also raises self-esteem of individuals. The MST's focus on youth, and in recent years on urban youth, also reflects its emphasis on future generations of leaders to take the movement into the future.

Through the political assessments that emerge from such courses and reflections, as well as other movement gatherings, movement leaders have intermittently anticipated the intensification of elite tactics and external political constraints. During these periods, the MST has sought to improve their internal organization and strengthen leadership development so as to prepare itself to adequately respond to external pressures.

Research also indicates that the MST's *formação* practices incorporated the movement's evolving organizational structure as well as liberationist pedagogical principles. The MST's organizational structure functions not only to make occupation and settlement life more democratic and participatory, but also when applied in the educational realm, helped produce leaders capable of reflecting on their reality and

practice, raising these reflections to the level of theory, and then applying these reflections to improve practice.

Through its work to both mobilize an educate, the MST encourages new democratic actors armed with the weapons of knowledge of citizenship rights to directly confront and negotiate with landowners, the state and the judiciary by occupying "unproductive land" and demanding access to credits and services for those living amidst the extremes of poverty and social exclusion. The *formação* process opens up opportunities for traditionally excluded populations to participate politically, both through debate and study, as well as through reflection and analysis of their political action. As Kathryn Hochstetler notes, the MST deepens democracy through its use of institutional channels and land occupation strategy. To take this analysis one step further, it is important to recognize the role of the MST's internal mechanisms of political education that prepare its leaders and members, helping them reflect on and understand the surrounding power structures and institutional channels available to a *sem terra*.

The MST believes that through its work with its leaders, its members, and the masses, the movement is able to create what Gramsci describes as the construction of counterhegemony. Counterhegemony emerges through the change of cultural practices, values, perception, knowledge, and the hegemony of the national social and political system. The institutionalization from within the movement also provides fixed spaces and programs where members and institutions of civil society can easily partner with the movement and contribute their vision to the creation of counterhegemony. With these internal mechanisms, the MST can invite scholars, university institutions, other social movements, politicians, foreign funders, and international movements and activists to

collaborate on movement projects in support of its goals. This collaboration can help develop the new perceptions, ideas, and knowledge that challenges elites, while further filtering this fever-evolving counterhegemony into other sectors of civil society.

The MST successfully counters the trend toward cooptation of its leaders by deepening and expanding its leadership base through the development of these mechanisms. These critically overlooked internal movement mechanisms produce and reproduce this movement and, as this paper argues, contribute significantly to increased militancy at all levels of leadership, discipline and overall effectiveness that helps the movement capitalize on external political opportunities.

The MST case, while specific to the historical trajectory of Brazilian democracy, contributes not only to the academic literature on contentious politics, but also to the knowledge base of grassroots leaders around the world. Further research is needed on the role of leadership development in other global movements, including within community organizing in the United States. Lessons from the institutional development and leadership training experience of the MST could certainly inform similar attempts within other movements, particularly those of the poor and working class. As these populations are increasingly excluded from institutions of higher learning with rising educational costs and the importance of standardized test scores, movements have the opportunity to educate new generations of leaders for change.

APPENDIX 1: Chart of MST *Centros de Formação*

Year	Name of Training Center	Address	State
	Associação Cultural do Centro de Formação Carlos Marighela	Rod. Prado Cumuruchatiba Km 7 Assentamento 1° de Abril Municipio de Prado	BA
	Associação Cultural do Centro de Formação Florestan Fernandes	BA 675 Km 1 Assentamento Terra à Vista Município de Arataca	BA
	Centro de Formação Integrada Fábio Henrique	Assentamento Beira Rio, Município de Boa Vista do Tupim, Chapada Diamantina	BA
1987	Intergrated Center for the Development of the Settled and Small Producers / Centro Integrado de Desenvolvimento dos Assentados e Pequenos Agricultores (CIDAP) Renamed in 2004 Centro de Formação Maria Olinda (CEFORMA)	Rod. Miguel C. Carneiro / ES-381 km 44 Distrito De Nestor Gomes São Mateus CEP: 29930-000	ES
	Centro de Formação Gabriela Monteiro	Assentamento Gabriela Monteiro, Brazlândia	DF
	Centro de Formação Canudos - Instituto de Capacitação e Pesquisa para a Pequena Agricultura no Cerrado	Assentamento Canudos, Área 3 - Sede, Caixa Postal 21 CEP: 76190-000 Palmeiras de Goiás Zona Rural	GO
	Centro de Capacitação e Pesquisa Padre Josimo Tavares	Jutay S/N Povoado Vila Diamante Negro CEP: 65345-000 Igarapé do Meio	MA
	Centro de Formação Francisca Veras	Assentamento Oziel Alvez, Governador Valadares/ MG	MG
	Centro de Capacitação e pesquisa Dorcelina Fonador	BR 163 km 18, Várzea grande CP 8012 CEP: 78.048-970 Cuiabá MT	MT
	CESIR - Centro de Formação Silvio Rodrigues	Assentamento Silvio Rodrigues, Municipio de Rio Brilhante/ MS CEP: 79.130-000	MS
	Centro De Capacitação E Pesquisa Geraldo Garcia - CEPEGE	Assentamento Geraldo Garcia Ms 162 Km 12 CEP: 79173-000 Sindrolândia	MS
	CEDITEP - Centro de Ensino e Difusão de Tecnologias Populares	Assentamento Itamaratí, Munícipio de Ponta Porã	MS
	Centro de Pesquisa Capacitação e Desenvolvimento Mártires de Abril	Av.Itacaiunas, N°2063 Bairro Cidade Nova CEP: 68509-110 Bairro Centro	PA
2001	Associação do Centro de Formação Paulo Freire	5° Travessa do Vassoral N° 155 Bairro: Vassoural Caruaru - CEP:55030-77	PE
	ITEPA - Instituto Técnico de Educação e Pesquisa da Reforma	Br 277 Km 706 Nova Roma São Miguel Do Iguaçu CEP: 85877-000	PR

	Agrária	Caixa Postal 222	
	CEAGRO - Centro de Desenvolvimento Sustentável e Capacitação em Agroecologia	Assentamento Jarau - localidade de Ouro Verde - CX.POSTAL: 24 CEP: 85.160-000 CANTAGALO	PR
	Escola Milton Santos - Centro de Educação Rural em Agroecologia e desenvolvimento Econômico Sustentável	1,7 km da Rodovia de Maringá - Maringá/ PR Caiza Postal 325 CEP 87001-970 Estrada Velha Paissandu	PR
	Centro de Capacitação Patativa do Assaré	Rua João Xavier Pereira Sobral nº1086 Bº Pacifica - Ceará Mirim CEP: 59.570-000	RN
	Centro de Formação Padre Ezequiel	Mirante da Serra/ RO	RO
	Instituto Preservar -Sepê Tirajú		
	Centro De Formação Antônio Joceli Correia		
1995	Technical Institute for Training and Research in Agrarian Reform (Iterra) / Instituto Técnico de Capacitação e Pesquisa da Reforma Agrária was created within Iterra	Veranópolis	RG
1996	Josúe Castro School / Escola Josúe Castro (in Iterra)		
1997	Centro de Educação e Pesquisa Popular em Agroecologia (CEPPA)/ BioNatur		RG
2001	Instituto Educar	Assentamento Nossa Senhora da Aparecida Área Nove Pontão - RS CEP:99190-000	RS
	Escola Agrícola 25 de Maio	Assentamento Vitória Da Conquista Fraíburgo Caixa Postal: 103 Santa Catarina / SC	SC
1996	Centro de Capacitação Canudos (CECAC)	Assentamento Moacir Wanderley - Povoado Quissamã, S/N, Zona Rural -CEP: 49160-000 N.S.do Socorro/SE SERGIPE CEP:49160-000	SE
	Sócio - Agrícola Dom Hélder Câmara	Rodovia Alexandre Balbo. Km 328.5 Anel Viário-Contorno Nortesitio Pau D´Alho. Vila Monte Alegre. Ribeirão Preto - SP CEP: 14057-800	SP
	CEPATEC - Centro de Formação e Pesquisa Contestado	Rua Dr. Rubens Meireles, 136 - Barra Funda CEP.01141-000 SP	SP
2005	Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes	Estrada Municipal 1140 - Prateí/ CEP: 08900-000 Guararema	SP

Source: MST National Leader, personal communication with document titled "Centros de Formação Completo," 12/19/07.

Appendix 2: MST Training Courses at ENFF in 2005

College-level Courses

Course Name	Date/Location	Length	Participant Requirements	Partnerships
History	May/Stage 2 João Pessoa	4 yrs		UFPB
Licensing in Agrarian Sciences	May/Stage 2 Bananeiras	4 yrs		UFPB
Creation of Social Organizations and Cooperatives	June/Stage 1 ENFF	4 yrs		Santo André Foundation

Graduate Courses

Specialization in Latin American Studies	Feb-Aug Stage 4; Juiz de Fora			UFJF/ENFF
Specialization in Latin American Studies	January; Juiz de Fora	2 yrs	Must be a *formador*/educator, *dirigente*	UFJF/ENFF
Specialization in Political Economy	September; CIDAPE, ES	2 yrs	Must be a *formador*/educator, MST agronomist, have done "Brazilian Reality" course	UFES/ENFF
Masters in Political Economy of Agriculture	September; Campina Grande, PB	2 yrs	Must be a *formador*/educator, *dirigente*; be active in settlements	UFCG/ENFF
Masters in Sociology	July; Campina Grande, PB	2 yrs		UFCG/ENFF
Specialization in Rural Education	May-June; ENFF	2 yrs		

University Extension Courses

Social Theories and the Production of Knowledge	February and July (Stage 3 & 4); Rio de Janeiro	2 yrs		UFRJ/ENFF
Social Theories and the Production of Knowledge	January 2006 (Stage 1); Rio de Janeiro	2 yrs	MST *formador*/educator; coordinators of sectors and teachers in MST Schools	UFRJ/ENFF
Biosecurity	2 Stages; ENFF	30 days	Use technical equipment; agronomists or agrarian technicians; *dirigentes* of collectives in the production sector	Fiocruz/Meio Ambiente/ ENFF
Latin American Agroecology	August; Lapa, PR	2 ½ months per stage	Agronomists, technicians that use technical equipment; *militantes* in the production sector who have completed high school	UFPR/Venezuela government/ ENFF

Source: MST pamphet, "A Organicidade e o Planejamento: Construindo Coletivamente" Cartilha de Estudo #6, June 2005, 50-51.

APPENDIX 3: Training Courses for *Militantes* and *Dirigentes* from 1984 to 2002

Year	Activity	Location	# of students
1984 to 1989	Union Schools		16,000
	Level 1 and 2 Courses: • Eloy Ferreira da Silva • Margarida Alves • Padre Josimo • Quilombo dos Palmares	• Northeast/ Southeast • South • Maranhão • Pernambuco	90
	01 Rural Laboratory	Training Centers (*Centros de Formação*)	600
	05 Rural Laboratory	Settlements	150
	State courses for Monitors and *Militantes*	Nationwide	180
	TOTAL from 1984-89		**17,020**
	Annual average		*2,837*
1990 to 1994	Integrated training with production in the states / regions / settlements	*Formação Integrada à Produção* or Integrated Training in Production	20,000
	Laboratories of the Center	*Centros de Formação*	450
	State and National Rural Laboratories	Settlements	2,400
	Basic Course of the National School	National School in Caçador	800
	Train the Trainers		480
	Regional Prolonged Course		800
	TOTAL from 1990-1994		**24,930**
	Annual average		*4,986*
1995 to 2002	Regional Prolonged Course		2,400
	Training of Professors of Philosophy and Political Economy		40
	Training of the grassroots (part of the National Training Program)		15,000
	Capacity building for Pedagogical Coordinators in courses		200
	Brazilian Reality Course for Youth (in partnership with UNICAMP)	National	4,000
	Youth Course for the states		36,800
	Brazilian Reality through the thinkers		70
	Course of the National Training Program (in partnership with UERJ)		520
	Leaders Course (*dirigentes*)		80
	Regional Train the Trainers	Northeast / South	720
	5 Southern Cone Courses		400
	TOTAL from 1995-2002		60,220
	Annual average		*7,529*
1984 to 2002	**GRAND TOTAL**		**102,180**

Source: MST National, Formação Sector; report by Horácio Martins de Carvalho, "A presença ativa do MST nas lutas sociais pela reforma agrária no Brasil (1984-2002), Curitiba, September 2003, p. 46-47.

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Interviews, Field Notes, & Email Communications

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