LIVING DREAMS

Creating revolutionary educational environments: The political education of the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST)

LA EDUCACIÓN POPULAR ES MÁS QUE UN TALLER

POPULAR EDUCATION IS MORE THAN A WORKSHOP

Author: Erika Del Carmen Fuchs
Date Submitted: November 24, 2004

A Major Paper submitted to the Faculty of Environmental Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Environmental Studies York University, North York, Ontario, Canada

_____
Erika Del Carmen Fuchs

_____
Deborah Barndt, Major Paper Supervisor

"Fora transgenicos, Não aceitamos esse tipo de sementes em nossas terras." No GMOs, We do not accept those types of seeds on our lands. —A *mística* in a MST course for militants.

Living dreams. We create and build what we want our society to be. These are not the capitalist dreams of getting more money, more profit—individual dreams that often divide communities. These living dreams are ones of a collective society where the basic needs of food, housing, work and education are met in a dignified manner. And there is an education that works alongside, for, towards the creation, construction of this society. This is because it is not enough to just dream, we must educate in order to have our dreams come true. To realize them we must build them. We must educate and know that they can be real. Why shouldn't we all live in dignity?

~ Carmen Gómez ~

MST militants in class.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

In Canada, I want to acknowledge the following for financial and institutional support: FES at York, CIDA/AUCC (for funding), an OGS scholarship, and YCISS for the Martin Cohnstaedt Graduate Research Award for Studies in Non-Violence.

I am especially grateful to Professor Deborah Barndt and Professor Ellie Perkins, who offered me much more than just academic support—they are both very dear in my heart, as two people who were fundamental not only in getting me to Brazil but in believing in what I did. They encouraged me to follow my passion and commitment both to academic work and to social transformation. Thanks too to Professor Leesa Fawcett for referring me to Ellie.

There are many loved ones I want to thank, especially my family and the *chango* family, and those friends who reviewed my drafts and provided valuable feedback.

I also want to acknowledge that beyond academic support, there has been emotional support from so many people—friends, and fellow "living dreamers."

In Brazil, there is an endless amount of people I want to thank for their help and support. Most notably Maria Gorete de Sousa *(minha companheira da luta e de sonho)*, Wanusa Pereira dos Santos (at the MST main Office, International Relations sector), Cristina de Sousa, Michelly, Carmen, Angelo, Andrea, Jane, Silvio, Gislene, Alvaro, Monica, and many popular educators, militants, and members of the MST, as well as Tasso, a friend outside the MST.

Foreword

This Major Paper seeks to fulfill part of the requirements towards my degree as Master of Environmental Studies by penetrating in depth one of the components of my Area of Concentration, namely Popular Education and Organization. My Area of Concentration is Popular Education in Latin America and Canada. My research in popular education with the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) allowed me to achieve many of my Plan of Study objectives and deepen knowledge of my Area of Concentration. As well as in-depth research of one of my components, Popular Education and Organization, my experience with the MST provided insight into the other Plan components, Globalization and Migration, and Refugee and Migrant Studies. The MST counteracts the negative aspects of neoliberal globalization, such as migration to cities and out of the country, by working towards an Agrarian Land Reform that allows people to provide the means for their own subsistence as well as be the agents of social transformation.

In my Major Paper, I respond to the following learning objectives:
- To research the methodology and heritage of popular education, especially how movements use popular education, in order to use it better in my popular education work.
- To study and better understand the context-specific methodology of popular education in Brazil, Mexico and Canada, in order to better understand how it is can be used in different contexts.
- To explore the definition of neoliberal globalization as it has been used in the last 10 years, in order to be able to understand some of its negative impacts on migration patterns and land distribution.
- To study and better understand what hegemony is and how it affects people's ability to think critically, in order to find strategies to promote critical thinking with the use of popular education.
- To research and examine strategies with which people counter the negative forces of neoliberal globalization in order to offer them as examples in my popular education work.

Abstract

This Major Paper focuses on the popular and political education of the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST). The goal is to understand how popular education emerges from and is embedded in a social movement and within the specific context of Brazil. Popular education is a methodology and way of living and thinking that encourages us to actively participate in learning as well as naming, understanding, and questioning the structure of society conceived in terms of neoliberal globalization. In Chapter 1, the author discusses her social, political and organizational identities in relation to popular education and her research. This is followed by an explanation, in Chapter 2, of the practice and theory of popular education, drawing on theorists and practitioners such as Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire as well as the MST itself to discuss concepts like *conscientization*, *praxis, hegemony, historic bloc* and *common sense*. These concepts are key to understanding the process of how the MST conscienticizes its membership in order to build popular power and challenge the current correlation of forces. Since analyzing both context and the correlation of forces is essential to an understanding of popular education, in Chapter 3, there is a discussion of the historical and present Brazilian context in relation to the Landless Movement. Once elements of the historical context and current conjuncture are looked at, there is a focus on how the MST as a social movement strategically uses its own popular education, Pedagogy of the Land. The MST's pedagogy is ultimately coherent with achieving its political objectives of land, Agrarian Reform and social transformation. Chapter 4 illustrates the MST's Pedagogy of the Land by describing one of their educational institutes. Chapter 5 provides further examples of how the MST's popular education courses integrate key elements that can be found in various social movements. This chapter includes a discussion on gender, grassroots work, and the creation of an educational environment. The conclusion includes some final reflections on lessons learned from the experience with the MST in Brazil.

GLOSSARY

NOTE: Throughout the Major Paper, words in *italics* can be found in the Glossary; therefore, I do not define them in the body of this work. The exception to this practice is the words in *italics* within quotes. In this case, they have been put in *italics* for emphasis by the author whom I am citing, so for the most part, they are not included in this Glossary.

Acampamento *(Portuguese)* Encampment in English. The phase after the occupation of the land, once MST members set up provisional housing structures, known as *barracos*. At this stage, MST members await the land title and technical assistance that is part of the current process of Agrarian Reform. After the MST occupies land, they set up temporary or provisional communities (*acampamentos*), complete with housing (of black plastic tarp) and in many cases basic schooling and other needs. (Petras refers to the *acampamento* as a campsite.)

Assentamento (*Portuguese)* Settlement in English. An MST community that has received land title through the current government process of Agrarian Reform. The phase after the encampment.

Barraco (*Portuguese)* Black plastic or tarp tents that are temporary housing structures for the MST members who live in encampments and even a period while they are on settlements in the process of constructing their permanent houses.

Base *(Portuguese or English)* The grassroots membership of a movement or organization.

Base Nucleus The smallest unit in the MST's organizational structure. In an encampment or settlement, this consists of a group of families; in a MST course, this consists of a group of militants.

Campesino (*Spanish)* When translated into "peasant" or "farmer" loses some of its meaning. Campesino has a specifically political connotation that includes the historic struggle for the land, as well as the way that *campesinos* work the land and their vision of the land.

Capitania heridatária *(Portuguese)* Extremely large landholdings in Brazil that were handed over to Portuguese nobles under a concession, not ownership; the ownership remained in the hands of the Portuguese Crown until 1822 and then the Brazilian Empire until 1850 (Morissawa 57-8).

Class Consciousness The process of awareness that there is a class structure and that one belongs to a particular class, often socioeconomic, but not limited to this; involves also understanding the complexity of defining class.

Coherence Refers to coherence between thoughts, words, and actions, such that what we say is reflected in what we do, and vice versa.

Colonization The distribution of land to or settlement of land by small tenant farmers; "distribution of small lots for the subsistence of a family" (Stedile *A questão agraria* 36).

Companheiro/a *(Portuguese)* Comrade, friend in the struggle.

Conjuncture A key moment in which political, economic and cultural forces converge to create certain conditions in which there may be an opportunity to transform the correlation of forces between classes in society.

Conjunctural Analysis An analysis of a *conjuncture*, a key moment in which there may be an opportunity to transform the correlation of forces between classes in society. The short-term aim

of the *conjunctural analysis* is to determine the state, and strengths and weaknesses of the dominant forces in relation to the popular forces. Depending on the analysis, there may be appropriate strategies to carry out to try to change the correlation of forces in favour of the popular forces. The long-term purpose of such analyses is a complete transformation of the current structure, by contributing to an understanding of the structure to be transformed. Alternatively, as Freire defines it, it is "the fortuitous conjunction of concrete phenomena that might not be repeated, or might recur only rarely" (*Pedagogy of Hope* 191).

Conscientização   *(Portuguese; conscientization* in English) The process of *conscientização*, which is central to popular education, is a growing individual and collective awareness (both reflective and active) of our situation within a given social context that ultimately empowers us to collective action. *Praxis*, the integration of theory and practice in a dialectical manner is key to the practice of popular education and its process of *conscientização*, as it involves our previous experience, reflection on our experience and finally action.

Conscienticize To work together with primarily working class or oppressed people in order for them to acquire or raise their level of class consciousness; this process is not limited to conscienticizing others, but must involve conscienticizing one's self as an educator.

Dialectical In contrast to a linear way of thinking, dialectical thinking or analysis sees what may appear as opposing forces as interacting and interlocking with each other.

Educand In the process of popular education, this is the learner. Used with term educator, who guides or facilitates the process of popular education, while the *educands* goes through the process. Implies a dialectical approach to educating in which the educator and *educand* both teach and learn from each other.

Encampment See *acampamento*.

Ementa   *(Portuguese)* The outline of an activity, where it fits in and the desired objectives. Can also be referred to as a design loom of a workshop or activity.

Farinha *(Portuguese* for flour*)* In different regions of Brazil, the cassava root, known as *mandioca* is a staple food. It is dried, ground and roasted into a type of cereal, known as *farinha*, that is then sprinkled on a variety of foods.

Farofa *(Portuguese)* Particularly in the Northeastern region of Brazil special corn flakes that are cooked into a paste (somewhat like "polenta" in Italy) and eaten with meat, usually.

Favela *(Portuguese)* City slums. Large urban settler communities, often in very precarious areas. The people living in *favelas* do not own the land, but over time have occupied it due to housing shortages. Many *favelas* have become infamous for their own internal criminal organizations, often with much power even outside the *favela*.

Fome Zero   *(Portuguese)* "Zero Hunger," a program created by the Lula government to fight poverty and hunger in Brazil.

Formação   *(Portuguese)* A process of political education and training of militants within an organization or movement to prepare them to better perform their tasks with a high level of consciousness and knowledge, so that they can in turn train and educate others. Integral to *formação* is the attention given to the process of human and personal development, within a social and collective context.

One element of popular education is political *formação*. Although in English, "formation" is not as widely understood as being political education, in most Latin American countries it is understood because of their history of social movements that practice political *formação*. In the process of popular education, the participant is politicized and becomes a conscious political and social subject. However, the concept of "formação" includes more than just political education; it is more holistic or integral, including human and personal development. It tries to incorporate a humanization of the individual within a collective revolutionary or transformational environment. It assumes that within capitalist society, there is a degradation of the human in part caused by the alienation inherent in capitalist structures and production or work activities. One of the statements made by Ché Guevara, an Argentinean and honorary Cuban revolutionary, may best exemplify this spirit that "formação" aims to achieve within the individual militant: "We must become hardened without ever losing tenderness." This means that militants must become stronger in their conviction and subsequent actions, but never lose the humanity that is essential and part and parcel of what they are fighting for.

Throughout this paper, I use "political education" instead of *formação*, for the most part, and political educator to describe the person who carries out this education.

Guerrillero *(Spanish)* Guerrilla fighter; usually part of an armed movement in resistance against the oppressive ruling political party or class.

Hegemony "Hegemony is a relation, not of domination by means of force, but of consent by means of political and ideological leadership. It is the organisation of consent" (Simon 21). "Hegemony is a relation between classes and other social forces. A hegemonic class, or part of a class, is one which gains the consent of other classes and social forces through creating and maintaining a system of alliances by means of political and ideological struggle" (Simon 22).

Jornada *(Portuguese)* Working day.

Landless Refers not only to the condition of not owning or having land, but also to the other aspects that accompany this, which include lack of work, housing and food security. Landless with a capital "L" refers to the members of the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) of Brazil, and constitutes a unique collective identity, based on the land and its physical, social, cultural and political aspects.

Latifundiario *(Portuguese)* The owner of a large unproductive landholding, usually passed on hereditarily.

Latifundio *(Portuguese* or *Spanish)* "A large area of land in the possession of one owner." The interpretation of "large" depends on the region. In the Brazilian Amazon this may be an area of more than 5,000 hectares, whereas in Southern Brazil this may be an area of 500 hectares. This name was used in the Brazilian "Statute of the Land, in November 30, 1964, to designate large unproductive properties" (Morissawa 13).

Liberatory Education Education that serves to liberate both educator and *educands* not only from traditional roles that disempower rather than empower, but also that works towards liberation from different forms of oppression to a social transformation.

Lucha *(Spanish)* Struggle.

Magisterio *(Portuguese* or *Spanish)* Teachers' training course or program.

Mandioca *(Portuguese)* Cassava root, a staple food in many regions in Brazil.

Materialism An ideology that usually stands in contrast to idealism, in which ideas are thought to influence material reality, make change. In materialism, the realm of material reality and specifically the relations of production is where change can be made.

Mestiza/Mestizo *(Spanish)* A Latin American of mixed race, particularly between indigenous person and someone of Spanish descent. Similar to Canadian word *Métis.*

Militant Used in Latin America (*militante* in Spanish and Portuguese) (and other parts of the world) to describe a member of a social movement or organization that strives for social transformation; usually someone who has a position or performs a variety of tasks within the movement, as opposed to general membership, which may not necessarily be given specific tasks, which are part of ensuring the movement accomplishes its objectives. This term denotes active commitment to the movement and its objectives.

Mística (*Portuguese* or *Spanish*) It is the word used to describe both MST mysticism and a specific technique or specific manifestation of *mística* in the form of short (formative or educational) plays or theatre pieces that militants and grassroots members act out in a variety of events, which include meetings, courses, and state and national encounters. There is a *dialectical* relationship between the different interpretations of *mística*: it is never just a play.

A type of secular mystique or mysticism and practice that draws upon historical and collective memory to revive the spirit of struggle and resistance based on the land in its spiritual, social, cultural, political and economic aspects.

Nuclei See *base nuclei.*

Organicidade *(Portuguese)* The organic development or form of organization of a movement.

Pedagogo-Militante (*Portuguese* or *Spanish)* A vision of a militant within an organization or movement as being part of the process of *conscientization* of him or herself as well as of others in the movement, as an educator-militant. All tasks and activities within the Movement are seen as having pedagogical value which the *pedagogo-militante* should take advantage of.

Pedagogy The philosophy or theory of education or educational processes. Education is a process, and pedagogy the theory or philosophy which studies it (Freire *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 24).

Political Educator *(Formador/a* in Portuguese or Spanish) Someone who dedicates her or himself to the task of politically educating and training others in order to assume certain tasks within an organization or movement with a high level of consciousness and knowledge. This person guides or accompanies those who are in their process of political education or of *conscientização.*

Popular Education An alternative form of education that encourages us to actively participate in learning about as well as naming, understanding, and questioning the structure of society conceived in terms of neoliberal and imperialist globalization. It questions the neutrality said to be in education, as well as the relationship between educator and *educand*, and the role and construction of knowledge. Participants learn to analyze their material and historical reality or situation of oppression in order to recognize that they are agents within this historical process and construction. Central to it is *praxis*, the integration of theory and practice in a *dialectical* manner, as well as a critical approach and pedagogy that involves self-reflection and self-

actualization. In the process of popular education and of the awareness-raising (*conscientização*) that it works towards, the potential exists for individuals and groups to feel empowered to transform our society into one that takes into greater consideration the right of people to reach their potential and do this within a context of respect for the environment around them.

Praxis The *dialectical* relationship between theory and practice.

Produtos da Reforma Agraria *(Portuguese)* Agrarian Reform products. These are products produced in MST *settlements* and *encampments* which are then sold in the MST Agrarian Reform stores located in different areas of Brazil. They are often produced in MST cooperatives, and include anything from top-quality milk, wine, cassava root alcohol, *farinha*, clothing, and handmade jewellery.

Quilombo *(Portuguese)* Community of slaves in resistance that escaped from their "owners" and achieved their freedom in these communities. Other poor as well as indigenous people lived in *quilombos*.

Reality A view that takes into account not only material reality, but also the perception or construction of that reality, which is an analysis of reality. This view of reality stands in contrast to concept of reality as is, unalterable. If reality is a construction, it is constructed by people, and, therefore, can be challenged.

Resistencia (*Spanish)* Resistance.

Settlement See *assentamento*.

Sem Terra *(Portuguese)* See *Landless*.

Sem Terrinha *(Portuguese)* The MST or Landless children that live in MST *encampments* or *settlements.*

Sesmaria *(Portuguese)* Small parcels of land, divided up from larger *capitanias*; although the land from the *capitanias* could not be sold, it could be handed over to those who produced on it (Morissawa 57-8).

Socialização (*Portuguese;* socialization in English*)* It refers not only to social interaction between people, but of the sharing and construction of knowledge in a collective manner. For the MST when someone shares information or knowledge with the rest of the group in a presentation or some other manner, it is called *socialização.* It is an important element in the process of *conscientization* and popular education.

Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) A kind of popular theatre that Brazilian Augusto Boal developed, similar to Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, in that it is theatre that works for social transformation and the liberation of the participants. In TO, there is no formal division between actors and spectators; all are agents in the transformation that occurs in this form of popular theatre.

Trabalho de Base (*Portuguese)* Grassroots work. A term used by the MST to refer to the popular education work that they do with potential *Landless* communities, as well as with their grassroots membership. This involves the work of *conscientization* that ideally leads to collective action.

Introduction

What is revolution? For me, revolution is the transformation and the creation of practices and ideas that allow people to live with dignity, that allow people to reach their potential while allowing others to do so. Revolution does not happen from one day to the next; revolution is the process of changing the system that we have now, a capitalist and imperialist one, to another one that respects and upholds human dignity in all forms, one in which all who will benefit from the revolution must participate in the process. Revolutionary process involves the day-to-day work of analyzing and questioning our lives as well as the structures that cause oppression in our lives. By believing in and maintaining hope we can transform the society from an oppressive and violent one into one where we can each thrive and support each other. The revolutionary process involves conscientization of the people who are most affected and oppressed by the current system and their organizing to change the system. This is the work of popular education, a revolutionary education.

My trip to Brazil was part of my own formation and life project. I consider that my task and role in life is to contribute to the process of conscientization we need to achieve social transformation and revolution. Arriving in Brazil, São Paulo, I did not come with images of Carnaval, soccer and samba. My first image of Brazil was formed after I read a newspaper article in my teens. In a short article in one of Vancouver's mainstream papers, I read about the situation of street children in Rio de Janeiro. The merchants found the street children to be a problem and to get rid of the "problem," they financed an association of thugs. The thugs brutally killed the children. Among the children found dead were children whose eyes were left hanging out of their sockets. This was a clear message to other street children not to rob the merchants or the same fate would await them. The image of the dead children with their eyes hanging out is the first image I have of Brazil. As well as the image of the Amazonian jungle. But when we landed, there was concrete everywhere. Where was the jungle? This wasn't the Brazil I imagined. 2½ months later when I landed in Belém, Pará, I arrived in the Brazil that I had expected, in the middle of the jungle. Ah, the many diverse realities of Brazil…

"Revolution is precisely the step from radical critique in the theoretical plane to the practical" (Vázquez 137).

This Major Paper, part of the requirements towards completion of a Masters degree in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University, is the result of five months of research into the political and *popular education* of the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers' Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra-MST)* in different regions of Brazil. The paper focuses on the MST's popular education within Brazil, in order to understand how popular education is used within a social movement and within the specific context of Brazil.

In existence since 1985, the Brazilian MST is a mass organized movement that struggles for land, Agrarian Reform and social transformation. One of the first steps in the process of transformation it works towards is the occupation of socially unproductive land; this is to pressure the government to comply with Article 184 of the Brazilian Constitution which states that "it is up to the Union to expropriate, for social interest and towards the end of Agrarian Reform, the rural property that is not fulfilling its social function"

(Morissawa 117).[1] The *Landless* Movement's occupations are part of a larger strategy which involves ensuring dignified work, food, school and housing for Landless families. Popular and political education is a central tactic toward these goals.

In existence for over 20 years, the MST now has about 2 million members, which include 350,000 families who are settled with another 160,000 families camped and awaiting the current process of Agrarian Reform which implies getting not only title to land, but also the technical and financial support necessary to live and produce on the land. The MST has carried out more than 2,000 land occupations, and reclaimed more than 7 million hectares of land; on that land, it has a network of more than 1,800 schools, 86 rural cooperatives, 96 food processing plants, and many other accomplishments (mst.org.br; MST Agenda 2004).

For MST members and other *campesinos* in Brazil Agrarian Land Reform is necessary, in order to distribute unproductive land that is in the hands of a few *latifundiarios*. A large segment of the rural population is landless and without the means of subsistence, as well as a poor urban population forced from rural areas to cities. The MST works towards ensuring that the government of former metalworker and Workers' Party leader Lula Inacio da Silva meets its obligations towards the Brazilian people. This means the implementation of Agrarian Land Reform but also public policies that are part of greater social transformation that changes the correlation of forces in Brazil from one in which the elite and agro-business dominate to one in which small-scale family agriculture is given the importance that guarantees dignity and full citizenship for the rural population. Once the MST occupies land, their communities aim to produce their own subsistence from the land, to meet people's needs (food, education, shelter, work), and to make people agents in their own lives. As part of this process, they seek to improve people's relationship with all aspects of the environment, from using organic production and seeds to relationships between people.

I focus on the MST's popular and political education in order to show how important and necessary this education is within a movement working towards the social transformation of a *hegemony* of a few (the capitalist and neoliberal system) to a popular hegemony (an alternative popular project), such as Antonio Gramsci writes about in his *Prison Notebooks*. The MST bases its popular education on principles that Brazilian popular educator Paulo Freire wrote about and practiced, but develops its own unique popular education in order to satisfy the needs they have as a national *campesino* movement trying to change the correlation of forces at a regional, state and national level. The work of popular education is a foundation for all of the Movement's work.

First of all, it is necessary to better understand some concepts within the theories developed by Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci, and the relation between them. I approach popular education largely as Paulo Freire and the MST see it, as a tool to bring about social transformation or to build a popular hegemony such as Gramsci

---

[1] The social function of land is defined in Article 186 of the Brazilian Constitution as "the rational and adequate utilization of land; the adequate use of available natural resources and the conservation of the environment; the respect of laws that regulate labour relations; the exploitation that benefits the well-being of proprietors and of workers" (Morissawa 117).

proposes. I look more closely at Paulo Freire's popular education and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. The ideas of both require us to have a better understanding of the context of where we want to practice popular education. For this reason I focus on elements of the Brazilian historical context and present *conjuncture* that allow the MST to build a mass transformative movement. I also briefly discuss the MST's role in relation to the current Lula government.

After analyzing the specific context in which the Landless Movement exists and arises, we can then better understand how they develop their own pedagogy, which I refer to as *Pedagogia da Terra*[2], Pedagogy of the Land. I will describe characteristics of this *pedagogy* and give examples of its practice in different MST courses and spaces, showing how it is used within a specific context to work towards a social transformation of capitalism into a popular project created by those involved in the process of *conscientization*.

I attempted to use elements of popular education and of Gramsci's theories to conduct the research, basing my work on *praxis*, the *dialectical* relationship between theory and practice. I see my role as a researcher as an agent within a process of transformation within the contexts I work in. I contribute to the process of popular education that I am researching (participating as popular educator, giving talks, giving ideas and criticisms, etc.) as well as taking elements of this context to see if they can be used in other contexts of struggle. In Chapter 1, I analyze my role as researcher, my location and identity within the research. As a social and participatory researcher, I see research as one step within the process of transformation, not only a tool within the academic realm; I have a deep commitment to the people with whom I research.

Research should be part of a collective process or contribute to one; the research and reflections on it should be socialized, that is, shared with others. When it is not possible to conduct participatory research (due to the goals or circumstances), we must ask ourselves what social purpose our research serves. In this case, I was a lone researcher, but with the objective that the research would be useful to others. I hope this paper serves as a small contribution to a larger collective construction of knowledge and to a discussion about how the MST's model of popular education could be used by other groups and movements in other countries. While recognizing that no model can really be transplanted from one context to another, in my academic career and research, I have attempted to find a balance between my theoretical work and my practical work.

The idea for the research in Brazil with the MST arose before I began my MES studies and before I had a clear idea of what would be my focus in the Masters program. When I was in Guatemala with a delegation visiting a land occupation of the campesino organization CUC (Campesino Unity Committee), I met a popular educator from the MST with whom I became friends. She told me about the Movement, and when I shared my interest in popular education, she invited me to get to know the experience of popular education within the MST. Then, I did not imagine I would end up in Brazil and

---

[2] The MST has a university-level course it calls *Pedagogia da Terra*, which is offered, in different areas of the country, at state universities as well as at the MST's own institutes. I use this term to refer to all of the MST's pedagogy. See Chapter 4.

incorporate this experience as the research for my Major Paper. While developing the objectives of my Plan of Study, and in discussion with professors who specialize in popular education and in Brazil, I finally decided to go to Brazil to research the MST's use of popular education. I carried out this idea with funding from a CIDA-AUCC project between York University and the University of São Paulo. I was in Brazil for five months, from August 2003 to January 2004, in the South and the North, getting to know different realities of a very diverse Brazil, and how Pedagogy of the Land responds to these different realities and needs. I participated in formal MST courses, such as a Teachers Training Course, in less formal courses, such as the Basic Course for Militants, as well as in other spaces of political education and organization such as state-wide gatherings, and state and national offices. This Major Paper will focus on only part of this experience, to consider how the MST's Pedagogy could be adapted to other contexts and movements, by people who are interested in and committed to working towards social transformation using a process of *conscientization* of a liberatory popular and political education.

In Chapter 1, I discuss my social, political and organizational identities in relation to popular education and the research. Chapter 2 is a discussion of the practice and theory of popular education, drawing on theorists and practitioners such as Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire as well as the MST itself. Chapter 3 focuses on the historical and present Brazilian context in relation to the Landless Movement. In Chapter 4, I discuss how the MST as a social movement uses popular education, strategically within their organization to reach their objectives. In Chapter 5, I will highlight some examples or case studies of the MST's popular education in its courses. Finally, I offer some conclusions and reflections on lessons learned from the experience with the MST in Brazil, in Chapter 6.

Chapter 1: Popular Education and Me

As my intention in the short and long-term is to practice popular education and this Major Paper is part of this process, I believe it is important to reflect on my social, political and organizational identity in the context of my research with the MST.

I begin by briefly explaining why I decided to do a Masters. In Vancouver I began to do solidarity work with Latin America, first with Mexico, then with other countries such as Guatemala. I started to learn about and get involved in local issues in Canada and the U.S. Through exposure to and practice of popular education, I decided I wanted to become a popular educator, not just an activist. As I believed I needed to become more knowledgeable about the theory as well as the practice of popular education in a dedicated manner, I decided to go back to university, looking for a program in which I could do this. My search led me to the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University and the work of popular educators such as Deborah Barndt. I developed a Plan of Study focused on popular education theoretically and practically in Canada and in Latin America. In Canada, that popular education would involve immigrants and refugees, and in Latin America it would involve social movements more broadly. My previous contacts with Latin American social movements led me to Brazil to research the MST's theory and practice of popular and political education.

As a young Mexican-German Canadian white female having grown up in Canada but traveling to Mexico almost on a yearly basis, I had a desire to develop my Latina side. My Mexican roots called me; I felt my calling was the popular education that came from Latin America and its social movements and years of *lucha* and *resistencia*.

Influenced by my origins, visits to Mexico, and political activism, I have formed political beliefs which have to some extent played out in my practice and actions over the last years. Although as a high school student I was involved in an environmental club as well as in the anti-war movement against the 1991 invasion of Iraq, my politics lacked critical analysis. I did not know how to analyze power structures and felt completely disempowered to do anything about the many injustices I witnessed. Perhaps because of this lack of empowerment and understanding, I stopped my involvement in any move towards social change and vowed that "politics were not for me." But my roots and my desire to do something to change the state of things pulled me back.

After years of superficial soul searching, studying and traveling, I finally decided I needed to do something about the injustices in the world, following the activity of my *mestiza* roots (the resistance of the Mexican people). Having gone through my own process of *conscientização*, I wanted others to go through this, to take political action to change this unjust world. I hit my head against many walls of frustration, not fully knowing how to go about this. Over the years, and especially recently, I began to understand this as a process and that I could work with others in a more organized and conscious fashion to raise awareness that might lead to action. Popular education would be my tool of choice, and throughout my time in the Faculty of Environmental Studies as well as the research in Brazil, Mexico, Guatemala, and Canada, I became more convinced that popular education was a powerful and effective way to work

with others towards social transformation, not only in Latin America, but also in Canada. I do not have all the answers as to how to go about the change needed, but I have ideas which I share and in some cases implement with others. I have come to realize the importance of not only the goal of a complete overhaul of the current neoliberal phase of capitalism to a more just system but of the process of us preparing ourselves for the continued struggle against the current system while starting to build the world we want.

My Masters education and the accompanying research are only one step in preparation for my contribution with others towards social transformation. I started my Masters convinced I wouldn't let the system absorb me and have me give up my dreams and aspirations. I promised myself that if the formal and institutional education process did not give me what I sought, I would leave it.

Nonetheless I realized there were benefits to being with a university. First, my research was part of a short-term plan (the completion of my Major Paper and Masters) and in the long term (my life-long contribution to and participation in social movements working towards transformation). Second, I had financial, academic and emotional support from a variety of institutions and people.

My research expenses in Brazil were covered by a CIDA/AUCC-financed program between York University and the University of São Paulo which involved local participation and management of natural resources in Brazil. I was in a very privileged position as a North American with access to such resources. How was I perceived in that role? I took it upon myself to be aware of this and let it influence not only how I felt about myself and how people saw me, but also let it impact my actions. I shared some of my resources with my hosts, the MST, and took a laptop computer which I donated to them (they had requested it) and gave them an amount for the food and lodging they offered me. I also contributed when the situation called for it.

Being a researcher from a North American university with my expenses paid certainly made it easier for me to get around Brazil and not worry about basic necessities, but I made a point of living in the same conditions as the *militants*, often sleeping in hammocks, on the floor or in improvised beds. I ate what they ate, often nothing more than beans and rice with *farinha*. It was obvious that I was a researcher but that identity intersected with my other identities; I made it clear that I was there also as a Mexican-Canadian woman who struggled for social transformation and saw my struggle united with theirs. I was there to learn from them, for my research and for my lifelong work but also to share my knowledge and experiences of struggle, to contribute to their own process of learning and *conscientização*.

This multi-layered identity carries a certain responsibility. I cannot be the distant researcher or observer. I have a commitment to social transformation, therefore, my research must reflect that commitment; it must be part of my work towards social change. As such, I tried to choose a methodology that allowed me to conduct research in better understanding the MST's popular and political education as well as be *coherent* with my lifelong objectives. My main motivation in doing the research was

to inform not only my Major Paper but also my future work with social movements and immigrants and refugees in Latin America and Canada.

I wanted to take a participatory research approach, but if I am honest with myself, I cannot fully say that my research was participatory action research, as this usually involves a collective process from start to finish. That is, in determining what would be researched, carrying out the research and in compiling the results of the research as well as implementing this collective knowledge in the community where it was researched and compiled. However, I did often work collectively throughout the process and towards social transformation, like in participatory research. I will share the results in a collective manner with movements or in building a movement. In Latin America, this includes movements that work for the respect of human rights and autonomy over their land, as *campesinos* and indigenous peoples. In Canada, this work includes building a movement based on the increasing hardships and human rights violations experienced by many people; with other Bus Riders Union members, I do popular education work with transit-dependent people, mainly women and people of colour to ensure that our basic human right to mobility is respected by the government authorities in charge of public transportation.

In the end, I saw my research as a mix between participatory research and participant observation research. I was an observer and participant, but had the privilege of deciding which I wanted to be in most situations. I could just observe if it seemed to benefit my research more, or participate in order to learn in this manner. My key research methodology was popular education, which involves a commitment to being a learner and educator as well as acknowledges and challenges where power and knowledge reside and how they are constructed; participatory research and participant observation research were my methods within popular education. Although I wrote the Major Paper alone with editorial comments from others, much of the knowledge represented here was collectively constructed by MST members with whom I participated in popular education.

My overall theoretical framework is a Gramscian and *dialectical* notion of power which is not linearly constructed or maintained, and that, in fact, is constantly being contested. My methodology is a popular education approach which denies neutrality and openly asserts that in all research as in all education there is an ideology, whether it is asserted or not. My methods are a combination of participatory research and participant observation research, whereby I saw myself as a researcher committed to the objects and subjects of my observation and participation. Finally, my techniques are multiple, including collaboration in educator collectives and in workshops, taking field notes, taking video footage and photographs of activities, making speeches and interviews, reading various materials, participating in various events and talks in Brazil.

Chapter 2: Popular Education: Practice and Theory

When I arrived at the MST school, the Florestan Fernandes National School, in Guararema, near São Paulo, I felt somewhat out of place, uncomfortable. Almost all volunteers building the school and as participants in the political education were men and I did not speak the language, Brazilian Portuguese. Only if they spoke very slowly could I understand, because I speak Spanish which is similar. I felt moments of desperation, as well as the excitement over being with the Landless Movement. But when I met one of the trainers, Carmem, I understood her. It's true that her Northeastern accent was strong, but what I understood was another kind of language. We began to speak about Paulo Freire, about popular education within the context of training the volunteer workers. Even though she spoke Portuguese and I Spanish, we spoke the same language of popular education, not only the words that Paulo Freire uses, but the concepts and feelings behind the words. Both of us understood what popular education is, and we had our concerns that it be done well. It was with her, here in this school and in another one where I saw her again, that I began to deepen my understanding of popular education in a very practical way. This exchange with Carmem taught me that patience and faith were qualities we needed to have as educators. The process of conscientization is slow, sometimes we cannot even see the results. Each person has her pace, and it is necessary to respect that, while also believing in the capacity of each person to realize his or herself, to become aware of the reality around them and to assume his or her role as a socio-historical agent consciously and responsibly. We must have faith and humility. As educators we are also being formed, as new women and new men in the new society that we desire.

<div align="center">*   *   *   *   *</div>

Landless Movement Anthem
Lyrics: Ademar Bogo; Music: Willy C. de Oliveira

Come let us weave our freedom
strong arms that work the land
under the shadow of our courage
let us show our rebellion
and plant our land like brothers!

Refrain: Come, let us struggle with raised fist
Our strength will lead us to raise
Our homeland free and strong
Built by popular power!

Raised arm that dictates our history
suffocating our oppressors with force
let us raise our coloured flag
let us awaken our dormant love of homeland
the future belongs to us the workers!

Our force rescued by the flame
of the hope of the triumph that will turn it around
let us forge this struggle with certainty
free worker and campesino homeland
our star will at last triumph!
(Nosso Jeito de Cantar 104)

In this chapter, I give a general definition of *popular education* as well as examine some of its theoretical and practical interpretations. I draw upon Paulo Freire's and Antonio Gramsci's ideas and theories; both give us elements with which to perform an analysis, while Freire describes the process of moving from experience to analysis to action. I also begin to discuss the MST's connection with and use of popular education as a social movement.

Introduction to Popular Education
What is popular education? It is a politicized education that encourages participants to understand their oppression, through actively learning about, naming, understanding and questioning the structure of society conceived in terms of neoliberal and imperialist

globalization, which results in their situation of oppression. Popular education as a practice encourages us to question the supposed neutrality in education, as well as the relationship between educator and *educand*, and the role and construction of knowledge and power. Participants learn to analyze their material and historical *reality* or situation of oppression in order to recognize that they are agents within this historical process and construction. Central to popular education is *praxis*, the integration of theory and practice in a *dialectical* manner, as well as a critical approach and *pedagogy* that involves self-reflection and self-actualization. In the process of popular education and of the awareness-raising (*conscientização*) that it works towards, the potential exists for individuals and groups to feel empowered to transform our society into one that takes into greater consideration the right of people to reach their potential and do this within a context of respect of the environment around them. The process of coming to realize or becoming conscious of one's oppression and analyzing its causes is known as *conscientization*, and leads the oppressed person to feeling that he or she can make decisions and take actions to change his or her life; in a collective manner with other oppressed people they can transform the causes of their oppression to liberate themselves. Popular education also includes the steps and actions that need to be taken for social transformation, which is a collective process.

I also discuss pedagogy and *formação*, both of which I consider part of popular education. Pedagogy is the philosophy or theory of education or educational processes. Education is a process, and pedagogy the theory or philosophy which studies it (Freire *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 24). Formação is a process of political education and training of *militants* and grassroots membership within an organization or movement to prepare them to better perform their tasks with a high level of consciousness and knowledge, so that they can in turn train and educate others. Integral to formation is the attention given to the process of human and personal development, within a social and collective context. Although I prefer the word formação to describe the process of political education that occurs, because it includes the concept of personal development, in this paper I use the term "political education" instead.

Popular education comes out of a tradition of struggle and resistance of social movements working towards social transformation and against capitalism and imperialism and their forms of oppression and domination. It is one way of combating the *hegemony* (ideological domination) of the system, of capitalist and neoliberal thinking; it promotes critical thinking from the grassroots, from the people, respecting the forms of knowledge of those who participate in the process of conscientization. Its practice and application varies according to the conditions of its environment, because one of popular education's fundamental principles is that the context in which we work must be respected and taken into account. However, popular education does not limit itself to the local. In our analysis of the causes of oppression we need to identify local factors and connect them to global conditions that have local impacts. Social transformation and resistance to oppression and its causes also have local and global elements.

Although it is useful to look at what popular education is through the ideas of Paulo Freire who was not only a popular education theorist but also a popular educator in

practice, it is important to emphasize that popular education comes out a long tradition in which it is embedded; it lives in the struggles of armed and unarmed social movements, with *militants* who are educators that practice it. Popular education that arises from a movement in which those who live, write about and practice popular education have a direct and collective interest and commitment in how it is used is different from the practice of a popular educator who is not an organic educator or militant of a social movement.

The pedagogy of the MST places itself in the tradition of popular education as a tool and a way of thinking and acting with the grassroots to achieve a social transformation constructed by the people. This pedagogy is from the people, with the people and for the people, to transform their situation of oppression.

The value of popular education is not only its participatory nature or the workshops or games that are sometimes part of it. In recent decades much attention has been given to participatory education, but part of this practice has depoliticized popular education. Authentic popular education emerges out of social movements or struggles that strive for human liberation that involves both transforming one's self *and* the world. It is depoliticized and degraded when it is divorced from this historical context of the struggle for transformation. This degraded education only resembles popular education in form, but not in content. Popular education is political because it involves the process of people questioning, analyzing and changing their lives, having decision-making power over their lives, that is, in genuine democracy. Popular education is not a feel good therapy session where everyone talks about their feelings and experiences without restraint or just a set of games or workshops to be used in any setting. There are cases in which popular education has been co-opted or called popular education when it isn't. For example, we have to question when corporations or the World Bank say they use popular or participatory education. Do they use it to work towards social transformation or to perpetuate the current system in the guise of being democratic? There are even situations in so-called progressive organizations or NGOs that are not popular education but only an exercise in doing things in a creative and participatory manner without the commitment to being critical of and working towards changing the causes of our oppression. Of course this can and should involve creativity and participation, but not without the critical and transformational aspect. It is only popular education when it involves working towards social transformation by taking a critical approach to the current system and its effects on people.

Ultimately, all education has an ideology behind it, even if that ideology is not explicit. One of the principles of popular education is that it recognizes that education is not neutral, and poses this characteristic as a problem, so that the process and content of the education that is imparted can be discussed and questioned with the practice of popular education. The MST's popular education or pedagogy breaks with the education traditionally imparted in schools which is not an education connected to the reality of the *educands* who are from a rural area. The MST pedagogy is about rural and peasant life, and vindicates it.

Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci

Paulo Freire's and Antonio Gramsci's theories help us better understand the case of the MST's political and popular education while also seeing how this model could be used in other contexts. Both Freire and Gramsci have an understanding of the connections between local and global structures and how we can analyze and transform them. The MST is a movement that uses popular education to work towards social transformation. As a movement it has three objectives: land, Agrarian Land Reform, and social transformation; it uses concrete needs as the basis for arriving at structural and social transformation.

In reading Paulo Freire we become aware of the need to see ourselves as socio-historical subjects and agents. To fully realize our role as agents and transformers of our reality, we must understand our history and current reality in order to locate ourselves within it and strategically work to transform it. Before we can transform society we must do a *conjunctural analysis* to know and understand that reality and the correlation of forces in order to be strategic in our actions and education. In Chapter 3, inspired by Gramsci's theories, I do an analysis of Brazil focusing on elements that contribute to the rise of the MST as well as some of the factors that work against it. This analysis will help us better understand how the MST organizes its struggle with tactics that include land occupations, education and negotiations with different levels of government.

Paulo Freire, liberatory and transformative educator

As a theorist and practitioner of popular education, Brazilian Paulo Freire brings us many elements as we consider what popular education is, especially what he calls *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. These include concepts and ideas such as *conscientization*, *praxis*, questioning the relationship between educator and *educand*, analyzing and contesting what are knowledge and power and how they are constructed, "reading" the world not only reading the word, education as a liberatory practice, the importance of dialogue, as well as considering the objectives of the collective process of *liberatory education*. How are reflection and action, and practice and theory connected in and through popular education? It is significant that Freire developed his ideas out of the Brazilian struggle, both in Brazil and in exile; in both cases, the Brazilian context of repression and struggle has a lot to do with the liberatory education that Freire advocated for and practiced. Freire was likely influenced by the repression he was subject to and had to flee from; he made a lifelong commitment to liberatory education and the transformation of the Brazilian system.

Freire defines *pedagogy of the oppressed* as:

> a pedagogy which must be forged with, not for, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade. (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 48)

Freire tells us that the pedagogy that will liberate the oppressed is one that ultimately must be made and remade with and by the oppressed, and based in their reality. The

MST pedagogy involves the oppressed or, in this case, the Landless people reflecting on their oppression and working toward their liberation. (See Chapter 4.)

According to Freire the oppressed "must acquire a critical awareness of oppression through the *praxis* of this struggle ["for their liberation"]" (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 51). Through the act of struggling, the oppressed acquire "critical awareness of oppression." I believe that MST members acquire this "critical awareness" in the struggle, that the struggle involves popular education which leads to *conscientization*, just as Liam Kane contends when speaking about the MST and popular education, "the major educational experience comes from active participation in organized struggle" (Kane 97).

Freire defines *praxis* as a necessary element in the process of conscientization, and popular education as a whole, as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire 51). If we are committed to popular education, we must put into practice what we learn through reflection on Freire's words and his dialogue with us, a dialogue with the objective of us assuming our role as historical agents and subjects. As popular educators, we must assume this role not only in formal educational spaces, but in all spaces of our lives.

In the Foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Richard Shaull says of the oppressed about whom and to whom Freire writes, that they "come to a new awareness of selfhood and begin to look critically at the social situation in which they find themselves, and often take the initiative in acting to transform the society that has denied them this opportunity of participation" (Freire 29). What is most important is that the subject who becomes literate and aware not only becomes critical of his or her situation but actually participates in the transformation. For the MST this mixture of awareness, literacy and participation is crucial, because this is what constitutes democracy if conducted in an organized and collective manner with the goal of building a better society.

Conscientização, or what Freire also refers to as "critical consciousness," is defined by translator Myra Bergman Ramos as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 35). One of the key contradictions that MST members perceive is how in a country with as many riches as Brazil there can be such unequal land and wealth distribution? How can a *latifundiario* own an endless extension of unproductive land, *latifundio* when there are millions of landless families with no land and on the brink of starvation? The MST land occupation is an action against the oppressive element of the rich and unproductive landowner. But the occupation only takes place after groups of families who are planning an occupation have met together and discussed different problems and situations that lead them to take the steps to the occupation.

The liberatory critical education that Freire promotes is an alternative to the education that appears to anaesthetize us to accept the fatalism and determinism that the capitalist and neoliberal system presents us with, to convince us that things are as they are and that we can do nothing to change them. By encouraging critical questioning

and organized collective action, popular education can lead us to liberate ourselves from this anaesthesia or social-conformity and individualism.

Freire suggests how to perform critical questioning and lift the anaesthesia, when he discusses the process of 'decoding' and generative themes. In an essay on Freire, Deborah Barndt speaks of the process of conscientization as 'decoding'. By analyzing specific contradictions that act as themes which generate critical reflection, those who go through this process may decide to act upon the conclusions of analyzing these contradictions in their lives, in order to transform them. The first step is recognizing these contradictions, then discussing them or 'decoding' them to get to their root causes. When we "decode" something, we begin to see the roots of "common sense" or the "cracks in the consent" (marino 126); we are one step closer to moving towards strategizing for action, because we have a better idea of our position in any situation. Decoding is a process of demystifying or unveiling what is accepted as is. Through a process of "decoding" our "social practices" we unveil or demystify the power of hegemony. As Barndt explains,

> The process of decoding a 'code' then is at the heart of the *conscientization*, a process that Freire articulated as critical (and collective) reflection on the world in order to change it, a process that links the personal to the structural, and embodies *praxis*, the dialectic of reflection and action. (Barndt 65)

Freire poses a key question when he speaks of the implementation of a liberating education: "If the implementation of a liberating education requires political power and the oppressed have none, how then is it possible to carry out the pedagogy of the oppressed prior to the revolution?" He tries to answer by pointing out "the distinction between *systematic* [sic] *education,* which can only be changed by political power, and *educational projects*, which should be carried out *with* the oppressed in the process of organizing them" (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 54). Systemic education is education that is used throughout the dominant system, usually throughout the school system that it has in place. The MST recognizes this distinction; they have an educational project, and are moving towards changing systemic education by acquiring popular political power. The educational project of the MST is part of their larger project for social change, which is essentially a proposal for an alternative system. The MST believes that the education, particularly the popular and political education of its *base* and of the Brazilian population as a whole, is the key to the transformation of the system.

There are points of overlap between Freire and Gramsci; Freire is very concerned with the consciousness of the oppressed, which takes on characteristics of the oppressor. He talks of the oppressed's consciousness in a way that we can connect it to Gramsci's development of the concept of hegemony in the following statement: "the interests of the oppressors lie in 'changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them'; [3] for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to the situation, the more easily they can be dominated" (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 74). Domination is achieved by the consent of the oppressed, not only by the oppressor's

---

[3] Freire quotes Simone de Beauvoir, *La Pensée de la Droite, Aujourd'hui (Paris);* ST, *El Pensamiento de político de la Derecha* (Buenos Aires, 1963), p.34.

force, and is thus the hegemony Gramsci discusses, domination by convincing or 'leading' the oppressed to consent or 'adapt' to the oppression they suffer by ideological means not purely by brute force.

Antonio Gramsci, Marxist journalist and worker organizer: analyzing and changing the correlation of forces in favour of the people

Gramsci is a Marxist and Communist theorist who "deepens" the analysis and explanation of certain elements within Marxism such as hegemony and the historic bloc. Gramsci's theoretical contributions to performing a *conjunctural analysis* are his development of concepts such as *hegemony* and historic bloc; they help us understand how the different forces we look at in a *conjunctural analysis* interact or relate to each other. He gives us the tools with which to understand the correlation of forces and how they are maintained, re-organized, as well as how they might be counteracted to transform a hegemony of the elite into a popular hegemony.

It is useful to look at Gramsci's ideas together with Freire's because both are concerned with the means through which the elite and powerful or the 'oppressors' have an effect on the oppressed and their consciousness or state of mind; though according to the context in which each works, each uses his own language. Whereas Freire is more likely to use terminology such as oppressed and oppressor, Gramsci with a Marxist lens uses terminology like capitalist or dominant class and working class. The terrain remains one of analyzing and changing the correlation of forces between classes. If Freire is concerned with how the oppressed carries within her or himself the oppressor's consciousness and the role that education has in this, Gramsci discusses how this process of mental or ideological oppression occurs, how the oppressed consent to their own oppression. How does the oppressor class hold and maintain power over the oppressed class? Gramsci's notion of 'common sense' is one way through which hegemony is maintained and we can counter it with the creation of 'good sense.' Common sense and good sense are not necessarily in opposition to each other, but rather in a *dialectical* relationship. The use of popular education is one way through which to create the 'good sense' that counters hegemony.

In Roger Simon's interpretation of Gramsci, he explains that "Common sense is the site on which the dominant ideology is constructed, but it is also the site of resistance and challenge to this ideology" (Simon 64). As we see, common sense is what hegemony, "the dominant ideology" is built on, but also the very place from which to begin resistance by challenging the assumptions that are inherent in manifestations of what we consider "common sense."

Hegemony

When Gramsci defines hegemony he does so within the frame of reference of the Italian historical context in which he writes. Although our context changes, we can still apply the concept of hegemony in order to analyze and understand how our society functions, how a dominant ideology like neoliberal and imperialist capitalism and the accompanying culture from the United States has come to hold a hegemonic place in our society.

"Hegemony is a relation, not of domination by means of force, but of consent by means of political and ideological leadership. It is the organisation of consent" (Simon 21). Hegemony functions because of the consent of a variety of classes to the actions and/or ideas of one class. This has the effect of appearing as though everyone in the society agrees with what the dominant class is doing, or as if there is "democracy," because most people do not appear to directly disagree with the way that the society is run, whether it benefits them or not. As Simon explains Gramsci's idea of hegemony,

> Hegemony is a relation between classes and other social forces. A hegemonic class, or part of a class, is one which gains the consent of other classes and social forces through creating and maintaining a system of alliances by means of political and ideological struggle. (Simon 22)

In this definition the key is the system of alliances; these alliances are not always evident or obvious ones. They may be between different powerful people, but they may also include the oppressed people who knowingly and willingly may ally with the powerful falsely believing that they share the same interests. This is the power of hegemony that it succeeds in convincing those most oppressed by the system that the system is in their interests.

Hegemony is the manner in which the dominant class maintains and organizes its power with consent of the people using the least amount of brute force and the most ideological control and persuasion. Gramsci, using somewhat militaristic language, explains to us the mechanisms that are used by the powerful in order to maintain their power, even when there is resistance. He alerts us to the strategies that are used by those in power that we may not even be aware of if we do not perform a deeper analysis of the situation.

Since hegemony is ideological domination, to counter it and break through its ideological veil, we must use a process of 'decoding,' such as Freire and Barndt suggest.

Simon explains Gramsci on the role of ideology in understanding hegemony:

> Ideology acts as the cement or cohesive force which binds together a bloc of diverse classes and social forces. The cementing ideology cannot therefore be a pure class ideology expressing only the class interests of the capitalist or working class. It has to be a synthesis, taking into account the unique historical traditions of any country and the contributions made by the diverse social movements which make up the hegemonic bloc. (25)

An ideology is made up not only of what serves the dominant ruling class, but of what will appease the other classes as well. In Brazil, the dominant ideology includes elements from the working and poor classes, their history of resistance (such as the Black and indigenous resistance) and collective memory of the dictatorship. However, these elements are not necessarily included in order to favour the working classes or to encourage their resistance, but sometimes for the very opposite effect, to appear as though all of the classes have the same interests and even to acknowledge resistance, but only that of the past.

It is also important to highlight that according to Gramsci (in Simon's interpretation), there is a "materiality of ideology... that it has a material existence in the social practices of individuals" (Simon 25). This is part of the materialist view which is counter to an idealist view. If ideology has "a material existence" which is based "in the social practices of individuals" then it would seem logical that by being critical of and trying to change those social practices that one could change or at least affect the material existence of the ideology and hence the ideology. If ideology's (and popular education's) role is what creates the sense of a bloc of common interests or forces that creates the hegemonic bloc, then by changing the dominant ideology, one can change the hegemony. This is the MST's objective, to change the dominant hegemony to a popular hegemony by affecting the social practices of its members through popular education.

The MST is a movement that works towards popular hegemony. They use Gramsci as a theorist and practitioner of communism. As the MST national leader João Pedro Stedile says:

> We are also trying to recuperate the work of Gramsci, who has contributed to an understanding of the complexity of social classes. In this direction, it is a matter of understanding how proletarian ideology and the ideology of our reforms can influence society. We must engage in the terrain of ideas, what Gramsci defined as the promotion of ideological hegemony within society, promoting the idea that socialism is possible, that it is possible to base a society on other forms of social relations. (*Globalization* 31)

Stedile refers to the hegemony of the working or peasant class as socialism. As a movement, its objective is to promote the ideology of socialism in order for it to reach a hegemonic status, that is to say, that it can convince a large part of the population of the necessity for socialism in order to work towards building a socialist society. Contrary to the current dominant hegemony, that of neoliberalism (dominated by the United States), this popular hegemony is a phase before the implementation of an alternative project that benefits the majority, unlike capitalism which benefits only a small minority in the world. Capitalism does not work for the MST as peasants, because in its current application it gives priority to profits and private property and not to the human and to the community.

Historic Bloc

To understand the historic bloc Gramsci speaks of involves doing a historic materialistic analysis focusing on the present moment, and the balance of forces for popular hegemony, as well as how hegemony is maintained both in civil society and the area of production. This includes a view of history as *dialectical*, which is the relationship between hegemonic and repressive forces and counter-hegemonic and resistance forces. (See Chapter 3.) Gramsci refers to concrete material forces and in particular relations between those who own the means of production and those who do not. This is key within the MST's struggle between the *Landless,* the dispossessed of the land, and the *latifundiarios*, the landowners; a historic struggle between the *haves* and *have nots*; unlike common sense that tries to get us to see this inequality as normal, there are people and movements that work to transform this situation to replace common sense with good sense.

According to Gramsci, common sense is "the uncritical and largely unconscious way in which a person perceives the world, often confused and contradictory, and compounded of folklore, myths and popular experience" (Simon 25), so developing 'good sense' implies developing a critical perception of the world. According to Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez, Gramsci "speaks of the necessity of creating a new common sense" which in Gramsci's own words implies "the necessity of new popular beliefs, of a new common sense and, as such, of a new culture and a new philosophy that is rooted in popular conscience with the same solidity and imperativeness as traditional beliefs" (288)[4]. Let us not just accept the attitude that "This is the way that things are." The MST promotes developing 'good sense' through a process of conscientization with the grassroots. Instead of accepting the official version of the world, they create their own interpretation of the world, and work to *conscienticize* towards this good sense through the process of popular education.

Marcos Roitman Rosenmann's discussion of social conformity can also help us understand hegemony and common sense: "Social conformity is a type of behaviour with its most characteristic trait being the adoption of conduct that inhibits the conscience in the process of construction of reality" (1). Social conformity (and the power of hegemony) is typified in statements like "What are we going to do, us humans are like that and we will never change!" (Rosenmann 4). These statements reflect common sense which is described as "a collective cosmology that projects the values of the hegemonic class and the dominant society" (Rosenmann 84). Social conformity, like hegemony, functions to suppress or inhibit conscience or criticism in our analysis or construction of reality, and results in non-critical acceptance and adoption of values which are not necessarily in our best interest and do not reflect our sociohistorical reality but rather one that is deceivingly imposed on us. Social-conformity, or what I call the lack of critical thinking, results in disrupting the relationship between "theoretical praxis and practical experiences." This then results in destroying the "link that unites the sociohistorical reality with the political projects for social change" (Rosenmann 86). All popular education, including the MST's, establishes the link between reality and the project for its transformation, with praxis at its core.

Gramsci does not provide answers as to how to counteract the current forces, only how to begin the analysis of these forces. In order to analyze what we need to do to create a popular hegemony, we need other tools. Part of what Gramsci's analysis offers us in understanding the MST and their work is his discussion of culture which he describes in terms that can be linked to Freire's process of conscientization in which the individual through a collective process becomes aware of his or her potentiality and role as socio-historical agent. For Gramsci, culture is,

> organization, discipline of one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's own personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness, with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one's own historical value, one's own function in life, one's own rights and obligations. (Forgacs 57)

A working class culture, or, in the MST's case, a revolutionary rural workers' culture necessarily involves the conscientization, or "higher awareness," of the rural workers so

---

4 In Vázquez it is quoted from *El materialismo histórico y la filosofía de Benedetto Croce*. Buenos Aires: Lautaro, 1958.

that they are the creators and re-creators of this culture. The MST works towards the popular hegemony, by creating and building on an existing culture but also creating a new one based on the Landless identity. One of the key pedagogical elements that the MST uses for its cultural revolution is *mística*, which is a type of secular mystique and practice that draws upon historical and collective memory to revive the spirit of struggle and resistance based on the land in its spiritual, ecological, social, cultural, political and economic aspects.

Popular Education in Practice: the MST and popular education

The pedagogy of the Movement is located within the tradition of popular education as a tool or even a way of thinking and acting to achieve a social transformation built from the people. That is to say, it is a pedagogy that is done from the people, with the people and for the people, in order to get them out of a situation of oppression. One of the fundamental principles of popular education is that it recognizes that it is not neutral education, and it poses this characteristic as a question or a problem, so that there can be discussion on the education that is often imparted and questioned through the use of popular education. It breaks with the traditional or conventional education that is imparted in schools that is not linked to the reality of its *educands*, who are from a rural area. The MST's pedagogy is one of rural *campesino* life, ultimately and inextricably linked to the land, and thus very aptly referred to as Pedagogy of the Land.

Popular education is embedded in and emerges from a social movement

"All political education of collective subjects is inseparable from the social movements that they create" (Caldart 12).
"The major educational experience comes from active participation in organized struggle: de facto, the MST is itself an enormous school" (Kane 97).

The MST links political education with its struggle; by examining these links, we can see how popular education is embedded in and emerges from a social movement and its objectives. As Liam Kane suggests, the MST "is a prime example of how in Latin America a 'movement' is considered the 'school' in which popular education takes place" (Kane 105). As a social movement the MST includes and works towards key values and objectives in its education; it "links education and schooling with collective memory and identity, with the struggles for democratic rights and values for equality and diversity, for liberty and justice, for land and culture, for work and dignity" (Caldart 10).

Within the present Brazilian and global context of the domination of neoliberal and imperialist capitalism, the Landless must be strategic in their forms of struggle. It is not just a struggle for land nor is it led by just a few of the Movement's leaders. In the struggle for land and against the governmental policies that mainly obey the interests of large national and multi- and transnational companies, the Landless Movement (as well as other social movements and organizations) see political education as fundamental to conquering or winning not only land but also the hearts and minds of the people through a process of *conscientization* in which all recognize themselves as agents of social change.

The MST defines its education and pedagogy in terms that identify their approach as popular education, very similar to how Paulo Freire defines it. In the First National Encounter of Educators of Agrarian Reform (Homage to educators Paulo Freire and Ché Guevara) they presented a Manifesto from Educators of Agrarian Reform to the Brazilian People.

In Point 8 of the Manifesto, they write,
> We defend a pedagogy that is concerned with all dimensions of the human person and that creates an educational environment based on action and democratic participation, in the educational dimension of the work, of the culture and of the history of our people. (Caldart 266)

In Point 12, they write,
> We work for our own identity in the schools in the rural area, with a political-pedagogical project that strengthens new ways of development in the countryside, based on social justice, on agricultural cooperation, on respect for the environment and the valuing of campesino culture. (Caldart 266)

The MST speaks of "a pedagogy that is concerned with all dimensions of the human person." This has a lot to do with their interest in the formation of a new human being, and all the aspects that make up a human being. The MST also strives to create an "educational environment" that links "action and democratic participation." It is not enough to educate; pedagogy must lead to action, ensuring that the *educands'* participation is democratic. In this pedagogy the role of work, culture and history is important. The MST refers to their "political-pedagogical project," viewing education and schools as part of their project for "development in the countryside," a social transformation that has the countryside and rural development at its centre. As I have been describing the MST's pedagogy, it is one that incorporates the struggle for social justice, another form of organizing agricultural production, which would be the cooperatives, a respect for the environment and that values campesino culture. In this pedagogy, land is at the centre, because it incorporates agricultural production, respect for the environment, and campesino culture as key components and pedagogical elements. (See Chapter 4.)

As Roseli Salete Caldart, a MST theorist and educator, explains:
> We want the educands to be more human beings and not only knowers of contents or mere masters of technical competences and skills. They need to learn to speak, to read, to calculate, confront, dialogue, debate, doubt, feel, analyze, relate, celebrate, know how to articulate one's own thoughts, one's own feelings, … and do all this in tune with the MST's historical project, which is a project for society and humanity. (Benjamin and Caldart 61)

The MST's Pedagogy of the Land is clearly not only working towards social transformation but is an integral part of this transformation by proposing and building its part in it, that is to say, the "MST's historical project" which is built by these *educands* who develop themselves as human beings. Put in simple words, the MST's struggle is based on land; the MST's education is also based on land.

Chapter 3: The MST and the Brazilian Context

Che, Zumbi, Antonio Conselheiro, Na luta por justiça todos somos companheiros!
Che, Zumbi, Antonio Conselheiro, In the struggle for justice, we are all comrades!
– MST chant

In Mexico the Secretariat for Public Education (SEP) wants to eliminate the teaching of Mexican pre-Hispanic history, of the indigenous civilizations that are the roots of almost all Mexicans. It is an attempt to erase the historical memory of a people, so that they no longer know of their roots, of their history of resistance of more than 500 years, in order to prepare them to be a few pieces more of cheap labour in the machinery of the capitalist system of production and displacement of peoples and of cultures. In Brazil the Landless Movement is part of a process that not only recuperates its history but that allows this history to feed the spirit of the Brazilian people, a people that is a mixture of the original indigenous of this land, Black African slaves, and European imperialist conquistadores.

In my trip through Brazil, getting to know the different realities of the MST I saw a Brazil that has its roots and its present in the mixture of various indigenous, African and European cultures which form the Brazilian cultures and histories. Brazil's history in terms of movements and of repression is present in all of the courses' spaces. The Landless Movement shows us that resistance can be expressed in many ways, through music, theatre, murals, poetry. Their mística attests to this as do the other forms through which they educate. When I walk through the halls of ITERRA, I see the murals of Zumbi and Palmares, Africans and descendents of Africans who said no to slavery, Antonio Conselheiro who together with others formed a community that lived a socialist co-existence, amidst murals of the MST camps with their black tarp tents.

From all these moments, I know that the mística of the MST, their living and ongoing force to struggle, resist and live in dignity, means that they know and feel and live their history and are connected to it. Knowing their history is a way to continue in the tradition of struggle and resistance. There is hope and an affirmation of life, dignity and self-respect in this process. The alternatives that the MST create and implement are rooted in their history as peoples with their different forms of organization and resistance.

*   *   *   *   *

The invasion arrived in Latin America by boat,
This plan for slaughter came straight from Europe,
They came in the name of civilization,
Carrying the sword, and in the other hand, a cross,
Our pillories of death spilled so much blood,
For cheap enslaved indigenous and Black labour,
There are three histories on this big continent,
One well before the invaders arrived,
The second, five centuries of invasion,
And of indigenous, Black and popular resistance,
And the third is the one we will build,
To destroy the root of all evil....

This history of two worlds spreads through the world,
With a colonial vision that does not show our pain,
But a cry of resistance re-ignites,
Following examples of true heroes,
The Black cry of Zumbi comes from Palmares,
So many raise their voices,
They are present in our organization,
In order to have greater force, it is necessary to unify,
Firmly marching against all slavery,
And Columbus' light will be put out,
—500 Years of indigenous, Black, popular resistance (MST song by Zé Pinto)
(Nosso Jeito de Cantar 9)

Historic Context, Global Re-structuring, Neoliberalism

In this chapter I examine the Brazilian context in order to better understand the context in which the MST exists as well as some of the factors that contribute to its existence and the way it organizes the movement. It is necessary to examine key moments in the country's history that give rise to the existence of social movements like the MST. I take a *dialectical materialist* view of history, which means that I see history as a non-static construction and dialectical interaction between dominant and often repressive forces and forces in resistance to those. My intention in this paper is not to present the reader with a full history of Brazil. I acknowledge that this quick overview of some events in Brazilian history is incomplete. However, I felt it was necessary to give some historical context, as context is an integral part *of popular education*, and I cannot further discuss the MST's popular and political education without situating it in a historical context.

> *One of the roles of the educator is to help people organize their sense of resistance and alternative directions, and show that these elements have a long history within us all.*
> *One of our roles as teachers ought to be to help people gather up their long personal histories, and sometimes social histories, of resistance and transformation so they aren't so fragmented and incoherent (marino 130).*

After this brief historical context, I then briefly discuss some of the global changes of the last few decades, a sort of global re-structuring, so as to situate the Brazilian local context in the larger global context. It is necessary to look at the global situation because it directly impacts Brazil's local context. With global re-structuring, capitalism took another step in its formation, towards neoliberalism, in the past 20-25 years. Neoliberalism is a form of capitalism that favours a free market which privileges the generation of profits over people and their basic economic, social and cultural human rights. As another stage of capitalism, it favours deregulation and dismantling of the welfare state that aimed to benefit the general population through government social programs. It is a system that privileges the multinational corporations whose weight and power seem to have more influence on government decisions and policies than do voters and citizens. Neoliberalism opens the doors to capital while closing the doors to labour and worker rights. Some of the mechanisms that neoliberalism uses in Third World (or what I prefer to call "over-exploited countries"[5]) are Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, which provide loans to these countries but with fiscal restraint conditions. These "fiscal restraint" conditions often translate into cuts in social programs that hurt millions of citizens, already poor or those who become poorer under the adjustments. Some argue that SAPs hurt the poor majority while benefiting the small elite.

---

[5] This term is used by a friend of mine, Emma Beltrán, and I prefer it to Third World; "over-exploited" leaves clear just what is being done in those countries by the exploiter countries.

Finally, I focus on the present context of Brazil, within a neoliberal global structure, with the electoral victory of a supposedly leftist party and leader on a world stage where many supposedly left parties and leaders end up serving the interests of corporations and the wealthy rather than the workers and other supporters who they purportedly stand for. In my discussion of the present context, I do a brief *conjunctural analysis* of Brazil's economic, political and social situation, situating the MST and their use of popular education within it.

My analysis throughout the chapter is situated within a Gramscian interpretation of history that understands history as *dialectical* and necessarily includes an analysis of power. We can understand history and the present moment of global restructuring and neoliberalism in relation to what is hegemony. There are always hegemonic forces, but also resistance as a response to them. I see resistance as a proposal for an alternative system to the hegemonic and repressive one. The MST can be considered a counter-hegemonic force, one whose resistance includes a proposal for another type of society. I pose the question of how a force of resistance can turn into a counter-hegemonic force. What happens when a counter-hegemonic force becomes hegemonic? We need to define hegemony. Are there different types of hegemonies? Are some better than others? Are there transitional hegemonies? Is it possible to get to a popular hegemony that does not need to be countered or challenged, but instead is a step that leads to social transformation which changes the dynamic of hegemony and counter-hegemony.

It is important to discuss both the dominant forces and resistance to those forces. How do we interpret resistance? Is resistance only a reaction or opposition to a dominant force? I consider resistance as an alternative proposal, not only as opposition to the dominant order. That force opposes and resists because the dominant order tries to eliminate its proposal (even its existence). Resistance is a way of ensuring that the proposal continues to exist, although perhaps sometimes not as organized so as to consciously change the correlation of forces. The forces of resistance ultimately must organize so as to strategically challenge the dominant order and consciously change the tide.

Within this analysis I see the MST movement as a counter-hegemonic force located in a long trajectory of resistance to historical and current hegemonic forces in Brazil. To understand how the MST could exist and continue to accumulate forces, we need to understand the historic and present context (with economic, social, political elements) in which the MST arises and now exists, with an analysis of power and history that shows the complexity and dialectic notion of these. In the present context, in particular, I discuss the MST's role as counter-hegemonic force in relation to President Lula and the PT, Worker's Party role and whether it is a hegemonic or counter-hegemonic force, or both, depending on the context.

Historic Context: Brazil in a Dialectic Materialism Version of Repression and Resistance
Before doing a historical analysis of Brazil I want to pose a few questions to keep in mind throughout the following discussion. There are many factors that contribute to the rise of the MST. This analysis does not attempt to cover all of these elements, only to give some elements to the reader in order to better understand the historical context in which the

MST arises. What within Brazil's history helps us understand the existence of resistance movements? How does the importance of land and its distribution change from the arrival of the Portuguese and other colonizers to present day? How does the existence of other Brazilian movements influence the creation of the MST?

Colonization and Resistance from the Indigenous Peoples
While the colonization of the Americas by Europeans affected the way of living of many of the first peoples, their ways continue today in some parts of Brazil, and the resistance of these indigenous peoples (those who live today and those who were killed) influences what happens today, because the Brazilian people identify themselves with the resistance that lives on in their collective memory and consciousness.

When the Portuguese and other Europeans arrived in what is now known as Brazil, they imposed their forms of organization and views of land ownership on to the people who were living there. Among the forms of land ownership that they created were the immense extensions of land known as *capitanias heridatárias*, extremely large landholdings that were handed over to Portuguese nobles under a concession, not ownership; the ownership remained in the hands of the Portuguese Crown until 1822 and then the Brazilian Empire until 1850. While those that held the *capitanias* could not sell the land, they could hand over the land to those who produced on the land, in parcels known as *sesmarias*. Until about the 18th century, only those who were "white, of pure blood and Catholic" could receive a sesmaria. We can see the different visions or concepts of land between the conquistadores and the first peoples. Maintaining a collective way of living and ownership of land has been and continues to be a form of resistance to the Conquest and to the imposition of the conquistadores' values (Morissawa 57-8).

The MST inherits both the values of the indigenous and of the conquistadores (through hegemony); it organizes people to act and live collectively to achieve their objectives, and it continues to struggle so that land ownership can be legally collective. In some cases, communities have decided to live in a collective manner, but the legal situation can make things difficult and create divisions. One of the MST's principles is that conquered land cannot be sold, but since land titles are individually assigned, in practice, a family or individual can sell their land. This decision could have dire consequences for the community, especially if it is struggling to live collectively.

The Brazilian population is defined as a mixture of the Indigenous, the Europeans that arrived to "conquer" the area now known as Brazil (Portuguese, French, etc.) and the blacks, Africans brought over from the African continent as slaves. Each one of these groups brings their own characteristics to what Brazil and the Brazilian people are today. Depending on the region, the influence of each group varies. In some areas indigenous culture is marginalized, whereas in some areas of the Northeast you will find prominent African-influenced cultural traits and practices. In yet other areas, you will see that the influence of poor white peasants has more influence.

In the history of the first peoples after the invasion by the Europeans, we see oppression from the conquistadores and resistance from those who lived in the area before this arrival. The Europeans' treatment of the indigenous as well as the indigenous resistance

influences collective memory. As in many parts of Latin America, the indigenous are marginalized and excluded, even though they have struggled to preserve their way of life. Important figures like Sepé Tiaraju and Tupac Amaru influence not only the Brazilian people as a whole, but are incorporated into the MST's education and *mística*.

The Jesuits played different roles vis-à-vis the indigenous. At first their presence was integral to the process of colonization and led to the deaths of tens of thousands of indigenous people. Later they recognized the indigenous as the original people of Brazil and opposed the colonial plan. There were Spanish Jesuit missions along the Brazil/Uruguay border where the Guarani people lived in populations of 1,500 to 12,000 inhabitants; here they continued to live in their original collective manner but under the supervision of the Jesuit priests. The latter role of the Jesuits may have a connection to the supportive role of parts of the Church and Liberation Theology in the formation of the MST and other social movements.

When there was an attempt to displace some of the Guaranis, due to conflict between Portugal and Spain, a war broke out, lasting from 1753 to 1756. A Guarani chief, Sepé Tiaraju, the leader of this war, lives in the memory of Brazilians; he fought heroically for Guarani land and was massacred along with 1500 warriors in 1756. He is known for the phrase, "This land has an owner," (this does not refer to private ownership, but rather contests the Portuguese and Spanish arrogance and ignorance in just taking indigenous lands). Tupi Guarani, an indigenous language, was spoken in a large part of Brazil for many years during the Portuguese colonial period. Only in the 18th century was Portuguese formalized as the official language of the entire country. Today, Brazilian Portuguese dominates as a language that according to many "unifies" the country, although some indigenous languages are still spoken and words from indigenous and African languages are incorporated into Brazilian Portuguese (Ribeiro 24-30; Morissawa 59-61). It is problematic that the colonizers' language is almost completely dominant, as this does not reflect the Brazilian reality which is a mixture of cultures.

The Brazilian people today have inherited some of the indigenous resistance in their own forms of organization. Most notably the MST is influenced by communal forms of living, referred to as initial stages of communism (primitive communism). Not only are there figures that evoke the resistance of the indigenous in the past, but these remind the MST that there were collective forces that worked against the invading and murderous forces. Collective forms of living today counter the capitalist ideology that holds individualism in such high regard. This is a culture of resistance to dominant and repressive forces that continues on to present day. It is also what contributes to the collective memory of Brazilians today, and those who know of their past, know that Brazilians have this resistance in their blood.

Slavery from Africa and Black Resistance

The history that includes the treatment and the resistance of the Africans that were brought over as slaves also marks who the Brazilian people are and their forms of struggle. The Europeans brought over the Africans because according to the history books the indigenous had other forms of work and living and did not satisfy the labour needs of the Europeans. Millions of Africans were brought over from Africa, the largest number brought to any part of Latin America. A fact that marks Brazil is that slavery was

not abolished until much later than in other countries, not until 1888. Even today there are various cases of slavery. These are not just bad labour situations, they are cases of slavery. They are situations in which the workers are "hired" under deception, but once they begin to work they are not given a just salary (sometimes no salary) and they are not able to leave their work (sometimes in very isolated areas). With slavery and other forms of oppression and exploitation, such as racism, marginalization, violence, the blacks of Brazil have suffered and continue to suffer socially and economically. When slavery was "abolished", there started to be a charge for land under the Lands Law decreed by the Brazilian Empire in 1850, whereas during slavery, whoever occupied and produced on the land became the owner of the land (Morissawa 69-71). Morissawa contends that this "Lands Law signified the marriage of capital with the property of land" and ensured that land remain concentrated in the hands of rich landowners (71).

The black population in Brazil has resisted for centuries, and its resistance serves as an example and inspiration for those who continue to resist today. There are striking examples like those of the *quilombos*, communities of slaves in resistance that escaped from their "owners" and achieved their freedom in these communities. The most famous *quilombo* was Zumbi of the Palmares *quilombo*, one of the communities that lasted the longest, from 1630 to 1695 with up to 20,000 inhabitants. Even though the Portuguese defeated Palmares physically, they were never able to kill the memory of Zumbi and Palmares in the Brazilian people. Zumbi continues to be an example of struggle for many in Brazil (Morissawa 65). There are other examples that are important for the MST as well as for the rest of the Brazilian people, such as Antonio Conselheiro, Antonio the Counsellor, a priest who together with his followers formed an alternative community, socialist style. The community of Canudos existed between 1893-1897 as an example of another way of living, and for that reason the government wanted to destroy it, and so between October 1896 and October 1897 sent over 5,000 soldiers to kill every one of its inhabitants (Morissawa 86-7).

Just as with Zumbi and Palmares, the government could not erase the memory of Antonio Conselheiro and Canudos. The MST incorporates these examples of resistance in their struggle, with slogans such as this one: "*Che, Zumbi, Antonio Conselheiro, In the struggle for justice, we are all comrades!*" In the Movement's educational and training institutes such as ITERRA in Veranópolis, Rio Grande do Sul, there are murals in the halls of Zumbi and Palmares as well as of Antonio Conselheiro and Canudos and others that influence the struggle, the thinking and the actions of the Landless Movement.

Just as with the resistance of indigenous peoples, the resistance of black slaves and their descendents contributes to the culture of resistance, as well as the forms of organization of movements that exist in Brazil today. The existence and dominance of slavery in Brazil informs and helps us understand why there is such inequality in the country, but the strong resistance movements also help explain why there are such strong movements today. As Freire says, "The quilombos—the hiding places used by runaway slaves—constituted an exemplary moment in that learning process of rebellion—of a reinvention of life on the part of slaves who took their existence and history in hand, and, starting with the necessary 'obedience', set out in quest of the invention of freedom" (*Pedagogy of Hope* 107). And he also reminds us that "It is our

task as progressive educators to take advantage of this tradition of struggle, of resistance, and 'work it' (108).

Unfortunately, the existence of slavery did not stop in 1888 when slavery was supposedly abolished in Brazil. Slavery exists today, as a fact that the CPT (Pastoral Commission of the Land) researches and works against (Morissawa; www.cptnac.com.br). There is even a government task force to track and close down cases of slavery in various Brazilian states.

There are over 100 years of history between the period of slavery and the pre-dictatorship that I do not deal with in this paper. Events such as the massive European immigration of poor peasants, once there was "free" labour and land available, also shape the MST and their experience; these people also brought their own forms of organizing, and contribute to current day struggles.

Pre-dictatorship, Dictatorship and Post-dictatorship

Prior to 1964, there was a growth of *campesino* and labour movements, participation of progressive elements of the Church, as well as the influence of socialist ideas. These burgeoned throughout Brazil, and it is possible to see the military coup d'état in 1964 as a response to these movements that threatened the powerful classes (Konder; Morissawa 95).

From 1964 to 1984, the Brazilian people lived a period under the military dictatorship of various generals; there were varying levels of repression, forcing many into exile. Among the exiles were figures like Paulo Freire, Betinho de Sousa (York grad and CERLAC founder; the idea for *Fome Zero* came from him), and Florestan Fernandes. Some even ended up teaching in Canadian universities.

This period also remains in the historical memory of the Brazilian people. It is important to ask who was behind the dictatorship and why it happened. Were the CIA and other U.S. institutions involved, as was the case in other Latin American dictatorships? How was the consensus of the people obtained after the coup d'état against Goulart? What was the role of the mass media (ie., Rede Globo) and other segments of society during the dictatorship?

Although the dictatorship lasted 20 years, it did not succeed in suppressing all forms of resistance and alternatives to the dominant system. In both Brazil and abroad, Brazilians continued to nurture socialist ideas and ideas of Brazil other than the one that they lived in or had to flee from. Freire himself lived in exile in different countries including Chile where he practiced and wrote about popular education. Upon his return to Brazil, he continued his popular education work, in positions within the Ministry of Education as well as with social movements like the Landless Rural Workers Movement.

Even before the dictatorship finally led into the supposed "democracy" in Brazil, there was an open resurgence of social movements. This included *campesino* movements, which started with actions like land occupations which eventually led to the creation of the Brazilian MST. During this time, PT, *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, or Workers' Party, an electoral party with socialist ideas and strong support from the grassroots, was formed.

Kevin Spurgaitis cites MST national coordinator, João Pedro Stedile, who comments on the MST's creation after the dictatorship: " 'The MST came about as an expression of the will of the *campesino* to struggle for the land. We had to rebuild all of this because a dictatorship had destroyed all of the social organizations.' This climate of 'violence and desperation' was the catalyst for the Latin American movement" (Stedile *Globalization* 30).

Another key event, in the 70s, the modernization of agriculture, known as the "Brazilian miracle," worsened the situation for most of the rural population. Stedile remarks that the introduction of soya production accelerated the mechanization of agriculture and produced massive unemployment which led many to migrate to the cities (Fernandes and Stedile 1-2). This trend continues in later decades.

Even after the dictatorship was over, Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, a friend and collaborator with the MST, points out, barriers or "fences" remained in the Agrarian issue, such as militarization and the "judiciarization of the struggle for land," which is the use of the laws and judicial system to criminalize the legitimate struggle of landless people; it criminalizes MST occupations, while leaving the landowners and assassins of the Landless in impunity (Fernandes 20).

The situation in Brazil was part of and responded to a larger global re-structuring, a phase in capitalism in which it changes form to neoliberalism (freer markets and movement of capital, but not of labour) and at least in the First World, greater hegemony. Globally, there is talk of democratization, but this becomes a cover to the expanding neoliberalism and hegemony, because in some places there is some apparent consensus from the population around this neoliberal globalization. At least that is the version 'sold' by the media. But, even in the present state of democratization preached by the imperialist U.S., we see 'cracks in the consent' not only in the U.S. but in nations where it tries to impose neoliberalism through hegemony and even brute force, such as in Iraq. Having gone in as a 'liberation' mission the U.S. went on to push neoliberalism, turning the war, death and suffering of Iraqis into business (think of the contracts issued to U.S. companies, like Halliburton, and allies in the war and the so-called 'reconstruction'), the resistance in Iraq is increasing at rapid levels. This puts into question not only U.S. intervention but the 'sell' of neoliberalism and democracy. In Brazil, just as there has been historic resistance, there is present resistance to global and local neoliberal policies and practices. What distinguishes the MST's resistance in Brazil is that it both challenges the imposed system and pushes forward a liberatory project for Brazil.

One of the main proponents of neoliberalism in Brazil was professor-turned-President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, also known as the father of dependency theory. Although Lula campaigned in opposition to neoliberalism and Cardoso's policies, since he took office in 2002, he has followed these neoliberal policies, often with more destructive effects than Cardoso. To give an idea of the effects of Cardoso's policies; "only between 1995 and 1996, 1.5 million rural workers were forced to abandon agriculture" (Morissawa 54).

Present: Neoliberal Agenda vs. Resistance

I have discussed elements of the historical context that contribute to the rise of the MST. I will now do a *conjunctural analysis* of the present situation and position the MST, as a counter-hegemonic force in the correlation of forces, in particular with relation to Lula and the Worker's Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores-PT*).

My analysis is rooted in *dialectical* materialism, the interplay between the economic-social structure and the ideologies that accompany or react to this structure. For both there are indicators we can look at that are interrelated and interacting, because what may appear to be part of the economic-social structure has a strong ideological reason for its existence, and vice versa. For example, racism and poverty are often manifestations of a division along class lines which also fall along ideological lines. For the economic-social structure, we can analyze the distribution of wealth and land, employment levels, and the level of indebtedness of the country. In terms of ideology we can look at indicators like racism, media, justice system, and campesinos' consciousness of their own class position.

I use some key contradictions to frame the discussion of the relationship between the MST and Lula's government (while not forgetting the dialectical relationship between them): these contradictions include those between hegemonic vs. counter-hegemonic forces, lack of access of land, which pits neoliberal policies and agro-export production against social movements fighting against this, speculative vs. productive capital/investment, and neoliberal dominated mass media and alternative media.

Economic-Social Structure and Ideologies

Of Brazil's population of over 170 million people, 20 million are landless, "while 7 million more barely survive as squatters, sharecroppers, and migrant workers" (Cassel and Patel 19). Brazil has the highest social inequality between rich and poor in the world, and some of the most unequal land distribution; 40% of farmers (*campesinos*) with 1% of land, the wealthiest 20% owns 88% of the land; the poorest 10% of population receive 0.7% of total income, the wealthiest 10% receive almost 50% (Cassel and Patel 2). Although the rural poor are poorer than the urban poor, there is great misery in the cities of Brazil, renown for their *favelas*. Poverty in rural areas is double that of urban areas. In September 2003, Brazil's unemployment rate was 12.9%, while 13% of workers had precarious employment (in the informal sector and below minimum wage) (Benjamin, de Assis and Ribeiro 3). Unemployment, under-employment and precarious employment remain an issue in both cities and the countryside.

This severely unequal land and wealth distribution and high unemployment level make the implementation of an Agrarian Reform urgent and create the need to find ways to satisfy the concrete demand for land and work of many campesinos and their children. These elements in the present context create optimal conditions for the MST to thrive as a movement; they respond to concrete needs within the Brazilian reality. The grave situation in the countryside pushes migration to the cities, but this is not due to a pull factor from the cities, where there are few opportunities and many social problems. Other movements in Brazil, apart from the MST, respond to these problems and attest to their severity by their existence and chosen actions; the Roofless Workers' Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto-MTST*), for example, responds to a lack of

housing in the cities by organizing and carrying out occupations, since the government (as in the case of the MST) does not respond to these problems in an adequate manner.

The lack of attention given to the majority of the population is reflected in the poor quality of basic necessities, such as housing, work, and education. Current education, especially for rural areas, if it exists, is often disconnected from the reality that people live. There is racism in the implementation and distribution of these services, as it is indigenous and Blacks who most suffer in all areas. In fact, Brazil's poverty and social inequality should be analyzed in terms of race, because the Black and indigenous population are the poorest and most discriminated against segments of society. They are also the most affected by crime, low level and quality of education, which is part of systemic structural racism and part of any analysis of the social-economic structure.

If poverty, racial and class discrimination and other social problems are now experienced at such high levels in Brazil, what can Brazilians expect as the country further indebts itself to International Financial Institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank as part of the external pressures of global neoliberal polices? In July 2004 total Brazilian foreign debt was estimated at US$203 billion ("Press Release"). The increasing foreign debt puts pressure on Brazil's social structure and services, as Lula's government prioritizes paying off the debt at the expense of desperately needed social services and programs such as Agrarian Land Reform, which contribute to alleviating social problems like unemployment, poverty and hunger. The rest of my analysis focuses on the MST in relation to Lula and the Worker's Party, within the framework of global and national neoliberal policies. The trend of neoliberal globalization results in "transnational [and national] corporations [that] need the fragmentation and the destruction of the domestic economy" in order to increase their markets (Morissawa 48); the MST stands counter to this trend by working for a stronger domestic economy, which goes against the policies of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO (World Trade Organization).

Lula Inacio da Silva and the Worker's Party vs. the MST

The MST is an example of popular power by those who recognize that party politics do not function for the majority, so it is necessary for people to assume their historic role as agents of the change they want. The *conscientization* of the MST membership, as Stedile mentions, is important towards this end. The MST's actions are part of counter-hegemonic pressure from civil society on the government, just as there is pressure from the dominant classes in Brazil to get the government to carry out policies in their best interests.

João Pedro Stedile explains what the MST considers necessary for change to occur, the role of social movements vis-à-vis the Lula government:

> Lula himself and his government are not strong enough to make all the changes that he promised. It is going to take the resurgence of mass movements…. The main thing that social movements must understand is that our strength derives from the number of people organized and their level of political consciousness. We need to put our resources into training people with a high degree of political clarity…. You have to confront capitalism and confront the attacks that we are

> facing, and *at the same time* build local alternatives and local solidarity economies (that's what we call them). You really have to do both at the same time as a strategy of accumulating forces…. The redistribution of knowledge is just as important as the redistribution of land. (Stedile 9)

Stedile states clearly the MST's belief that mass movements like the MST must pressure Lula's government in order to ensure that his promises to the least privileged of Brazilian society are carried out and result in significant changes in the country. The MST's strategy is two-fold: to resist the current capitalist model which involves putting pressure on and negotiating with the Lula government, and at the same time, to create an alternative model of society with genuine rural development at its core. The MST's engagement with Lula's government involves both pressure and negotiation; pressure in response to how international financial institutions and polices impact *campesinos*; negotiation in areas such as school education, literacy programs, as well as Agrarian Reform programs for small-scale domestic production.

To this day, the repressive and hegemonic forces in Brazil include the *latifundiarios* and the urban upper classes who control key elements through which hegemony is reinforced, such as the media, the justice system, and armed militias, and the owners of large industries, who also have an important role in international relations, economically and politically.

The dominant classes have control of the media largely dominated by Rede Globo, one of the largest media chains in Latin America, which has an impact on the portrayal of the MST and other movements. While the media can give the MST a bad image, the MST has often been effective at swaying public opinion once it enters the collective consciousness through TV, radio or the press. The MST spreads its own counter-information so as to *conscienticize* people about the Movement's role in Brazil; it does this through its own alternative media (*Sem Terra* magazine, *Sem Terra* newspaper, community radios, Internet sites, booklets), as well as its presence in marches, popular education campaigns, work in its communities, coordination with other movements, and negotiations with different levels of government. While rich landowners increase their militias that fight against and kill poor landless people, the MST continues organizing and struggling against this violence.

Although Lula's victory may have resulted from a vote against neoliberalism and some argue that he faces international and internal pressures which prevent him from implementing the changes he promised, it seems that Lula has betrayed both the promises he made and his humble worker roots. Lula's party, the PT, had a history of grassroots organizing with and for the poor and the more left-leaning segments of the Brazilian population and might have been considered counter-hegemonic to the dominant forces in Brazil. However, both the PT's and Lula's actions now favour hegemonic elements in Brazilian society, the ruling elite such as *latifundiarios* and exporters, rather than the poor and disadvantaged majority of Black, indigenous, *mestizo* and white Brazilians.

When Lula pays off foreign debt and favours large agro-export businesses instead of giving money for social services and Agrarian Reform, he responds to neoliberal policies

not to the desire for genuine social re-structuring. Lula refers to his measures as "bitter medicine."

Social movements like the MST and even less "radical" progressives may feel betrayed by this "bitter medicine" from Lula, who pays "lip service" and offers token programs like *Fome Zero* to Brazil's poor, without altering the structure that causes Brazil's social inequality. The government's discourse of improving the situation for the poor is not coherent with its actions. While it encourages speculative investment, it weakens productive investment in sectors except for those controlled by rich agro-exporters. When Lula pays off foreign debt and favours large agro-export businesses instead of giving money for social services and Agrarian Reform, he responds to neoliberal policies not to the desire for genuine social re-structuring. Lula refers to his measures as "bitter medicine." The MST understands that the Lula government favours speculative financial practices, so it pushes for greater productive investment through the implementation of programs such as genuine Agrarian Reform.

The increase in speculative investment, encouraged by such government actions as offering high-return bonds, is accompanied by a "decline in productive investments" which in turn "contributed to increasing unemployment. "Free market policies" led to a big increase in cheap and subsidized imports displacing local small and medium size agricultural and manufacturing producers who employ the bulk of the labour force" (Petras 2004, 40). With the goal of expanding foreign trade and exportation of Brazilian products like soya, orange juice concentrate and beef to Europe and Asia, Brazil is part of MERCOSUR, a regional trade bloc, and the G22, a counter-bloc of counter to the U.S. and countries that dominate WTO (World Trade Organization) negotiations. But how does this benefit the majority of Brazilians who are not part of the export scheme and need employment, food and housing? These export products are part of a system of mono-cultural production that does not guarantee food security for the majority of Brazilians. Export industries such as soya create few jobs. It does not make sense to support export industries when there are high rates of unemployment. As Food First reports, "the FAO found that large farms needed 60 hectares to create one job, while a family farm created a new job with only 9 hectares" (Cassel and Patel 28) while also feeding the family.

It is clear that Lula's measures directly and severely affect social services, and fail the majority of Brazilians. When Lula "slashed the budget by $3.9 billion" US, there were "reductions in the promised minimum wage from $69 US to $67 US per month." In total, "Over $1.4 billion (USD) … came out of the social budget" which included "food programs, education, social security, labour, agricultural development, cities and social promotion…. The major reason for the social and other budget cuts was to increase the budget surplus to meet IMF and debt payments (Petras 30-1). We see how the external pressures of global neoliberalism affect social services and the poor.

Lula's economics focus on speculative activities that tend to present favourable economic growth without the on-the-ground benefits for the majority of the population; they are disastrous for the short and long-term survival of millions of Brazilians:

> The Brazilian state's budget surplus of 4.25% result[ed] in over $23 billion dollars in
> tax revenues being transferred mostly from wage and salary workers to wealthy

domestic and foreign creditors (mostly bankers) who in turn invest in speculative activities, principally high interest-bearing bonds from the Central Bank. (Petras 30)[6]

Despite Lula's election promise to create 10 million new jobs, after one year in power, there were one million new unemployed workers (Benjamin, de Assis and Ribeiro 4).

During Lula's term thus far, "export revenues (particularly in soy bean, beef and citrus) have increased while the minimum wage for agricultural workers has in real terms declined" (Petras 37-8), clearly another case of how global pressures and neoliberal policies effect the poor and working classes. There is no proof that Lula's economic policies have improved the lot of the poor and working class. To the contrary, Petras points out "Between 1995 and 2001 foreign investment increased from R$272.6 billion to R$914 billion... In the same period unemployment grew 155.5%... there is an inverse relation between the inflows of foreign capital and employment" (Petras 40). As neoliberal policies favouring foreign and speculative investment increase, employment decreases.

A clear example of how Lula's administration favours the agro-export sector at the expense of landless rural workers is the following:

> The agro-export sector controlled by a tiny elite of plantation growers and agro-business multi-nationals experienced spectacular growth thanks to lucrative subsidies and tax incentives. In contrast the landless rural workers, the co-operatives and family farmers suffered the worst year in recent memory in terms of land distribution, rural credits and technical aid. (Petras 57)

Both budget cuts and an emphasis on export and speculative investment have accompanied low wages and unemployment. In order to alleviate poverty and hunger, as well as generate employment, it would make sense for the Lula government to stimulate the productive market and economy, and put the solution to these problems in the hands of the people affected, through programs like Agrarian Reform.

While Agrarian Reform is not implemented as it should be, access to land remains in the hands of few, therefore, denying genuine rural development, which involves not only rich agro-exporters, but also poor rural workers. Although Lula professes to support the MST, in the crucial area of the poor having access to the land on which they can work, feed themselves and others, Lula's track record in the first year is even worse than Cardoso's. If we then consider the violence faced by MST members who were evicted from occupied land, well, as Petras says, there is a very low number of people in this first year who have benefited from Lula's promises for Agrarian Reform. In terms of giving MST members access to the land, Lula fared poorly:

> Da Silva had promised to settle 60,000 families on expropriated land in 2003 and finished the year with 10,000 families. The MST had demanded the settlement of 120,000 families … compare the figures to the previous neoliberal Cardoso regime, which averaged 40,000 families per year over an eight year period… the Da Silva regime barely reached 25% of the previous regime's dismal yearly

---

[6] Petras uses information from Benjamin, de Assis and Ribeiro 7.

record … if we subtract the number of land settlers who were forcibly evicted by the state judicial authorities (9,243 families), the net land reform beneficiaries is less than one thousand. (Petras 57-8)

Petras makes it clear that only the actions of social movements like the MST result in concrete results:

The only agrarian reform which took place in Brazil resulted from mass direct action from below. Land occupations increased from 176 in 2002 to 328 in 2003, an increase of 86%. … (CPT Document Dec 21, 2003) The number of families that participated in land occupations rose from 26,958 in 2002 to 54,368 in 2003, an increase of 102%. The number of families organized in campsites in 2003 rose to 44,087 against 10,750 in 2002, a 310% increase. (Petras 59)

For there to be changes that favour the majority, Brazilian social movements must continue to exert pressure on Lula and his administration. One proven solution to at least some of Brazil's hunger and poverty is to implement genuine Agrarian Reform, because small-scale farming generates employment while allowing people to feed themselves. The currently unemployed landless would work on their own land and feed their own families. Over time, small farms provide for the local and national market as well as provide more jobs per hectare than large soya plantations. In the balance between small and large scale agricultural operations, we see how the IMF and World Bank's conditionalities on their loans push for large scale agro-export in Brazil; this neoliberal policy has a negative effect on local small-scale farmers and economy, and shows us just how Brazil must "adapt its economic policies to the interests of the commercial and official creditors" (Morissawa 48).

Due to the situation of unemployment, hunger and poverty, the MST argues that Brazil has a crisis of projects (Stedile 16). The argument holds true if we think of a national project as one that benefits the majority, which Lula's plans do not do. Although some argue that Lula tries to balance between the different forces, is this really the case? It is necessary to look at the correlation of forces in Brazil, at the government, regional and other levels with a critical eye. Lula does not have an alternative project for Brazil, at least not one he is working towards or implementing. His project, if it can be called that, works within the current hegemony and system of global neoliberalism, and he does nothing concretely to contest these systems. Although Lula shows some alliance with the MST and other social movements, this is not a deep alliance that could change the correlation of forces, because he works to maintain the current systems of power through the economic, political and social decisions he makes.

Lula addresses Brazil's economic and social situation through world conferences and national government programs to fight poverty and hunger that profess to feed people and to find ways for them to feed themselves. However, these instruments remain in the hands of a government whose interests seem to be primarily with the rich.

The MST responds to and engages the current conjuncture by proposing an alternative project for Brazil. While the MST is also concerned with Brazil's economic and social situation, it offers and implements an alternative that distributes resources into the hands of the poor so that they can work and sustain themselves and others in Brazil with

the food they produce. The MST works towards this project by using media, the law (particularly the Brazilian Constitution), direct action (such as land occupations), and when possible, negotiating with the government. It has set up a system of cooperatives in many of its settlements that produce *produtos da reforma agraria* which are sold in MST stores throughout the country. The MST model generates employment and work for families as well as food security. It fights against the unemployment, hunger and poverty created by the neoliberal model in place in Brazil. As Liam Kane contends, "For the MST, the real challenge is … to prove by example, in the way settlements are run, that alternative models of rural development are possible" (94).

The MST's strategy to challenge the current system while implementing an alternative system is one in which "the redistribution of knowledge is just as important as the redistribution of land." This strategy includes both cooperatives and critical education based on its members' realities. It is integral to the MST's alternative to obtain land and to ensure that collective knowledge-construction and *conscientization* are key elements of the struggle, such as we see in their Pedagogy of the Land. However, for there to be a change in the correlation of forces, the MST must be part of a counter-hegemonic bloc that works to *conscienticize* all of the Brazilian population, so that there will be systemic changes that have a lasting positive impact on their lives.

Chapter 4:
The Strategic Approach of the MST's Popular Education

Madre Terra, nossa esperanca	*Mother Earth, our hope*
Onde a vida dá seus frutos	*Where life gives her fruits*
O teu filho vem cantar	*Your son comes to sing*
Ser e ter o sonho por inteiro	*Be and have the dream in its entirety*
Sou Sem Terra, sou guerreiro	*I am Sem Terra, I am warrior*
Co'a missão de semear	*With the mission of sowing*
A Terra, Terra, Terra, Terra	*The Land, Land, Land, Land*
Mas, apesar de tudo isso	*But, despite all of this*
O latifúndio é feito um inço	*The latifundio is made an inconvenience*
Que preciso acabar	*That I must finish with*
Romper as cercas da ignorancia	*Break the barriers of ignorance*
Que produz a intolerancia	*Which produce intolerance*
Terra é de quem plantar	*Land is for those who work it*
A Terra, Terra, Terra, Terra	*The Land, Land, Land, Land*
—Cancão da Terra, Pedro Munhoz	*—Song of the Land, Pedro Munhoz (Song often sung in místicas)*

Because if we struggle we struggle for a very clear objective which is our happiness, that is not only individual, it is a collective happiness. And it supersedes this capitalist sentiment. It is another sentiment of happiness, a happiness of brotherhood, solidarity, of the construction of a happy life for all. In this sentiment for us is joy and celebration, which is part of our process of political education, of our process of struggle. Also present in this moment is what we achieve in our process of political education beyond study, books, debate; which is to know the reality of each state, to know the culture as a people, as people that celebrate… To dance here for you, as people dance, sing and interact among each other. We want to have this exchange with each one of you that make up the Landless Movement here in this state. We would like to bring [to you] … dance, a cultural element which is the dance. — Maria, MST political educator (Recorded by Fuchs 2003)

It has been twenty years since the retaking of the struggle for land in Brazil. We proved to the bourgeoisie that if they deny us knowledge, the workers take their space in constructing knowledge and showing in practice that people can organize. Revolutionary theory does not exist without revolutionary practice. We have already initiated this construction in the encampments and the settlements. Our militant practice is collective coexistence, but we need to go beyond this, to study and feel for it a revolutionary passion. –Alvaro, MST political educator (Recorded by Fuchs 2003)

As we see in the previous chapter, a *dialectical* interpretation of history helps us understand how hegemony manifests itself through the relationship between dominant forces and forces of resistance. With this interpretation, we can begin to analyze and question where power resides; in the dominant force, in the resistance and/or in the *dialectical* relationship between the two? If we understand power as something that must be constantly negotiated, then an apparently dominant power can be contested

and popular power can be created that acts as a counter hegemony to the dominant hegemony.

MST, Counter-Hegemonic Force

In this chapter I speak about the way in which the MST, as a counter-hegemonic force to the dominant neoliberal powers in Brazil, builds popular power. Popular power is power constructed from the people, who are *conscienticized* through a process of organized participation. The MST as a mass movement that wants to maintain and increase its position as a counter-hegemonic force does so through the use of popular education, as a tool for the construction of popular power.

I divide the chapter into two parts, in the first part, I explain the content of the MST's Pedagogy of the Land as popular education, and, in the second part, I use the ITERRA institute example to explain the process of Pedagogy of the Land, and how it is connected to the MST's structure, organization and construction of a viable alternative to the dominant neoliberal capitalist model.

I refer to the MST's popular and political education as Pedagogy of the Land. The MST uses this term to refer to one of its university-level courses for the training and preparation of political educators; I think it is appropriate to use it to refer to all of the Movement's popular education. I define Pedagogy of the Land as the theory of the Landless popular and political education that uses land as both its theoretical and practical foundation.

Pedagogy of the Land

The Pedagogy of the Land draws on the multifaceted relationship with the land that the MST promotes; land has theoretical and practical components, as well as social, cultural, political, economic aspects. Land gets integrated into the Movement's popular education in the way that the Movement carries out its work, by ensuring that it is always based on the lived experiences of its students who are either *campesinos* or sons and daughters of *campesinos*. In content, in many of the disciplines taught, or in the manner in which the courses are structured, land is integrated into the material of almost all its activities.

Although *Pedagogia da Terra (PDT),* Pedagogy of the Land, has many elements, I focus on only five key points: land as a source of: Spirit, Identity, Resource, Survival, and land as Economic Property. The MST's pedagogy is a subset of a general pedagogy of the oppressed—"the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation" (Freire 1970, 53); it is filtered through one specific set of experiences, those of being a landless rural worker seeking to reclaim the land. One of the most important moments in this experience is the occupation of the land, which is an integral part of the pedagogy. For MST members to connect with their experience, they need a specific pedagogy, hence, Pedagogy of the Land. This pedagogy highlights one of the MST's main successes as a movement, its social and ecological rootedness; it is based upon the experiences of the landless and their relationship with the land.

The MST's pedagogy is a politicized environmental popular education. It is not education that just teaches about trees, but educates people to reflect on their role

within society and their environment, so that they can establish or re-establish a healthier relationship with the environment which includes people, nature, and work. It encourages greater consciousness of relationships with other human beings as well as with the environment and one's self. This relationship includes a vision and work practice that differs from the capitalist system's model of exploitation and domination—which is reproduced in all relationships, with our environment and other beings in it; it affects relationships between men and women, as well as the relationship a *campesino* has with the land. Instead of fostering relationships in which people, *campesinos* or large landowners, exploit the land without regard for the consequences, the MST, through its education and practice, promotes another relationship with the land, one of respect and understanding. For example, the MST includes education on GMO (genetically modified organisms) seeds and their effects, and on how to practice agriculture with only organic, native seeds without using pesticides or herbicides, something that benefits the *campesinos* as well as the land. The MST encourages its members to connect with their own experiences through the pedagogy but also to be critical of and challenge their own views of land and their relationship to it. Being part of a capitalist society where all relationships are mediated by money and monetary value, the *campesino* inherits elements of the dominant ideology or hegemony in his or her mentality. With its popular education, the MST seeks to start from its members' experiences and move to a transformation to build a better society in which land and all relationships that are mediated by land are based on respect and dignity.

This pedagogy stands in contrast to other environmental education which only deals with the issue of protection of the environment without engaging with other key environmental and land-related issues such as the private land ownership system as well as the people who are part of and depend on the natural environment's health.

In addition to the various elements of the land, I discuss how the MST's pedagogy engages with issues that new social movements incorporate in their struggles such as gender, race and the environment. In a completely politicized manner, gender, race and environment play an important role in the pedagogy and organizing work of the movement. Gender is dealt with in the participation of women as coordinators together with a male coordinator (there is one male and one female coordinator) and in changing human relationships of domination inherited within the capitalist model; this change benefits women as well as men. For example, because of legal precedent and tradition, land title was usually issued to men, but the MST has increased the number of women who receive the land title in their names. In terms of race, the Movement works at respecting and understanding the diversity of present and historical Brazil and includes this as an integral part of its struggle. While racism still exists, the Movement has come a long way. With the *Landless* identity and *class consciousness* that are an integral part of the MST, a poor white person from the South can identify with a poor Black person from the North. While this is only one step towards building camaraderie across race and gender, it is very important and is a success of the movement. The MST and its members build alliances with other movements across issues. These alliances include coordinating bodies such as the CMS-the Coordination of Social Movements, a wide variety of social organizations that are building a movement to create a new national project for Brazil, and the National Campaign against the FTAA (*Campanha Nacional contra a Alca*).

When the Landless Movement challenges traditional relationships of exploitation and domination, it includes the environment as an integral part of their analysis and action; it is essential for humans to question and transform their relationship with the environment and the land, so as to not allow themselves to be exploited, but to care for each other as they care for the land, the Earth. Human beings are part of nature, not separate from it. This is evidenced in the MST's campaigns and work in all of their communities regarding GMO seeds and organic agriculture. Ultimately, they understand that if Landless people are truly critical of the system they will also be truly critical of their own thoughts and actions as part of the system that they want to change. Gender, race and environmental issues are interrelated because the attitude towards each is essentially part of the criticism of the capitalist model and society which creates relationships of colonialism and domination, between people as well as between people and their environment.

As I have mentioned, the land is considered from various perspectives: spirituality, identity, culture, resource and economic property. *Mística* refers to spiritual elements of the land as well as its significance in terms of identity and culture. The MST sees the land as a source of survival in the area of agricultural production, in the creation of cooperatives, in the practice of a family agriculture and in the use of seeds that are GMO-free. The MST incorporates the concept of economic property in its struggle, as it challenges private property and struggles for collective property. These are all the different ways through which the MST places importance on the land but also through which they challenge the current system of capitalism and presents some land-based alternatives.

While being landless is a concrete, objective condition, the strength of the MST is that it takes this landless condition and turns it into a basis for an identity that includes but also goes beyond an objective condition and uses the spiritual, social and political elements to ensure that its members maintain a prolonged struggle for the land even beyond the occupation of it, because they have *class consciousness*. Though, as with any kind of consciousness, it is always in construction and, thus, popular education always has a role. They thus assume the *Landless* identity. Since identity and *class consciousness* are socially constructed, some people are objectively workers, but do not have working *class consciousness* which is a form of identity and agency. However, the MST Landless people know that they are poor and disenfranchised, and act from this *class consciousness*. The Landless identity is of particular interest when we consider the tension that exists between class and spirituality in some interpretations of Marx. The MST movement contains this tension; on the one hand, many of their courses include Religion classes and there is lots of participation from religious elements in the Movement mostly because the existence of the MST in part develops from the church's own work with Liberation Theology and the creation of the Base Ecclesiastical Communities (CEBs). On the other hand, there are those within the Movement who are wary of institutionalized religion.

I will never forget a MST Religion class by a Catholic priest, Cerioli, in which he dealt with this tension, explaining it as a tension within the Church itself, and using Marx's famous saying, "Religion is the opiate of the people," in the lecture. He explained that as in society, the Church also contains a hegemonic and hierarchical segment which is

allied with the dominant class. He believed that Marx was critiquing this hegemonic and hierarchical Church and suggested that we consider the context Marx refers to in his statement, and recognize that this critique might not apply in the same way in other contexts. Cerioli gave examples of religious figures that fought against the dominant classes, like Camilo Torres, a Catholic priest who became a *guerrillero* in Colombia.

Spirit & Identity: Mística and Collective Memory

Land has a spiritual significance for the Movement which it expresses most obviously in its use of *mística*. The Landless identity is highly dependent on collective memory, that is, historical memory. The pedagogy

> arises from the cultivation of memory and the sense of history and perception of being part of it, not merely as a recovery of meanings, but as something to be cultivated and produced. Collective memory is fundamental for the construction of an identity. To cultivate memory is more than to know one's own past. For this reason perhaps in the MST there is such a close relationship between memory and mística. (Benjamin and Caldart 58)

One of the ways through which the MST maintains and reinforces collective memory and identity is with its use of *mística*. The concept of *mística* for the Landless sometimes defies definition. Javier Arjona and Carlos Aznárez say that "in the context of the Landless it is a cultural act in which their struggles and hopes are represented." These same authors cite a militant from the Movement who explains it in the following way:

> In social struggles there are moments of repression that seem to be the end of everything; but, then, as if a mysterious energy touched each one, slowly once again things start working out and the fight starts with more force. This energy that motivates us to stay engaged is what we call mystery or *mística*. Whenever something is moved in the direction of the human being becoming more human, *mística* is being manifested. (89)

Mística "is the soul of the fighters of the people; the feeling materialized in symbols that helps the people maintain their collective utopia. For the MST, *mística* is one of the basic dimensions of the education process of the Landless" (Benjamin and Caldart 74). *Mística* has a particular, and even pedagogical, importance within the movement. It is what gives people strength to continue struggling. It includes conviction, indignation, and fervour, something almost spiritual that is rooted in the concrete and in the daily like the land, the struggle for it, and the desire for a just world with dignity. In all of the MST's education and formation spaces, *mística* is present. It is developed with elements like the MST flag, anthem, other songs from the *campesinos* and those revolutionary figures who act as examples and inspirations. *Mística* is also the popular theatre that is almost ritualistic performed in order to promote unity around the identity of being Landless. Therefore, *mística* is the word used to describe both the MST's land-based mysticism and a specific technique or specific manifestation of *mística* in the form of short (formative or educational) plays or theatre pieces which militants and grassroots members act out in a variety of events, from meetings, to courses to state and national encounters; there is a *dialectical* relationship between the different interpretations of *mística*: it is never just a play.

Collective memory is reinforced by the struggles that came before the MST and continue to feed the Landless' spirit of resistance and of struggle; this includes such struggles as those of Canudos, of Zumbi de Palmares, but also international figures representative of national struggles like Che Guevara and Emiliano Zapata. In the MST's *místicas* (short plays) the pedagogical element is present in the moment of presenting and watching the *mística*. While individual heroes from various struggles throughout particularly Latin America are put alongside heroes from Brazilian struggles, there are also MST members that are included in these *místicas*. Having participated in watching and preparing for various *místicas*, I felt that the preparation of the *mística* as well as sometimes the discussion it provoked afterwards, were very important moments. While sometimes the assignment of a group having to prepare a *mística* was seen as just another task, the militants became aware of the importance of discussing the *mística* they wanted to do, as well as discussing after they presented the *mística* to the other militants whether it be in a course or a MST state encounter of hundreds of MST militants. A *mística* is presented usually about two or three times a day during a course or an encounter, and is the responsibility of a different group daily. It provides a moment in which the militants must work collectively, drawing upon what they have learned and their experiences, reflecting upon these so as to come up with ideas for their *mística*, deciding collectively what and how to put it into action. It resembles Theatre of the Oppressed techniques in which the participants (both the actors and the spectators) are involved in the theatre, in which they often act out part of their lives as *campesinos* and members of the Landless Movement. In this same sense, Theatre of the Oppressed is as Augusto Boal says, "a rehearsal of revolution" (155) that is, the experience of the process of being subjects who contribute to the social transformation that they want to see in reality. In mística, participants represent and act out scenes that happen or could happen in their lives. Sometimes acting out these scenes serves to offer possibilities or solutions to the obstacles that they face and give them the motivation to carry them out.

In a Basic Course for Militants the CPP (political-pedagogical collective) used Theatre of the Oppressed as a technique to engage with problems and conflicts that came up in the course. Militants formed groups in which they acted out a scene that represented a problem or a conflict in the course. Afterwards, those who were not part of the representation could replace someone within the scene in order to try to improve the situation and resolve the problem or conflict; discussion followed on whether or not these solutions could be realistically implemented.

Landless Identity

The Landless identity is a collective identity based in material existence because it includes what all Landless people collectively have achieved, by performing land occupations, which is an attempt to transform their material reality. Landless with a capital "L" is an identity that has been constructed collectively through continuous actions and victories and suffering. All Landless people know that they would not be where they are unless those before them had occupied Macali or Anoni or had organized the first MST Congress. The Landless are still Landless even after they obtain the land legally. Many understand that their identity is not only based on the fact that they do not have land, but because of the class that they are in; it is thus a collective class identity, uniting Landless across the country. Whether you are a white male from

the South or a black woman from the North, you can look at each other and identify with each other and immediately know something about the other person by virtue of her or him identifying him or herself as Landless.

Caldart explains in more detail the meaning of the *Landless* identity:

> The MST's pedagogy is the manner through which historically the Movement has formed the social subject with the name *Landless*, and that in day to day activities educates people which are part of it. The main educational principle of this pedagogy is the *movement itself*.... To be Landless today is much more than being a worker who does not have land, or even who struggles for it; *Landless is a historically constructed identity*... The relationship of the MST with education is a relationship of origin: the history of a great educational project. If we reclaim the concept of education as *human formation* in its practice, we find in the MST since it was created [a focus on] the transformation of the 'wretched of the land' and the 'poor of all' into citizens, willing to struggle for a dignified place in history. It is also education which we see in every daily action that constitutes the formation of the identity of the MST landless. *The Movement is our great school*, say the landless. (Benjamin and Caldart 49-50)

Landlessness is a collective identity because the Landless are individuals that make up a collective, a movement, and the interaction between the individuals and the Movement as a whole is essential for the formation of Landless identity. In the process of occupying land, *campesinos* not only reclaim land, but become subjects of their own history as political and social actors, as agents of their own lives. The importance of being citizens is extremely important; the MST has its own construction of active citizenship which it promotes through its political education and organizational structure.

Resource & Survival: Production and Cooperatives

Land is a resource and a source of survival for the Landless. Their demand for real Agrarian Reform embodies this aspect of land. When the Landless occupy land and negotiate for technical and financial assistance with the government, they are not interested in receiving handouts from the government. They are interested in establishing their alternative project for society, one in which they produce their own food in their own manner. Once the land has been occupied and even before they receive the land title, the families' priority is to make the land fulfill its social function, to produce. They begin to work the land immediately so that they can begin to feed themselves, their families.

Once the Landless families receive their titles to the land, some form cooperatives (either formally or informally) in order to set up a system in which they can continue to work together to the greater benefit of all. The MST has a sector, Settlers' Cooperative System (*Sistema Cooperativista dos Assentados—SCA*) that is responsible for Cooperatives, as part of a system of rural development that works to ensure food security for all of Brazil. The MST currently has over 86 rural cooperatives on its reclaimed land, cooperatives that produce milk, organic seeds, vegetables, etc. Although the majority of the MST's cooperatives are located in the South of Brazil, the MST attempts to commercialize their products which they call *produtos da reforma agraria* (Agrarian

Reform products) across the country, in local MST stores. So, in the Northeast of Brazil you will find jam produced by the students at ITERRA being sold alongside products like *farinha* and *farofa* that are produced by families in the Northeast.

Economic Property: Challenging Private Property While Fighting for Collective Property

There are contradictions in the Landless movement's struggle for land and their view of it. On the one hand, they challenge the existence of private property by occupying *private* land that does not serve a social function; on the other hand, the idea of private property is so entrenched in the minds and actions of the Landless that once the land is conquered the battle seems often only to be beginning. While the action to occupy the land was necessarily collective, once the land title is received, there are many manifestations of individualism. First of all, the land titles are issued in an individual's name, not to a collective of people, even if a group participated in the struggle and worked to get to this point collectively.

In some cases, landless people who occupy land see it only as economic property and do not value it for its other elements. Once they occupy land they are content and do not see the need to continue to struggle, so they often stop collaborating with others. There have been many cases within the Movement, that after receiving land title, MST members will sell off their land, which for the MST is tantamount to violating the sacredness of the land and their struggle for it (which is not in terms of economic value). This selling off of land can create serious problems in communities because sometimes it creates divisions between those in the community who are committed to being Landless and continuing in a lifelong struggle, and those who are not.

Occupying the land is only the beginning of the MST communities' struggle to get the land. Families, aided by MST leadership and militants, set up *acampamentos*, of black plastic tents. While these *barracos* in the *encampments* are meant to be temporary, families may spend years in them, often facing violent evictions by government authorities who respond to the landowners of this unproductive or under-productive land. Once the community of MST members receive the land titles for the occupied land, these communities become known as *assentamentos*. The process of becoming a settlement involves negotiations with the government who has the obligation to provide technical and financial assistance as part of the Agrarian Reform program. The entire process, from preparing for the occupation to obtaining the land title has pedagogical or formative importance for the Landless people; it is never just about economic or land gains. As Kane points out, "An encampment needs to organise itself well to survive and many consider the collective organisation and struggle in encampments their major formative experience" (94).

ITERRA

In the first section of this chapter, I spoke about the content of the Pedagogy of the Land; in this section, I focus on the process of Pedagogy of the Land, using the example of ITERRA to link the MST's pedagogy with organizational elements such as its principles and structure. ITERRA (also known as IEJC—Josue de Castro Educational Institute), one of several MST educational institutes, reflects the pedagogical practice of the MST as a whole, in terms of militants, the grassroots membership, the organizational structure and *base nuclei*, the organizational and political objectives and principles (which include

criticism and self-criticism), the pedagogical proposal as guideline, the popular educators, all of which are elements of the participatory democracy that the MST practices not only at this institute but throughout the Movement. To conclude, I speak of the territorialization or spatialization that this participatory democracy creates. ITERRA, housed in a large building on loan from Capuchin monks, is also the result of negotiations with the state's government which finances part of this technical or career college institute.

The MST uses popular education in many forms: I look more closely at the example of a Sociology class at ITERRA (part of a Teacher's Training course I attended) that puts into practice an education aimed at creating historical subjects, by basing the class and analysis on the *educands'* daily lives.

In this class the student-militants discuss sociology starting with their own lives and experiences as *campesinos* or sons and daughters of *campesinos*. The teacher giving this Sociology class, a priest within the movement, asked them to describe a typical day in their family's life, and particularly to focus on the division of tasks between male and female children and between men and women. When there were about 6 scenarios of the students' lives, he asked them what they saw in these scenarios. What are the similarities, differences, and patterns that emerge? What does this say about the life of *campesinos*? Why are things this way? By beginning the discussion with the details of the students' lives, a broader discussion took place about the reasons and explanations for the behaviour. It included themes like power and division of labour along gender lines, and where power resides in each sphere, the private sphere of the home and the public sphere of the workplace as well as the fields. Who has power in the home? Who has power or reigns in the fields away from home? Why is it this way? Who benefits?

In this Sociology class we see that by beginning with the concrete life or practice of the students we can then more broadly discuss and theorize on this practice. The objective of this exercise is not to leave the discussion in the theoretical realm but to have students discuss, think, and apply this new understanding in their work in their communities' schools. The goal is for students to critically reflect on their lives as *campesinos*, about how habits and customs are formed and why something is assumed to be natural or "common sense" just because it is something that they have always lived. When they begin to analyze their lives, they realize that they have inherited a lot from their parents and ancestors, some of which do not benefit them as *campesinos*. They begin to realize that what we assume to be "natural" is a construction, a learned or acquired habit or custom. So, if it is acquired or learned, it can be changed. It is through analysis of their daily lives that students reflect on the implications of this life, in a critical manner, as well as how this relates to their being MST militants. If they do not agree with the way that things are, then they can begin to see how they can change these habits and ways of thinking and acting that appear "natural."

Gramsci's ideas of *common sense* and *hegemony* can help us understand what the MST is trying to do in this example by having the militant-students analyze and critique their own lives or "social practices" as sons and daughters of *campesinos* and *campesinas*. Gramsci believes that ideology is rooted in "social practices of individuals" and since ideological domination is the manner in which hegemony primarily functions,

it is logical to begin a critique of hegemony and the current system by critiquing and analyzing the daily lives of the people who function within or even "consent" to the hegemony. In this case, they are landless men and women and their children, all of whom in their "social practices" manifest the material existence of the dominant ideology, of capitalism, in which there is not only domination between classes, elite and rich class over working class, but also between men and women. The characteristics of relationships at a structural level are reflected in the way in which relationships at a personal level play out. If students can critique and see a way to change their social practices, then they can critique and see a way to change the society as a whole, once they understand the connection between ideology and daily practice. Once there is a deeper analysis of the practice this can lead to seeing the roots of, or "decoding" this practice. This example allows us to see what is considered a "generative theme" within popular education, a theme for analysis drawn from the daily lives of the students that not only generates a discussion about issues based on their realities but also points to societal and systemic characteristics.

While this Sociology class which looks at the daily lives of students in training to be teachers of Landless children is a good example of how the MST uses popular education to work towards social transformation, it also shows where one of its biggest challenges lies, that is to say, in the daily lives of its grassroots membership, the Landless men and women and children who make up the MST. The MST must work at the personal and family level, as well as at the structural level of society in order to achieve the transformations it desires. While the family is the smallest unit within the Movement, the MST places great importance on the *nucleus*, the smallest unit within its organizational structure, where families came together to work, to discuss, and to do other things in a collective process.

ITERRA is illustrative of how the Movement uses popular education towards its objectives; it functions much the same as most MST's courses and institutes. Militants occupy a variety of positions: as students in the courses, as popular educators (sometimes they are also *educands*), and as paid or volunteer staff (sometimes alongside grassroots MST members) to support the running of the institute or course. The popular educators make up the CPP, the Political-Pedagogical Collective or Coordinating Body, who accompany the *educands* through their courses and political education. The CPP creates a pedagogical proposal together with input from the MST Sector responsible for a course (each course at ITERRA corresponds to the needs of a specific MST sector). This pedagogical proposal which is the basis for the content as well as to some extent the process of the course is then discussed with course participants, to ensure their input in their own education.

Programs at ITERRA consist of 3-4 years of studies which alternate between Community Time and School Time, which means that militants begin to participate in their communities, as part of their studies. School Time is spent at the institute while Community Time is spent in a militant's community putting in practice and researching what is learned at ITERRA. This is part of the MST's commitment to *praxis* as a way of educating its militants. School Time is further broken down into Educational Times in accordance with different types of activities, which include Study Time and Productive Work Time. Productive Work Time involves *educands* doing different work activities, such

as agricultural work, cleaning, artistic production, cooking, and bread and pastry making. These activities have various purposes: to give importance to work as a pedagogical process, to ensure the functioning and financing of the institute, and to ensure that *educands* acquire or deepen skills that allow them to change their material reality, in *encampments* and *settlements*.

ITERRA programs correspond with MST sectors that send militants to the institute, in order to then participate in that sector with their newly acquired skills, at either a regional or national level. For example, the Production sector has a say in what is taught in the Administration of Cooperatives program, just as the Education sector has a say in the Teachers' Training and Pedagogy programs, the Health sector in the Community Health program, and the Communications sector in the Social Communication program. Those who work within the Movement's sectors at the state and national level decide what is taught in each of their respective courses that prepare militants for tasks in that sector. Class participants also have a say, with direct input in the course's pedagogical proposal which can be modified if the class decides to do so collectively.

ITERRA is one embodiment of the MST's general objective to impart an education that is coherent with and connected to its members' lives, both as rural people and as MST members. It is education that comes from the Movement as well as the realities of the people who make up the movement. ITERRA fits in with the MST's vision of education as a tool towards social transformation; at this institute the Movement educates militants who belong to different sectors of the MST and will return to their communities where they put in practice their skills towards social transformation. This is one example of the Movement's strategy of using education towards their larger, longer-term goals, and is something we see throughout the country, in different forms.

Role of Militants

In Latin America a militant is a member of a social movement or organization that strives for social transformation, and who has active commitment to the movement and its objectives. While the term militant comes from Marxist-oriented organizing for armed struggle, it is used in movements that do not advocate for armed struggle, but are committed to social change through collective action in opposition to the dominant classes. I use this term to describe an important element well aware of the misuse of this term in present day politics and mainstream media, which use it instead of terrorist. This current usage is a criminalization of legitimate struggles against forces that repress and oppress millions of people throughout the world.

Within the MST, those who do the various tasks needed to build and sustain the movement are the *base* or grassroots membership, on the one hand, and the militants, on the other. The difference between the *base* and the militants is that the *base* does not have set or assigned positions or roles within the movement as do militants. Both the *base* and militants are part of the organizational structure, but militants go through processes of political education in order to become better prepared to carry out their tasks within the Movement's structure. These militants can be part of any one of the Movement's sectors which include the Production sector, the Education sector, the Formation sector, etc. Although in this section I focus on militants in an ITERRA teachers' training program, *Magisterio*, this discussion can apply to all MST militants.

The vision that the MST has for its militants is one that sees them not just as militants but also as pedagogues or teacher-militants (*pedagogo-militantes*), or the "educators of Agrarian Reform" (Caldart 265). This does not apply just to educators within the Movement, but what the MST wants all of its militants to be. Since the MST has a vision and practice that the grassroots needs to be *conscienticized*, the militants who are in contact with the grassroots should be involved in the work of educating them as well as themselves as they carry out their various tasks. Militants who become leaders also carry out popular education work, including the grassroots work (*trabalho de base*). In the MST organization no one is too important to do grassroots work. In cases where there are low numbers from those from the Landless communities closest to where the grassroots work is to be done, the leadership will step in and help with the work.

A 17-year old female student in the ITERRA Teachers' Training program talks about how this education ties in with her life project as a militant and teacher within the Movement.

> At ITERRA we have a very popular pedagogy. ITERRA is a school centred on the settlement, everything is centred on our movement.
>
> Within the institute we are part of the struggle, so we are forming militant-educators. We want to be a militant, in the school as well as outside of it, because education not only happens in the school; it happens in all the moments that we live, in which we co-exist, whether that is within the settlement, the encampment, in any place where we find ourselves.… We want to take this to our children who were born in the time that we lived during the occupation in the *barraco*, this identity of being a *Sem Terra*. We want a social transformation that brings dignity to all our *Sem Terra* families. —Clarice (Interview with Fuchs 2003)

Through this militant's experience we see how the MST's educational system connects not only to the lives of those that attend the institute, but also to all Landless people. The militants understand their role in the school and in the movement. For many, the movement is a large part of their lives and has brought many benefits to their family—such as food security, as they can now produce food and feed themselves on their land. In this militant's observations she expresses her sense of duty to her community and to the movement; she sees her education at ITERRA as contributing to a life project as well as a program of study that will contribute directly to her community. Research and study are not disconnected from the students' daily lives and reality, as sometimes is the case in traditional schools. Education comes from and includes the students' realities, which for MST members is life on the land, of either the *encampment* or *settlement*. Pedagogy of the Land is connected not only to the land, but also to the Landless identity. It incorporates different experiences of the Landless, like the moment of the occupation (or even before) and aims at becoming more educated in order to contribute to one's Landless community. This pedagogy is an alternative to the model which the capitalist system perpetuates. The MST family becomes one manifestation of the new society that MST members are working towards, and, at a small scale, have achieved in spaces like ITERRA, the *encampments* and the *settlements*.

The MST's education attempts to reflect and deal with the students' reality. One of the key characteristics of popular education is that it begins with a participant's reality and encourages him or her to reflect, collectively with others, on that reality in a critical manner. In order to carry out this work, the Movement needs people committed to practicing this type of critical education, that is, *pedagogo-militantes*.

Like one of ITERRA's booklet's states:

> Study and research are also a revolutionary mission…. We learnt that we had to research in order to better understand and act upon reality, to change things, and that our research could not have purely academic or personal interest. We had to study in order to better see reality; to know where we stood in order to advance daily in the struggle. (Witcel et al 18)

In the above statement, students of Pedagogy of the Land make the connection between their study and research and the Movement as a whole. They understand that daily school activities must be connected to their lived reality, and that by better understanding this reality and participating in the Movement through their study, research and militancy, they make valuable contributions to the Movement and society. Education is not removed from social struggle, but rather is and should be intimately tied to it in order to advance the struggle through the creation of social and collective knowledge.

Role of the Pedagogical Proposal in the Course

The pedagogical proposal is an important foundation for the course, an element of popular education. It is a guide for the course activities, but also should be worked on towards advancing the movement's objectives. This guide is shaped around key threads, which involve the political education of a human being as a MST militant, with an integral or holistic vision and practice. The threads that the pedagogical proposal is based on serve as guidelines, and before, during and after the course, the progress in them can be evaluated, though very qualitatively. Are the goals being reached? The activities included in the course revolve around the threads of the proposal. The proposal is a collective and integral creation. It is not just about what happens in this course, but about what happens within the Movement, and, in particular, its members' daily lives. The proposal, like the Movement, is in constant transformation; it is constantly being modified according to comments and critiques by the students and the CPP. Through the proposal we can see what popular education is, and specifically popular education within a movement like the MST (see also Chapter 2). No fixed document exists that can tell us how to do popular education, not even how exactly to do a workshop. A document acts as guideline for the work to be done, which is fluid, changing, dynamic; it only serves to help educators ensure that they have a vision and reference of what they expect to achieve. Because popular education is constantly changing and dynamic, we must constantly respond to the process in a prepared and critical manner. In a dynamic environment we need to constantly do '*conjunctural analysis*', developing new strategies in response to the shifting balance of forces of the moment.

The Pedagogical Proposal is important as a guideline for the type of education that will form the type of militants that the Movement needs to fulfill its objectives. In the Basic

Courses for Militants, a CPP member discusses the kind of militant needed to respond to the historical moment in which the Movement finds itself. In the context of discussing the correlation of forces between the Lula government, the government setup and power structures, he says:

> There are various elements that reflect what type of militant we need to form in this historic moment. In the pedagogical proposal, the goal is to form a subject who can intervene in any reality, interpreting the reality, prepared to act in any moment to contemplate the diversity of cultures, the diversity of ways of thinking, the diversity of ways of speaking, to understand, to contemplate the environment where he [or she] is, to contemplate which are the aspects that shape geo-politics, cultural issues, economic issues, and [then to] act. We will not form a militant who acts alone, but rather one who acts within a collective process. —Angelo (Recorded by Fuchs 2003)

What Angelo says is similar to Freire's discussion of the socio-historical agency that popular education is concerned with. The MST wants its militants to recognize their abilities and role within a socio-historical process and any *reality* within that process. They must be able to analyze that reality and ultimately "intervene" or act upon it, with the goal of transforming it, with others, "in a collective process."

In all MST courses, each activity, class or workshop depends on the person or persons who carry out the activity. Both militants and friends of the Movement carry out these activities, and, since the MST has a reputation for working with popular education and many friends of the MST are familiar with it (its use is prevalent in progressive sectors in Brazil), there is usually congruence between the theory and practice of the pedagogy. In many of the courses, like the Basic Course, the CPP will sit down and discuss a specific activity or workshop with the educator, to let them know what they expect out of the activity and ask the educator to share what he or she plans to do. For example, the CPP may let the educator know that in the activity on sexuality that they would like militants not only to learn about sexuality but also to include gender in the discussion in such a way that it also leads to discussion on the relationships in the course. It is then up to the educator to incorporate the CPP's suggestions and expectations in the manner he or she sees as appropriate. Beforehand, the educator usually receives an *ementa*, the outline of an activity, where it fits in to the course and the desired objectives.

As I previously mentioned, ITERRA's activities are divided into and correspond to different Educational Times, which are integral to the pedagogical proposal and the carrying out of each activity. One of the members of ITERRA's Political Pedagogical Collective (CPP) talked about the division of the school time into "educational times" (such as Study Time and Productive Work Time, among others) and how this ties into the MST's organizational structure:

> The school is organized according to several educational times [or periods]. It differentiates us from the traditional school; we do not use only the classroom to educate. All space is educational. We organize into base nuclei here because we want to reflect the Movement's organizational structure as a whole. We have the organization of the school, but also of the Landless Movement as a whole. It is to guarantee more opportunities for participation through structures and moments in which the educands participate in all of the school. They are all

important, including those moments when educands are evaluated ... in all aspects, not only the moments in the classroom, but in the NB [base nucleus], the study group, or in the work group. —Tony (Interview with Fuchs 2003)

There are different groups formed in accordance with the educational times; these include *base nuclei* (NBs), study groups, work groups, which I discuss in greater detail.

At MST meetings I attended, I learned that at national and state levels, one of the greatest priorities of the MST is to re-activate the *conscientization* of its *base*. The way that they have found to be most effective is through their organizational structure which is based on the smallest unit, or the *base nucleus*. Base nuclei consist of either a group of militants, if it is in a course, or a group of families, if it is in an encampment or a settlement. In an encampment or settlement, once the base nuclei function properly, a coordinating body is formed made up of representatives from the base nuclei. Ideally, every base nucleus of families should be accompanied by a militant who has gone through a process of political education and who is committed to his role within the movement. The difference between the militants and the nuclei is that the militants may or not be part of a nucleus of families within the encampment or settlement. There are cases in which militants are from the encampment or settlement and other cases in which the militants have been assigned to accompany a certain settlement or encampment but are not from there themselves; in the latter case, they would not be part of a nucleus of families. The MST's ideal is to have all militants drawn from the encampments and settlements and thus part of a nucleus of families that they accompany. The Movement believes that this would best ensure participatory democracy.

There are, however, inevitably tensions in building up from the ground up and what the leadership wants for the movement and its members. There are situations in which a community has made decisions which have had disastrous results for itself and the movement as a whole; in some of these cases, the leadership does its best to convince the community to do otherwise. There is one example in which a community decided to contract out the construction of all its houses with money it received from INCRA, the government body that gives technical assistance for Agrarian Reform. While the leadership encouraged the community to work together and find a way to stretch the money out by buying the materials and collectively building the houses, the community ignored this advice and went ahead with its decision to contract out the work. It turned out to be a complete disaster, as the contractor took the money (he was given one cheque with the full amount) and never built the houses. The community was left without houses and without money. The MST was also held responsible for what happened. The leadership then had to deal with the problem created by democratic decision-making. Communities in this region still ultimately make their own decisions, but with this extra advice and cautionary tale from the leadership.

The MST has had success in the way that it organizes because it acts in different ways in different spaces but always with the same objectives and according to the same principles. Among the spaces in which it has success are with the government and with the universities. With the government, the Movement has learned to negotiate but not to cede to the demands of the government if they do not fit within their principles. The

successes of the Movement in land occupations and the process of Agrarian Land Reform allow it to continue to negotiate in an effective manner, and to have some weight in the process. For example, in its negotiations with INCRA (the National Institute of *Colonization* and Agrarian Reform), if the government does something that does not fall within the principles of the MST, the MST has gone as far as occupying the offices of INCRA. For the MST it is very important that the process of Agrarian Land Reform be conducted in a comprehensive manner, more than just the handing over of the land title. The process must include technical assistance to the MST settlers. But this assistance cannot be whatever the government wants it to be. The MST does not accept the government's money or assistance on the government's terms. They insist that their way of working be respected and implemented. When INCRA provides the MST with agricultural technicians for their settlements, the MST insists on training them in one of their courses for technicians before they begin work at the settlements. While this does not always ensure that the technician will work according to the MST's principles, it does allow the technician to understand the principles and the MST's manner of working in agricultural production. There have been cases of technicians who have joined the Movement (formally and informally) after having been INCRA technicians who worked with MST settlements.

ITERRA Organizational Structure
When I arrived at ITERRA, I and another visitor were given a talk by members of the CPP, the Political Pedagogical Collective of the Institute, which is responsible for giving the necessary political and pedagogical direction to the institute as a whole and to the specific programs. Their talk illustrated how the organizational structure of the institute is coherent with and resembles the Movement's organizational structure (in both encampments and settlements), and how both those structures have pedagogical and political intentionality for preparing teacher-militants for the movement as well as ensuring the most democratic and full participation of its participants.

At ITERRA the basic structures for participatory democracy are the *base nuclei*, made up of militants; in encampments and settlements, the same structure applies but instead of nuclei of militants the nuclei are made up of families. The ITERRA and larger MST organizational structure are basically the same because it serves to achieve the MST's objectives as well as follow its organizational and political principles. I have included organigrams of the general structure of ITERRA and of an encampment or settlement, in which I have arrows to show in which direction this structure works. There is directionality from the bottom up and from the top down; however, this varies according to each encampment or settlement, and just how well the *base nuclei* and general assemblies function as the spaces for participatory democracy. One of the ways for the MST to get a sense of how well one of its settlements or encampments is functioning, is to look at both how the *base nuclei* and general assemblies are carried out.

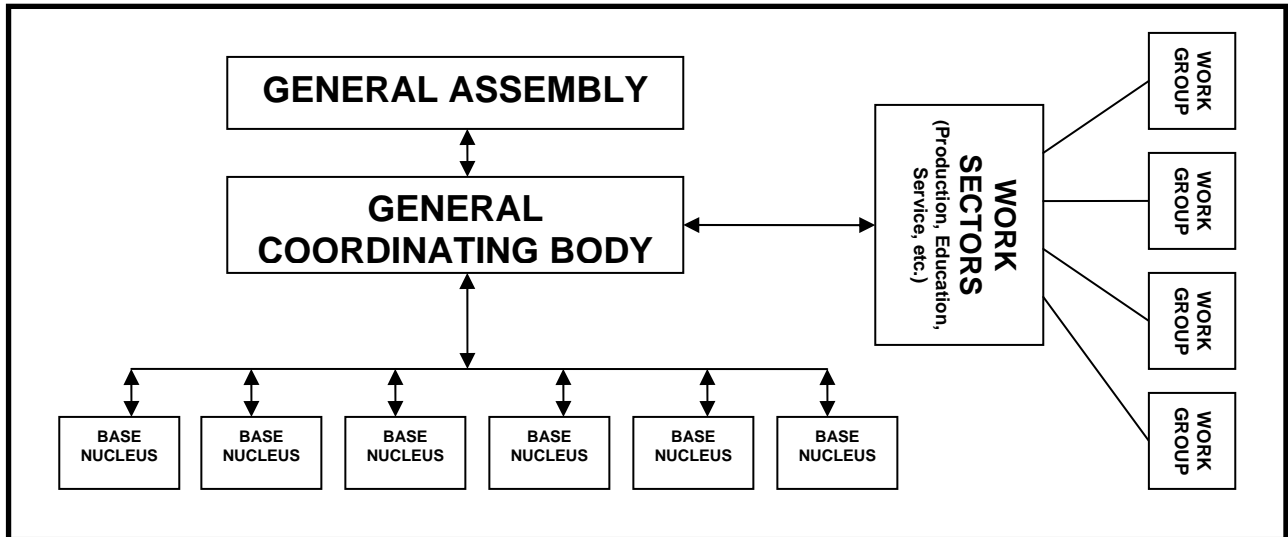## *Organigram of ITERRA Organizational Structure*

This is a basic organigram of the organizational structure at ITERRA. If you compare this organigram to the one of the MST structure in an encampment or settlement, you will notice the similarities.

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                              ┌────────┐│
│  ┌─────────────────────────┐                                 │ WORK   ││
│  │  GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF     │                                 │ GROUP  ││
│  │    THE INSTITUTE         │                                 └────────┘│
│  └─────────────────────────┘                    ┌──────────┐ ┌────────┐│
│               ↕                                  │          │ │ WORK   ││
│  ┌─────────────────────────┐                     │  WORK    │ │ GROUP  ││
│  │  COMMISSION OF THE       │                     │ SECTORS  │ └────────┘│
│  │  INSTITUTE'S BASE NUCLEI │                     │(Production,│┌────────┐│
│  └─────────────────────────┘                     │ Education,││ WORK   ││
│               ↕                                  │ Service,  ││ GROUP  ││
│  ┌─────────────────────────┐                     │ etc.)    │└────────┘│
│  │  COMMISSION OF THE       │                     │          │┌────────┐│
│  │  BASE NUCLEI OF THE COURSE│                    └──────────┘│ WORK   ││
│  └─────────────────────────┘                                 │ GROUP  ││
│     ↕    ↕    ↕    ↕    ↕                                     └────────┘│
│  ┌────┐┌────┐┌────┐┌────┐┌────┐                                         │
│  │BASE││BASE││BASE││BASE││BASE│                                         │
│  │NUCL││NUCL││NUCL││NUCL││NUCL│                                         │
│  └────┘└────┘└────┘└────┘└────┘                                         │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
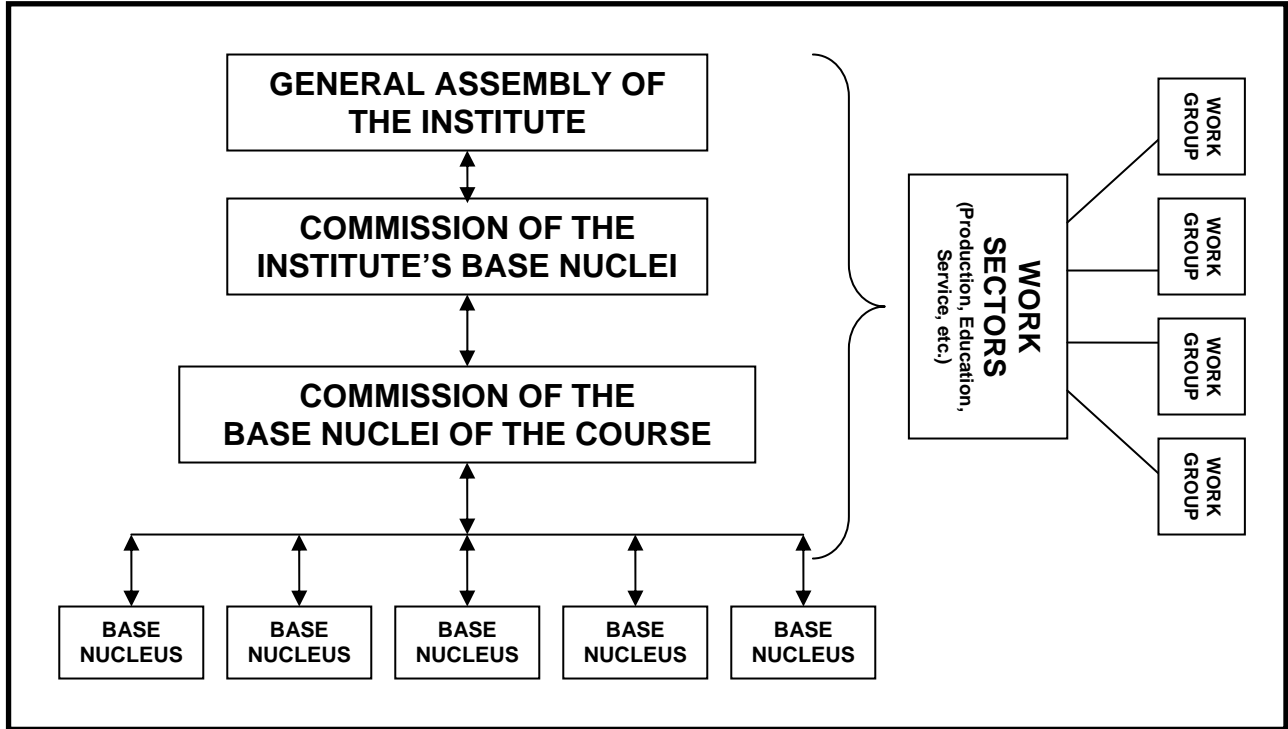
MST Organizational Structure: Encampment or Settlement Level

Below you see the basic organigrams for the organizational structure of one of the MST's encampments or settlements.

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                              ┌────────┐│
│  ┌─────────────────────────┐                                 │ WORK   ││
│  │   GENERAL ASSEMBLY       │                                 │ GROUP  ││
│  └─────────────────────────┘                                 └────────┘│
│               ↕                                  ┌──────────┐ ┌────────┐│
│  ┌─────────────────────────┐                     │  WORK    │ │ WORK   ││
│  │   GENERAL                │  ←──────────────→   │ SECTORS  │ │ GROUP  ││
│  │   COORDINATING BODY      │                     │(Production,│└────────┘│
│  └─────────────────────────┘                     │ Education,│┌────────┐│
│     ↕   ↕   ↕   ↕   ↕   ↕                        │ Service,  ││ WORK   ││
│  ┌────┐┌────┐┌────┐┌────┐┌────┐┌────┐             │ etc.)    ││ GROUP  ││
│  │BASE││BASE││BASE││BASE││BASE││BASE│             └──────────┘└────────┘│
│  │NUCL││NUCL││NUCL││NUCL││NUCL││NUCL│                         ┌────────┐│
│  └────┘└────┘└────┘└────┘└────┘└────┘                         │ WORK   ││
│                                                              │ GROUP  ││
│                                                              └────────┘│
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

The structure of both ITERRA and the MST allows for and encourages democratic decision-making. At ITERRA, there are monthly General Assemblies where major

decisions are made. Decisions are discussed in the *base nuclei* and are reported to the assembly and approved by all. Proposals that are discussed in the nuclei and then approved at the general monthly assemblies can come from any assembly member, whether they are an *educand* or a member of the general coordinating body. Democratic decision-making functions in a similar manner in MST encampments or settlements, with variations according to each region. There are cases when community leaders do not act democratically and impose their own decisions on the rest of the community; however, when MST regional leaders visit the communities in the region, they talk to community members and leaders alike about such issues within the community. If there are problems in the way that decisions are taken, these regional leaders work with the community to resolve them. While there are tensions in the practice of participatory democracy, I concur with Liam Kane that,

> there is convincing evidence of genuine commitment to bottom-up development: the mass-based nature of the struggle, an education programme designed to enable participation, lack of uniformity between encampments and settlements, and openness to society and collaboration with many different agencies. (Kane 96)

An article in the *Sem Terra* magazine describes ITERRA:

> the management of the school is democratic, in the distribution of tasks and the planning; its organization is based on the ways of the Movement itself, that is, it translates the MST's strategy to daily education and formation, with the base nuclei, the sectors and the coordinating body; the educands are also responsible for the direction of the educational process (being historical subjects), for the production of the food for self-subsistence, for the bread-making, and for the agro-industry [work in neighbouring farms] which generates revenue for the maintenance of the educational establishment and the acquisition of learning materials for the programs. (Santos 51)

Santos explains that the educands participate in their own learning process as well as in the process of ensuring this learning can happen, that is, the running of ITERRA.

The director of ITERRA, and member of its Political Pedagogical Collective (CPP), speaks about the relation between ITERRA's organizational structure and the MST's organizational structure, and how this facilitates participation by members:

> The institute's structure of participation [is that] we have Base Nuclei.... From the classes, from the workers who stay here permanently.... From these nuclei we draw a coordinating body. Each class has its coordinating body that is called CNBT, which is the coordinating body of the base nuclei from the course and from this coordinating body is created the CNBI, which is the coordinating body of the institute's base nuclei.
>
> All of us have our representatives in the coordinating body.... We have a general meeting. In the nuclei we discuss the rendering of accounts, the evaluation of the month is approved at this general meeting. Above the general meeting, we have the leadership of the Landless Movement. This structure is politically subordinated to the principles of the movement, the MST in general. The other part is the execution of the activities, the work sectors. ... The service sector

covers the house, all of the accommodation.... The production sector covers the planning of production and the like. The education sector covers the pedagogical part. These sectors are made up of work posts.... This is the structure of discussion, and also the structure of execution. All of us are participants and leaders, and implementers.... —Matilde (Interview with Fuchs 2003)

In the above statements, we see the *coherence* between the MST's organizational structures in different spaces. This *coherence* is important in order to achieve both political and organizational objectives in a democratic manner in which participants actually participate in the decision-making and carry out the decisions made.

The decisions taken at the *base nuclei* and general assembly level affect what happens at all levels of ITERRA. This is not always the case, as in some of the courses I attended financial decisions were left in the hands of the CPP. This has an impact on the decision-making process, which ultimately is the most effective and sincere when people have full control over all of the decisions they make, including financial ones.

Base Nuclei
The smallest unit for democratic decision-making in the MST's organizational structure is the "base nucleus," whether it is in a settlement or in a course. If it is an encampment or a settlement, a nucleus consists of 10 families, or, if it is in a course, the nucleus is made up of 10 militants. The reason behind and the significance of this unit is similar in these two circumstances. It is to facilitate the truly democratic participation of the majority of people. A group of 10 people or families can be organized more effectively at the same time as being able to discuss their organizational objectives; in these nuclei, militants and/or families discuss the issues that affect the course or community, respectively. What is the significance of the base nuclei? The*y* provide spaces where decisions are discussed and where a lot of education happens. It is ultimately where a large part of democracy occurs, because it is at the *base nucleus* level where militants and base families discuss their concerns, problems, plans, and decide what to do to resolve these problems and realize their plans. If the *base nuclei* in an encampment, settlement or course are not functioning properly, that is, if there is a breakdown in communication or in regular effective meetings, this is a clear signal that democracy is not functioning. The MST recognizes this and faces many challenges when it comes to the *base nuclei* structure. In order to maintain the *base nuclei* organization working in camps and settlements and even in courses, accompaniment of the process is needed, by militants whose commitment is to be facilitators of the process. This is one of the MST's goals, to encourage greater democracy in its movement by increasing the effectiveness and activity of the *base nuclei*.

Study Group
Educands are divided into study groups to discuss certain texts that are part of the classes that they are taking. These are the same groups each time; this way of organizing is chosen so that the students can get into deeper discussions about the texts and build the skills for collective analysis together as a group. The group reads and discusses the text collectively. Depending on the class, there is a report back to the rest of the class about the text that can take a variety of forms: oral, musical, through theatre or other forms.

Work Group

Among the educational times at ITERRA is the Work Time during which time the educands work in different work areas to achieve the functioning and survival of the institution. There is a bakery for making bread and desserts that the educands sell in the store available to the students. The students also make jam that they sell at the ITERRA store as well as at other Movement stores throughout Brazil. Other job posts and work areas include the children's nursery for the *Sem Terrinha*, the herb and vegetable gardens, pig raising, arts and crafts, cleaning, work on nearby farms. The work is an important part of their education, for its pedagogical value, as well as for the survival of the institute.

The MST's Political and Organizational Principles

The MST has political and organizational objectives and principles; the two complement each other. The political objectives are the content that gives direction to the Movement; the organizational objectives are the process which leads to the fulfillment of the political objectives (and give life and continuity to the Movement) as well as ensure that there is no corruption of the mass movement. The Movement organizes itself in such a way as to meet its objectives and be able to confront and overcome its obstacles. In popular education the process of conscientization is as or more important than the content and knowledge that the subject acquires. If several individuals can work together in a collective manner to analyze and act upon the conclusions of the analysis, this is usually more important than someone just having knowledge. The political and organizational objectives complement each other. The organizational structure ensures participation from the grassroots, long-term participation that is not dominated by the same leaders, but that forms new leaders from the communities; through this process, both the political and organizational objectives are being met.

The MST's organizational principles are fundamental as the basis of the MST's proposal for education, because the MST's organizational structure tries to ensure that participation is democratic while being pedagogical and reaching its political objectives. The political objectives, as mentioned, are land, Agrarian Land Reform and social transformation. "The organizational principles are the following: collective leadership, the division of delegated tasks, discipline, planning, study, the connection of the leadership with the grassroots and permanent criticism and self-criticism" (Caldart 87).

The process of criticism and self-criticism is extremely important within the MST's activities and structures and especially in the process of political education. In one MST course I attended there was a go-around in the CPP in which each person pointed out the positive qualities and criticisms of each person within the CPP. Each time the group met, one person was the focus; at the end of the go-around the person gives self-criticism, sometimes responding to the criticism received from others. However, despite the MST trying to implement this process in all its spaces, members told me of many cases in which this process was not fully in place.

According to a member of the political pedagogical collective at a MST educational institute,

> We can change things every day, but what we cannot do is change or stop from including are the movement's organizational principles. These include: Collective leadership of the collective commons, the issue of participation; the issue of unity, of discipline. These are principles. How we achieve these principles can change as part of the pedagogical process. (Interview with Fuchs 2003)

In this statement we see the importance of being true to MST principles because it leads to strengthening the MST's objectives in a democratic and collective manner. It is also important to allow for flexibility and freedom; this acknowledges that there are different ways in which to apply these principles in order to ensure the respect of individuals in the process as well as of the particular conditions in which they find themselves.

Historically, land has been central to the MST's struggle. While it has always been important to have physical access to the land, over time other elements of the land and what it represents have been included in the struggle, often in a pedagogical manner. Land has spiritual, political, anthropological, economic, cultural, and social values that are incorporated into the MST's struggle. As we saw in Brazil's history, land which was collectively held before Colonization came under Crown or private control after the Europeans' arrival. The MST challenges private land ownership both by organizing people to form collectives and communities that work together as though the land were collectively held, and legally by fighting for collective land title rather than the individual land title that the government issues. The MST's next political objective, Agrarian Reform, includes more than giving out land under the government's conditions, which embody capitalist values of land ownership and distribution. For the MST, land reform includes the distribution of land and all the processes associated with working, living, and producing on the land, from building houses to technical assistance. This means that the MST will not accept the land under any conditions though; it must be within the frame of the MST principles of collectivity.

The objectives of land and Agrarian Land Reform are included and embodied in the MST's activities throughout the country, including in their educational spaces. One way is through "another conception of the connections between social production and school production" (Caldart 10), that is, what happens in the school and what is produced there, has a connection to the production on the land, in the communities. We see this play out powerfully in the MST's *mística*. Through mística, the different elements and meanings of land are blended together; mística, although difficult to define precisely, is a combination of the symbols, the bonding, the actions of the Movement sometimes represented in plays or rituals. The MST flag, MST cap, its anthem, its various songs, its heroes and heroines as well as those of other movements, plays or rituals about land and the struggle all make up what is mística. It is both a concrete and spiritual force that unites the MST members (and friends of the MST); it reinforces their unity and commitment to the struggle. Mística also serves a pedagogical and political purpose. It revives the militants' and community's spirits through moments that connect their daily activities in the movement with what they are struggling for, while giving their lives a ritualistic kind of importance and specialness.

In the Basic Course, for example, the opening mística included reference to the history of repression and of resistance struggles (such as the Sandinistas and the Zapatistas)

throughout Latin America. Coloured flags were placed in a circle formed by the militants around a symbolic grave, and then the MST flag was unearthed from the grave to symbolize the MST's own struggle as rising out of this history of repression and struggle of Latin America. This mística incorporates the Movement's vision of the role of its militants and the kind of relationships it wishes to see among people and with the environment. Militants are compared to sunflower seeds. This refers both to the militants' role as those who plant ideas and sow them in practice, but also to the care for the environment that the Movement promotes with its membership.

A female MST militant from the region participated in the mística and spoke about this care as a form of resistance:

> Resistance is our greatest weapon against the bourgeoisie.... As a form of resistance we care for our male companheiro, our female companheira, for nature, for our seeds. Each one of us has a role as a seed. (Recorded by Fuchs 2003)

As part of the *mística*, a female member of the MST National Leadership spoke to the militants about their role in the creation and maintenance of popular power:

> We choose the sunflower seed because a sunflower becomes exuberant when the sun is out, but when the sun is tucked away, it closes. The Landless Movement knows that when it forms its [militants] that they know how to become exuberant, they know how to move forward on their tasks. When attacked or when it is the night of repression or of difficulties, they also close down and know how to keep the secret of the crop for the following day when the sun returns.
>
> You were chosen to be the site for new ideas. I invite you to plant a sunflower. We are like seeds, because when we leave here, we will multiply the ideas we acumulate here. In this school you will study theories and relate them the to practice of day to day life in our encampments and settlements.... Sow the ideas of change, sow and plant the ideas of social power.... Take a seed and plant it here in the map of Latin America. (Recorded by Fuchs 2003)

Using the metaphor (a key aspect of the MST's mística) of a sunflower, she discusses a militant's role, both in theoretical terms of the political education she receives and how it is connected to her practice as a militant, when she finishes the course and begins her tasks within the movement. We see the importance *praxis* is given in the movement. *Praxis* is present in the *mística* where ideas are brought out about the movement's actions, while acting out or symbolically putting into practice those ideas. It is *Theatre of the Oppressed*; the oppressed take on the roles they have in life and act out solutions. The MST's *mística* and the work of its militants are key elements towards the movement's construction of popular power or popular hegemony, just as are the land occupations.

Referring to the MST's massive land occupations, a professor and collaborator with the MST, Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, says, "These struggles were developed by means of processes of spatialization and territorialization of social movements in the countryside" (Fernandes 20). He clears up what he believes is a misunderstanding that rural land settlements are the result of Agrarian Reform. He states that they are in fact the result of a "struggle for the land" waged by the MST and other movements. Thus,

"occupations have been the main way to access the land" (Fernandes 21). This land is now a productive space of agricultural products. This physical space is also where different kinds of knowledge are collectively constructed and linked to the lived realities of the people that live on the land.

The territorialization or spatialization of the MST represents part of its construction of popular power, that is both through the physical occupation of land and the construction of a space in collective consciousness. As the MST conquers land, that is geographic space, it also works to conquer something more, social space. Ademar Bogo, a MST militant, talks about this conquest of land as part of the accumulation of forces by the MST. I argue that it represents the creation of conditions for changing the correlation of forces if coupled with the forming of alliances with other movements and organizations. He says,

> We must understand as accumulation of forces, the conquest of space, social and geographic, and its maintenance through the organized intervention of people or of a mass movement, elevating the level of consciousness through the pursuance of objectives in the short, medium and long-term. (138)

The Landless identity and its expressions (such as mística) help change the correlation of forces, because it continues after the conquest of land, and incorporates the processes of mass organization and conscientization which allow the Movement to achieve its objectives. Bogo goes into more detail on how productive space is maintained and accumulated with the accompanying political and popular education of the membership:

> In the settlements, the accumulation of forces is related to the development of the different dimensions of the settlers' lives. At the same time that we are concerned with production, we should be concerned with the education of the children and the political formation of the adults. (Bogo 139)

The construction of knowledge occurs at different levels, as MST militants participate in a variety of events, activities, either of the MST or of other movements or organizations in Brazil and abroad, where they learn and share experiences with others movements. One way of constructing knowledge is the report back of these experiences with other MST members, whether it is in one's study group, nucleus, office, or other MST organizational unit or space. This report back is one way the MST encourages socializing of experiences. Collective analysis on what is reported back may happen immediately after the report back, or be incorporated into another activity. This concept of socialização of knowledge and experience is fundamental to what the Movement is building. Knowledge should not be held as power over others, but rather shared in such a way that it can be used towards a greater purpose. The knowledge and experience of one person finds other uses in the collective. For examples, students prepare their work and present it to others. This can be in many forms, from theatre pieces to written reports. This knowledge serves not only those students but the movement that they are a part of. It is very different than other educational spaces like schools where students are not part of a movement. Here, MST students have a direct stake in their learning experience, and knowledge is viewed and acted upon differently. It is not seen as competition. Students share experiences and research in order for the Movement to

advance, and, in most cases, are directly connected to their research topics. Their final project topics have to do with their community's reality and needs.

For example, *Pedagogia do Movimento Sem Terra*, a book I use in this paper is written by Roseli Salete Caldart as part of her university work. Her PhD work comes out of MST members' lived realities and her militancy as an educator, and it feeds back into the militancy and lived realities of others as a contribution to and reflection on the Movement's work. Her book represents *Pedagogia da Terra* in action; it is based on lived realities, but there is also reflection from those within the Movement and there will hopefully be action on this reflection and analysis.

The MST's Pedagogy of the Land contributes greatly to the MST's success. It is part of a larger strategy of building popular power with MST members who are conscious of and assume their roles as socio-historical agents who construct their own reality. For a mass movement like the MST this means that if a majority of its membership is *conscienticized* and empowered, they can challenge the current correlation of forces, as a counter-hegemonic force. Although the MST has a Marxist-influenced militant structure, they are not a top-down organization. They believe in clear leadership roles, but dedicate time and give importance to integral issues such as the participation of women, the relationship with the grassroots (from which democracy is built)—all part of the process in which the oppressed can liberate themselves. The MST's project is to integrate into the basic life of the community, which ensures that it has a democratic structure. As a movement, it has not undergone a process like the PT, which has become quite disconnected from the people it is supposed to represent. The MST is connected to and finds ways to deepen the connection with its grassroots—it is from their communities that the MST draws its strength. ITERRA is only one example of the Pedagogy of the Land in practice. However, the role of people and the pedagogical tools used at ITERRA are a fundamental part of the MST's pedagogy and are used in its other courses, as well as other MST spaces, all of which work to ensure participatory democracy.

Chapter 5: The MST and Popular Education: Examples

With this energy of those who come from different places of this Brazil to meet here in the MST centre for formation, of the settlement Sons of Sepé in Rio Grande do Sul. Well, we are clear of the importance that political formation has in this process. We will unite our cultural richness through our accents, music, food, dances, and lived experiences. We will prepare ourselves for the various contradictions that accompany the process of construction. We need to be vigilant so that these act as steps in our collective advance. Nostalgia and fatigue must be collectively overcome with the energy of our utopia that guides us towards socialism. We are sons and daughters of popular revolutions. We are seeds of transformation with the mission of germinating and giving the fruits of solidarity. We are the hope of the continuation of the struggle of our martyrs.
— Alvaro, Political educator from the Basic Course for Militants (Recorded by Fuchs 2003)

We want to build a national movement that unites people from all of Brazil, and represents the feeling of unity in our diversity. We are different but have a common dream that unites and strengthens us. With this difference we will build the Brazil we dream of and not the Brazil that we have today.

We travel all of Brazil doing the political education of our militants, knowing that our diversity is what makes us rich and makes us the Brazilian people. Our national political lines are applied differently in each state in how we do marches and occupations. We are strengthening this concept of the political-ideological education of our organization. Although our country will be constructed in different manners, it is possible to have the same political line. Our task as militants [is] to learn from this concrete reality, to do grassroots work, discuss, dialogue, ask, and build this process. We are not here only to learn to have good discourse, to organize, to systematize our experiences better, our discourse, our intervention, but to in fact build a new man and a new woman.

By transforming our habits, we can build a different mentality based on the values of solidarity, fraternity, love, elements which must be part of the process of political education.
— Maria, Political educator and coordinator of the Basic Course for Militants (Recorded by Fuchs 2003)

In this chapter I draw on more examples from MST courses to further examine how the Landless Movement implements its Pedagogy of the Land. While in Chapter 4, I used the example of ITERRA to discuss the pedagogy's different components, such as the people and pedagogical tools used, in this chapter I look at the complexity of the educational process. I discuss the difficulties and tensions in the implementation of the pedagogy with particular emphasis on the *pedagogo-militante* and her connection with the grassroots, because education with and from the grassroots is fundamental to the MST and is one of its strengths as a social movement.

What is central to the society that the MST is building is the formation of a new being, that is, a new woman and new man. In this process the MST is concerned both with training the trainers or educators who in turn train and educate other militants, as well as with the grassroots membership who is trained and educated in the process of *conscientization* and organization. The MST's organizational structure, discussed in Chapter 4, includes not only leaders, educators and militants, but also family groups (nuclei) from the grassroots membership. So, I discuss one aspect of the role of gender and the importance it is given in the movement. Finally, I briefly discuss the creation of

an educational environment, which is also fundamental to being able to carry out effective popular education. All of the examples which I discuss illustrate elements that are important to the MST's project for social transformation.

CPP-Educators: Those who educate and form others: Basic Course for Militants: Political Education of Militants and the Role of the Educator in the CPP

The Basic Course for Militants, part of the itinerant segment of the Florestan Fernandes National School (ENFF), is one of the Movement's most important courses, especially for newer militants. It helps them consolidate their commitment to the Movement and acquire more theoretical and practical knowledge that will help them as they take on tasks as militants within the MST. As I had the opportunity to participate with the educators of the Basic Course, I focus more closely on the role of the educator.

The MST's organizational structure, or what it calls *organicidade*, or organic development, is one of its most important educational principles. The manner in which the Movement organizes itself encourages participation by its militants and membership; this participation is an experience that forms and educates them. Educators are very conscious of this. As you read about my experience in the Basic Course, keep in mind the connection between the militants' participation and the Movement's organization as a whole, as well as the intentionality behind the act of education as an important element of MST pedagogy.

Although it is not possible to foresee everything, an educator must reflect ahead of time on the different scenarios that could occur during the course. One of the characteristics of popular education is that the educator must be prepared and at the same time flexible for any situation that may arise. He or she must take advantage of different situations as potentially educational and formative experiences. This is coherent with the belief that political education is a process which includes all moments of our lives. The educator, who has this philosophy or approach to education and has reflected on the intentionality of his or her acts together with others, will be more prepared for any situation and take advantage of it as part of the education. This in turn impacts how participants perceive what they consider is part of education. The hope is that they will reflect on the role of education in their lives as MST militants and how they can apply this knowledge.

I arrived at the Basic Course a week before the course started, as the Political-Pedagogical Collective (CPP), the group of educators or trainers of the militants, was preparing for the course and the arrival of the militants. This was one of my richest experiences in the five months I spent with the Landless Movement, as I participated with the nine educators (including the course's coordinator), in preparation for the Basic Course, giving time and importance to the process of conscientization. The preparation process (*and* education process) is both political and pedagogical; it is key within all popular education and certainly within the MST that the political and the pedagogical be intimately interconnected. While the pedagogical aspect affects how the education is carried out, the political considerations involve reflecting on the consequences of these actions beyond the realm of the course. There is both pedagogical and political intentionality in the MST's education; as a Movement it is genuinely interested in the personal and human development of each of its members

and militants; it is also interested in moving towards its political and organizational objectives. As Freire points out, education is not neutral. Since inherent in it is an ideology that promotes someone's or some class' interests, it is already political. The Landless Movement takes the combination of politics and pedagogy seriously by promoting critical education. In this week there was mental preparation for the educators as well as concrete physical preparation of the final details so all would be ready for when the course began and the militants arrived from 20 of Brazil's 26 states.

Whenever possible, MST courses are held in its encampments or settlements. The Basic Course is normally held on a MST settlement, as was this course which took place in the *Filhos de Sepé* ("Sons of Sepé Tiaraju") settlement in Viamão, Rio Grande do Sul, in Southwestern Brazil. The course may take place in buildings or structures already in place before the course arrives, or additional temporary or permanent structures may need to be built, depending on the settlement's needs and available resources. Course participants participate and interact with the MST members who live on the encampment or settlement and contribute to the community where the course is being held.

Discussion on the division of men and women in rooms, and pedagogical implications: Problematizing gender: Why is it so important? The creation of new human relationships
A discussion of the pedagogical proposal for the Basic Course involved a debate over whether the rooms in which militants would sleep should be co-ed or not. Should women and men sleep in the same room or in separate rooms? While at first it seemed straightforward, in the course of the discussion, I began to understand the complexity of the matter. The educators in the CPP had to consider the course and the relationship between participants and their learning, as well as their decisions' impact beyond the course, in the Movement's encampments and settlements.

One of the key threads of the course's Pedagogical Proposal was the element of Human Relations, Values, and Gender relations. This thread refers to relationships between men and women, as well as to relationships between women and between men. Having militants sleep in the same room might provoke interesting discussions on the relationship between men and women, so that they could learn to coexist, something the CPP hoped would be reproduced in the militants' communities. Co-ed rooms would also contribute to greater camaraderie among the militants. When the CPP began the discussion, they were not fully aware of the complexity of the issue; they lacked the perspective of how a seemingly simple decision could affect MST encampments and settlements.

Conscience→ Action or Action→ Conscience?
The central debate was between two points of view. One viewpoint was that change can be brought about in someone's consciousness or conscience by altering her actions, such as having women and men sleep in the same room. The other point of view was that one first had to have consciousness of the necessity of sleeping in the same room and then the concrete action of the militants sleeping in the same room could follow. Some believed that the militants were not mature enough to sleep in the same room, as they came from communities where work was still being done on transforming gender relationships. It would be too great a shock; the militants had not

yet acquired the skills necessary to put this in practice. The discussion continued with more detailed points of debate.

Up to this point the CPP had not thought about how the militants' parents would view this action. They had considered the situation only in terms of how it might result in militants taking this discussion back to their communities, the MST encampments and settlements. Other possible consequences were not taken into account until an educator from the region participated in the discussion one day. She did not support the idea of militants sleeping in co-ed rooms, because it was already difficult enough to convince parents to send their daughters to the courses. The parents feared exposing their daughters to the 'danger' that the male militants posed, because in some courses there were cases of pregnancy, and parents didn't want their daughters to return from a course pregnant and dishonoured. It was better that they not go. This was a very important point! The original intention of this discussion on gender was to find ways in which men and women could better co-exist and as such increase the participation of woman as an equal and valued militant in the Movement. But if parents were not going to send their daughters, it was little use to have the discussion if all the participants turned out to be men.

Afterwards, I saw that in the majority of MST courses there were fewer women than men. The MST did everything to encourage greater participation of women and had achieved a lot in this. But it always had to be careful with what parents wanted. The MST did not want to generate intense conflict in the families. Yes, they want families to discuss the issue of gender and the patterns in *campesino* life, but they do not want them to oppose the participation of their daughters in spaces that are important for the construction of the Movement and for the society it is working towards. Both men *and* women are needed to transform gender relations, because the idea is to form and *conscienticize* new men and new women for a new society. Gender relations and the participation of women in all parts of the struggle are key elements of the MST's work of social transformation.

Grassroots Work: Agrarian Reform Day: Militant-Grassroots Relationship
Grassroots work is a fundamental part of the work that the MST does, because it is the work of building the MST's *base* as well as maintaining the *base* that is already conscienticized and active. Grassroots work refers both to the work that the militants from settlements do to organize people who live in the periphery of the city, or in areas where there is a need for land and the people are not meeting their basic needs, as well as the work that is done by MST militants and members in MST communities where the MST's organization has disintegrated, or spirits among members are particularly low.

With people who are not yet Landless
Sometimes the people who are approached in the grassroots work are already organized in CEBs (Ecclesiastic Base Communities). So, when the militants arrive their work consists in talking to these people about the possibility of getting land, thus occupying land. They do this by explaining to people the context of the current system, as well as how to organize into groups of families to study and analyze together their situation before deciding that they will do a land occupation.

The MST's grassroots work happens in a variety of places—the Ecclesiastic Base Communities—CEBs, the Rural Workers Unions, the schools and the living quarters themselves. "As such, the grassroots work is realized in different places and in distinct conditions. It goes through the construction of a space of political socialization" (Fernandes 55). Socialization here refers not only to the social interaction between people, but of the sharing and construction of knowledge in a collective manner. In the MST when someone shares information or knowledge with the rest of the group in a presentation or some other manner, it is called *socialização.* This is a very important element in the process of conscientization and popular education as a whole.

I attended one of the grassroots work meetings with people who wanted to organize to occupy land. I saw how the MST members and leadership spoke about neoliberalism and the current situation as the root cause of what is happening in terms of land. In this meeting the MST also organized the family nuclei (or groups of families) so that the families could begin the process of collective study and analysis of their current reality, before taking the decision to occupy land. What I also saw in this situation was that since many of the people from the settlement closest to where the grassroots work was being done couldn't participate in actually doing the grassroots work, some leaders from the Movement arrived to do the grassroots work. This was a failure of the multiplier effect of the MST's work in which those who benefit from the land occupation and the grassroots work of others are to continue this work with other communities and people that are not yet organized. It is a way of organizing new people to occupy land but also so that those from the settlements continue in their commitment to their process of conscientization of themselves and of others. I saw that there was a gap in the process, a lack of people from the settlement participating in the grassroots work. We speculated on the causes of this lack of participation. Sometimes the internal organization and commitment to the Movement have disintegrated within the settlements. This makes us realize how important it is for grassroots work to continue even after the land is conquered and the basic infrastructure is built; grassroots work implies participants being conscious of why it is necessary for them to help other landless just as they were once without land.

A man who lives in one of the MST settlements speaks about the difference between life before and after the occupation. He was also involved in the grassroots work being done in the nearby city. He says:

> Here we have enough for us to live a much better life than the life we lived in the periphery of the city. Then, there were days when we had something to eat, and days when we had nothing to eat. —Zé Lucas (Recorded by Fuchs 2003)

A female militant who works at the MST office in São Luis, Maranhão, talks about the grassroots work being done by this same community.

> The number of people who live here is small. For example, tomorrow [some will leave to do grassroots work] to organize families in neighbourhoods that live in the same conditions that they lived before they came here. They claim that they have few people from within the settlement, of these families organized in nuclei, who go out to contribute to the grassroots work. [A community leader] wonders whether greater internal strengthening is needed to achieve political advances outside. —Zaira (Recorded by Fuchs 2003)

In the above quote we see the double necessity of doing grassroots work, the benefit that is offered to people who live in conditions like they once lived in, that is to say, conditions in which they can provide themselves with their own food, but have to depend on a system of being indebted. The benefit of doing grassroots work is that it compels or necessitates a stronger internal organization. To be able to do grassroots work outside of the community, the community needs to have some internal cohesion and know how to work together. This is the opportunity to unite to do something to benefit new people as well as themselves; they reinforce their commitment when they help other people organize themselves.

Here we see some of the principles of popular education in action, because in the process of grassroots work, it is not a situation or process in which one dominates over another. Here those that actually do the grassroots work are also getting something from the experience of doing the work; those who are organizing as well as those who are being organized, both gain from the process, from the experience. It is true mutual support.

The manner in which grassroots work is carried out varies a lot, depending on the community, the ties they have with other communities in surrounding areas, as well as the resources available to them. For example, in the case of another settlement near this one, the people who live on the settlement have relatives in a nearby city and also have access to a community radio through which they can talk about the MST, the settlement and their work. This facilitates the grassroots work and outreach to people.

With the Landless base
Those from the Movement know that it is necessary to continue to do grassroots work with those whom they already consider Landless, because the process of conscientization and sustaining themselves in a constant struggle is not something that comes automatically and that the community always initiates themselves. Sometimes, due to various motives the community (which is to say the settlement) is discouraged and the internal organization and motivation starts to disintegrate. For some settlements this happens after several years of being on the land.

Agrarian Reform Jornada
The MST of Rio Grande do Sul had organized an Agrarian Reform Workday that consisted of doing grassroots work in a region of the state. MST militants and grassroots members from one region of the state that was more motivated and better organized went to another region of the state where the people were having problems in their organization and their lack of motivation. Militants from the Basic Course were invited to participate in the *Jornada*. I also joined in the work.

The Agrarian Reform Jornada lasted almost a week, including travel time and the organization before and after visiting the settlements. Those from the Basic Course, some from the settlement and myself got on the buses and traveled a few hours towards the border with Uruguay to Conquista da Frontera ("conquest of the border"), a MST settlement, in a region where a lot of land had been taken by the Movement. I remember one militant from the region showing me just how much land the MST had reclaimed in that region. With gestures, he said, 'This is all "conquered" land, from here

to 80 kilometres in this direction, from here to 50 kilometres in that direction, from here to 100 kilometres in that direction, and so on.' I cannot recall the exact number of kilometres in each direction, but in every direction there was land conquered by the MST, as far as the eye could see.

I felt moved when he told me this and showed me the land. I felt his pride at being in the midst of this land that was the outcome of the suffering and struggle of so many people, and that continues to be a site of struggle and resistance. In this settlement they have a cooperative for traditional, non-GMO seeds, and other initiatives like a model house made of natural materials. I felt the emotion of the Movement having conquered this land, but also I saw how the Movement is accumulating conquered land. I started to think about the meaning of this. The Movement continues to conquer and gain a physical space which can also mean that they are gaining more space beyond the physical if they do the work necessary to accompany the occupation and the conquest of land. In part, that was why we were there, to continue to do the grassroots work that makes the Movement a Landless Movement that helps so many people feel and identify as Landless, and not only *landless* (see Chapter 4); that is, for them to feel that they are part of a collective Landless identity rather than only having been people without land and other basic rights. The way in which the Movement does its grassroots work is what characterizes it as a Movement and also what allows its members to achieve the success that they have. It also serves as an example for other resistance movements in other parts of Latin America or the world.

In a large gymnasium, we met with MST members from various settlements who came to participate in the Agrarian Reform Jornada, to prepare the work that we would do. The MST office in Porto Alegre had prepared a package of guidelines for the work, with a list of the Jornada's objectives, which included the following:

> To rescue the mística, the animation, the symbols, the good side of agrarian reform;
> To encourage the organization of community life;
> To strengthen revolutionary values: solidarity, camaraderie, collectivity...;
> To strengthen our identity with the MST and with the struggle of workers;
> To strengthen and implement the MST's organizational structure.

The idea for the Jornada was to arrive in the communities and ask community members to share with us what was happening in their settlements. We would present to them the idea of the Jornada, which would include us facilitating a *conjunctural analysis* of the country and of the community so that together we could situate what happened in the community within a more local, regional, national, and if possible, international context.

The general strategy for achieving these objectives was to revive their collective memory of being in the camp by using mística and symbols that would remind them of their time in the encampment, hopefully encouraging them to also revive the collective spirit that was present at that time. With our facilitation, the community would do a conjunctural analysis of their current situation as a settlement, within the region, state, country, and if possible the international situation. Mística was one way through which they revived collective memory to be able to take advantage of their experience in organizing and working together as a community. These were Landless communities

that had gone through the process of wanting land and had organized themselves to occupy the land that they wanted. But, as the MST sees in many cases, once the land is conquered the process became more difficult because sometimes the people of the settlements no longer see why they should continue to struggle. The process of conscientization had to move with class consciousness to understanding that they were in a perpetual situation of poverty and marginalization, because the root of being poor and Landless is in the system of distribution of riches and of exploitation, and because of these things cannot only be resolved with the conquest of the land. As campesinos they need more land, they need the necessary support in order to begin to work the land as well as meeting the basic needs of the community such as a school, basic infrastructure, appropriate housing, and a sense of community.

We divided ourselves into teams, and I remember my initial disappointment when they put me together with four men that I did not know. I thought, Oh no, there is no other woman, I will have to do the work on gender. I was not happy with this for two reasons. First, because I felt that gender work should be done by both men and women, and second, because in previous experiences in Mexico and Guatemala I saw how a foreign woman doing work on gender could complicate the work and I did not want to get into this! But, was I ever wrong! I ended up loving these four incredible men each with his special personal qualities, and maybe not evident at first glance to a woman who was only looking superficially.

When we divided into work groups, we had to organize ourselves and divide up the tasks. We would do activities on gender, a conjunctural analysis (through the activity of a soccer game), and an overview of the MST's history and organizational structure. We would also do activities with the children and youth. Among the objectives of these activities was to know the communities' needs in order to do follow-up work, by sending militants or brigades of militants to continue the work in the settlements. The hope was to get the settlement members to talk about their situation both so that others within the Movement knew how things were going for them, and so that they themselves could reflect on what was happening in their community and feel that they were still an integral part of the MST. The objectives included implementing or reactivating the MST's organizational structure in the encampments and settlements so that these members could find solutions to their problems, by organizing to meet their necessities and demanding from the government what they needed. In the settlement where we were sent (as with the others in the region), the *base nuclei* that had been active during the time of the encampment were now basically deactivated. The question was how to reactivate the *nuclei*, so that the MST's objectives for their organizational structure could be reached, both for the settlement's benefit as well as for the Movement's?

Description of the work in Patrocinidade
As part of the grassroots work, we had to visit all of the families in the settlement if possible, but in this settlement, Patrocinidade, the houses were very far apart from each other. So, we decided only to visit the coordinators of each of the *base nuclei*, each of whom would gather the rest of the members from their, to invite all of the families and prepare for the Jornada. We divided our team of five people in order to do visits of the base nuclei. We walked far to get to some of the houses.

The day we had arrived, we had met with the majority of the coordinators of the nuclei in order to talk to them about the Jornada. The response was not very inspiring, but at least we felt that some were willing to make the effort and invite their nuclei of families. But when Paulo and I arrived at the house of one of the coordinators, it was our great disappointment that there was only one other man present, and he wasn't even there because he had been notified of the Jornada; no one had been notified. We sat to talk to the men, but they were not interested in participating in the Jornada. On our return from this house Paulo and I talked about the situation in the settlement, and were worried about the apparent lack of interest and cooperation we witnessed.

We returned to meet with the others in our team, and it seemed that some had fared better than us. So, we waited until the next day, the day of the Jornada, when at the community's meeting place, we would do the prepared activities and have a collectively prepared meal together. While attendance was not very high, a variety of men, women and children from the community were present, so we went ahead with the plan for the day. Before beginning the conjunctural analysis of Brazil, I spoke about NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and the negative effects it had on Mexico. I used an ear of corn that I let fall to the ground in order to show what NAFTA had done to Mexican culture. Through the corn I explained how things were affected within the society that has its cultural basis in corn. If today almost 50% of the corn consumed in Mexico is imported from the U.S. and is genetically modified, what does this mean for the culture, the life of Mexican women and men? As a team we decided that I would speak about the situation in Mexico, in order to incorporate a more international perspective while also connecting to the settlement's reality. In this settlement, as in other places where I talked about the effects of neoliberalism on the Mexican population, MST members connected to what I said. I used elements of Mexican mística like the ear of corn to symbolize Mexican culture, and compared this to the staple food of that region, like *mandioca*. We did a conjunctural analysis together using the idea of a soccer game as a way to bring out discussion about the different forces or teams involved. Many present contributed a lot to the discussion, and made the connection between regional, national and even international events to what was happening in the community.

As the day ended, we received feedback from the community. Most had enjoyed the day, and I noticed many in higher spirits than when we had first encountered them. A woman from the settlement spoke about the Jornada:

> The Jornada is very important for the settlement to motivate and also to unite us. It will enliven the settlement. This mística and the conjunctural analysis are very good for the settlement. (Recorded by Fuchs 2003)

From discussions, I observed that the mística had worked to some extent in that many talked about and reflected on how the community was better organized and more united during the time that they were an encampment. While we couldn't offer them solutions to their problems, as a team we felt that we had worked with the community members to help them begin the process of reflection that was needed in order for them to identify problems and hopefully begin to resolve them. Both Paulo and I, who had been quite discouraged after our visit with one of the base nuclei coordinators, felt more encouraged after the day of activities with the adults and children who attended

the Jornada. We discussed the fact that it would be a long process to resolve the issues in this settlement, but that that was precisely the process of conscientization: often long, hard and not always with obvious results.

After we left the settlement, we returned to the gymnasium at Conquista da Frontera, and reported back to the other teams from the Jornada. It was here that others shared their difficulties, similar to the ones we had experienced. In some cases, the teams had not even been able to perform all of the activities. We were told by those from the region that the work we had done was valuable in that it helped leadership assess the situation, and that it would be followed by work in those settlements to ensure that the Jornada would only be the beginning of reviving the spirit and organization of the MST settlements. Grassroots work is an integral part of the MST's work, both to broaden the membership, as well as to ensure that current members identify with and carry out what is part of the Landless identity: analyzing their local situation, so as to make changes locally that also work towards transformation at the regional, national and international levels.

Creation of an Educational Environment

The MST political education process requires a good educational environment, in order for the course's contents to have an impact on the militants and encourage them to relate what they do in the course to their daily lives in MST communities. The creation or construction of an educational environment includes many things, from taking into account the environment to challenging the concept of the environment, to include all people, built structures, and nature.

What can we do to contribute to this process of educating and preparing human beings? How can we help so that they achieve the greatest benefit and integration with their environment? I wrote the following list when I was in the Basic Course, while thinking about these questions together with the CPP.

- Create physical spaces that facilitate the pedagogical process.
- Create moments for interaction between the participants.
- Provide healthy food so that each person can realize their capabilities without health limitations.
- Pay attention to the emotional and spiritual needs of the participants through activities, moments, attention, like for example, mística, small groups, and an open attitude from the course's CPP.
- Give time and space so that each person can take care of herself and be able to reflect on her own process.
- Accompany the process of each person, taking into account the different paces of each person, but also providing certain challenges for them.
- Evaluate the process as the coordinating group, as individuals within a collective, and from the perspective of the participants.
- According to the evaluation and the criticism/self-criticism, adapt the process.

Political educators also need to take care of each other, which is more difficult when the necessary infrastructure for the proper functioning of the course is not in place. There has to be an understanding and prioritization of needs for a course; so that the

moment of political education is not dominated by the difficulties, the educators need to strike a balance between meeting physical and pedagogical needs.

In the Basic Course, the educators who made up the CPP were concerned with and conscious of the educational environment, and had intentionality towards it. They considered the physical environment. Since they had sufficient resources for the functioning of the course, they ensured that the militants were in adequate living quarters, with beds and shelter. They were also able to select a varied diet that included meat and lots of vegetables. (This is not the case for all MST courses; some have scarce resources.)

Apart from the physical environment that meets basic necessities like food and lodging, they were also conscious of how the physical environment had a pedagogical impact on the militants. The CPP decided to have not only an indoor kitchen but also an outdoor one. The centre where the course was taking place was already a centre for formation that was an experiment in permaculture. They took advantage of this while the militants were there, so they could consider how their practice could take into account elements of permaculture. The bathrooms were also part of the permaculture system with septic tanks that were filled and afterwards decomposed with the help of bacterial organisms.

This discussion is only part of the process of creating an educational environment, a process which I have discussed in this paper. Ultimately, the MST's educational process is one of integrating the Movement's core values, such as are gender relations, work, and study, as part of the conscientization of both its general memberships and of its militants. I hope I was able to give some insight into some of the methods they use to create their visions and dreams of a transformed society in which human dignity and collectivity is valued over profit and individualism.

I focused on these examples to highlight some areas of importance to the movement, but that also present a challenge—the discussion on gender not only highlights the key issue of gender, but ties this in with the issue of the relationship between the course and its impacts on the militants with the impact on MST communities. The example of Grassroots Work gives a small window into fundamental work not only to ensure participatory democracy, by trying to re-activate *base nuclei*, but also to ensure that democratic participation involves analysis of the local, regional and national situation. It is also important to ensure that an educational environment is conducive to learning, that a particular course is carried out in the best conditions possible, but also that the *pedagogo-militante* can be inspired to create a similar environment and pay attention to an educational environment in their own work in communities. In these examples, we see how the MST links the political with the pedagogical. Decisions on how education is carried out with both militants and membership alike must consider what impact they will have on the movement as a whole, as well as its ability to continue to have a presence as a counter-hegemonic force and to build a popular power that is both critical of the dominant and repressive hegemony and its forces *and* of itself. It is the MST members' attention to details in the pedagogical and political process that I believe contribute to ensuring the Movement's success as a social movement that

actually has an impact on the correlation of forces in Brazil, while also serving as a model or an inspiration for other contexts.

Chapter 6: Lessons Learned and Conclusions

Dreaming is not only a necessary political act; it is an integral part of the historico-social manner of being a person. It is part of human nature, which, within history, is in permanent process of becoming. In our making and remaking of ourselves in the process of making history—as subjects and objects, persons, becoming beings of insertion in the world and not of pure adaptation to the world—we should end by having the dream, *too, as a mover of history. There is no change without dream, as there is no dream without hope. (Freire Pedagogy of Hope 90)*

In this final chapter I reflect on my experience with the MST, both on a personal level, as well as how it might contribute to work with organizations who are interested in the MST model. What lessons have I learned from reflection on this experience? How might the MST model encourage other organizations to reflect on their popular education and movement-building work?

I came away from my experience knowing that popular education is more than just a workshop, because popular education is infused in almost all of the work that the MST does. It is a collective process that requires us to do a *conjunctural analysis*, and look at the concrete needs and reality of our context, and work from that starting point. In the case of the MST and its pedagogy, they are both based in land, its social, cultural, political and economic aspects. The MST's democratic political and educational process includes analysis which is carried out by both the leadership and the grassroots membership; this then leads to decision-making and action. It was very inspiring to have been both an observer and a part of this process, but the challenge was in my return to Canada. How could I go back to an environment where popular education is something that is often done only within a workshop?

It was difficult to return here and write a Major Paper. At times as I wrote the paper, it seemed contradictory to write about popular education and not feel connected to the purpose of this paper beyond fulfilling requirements for a Master's Degree. I wanted to be part of more collective processes, where I could use the experience in Brazil. But, as I finish writing this paper, I realize that imperfect as the process of writing a paper is, it was a valuable moment of reflection. This reflection resulted in something that is a basis for discussions with others about the MST, popular education and social transformation in general.

Now, I must take the next steps in my personal journey of commitment to being a popular educator. I plan to create popular education materials and articles that allow me to share what I learned from this experience. And I hope that they will help others understand the MST model better, and most importantly inspire them in their own work.

Those of us who are part of popular education work realize that it is the work of ants— a long process of small actions that we hope will lead to social transformation and justice. We can never get enough hope from social movements like the MST that do popular education. As we work towards our dreams, these movements show us that we must do so grounded in the reality and concrete needs of people. My time with the MST was the experience of living dreams, because their dreams are rooted in the lives of people who make up the Movement.

From many MST *companheiros* and *companheiras*, I bring away hope that it is possible to make change even in difficult contexts, when the odds seem against us. I was impressed by the MST's revolutionary culture. Now, in Canada I am determined to be part of the work of creating and reviving a culture of organizing and social change. This involves understanding and connecting with Canada's historical context and history of resistance and organizing, but also the concrete needs of people today. We need to find a way to unite people in a movement, one that includes a wide diversity of people and viewpoints, with a basis of unity.

As issues cannot be dealt with in isolation or out of context, I realize that what the Movement does in Brazil is not necessarily something that we in Canada can do. But, we can certainly consider which concrete needs exist here and how we can build a movement around those needs—what are the different aspects or significances of those needs? What are their roots? These are important questions to ask. They lead some of us to construct models of political and popular education that support the work of movement building.

Upon reflection of what the MST model can offer us in a Canadian context, I believe it leads us to question ourselves as popular educators as to whether we integrate issues in a way that is politicized. By politicized I do not necessarily mean having to do with party or electoral politics, but rather what affects the daily lives of people and their decision-making power, while taking into account their socio-historical roles. For example, in the Faculty of Environmental Studies and other parts of Canada is our "environmental" education politicized, and if it is not, why isn't it?

As I continue to ask myself and others questions about whether popular education in Canada is politicized, I have become part of an experience of on-the-ground-not-limited-to-a-workshop popular education here. As part of the Bus Riders Union, a group of transit-dependent volunteers, we get on the buses to talk to people about the current transit system in Vancouver. Translink, the regular transit board wants to increase bus fares. We work with this issue, because it begins with the concrete needs of people and their reality—the need to get from one place to another, which is a basic human right—but we are working towards a larger transformation as we talk to bus riders and together do an analysis of the situation beyond transit to why there is a fare increase. My experience with the MST has taught me to look at current conditions—concrete needs—but also to hope together with others and sustain that hope, because we need to change the current situation in which more people in Canada are also being marginalized and ignored. Here we create our model of organizing situated in the Vancouver context though always inspired by other contexts that teach us a lot.

The experience with the MST has not only strengthened my commitment to social justice and social transformation work, but it has also offered me material which I can share with others, so that together we can reflect on it and use it in our work. Popular education offers me and others the chance to work towards transforming our reality, as agents of this change who analyze then act upon the context. How can we let this opportunity pass us by?

Bibliography

Arjona, Javier and Carlos Aznárez. *Rebeldes sin tierra: Historia del MST de Brasil.* Tafalla: Txalaparta, 2002.

Barndt, Deborah. "The World in a Tomato: Revisiting the Use of 'Codes' in Freire's Problem-Posing Education." *Convergence: A tribute to Paulo Freire* Eds. Paula Allman, chris cavanagh, Chan Lean Hang, Sergio Haddad and Peter Mayo. 31: 1&2 (1998): 62-73.

Benjamin, César and Roseli Salete Caldart. *Projeto popular e escolas do campo.* Brasilia: Articulação Nacional Por uma Educação Básica do Campo, 2000.

Benjamin, César, J. Carlos de Assis and Rômulo Tavares Ribeiro. "Desemprego: cenário atual e políticas alternativas." 3 Nov. 2003 <www.outrobrasil.net>

Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed.* New York: Urizen Books, 1979.

Bogo, Ademar. *Lições da luta pela terra.* Salvador: Memorial das Letras, 1999.

Caldart, Roseli Salete. *Pedagogia do Movimento Sem Terra: Escola é mais do que escola.* Petrópolis: Vozes, 2000.

Cassel, Amanda and Raj Patel. *Policy Brief No. 8: Agricultural Trade Liberalization and Brazil's Rural Poor: Consolidating Inequality.* Oakland: Food First, 2003.

Fernandes, Bernardo Mançano. *Questão Agrária, Pesquisa e MST.* São Paulo: Cortez, 2001.

Fernandes, Bernardo Mançano and João Pedro Stedile. *Brava Gente: la trayectoria del MST y la lucha por la tierra en Brasil.* La Habana: Editorial Caminos, 2002.

Forgacs, David. *A Gramsci Reader.* New York: New York University Press, 2000.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum, 1992.
---. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum, 1970.

Fuchs, Erika Del Carmen. Video footage filmed by the author. August-December 2003.

Kane, Liam. *Popular Education and Social Change in Latin America.* London: Latin America Bureau, 2001.

Konder, Leandro. *História das Idéais Socialistas no Brasil.* São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2003.

marino, dian. *Wild Garden: art, education, and the culture of resistance.* Toronto: Between The Lines, 1997.

Morissawa, Mitsue. *A História da luta pela terra e o MST.* São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2001.

Nosso Jeito de Cantar: Livro de Canções Populares e da Terra. São Paulo: ANCA— Associação Nacional de Cooperação Agrícola, 2001.

Petras, James. *Brazil and Lula: Year Zero.* 27 Sept. 2004 <www.rebelion.org>

"Press Release-10.21.2004, Foreign Sector." *Banco Central do Brasil.* 16 Nov. 2004 <www.bcb.gov.br/?foreignsector>

Ribeiro, Darcy. *The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000.

Rosenmann, Marcos Roitman. *El pensamiento sistémico: los orígenes del social-conformismo.* Mexico, DF: siglo veintiuno editores, 2003.

Vázquez, Adolfo Sánchez. *Filosofía de la Praxis.* Mexico, DF: siglo veintiuno editores, 2003.

Santos, Sueli Auxiliadora dos. "Um escola em movimento." *Sem Terra* Oct./Dec. 2003: 51-55.

Simon, Roger. *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction.* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982.

Stedile, João Pedro. *Globalization and Social Movements: A Brazilian Perspective, a public lecture by João Pedro Stedile of the MST (Landless Workers Movement) of Brazil, held at O.I.S.E. Auditorium, Toronto, October 20, 2003 (CERLAC Colloquia Paper).* Toronto: CERLAC, 2003.

Stedile, João Pedro. *A questão agraria no Brasil.* São Paulo: Atual, 2002.

Witcel, Elizabete, Ivori Agostinho de Moraes, Judite Stronzake and Marli Zimmermann de Moraes. "Pedagogia da Terra: Turma Salete Strozake." *Pedagogia da Terra.* Veranópolis: ITERRA, 2002. 7-24.