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**CULTURE, STRUCTURE, AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE MOVIMENTO DOS TRABALHADORES RURAIS SEM  
TERRA IN CEARÁ, BRAZIL**

by  
**Tiffany Marie Kwader**

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**Dedication**

**For those who know me well enough to know that there is no box.**

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**Abstract**

Culture, structure, and means of resource mobilization are examined in the context of the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* in Ceará, Brazil. Specifically, this study reviews the structure of the movement, how it creates a rural, landless worker culture, and its mobilization techniques. Using various theoretical paradigms, the concept of populism, which sees the use of culture as a means to build power to gain recognition, legitimacy, and support, is adapted to this case study. To illustrate this concept, information derives from personal interviews, speeches, mass printed media by the movement and the Brazilian government, and theorists who provide a framework that dissects the movement, illustrates its structural-cultural base, and constructs an interpretation in terms of social movement theory. These factors of analysis provide an innovative approach to linking culture analysis with social movement theory, primarily facets of structure and resource mobilization.

## **Introduction**

### **Literature Review**

Popular social movements are the focus of many research lenses, including political organization, resource mobilization and other areas of sociology. The concept of populism is a combination of these and other disciplines. Nestor Garcia Canclini in *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* defines this as a “way of using culture to build power” to gain recognition and political legitimacy (1995: 191). State and social movements utilize this constructive power as a means by which to make their demands heard and for them to become a functionary of the larger system, allowing for the acknowledgement of their contribution (Canclini 1995). Martín Barbero proposes that the popular sector tries to obtain this power through a forceful struggle for recognition and as means to reconstruct the popular reality (Barbero in Canclini 1995: 204-5).

For the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST<sup>1</sup>, a landless movement) to achieve a favorable level of popular acknowledgement, from which the movement can create social change, it must endure and rise above the reality of the area. The MST became an active, organized group in Ceará 10 years ago. According to INCRA (Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária)<sup>2</sup>, land reform is important because Ceará has the largest concentration of land remaining in the latifundio structure in the nation. One of the aims of the movement is land attainment; in Ceará, 280,000

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<sup>1</sup> All subsequent references to the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* use the acronym MST.

<sup>2</sup> INCRA is the acronym used here forward for *Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária*.

families remain landless (*Diario do Nordeste* 28 April 1999: 1) even though the MST has obtained land titles for 7,292 families since its inception until 1996 (*Revista Sem Terra* Jan/Feb/Mar 1998; MST in Stédile 1993). Ceará currently has 263 assentamentos with 130 of these under the directive of the MST. This is the largest number of MST assentamentos for the entire Northeast region and the third most in the nation (MST in Stédile 1993). These statistics are essential in reviewing the importance of the movement in Ceará in a national context and in assessing the movement's endurance capabilities in light of new reform.

It is impossible to discuss the future of the MST without also discussing Ceará and the new agrarian policy initiatives originating from the state. The *Novo Mundo Rural* is the new agrarian reform policy signed on July 7, 1999, based on the 1997 pilot project known as *Reforma Agrária Solidária*. The purpose of the policy is to decentralize the agrarian reform process by allowing the Ministry of Agriculture to oversee and advise all governmental directives at the federal, state, and municipal levels. The policy also mandates a non-affiliated association to receive land titles. A non-affiliated association consists of twenty to forty families, selected through an application process, and resettled on land overseen by the government. Social movements cannot receive aid in the reform process nor receive land titles under this new policy because they are self-comprised and do not conform to governmental control. The MST may have a secure stronghold with its 130 settlements known as *assentamentos* and 3 encampments known as *acampamentos* in Ceará, but the future progression of the movement appears to have an added obstacle to overcome with the new agrarian reform. Therefore, the movement's use of its culture to

**build power is important to its survival. The process of this strength is intricate and includes a variety of stages, the first addressed by resource mobilization theory.**

**Foweraker, a sociologist, presents resource mobilization theory as beginning “with the premise that social discontent is universal but collective action is not” (1995:15). A manifested form of discontent includes collective action that uses symbolic representations of the movement’s culture to affirm its objectives and promote its ideology. In essence, people use culture to build power to gain recognition and greater support because they are unsatisfied with their current social standing. The difficulty however, lies in gathering resources to maintain and expand a social movement so that it can change the current social reality. Networking is essential because it allows for the assembling of resources, including people, and provides a means for social movements to articulate their demands (Foweraker 1995).**

**These particulars appear within the context of the framing process. David Snow, a sociologist, states that “at a minimum people need to feel both aggravated about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can address the problem” (Snow in McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 5). The social problem that a movement wishes to address and the structure of the movement will define its framing process; in addition, this phase of mobilization defines objectives and means for the movement to follow. Without a stable organizational framework, the movement cannot endure or be able to sustain collective action (Zald 1996). The following table by McCarthy provides a simple means of defining which collective action structures are movements and which are not and whether they are formal or informal in nature.**

**Table 1**  
**Dimensions of movement-mobilizing structures**

	<b>Nonmovement</b>	<b>Movement</b>
<b>Informal</b>	Friendship networks Neighborhoods Work networks	Activist networks Affinity groups Memory communities
<b>Formal</b>	Churches Unions Professional associations	Social movement organizations Protest communities Movement schools

Source: McCarthy, John D. "Constraints and opportunities in adopting, adapting, and inventing" *Comparative perspectives on social movements: Political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings* (Ed. Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, Mayer N. Zald). New York: Cambridge University Press. 1996.

This thesis demonstrates how the MST is a formal movement (See Table 1) but how it also incorporates the other three structure sectors as a means to mobilize resources and to further define their directive and objective. Social movement theory regarding these other three sectors is inapplicable to the movement because of the MST's defining organizational characteristics distinguish it as a formal movement. Nevertheless, one must note that mobilization and framing within all movements and nonmovements are not without cultural context as is illustrated by references to Jasper.

Populism states that building power uses culture, but what is culture? Zald, a sociologist, succinctly defines culture as "shared beliefs and understandings, mediated by and constituted by symbols and language, of a group or society" (1996: 262). Social movements exist in a larger society but in many ways, they define their own culture as a means of creating support. Cultural stock, as defined by Zald, provides the basis of defining what is injustice, how to organize, how to protest, how to utilize resources, and how to frame the movement to "persuade authorities and by-standers of the rightness of

their cause” (1996: 269). It is the rhetoric used from cultural stock that allows social movements to become legitimate actors in the socio-political system and provides them with a basis for building more power.

Previous theoretical frameworks regarding social movements emphasize the structure and political make-up of movements’ power. Tarrow, a social movement theorist, asserts that social movements are not institutions and thus less-easily understood than political parties or interest groups (1996: 50). Although Tarrow attempts to understand and dissect social movement organization, applying his theories to the MST fails. The movement is not entirely a state-affected, non-structured entity in Brazil; rather, analysis of the movement through populism shows that it is a cultural and institutional means of creating change.

A second theorist, Street, addresses populism in politics. He states that populism is a form of popular culture and therefore consumed by the masses without discretion (1997:170). The MST informs its members and the populace of its structure, organization, and objectives so that the masses are conscious of their decision to recognize and support the movement. Street’s definition of populism argues that everyone must accept the movement because it is popular but this is not the case. Illustrated in Part II, “Creation of Culture,” are the various campaigns and countermovements to the MST, demonstrating that while this movement may be popular it is not blindly supported. Although Tarrow and Street may define social movements and populism well for their case studies, their approaches are not congruent with the reality of the MST in Ceará.

**This investigation presents a case study of the MST in its social, political, and economic reality within Ceará. Most inquiries into the movement look into its history or structure, usually written for Brazilian academia and for other governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations, such as INCRA and FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization). Seeking to transcend one discipline and one audience, embraced is the theory of populism. Most studies of populism seek to broadly bridge culture and politics with few case specifics. This case study connects the culture of a social movement with its ability to assemble resources from within its own organization and the larger community. Moreover, analysis specifically addresses the reality of the MST and its structure to gain recognition and support through definitive examples from Ceará.**

**By adopting populism as a basis for studying the MST, incorporation of terminology includes theoretical frameworks of resource mobilization, framing processes, culture, and cultural stock. The main theoretical paradigm of resource mobilization and culture used to illustrate how the MST is an example of populism exemplifies how popular and organizational support mobilizes resources that strengthen, expand and promote the movement and its objectives.**

**Interweaving academic and theoretical concepts from texts used in this study, primary consideration resides on personal interviews and mass media resources. These highlighted sources are the informational foundation of this thesis and illustrate the connection between the movement and the proposed theoretical precepts. Primary data stems from personal interviews with MST members and coordinators, politicians,**

professionals, and movement supporters. Additionally, first-hand notes from speeches, conferences, debates, and celebrations factor into the primary data. Popular resources include MST education notebooks, magazines, newspapers, and Web information; local newspapers from Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil; television news broadcasts; and governmental publications, including pamphlets and Web information. The use of primary and popular data best illustrate the structure and objectives of this popular social movement, while reaffirming the theoretical principle of populism. The following section does not present popular structures in regard to populism or resource mobilization theory but rather reviews the organizational basis of the MST.

## **Structure of a Landless Movement**

This section introduces the overall structure and objectives of the MST. The first division presents the current Brazilian land structure, reviewing the basis and description of the land system, pertinent laws regarding land and agrarian reform, and statistical data illustrating the unequal distribution of land. Second, adduced and defined by MST literature and propaganda are the three core objectives of this movement, being the need for land, agrarian reform, and a just society. Following these first two introductory divisions, outlined are the processes utilized by the movement in order to achieve their objectives.

The MST has three distinct stages in its development of base communities from inception to completed implementation. The first stage is the organizational phase. Following this, is the encampment period, the first in which there is active change. The final phase, settlement, is that after which the movement receives the land title and begins construction of the community. Organization of the movement in terms of people and resources does not end upon receiving the title; there is a continued pursuit of resources, recognition and support. The final division of this section presents the conceptualization of the affect the MST has on land systems and societal structures.

## **Land Structure**

Struggles for equal land rights and distribution began with the Portuguese arrival in Brazil in 1500 and progressed with the development of several social movements working for agrarian reform. Upon its onset in 1964, the military dictatorship disbanded

these organizations. In 1975, the Brazilian government implemented the political opening known as the *abertura*, allowing more political, social, and cultural freedoms. This opening provided small groups of peasants to organize and occupy certain sections of land until receiving legal title. The first major recognized land occupation occurred in Santa Catarina in 1978, in which 300 families squatted on a parcel of land until given ownership. The MST developed into a national landless social movement from this tenure and as an effect of agrarian reform policy. Aiding in organizing the entire country, a national congress forum, representing 23 states with 65 delegates and 15 national directors provides the leadership structure of the movement. The national structure illustrates the complexity of the MST in being the largest social movement in Brazil. According to the Secretary for Rural Development (SDR), since a significant percentage of people in Ceará are without land, a transpired result is the development of several landless organizations, the largest and best organized being the MST. The movement within Ceará has 19 state directors.

Any land structure is incomplete without discussing its workers. Brazilian rural workers are in a feudal-like land and work structure. Feudalism is a pyramid structure in which there are few owners or directing members of the manor or property and several laborers. Latifundios, large land portions that often mimic the feudal system, in Brazil have two types of laborers. First, there is the free peasant who works the land in order to provide for both the laborer's family and that of the proprietor. Fieldwork pays for rent of the space, for residence and for use of the land. The second type of worker is the wage laborer. Theoretically, the laborer works sufficient hours to pay for necessities and

amenities along with producing extra crop yields as payment for rent. In practice, however, the wage laborer becomes indebted to the landowner for an indefinite period. Desiring to break free of the feudal structure, rural workers organize in order to promote and demand equal access to land through the process of agrarian reform.

Reinstitution of agrarian reform law followed the fall of the military dictatorship in 1985; however, these laws are “on the books” but rarely found to be implemented. Several interviewees attributed the absence of reform due to the lack of interest on the part of politicians and landowners to reform the social structure. As presented in the film “*Killing for Land*,” the official agrarian reform policy states land entitlement is ensured to a peasant, his/her family or a unified tenure group so long as the land is not currently under production and if these individuals or group remained on the land for five years without resistance or complaint from the proprietor (Cowell 1990). The effect of this law is that a squatter’s settlement will move onto a particular parcel of land, construct housing, begin cultivation, and often provide some type of compensation for the use of the land to the owner. At the four and a half-year marker, the owner hires a group of individuals to evict the peasants from the land. Most peasant struggles result in violence and often death with less than half of the settlements receiving official title to the land. Although the MST seizes land during its second phase of development, the overall structure makes land titles more attainable. The organization demonstrates its determination to obtain the land title through the encampment phase, which also illustrates its strength in mobilizing and distributing resources among its own

organization. Tangibly represented in the following statistical data regarding land distribution, discrepancy in agrarian law persists.

Within the area of this study, the sertão of Ceará, 3% of the population of the region owns more than 70% of the land (Hall 1978). Inequalities persist to date as shown in a regional study in 1998, revealing that less than 30% of the small farmers, including peasants and wage laborers, own their own land, often less than two hectares (BARA and NOAA). In addition to few workers owning their own land as a means of security, most forms of labor are laid-off as a cost-saving measure during periods of drought, common every six years in Ceará. In a semi-arid region like the sertão of Ceará, agriculture is difficult and there are few natural resources, as such, self-sustainability is nearly impossible. These dry periods also promote migration from the region but also aid in the mobilization of rural laborers in support of agrarian reform. More specifically, efforts to obtain land titles attempt to maintain workers livelihoods. Production is the only agency by which workers sustain themselves and their lifestyles and added promotion of cooperative and community farming techniques within the movement secures their living. MST objectives address all of these issues in considering land structure, law, and disbursement.

### **What are we fighting for?**

One of the most critical components of a social movement is its objective. The MST defines its struggle in terms of three main objectives. These include the attainment of land, agrarian reform, and the pursuit of a just society. Incorporated and manifested in

the overall structure, the three phases of the movement illustrate each of its objectives, first defined within the larger context of the social movement structure and society.

The objective of the attainment of land corresponds to the need for each rural family to be able to survive by way of agriculture; land is a rural necessity for survival. Land provides access to production and thus, the opportunity to work and to secure the livelihood of their families (Harvey 1996: 178). Cooperative and movement frameworks assure individual survival. A syndicate organization fights with greater strength for either better wages from an employer or land titles from the government. In essence, the objective of attaining land is the movement's defining struggle for survival.

The second objective, agrarian reform, will generally suffer with great resistance to its implementation because it intends to alter the foundational structure of the country (Stédile 1983). The desire is to guarantee land to all those who will work the land, especially those already laboring on large pieces of property. Security of legal title also ensures a landowner's right to services of credit, fixed prices, technical assistance, and overall security within the rural region. Due to the significant social and political changes resulting from implemented agrarian reform projects, a syndicate organization like the MST enables rural workers and new landowners to secure their entitlements. The acknowledged part of the need to secure reform and entitlements illustrates the MST's concern in reconstructing a just society.

A society without an exploited population and without a sector that exploits is the principal definition of a just society provided by the MST in literature. In practice, the construction of a new society will entail a reconfiguration of current political power,

allowing for greater political reception of all social movements. Access for the MST would allow for open communication and exchange within negotiations for resources. In general, the MST views just societies as providing equal access and rights to all individuals, movements, and organizations. The first phase of the movement's struggle encapsulates and promotes these three objectives.

### **Organizing a Social Movement**

Success achieved within a social movement is not haphazard or without direction. The organizational phase of any movement is critical because the movement's success hinges upon the structure created within this initial phase. The MST begins each struggle for land with a three-tiered organizational phase that includes formation, occupation, and planning.

The most time-consuming aspect within the organization phase is the actual assembling of the movement. This process begins with a call of the MST to aid in the establishment of an occupation within an already existing group of rural workers, or the MST enters a particular area and rallies the workers. Either way, incorporated into the movement is a small group of rural workers. With a small base group, the process of consciousness-raising begins to inform rural workers about the unjust social status in which they live. Awareness of social and political issues also serves as a means of enticement for other rural workers to join the struggle.

With a coherent group, the MST works to sensitize it to the socio-political reality. First, there are presentations concerning worker's political rights with regard to minimum

wage, voting, and the right to own land. Second, the workers become aware of the inequitable land division between small and large landowners; discussion of different uses of the land allows the introduction of the third sensitization component. Workers receive information as to what a land occupation entails and why they should continue in the struggle for land and agrarian reform.

Provided that the group wishes to continue, the MST aids in the structuring of the group and in the tenure of land as well. Instruction of how to occupy a piece of land combines with the group assessing which area they wish to inhabit. During this organizational phase, the MST directs the group to choose a piece of land that is *terra parada* or unproductive. Specifically, unproductive means a parcel of land that has no cattle or other livestock, is not under cultivation, and is barren of all structures like houses, sheds, barns, etc. The MST chooses to occupy such areas because without these items to demonstrate the productivity of the land, the government is more likely to reassign the title to the workers who will cultivate and produce on the land versus the large landowners who allow the land to remain fallow for indefinite periods. The government also verifies the unproductivity of the land before redistribution through INCRA. INCRA is an organ of the federal government that works to reappropriate unproductive areas of land to landless or those workers who have little land. Directed disbursements by the government abound from this agency, from the beginning to the end of the titling and the settlement process. Whether through the assistance of INCRA or a unified group of associations, the MST may also attempt to obtain land by purchasing it directly from its owner.

In conjunction with organizing people and deciding on the area to occupy, the MST plans the division of labor on the land. The two main concerns during this period are what crops to cultivate and where to construct housing, schools, and health post. Planning provides a utopian vision of the future, allowing for greater mobilization and planning. This visualization of a successful occupation provides motivation for workers during the occupation period known as *acampamento*. In addition, a concrete, objective plan for the use of the land aids in the retitling process in the second phase of the MST.

### **Camping for Land**

The stereotype of an agrarian reform movement in Latin America encompasses an image of a group of 40 to 300 families that move onto a piece of land and squat. Squatter settlements take possession of the land, begin construction of fields and houses, and hope that this invasion secures them the right to land title. Most settlements endure a period of violence and only receive the right to inhabit the land or the title in about 50% of the invasions (Cowell 1990). Learning from the mistakes of other agrarian reform movements like squatter settlements, the MST constructed a more balanced and successful strategy obtain land title. Within this division, outlined is the second phase of the movement.

The Portuguese verb *acampar* means to camp and thus the word *acampamento* signifies encampment or campsite. Encampment is an appropriate translation because it is in this phase that the MST occupies the desired land by establishing a temporary

dwelling. The term *campsite* also signifies the group's use of the location as a headquarters for actions within the *acampamento* and the surrounding area. Beyond the duality of the word's use, the emphasis focuses on the temporal seizure of land.

Due to the well-defined structure of the MST, the occupants recognize that their actions are severely limited. Restriction stems from the lack of property title possession. The movement limits its actions to building *barracas de lona* or black plastic makeshift houses while negotiations occur. During this period, landowners receive notification that a faction of the MST occupies a piece of their land, confirming the existence of the tenure. The movement trespasses in order to establish an *acampamento*. There is little to no compensation expected for occupying the land since the land lay idle previously and MST members undertake no ventures of production. Activities reduce to simple residency on the land while the second phase begins.

During this period, the movement meets with the government concerning land title. Negotiations last for an average of 3 to 6 months and the MST receives the title approximately 99% of the time. Three factors attribute to this success, including the prospectus, the movement's restraint, and its organization. First, the MST provides a well-researched and thought-out prospectus for land use upon reapportionment. The movement's dedication and force constitute the second and third factors required for successful apportionment. The movement's structure and commitment to obtain the land title provides the reasoning and restraint for not planting crops, nor constructing permanent structures, nor establishing side businesses during the encampment. The reasoning for this is that at no time will the movement assume that it will receive the title

or permanent access to the land; the members recognize that this is a struggle for land and a just society begins by title negotiation. Sacrificing time, energy, and resources, the movement promotes itself as working towards equality and change through these factors and its actions.

The third factor for the movement's success is its strength in organizing and distributing all of its resources to various *acampamentos*. The stability of this social movement exhibits itself when support extends for a period of three to six months over 23 Brazilian states. Ceará currently has three *acampamentos* under the direction of the MST. Not only is this phase of the movement remarkable, but it allows for the permanent structuring and mobilization of the movement within the third phase.

### **Settling Land**

A *barraca de lona* is not a house nor is a campsite a community. Once the MST receives the title for the land that it occupies, the third phase in its struggle for agrarian reform begins. The movement must now transform the land into its own by implementing the plans it set out for itself during the organizational phase. Unity of the movement, the populace, and by the government aids in the implementation and construction of the community.

Three organizations that support the MST are INCRA, FETRAECE (Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura do Estado do Ceará)<sup>3</sup>, and the CPT (Comissão

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout this thesis, the acronym FETRAECE represents *Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura do Estado do Ceará*; translated, the acronym signifies Federation of Agricultural Workers in the State of Ceará.

Pastoral da Terra)<sup>4</sup>. INCRA, as previously stated, is a division of the federal government that works with *assentamentos* to obtain titles and resources. FETRAECE is an organization, based in Fortaleza, Ceará, that provides legal consul to uphold the interests of rural workers and also coordinates affiliations among Cearense social movements (Paiva, Sousa, and Frota 1999: 8). The CPT accompanies families involved in land occupations and land conflicts; the commission also provides infra-structural assistance through food, transportation, beds, tents, and medical assistance (Paiva, et al 1999: 3). These organizations aid in the overall mobilization of support and resources for the MST; however, the government oversees most monetary considerations.

The greatest means of assistance, for which the government is liable, once it recognizes a settlement, is financial. Aid comprises three categories: credit, entitlements, and housing. Credit allows the community and its individual members to receive federally recognized loans that maintain fixed interest rates and terms. Loans provide the settlement an opportunity to buy construction materials and agricultural machinery. Households may opt to purchase furnishings, equipment, and seeds. Entitlements encompass a variety of assistance programs ranging from seeds to irrigation projects, school supplies to salaries for teachers, and medical supplies to federal and state-mandated rotations of physicians through a particular community. The category allows a settlement to be eligible to receive additional federal and state assistance programs. The final category, housing, provides construction materials and money for the community; in

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<sup>4</sup> CPT is the acronym for the *Comissão Pastoral da Terra* used here forth. The translation reads Pastoral Land Commission.

addition, governmental recognition establishes access to electricity, water, and telephone lines.

There are two types of MST communities: cooperatives and associations. The basic components of a MST cooperative are that it pay taxes, commercial products are grown, and the community is self-sustainable as a business. An association pays no taxes, grows products for subsistence, and functions as a base community.<sup>5</sup> With both of these structures, the MST mandates some structural rules for community living. Any movement needs to have regulations, discipline, and order to maintain the objectives and the unification of the organization. The first there is no consumption of alcohol. Secondly, each family raises a determined number of animals. Lastly, milk is for children. All milk produced by dairy cows or goats is under the direct control of the community and equally distributed among the children. Disbursement allows for the maintenance of minimal nutritional levels. Additionally, the movement stresses a motto as a rule to live by. It states, "Work, discipline, and solidarity" (Muggiati 1996: 34)<sup>6</sup> and this underlies the motivation and actions of the organization.

The structure of an *assentamento* reaffirms the stability and determination of the MST in working towards agrarian reform. The community works towards a just society in a perpetual process that seeks to improve the social, economic, and political structures that foster agrarian reform within the larger regional, state, and national contexts.

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<sup>5</sup> The structure and ideology present within the base communities of the *Movimento Sem Terra* is representative of that found in the *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* (Christian Base Communities) of Northeastern Brazil originating in the early 1960s.

<sup>6</sup> All subsequent translations are my own.

Nevertheless, the promotion of a just society begins with the construction and divisions of the land.

Communities are in two sections, land reserved for housing and that used for communal production. In the residential section, houses lay in rows with social services alternating at the ends of each row; services include a community building and offices, schools, and a health clinic. If a community has three rows, the school may be at the far end of the first row, the health clinic at the near end of the second, and a community building may lie at the far end of the third. Behind each house is a small, square parcel of land for each family to grow supplementary or subsistence crops. Everyone works communal land, providing for the livelihood of the community. Required to work consists of three days in the fields and yields provide the sustenance for the settlement. In the cooperative context, common land additionally produces marketable goods. Although these land divisions and production strategies benefit the entire community, larger groups may find it difficult to sustain themselves and thus redistribute themselves in order to create several smaller, more manageable settlements.

### **Reassessing the Movement's Structure**

The MST, through its objectives, aims to solve the problem of the rural landless worker through the reapportionment of "unused and underused lands into the hands of the unemployed and underemployed" (Burns 1994: 337). The greatest hindrance to this movement's development however, is that it does not occur within a vacuum. The

**movement must work within already constructed social, economic, and political systems in a way that optimizes the collection of resources.**

**The MST seeks to unify small groups of workers at just the right time. In a cyclical process of organization and conscientization, the landless unify to be educated as to the unjust societal structure, in which they live, and list their human and constitutional rights. The emphasis of the MST is to decentralize the power frameworks and empower the settlement and the movement at large. If a rural social movement wishes to gain recognition and support from the urban masses, as the MST does, then a well-defined identity must demonstrate the movement's influence, determinance, power, and longevity. Without a foundation, such as that presented here, a social movement has no base from which to define or present itself. The proceeding segment, Part I, reviews the MST's structural organization in each phase of the movement.**

## **Part I**

### **Mobilizations and Occupations**

The MST is the largest social movement organization in Brazil. The movement transformed itself and its image from that of land bandits in the 1970s to an established and recognized organization in 1985 and finally into a national movement today. The movement's historical and established structure of mobilization and occupations is the basis of its growth and success. This section presents the formation of the organization in three divisions. First, a brief history of the MST within Ceará illustrates the foundational basis and support structure for the movement. The following division presents mobilization techniques and ideologies. Lastly, an outline of present land occupations demonstrates the significance of the organizational phase to the development of the movement. Without these historical and structural components, the efforts of the MST could not survive nor succeed.

#### **Pioneers in Mobilization**

The struggle for land, agrarian reform, and the development of the MST began with the CPT. Directed by Padre Aculden Triza, the Commission organized and executed the *Cruzando da Terra*, beginning the Northeast's *Luta Pela Terra* with its first occupation of Bahian land in 1981. The *Luta Pela Terra* is a national campaign working towards agrarian reform (Cowell 1990). Diffusing these organizational patterns, the CPT spread the *Cruzando da Terra* and the *Pastoral Juventude*, an adolescent component of the CPT, throughout the region.

As a member and activist of the *Pastoral Juventude*, the CPT delegated Fatima Ribeiro to attend the 1985 First National Congress of the MST. By networking, attending workshops, and becoming inspired by movement's activists, Fatima left the meeting with several contacts and the idea to mobilize the entire state of Ceará under the direction of the MST. For the next four years, Fatima worked closely with the CPT and MST to mobilize support and a resource basis for the movement. In addition, a base group united to test the applicability of land occupations and the MST structure within Ceará. On May 25, 1989, Fatima led 400 families in the seizure of land in the Canindé municipality near the city of Madalena. This occupation marks the inception of the MST in Ceará. Nonetheless, the struggle to continue mobilizing people and resources for the survival of the movement persists due to the composition of the state.

Ceará is a state of dichotomies. There are 104 state municipalities with an approximate 40% of each maintaining viable infrastructures, including those providing potable water. While most areas have limited accessibility to infrastructure resources, the city of Fortaleza and its immediate surrounding areas have nearly full access to potable water and stable basic structure systems. While one-third of the state resides in the capitol, two-thirds of the state's population remains deficient of 60% of goods and services provided by a base system. In addition to the unequal distribution of resources, territorial divisions also illustrate poor distribution.

Less than 10% of the Cearense populace owns the title to 80% of the land; in other words, 90% of the populace only has access to one-fifth of the land. This disparity constitutes part of the reason for the presence of extreme levels of poverty and misery. In

addition, semi-arid land covers nearly 90% of the state, leaving only 10% of fertile, highly productive land. Since most large landowners already possess this fertile region and the sertão production yields are relatively low, land often becomes “simply abandoned” (FETRAECE, speech). Latifundiarios own a large percentage of the area and allow their lands to lay idle, especially low-yield producing areas within the semi-arid region. The fact remains, however, that rural landless workers strive to obtain their own land and to become self-sustainable with lesser regard given to land quality and productivity yields. With these goals in mind, many join the dynamic organization of the MST to become active in the network of over half a million rural workers, including members of cooperatives, land occupations, and rural affiliates within the region (Petras 1998: 26). Many rural workers feel that to attain any piece of land would allow them to be more viable and self-sufficient than if they continued to work for large landowners.

More than 90% of Brazilians want some form of agrarian reform, but the violence and difficulties portrayed by the government-run media, detours many from joining an organization or in believing that reform is possible. The MST counteracts violent portrayals by providing a support base for rural workers, one that encourages them to improve their lives by banding together. The presence of the MST also promotes awareness of the need for societal reform throughout the various unequally distributed regions in Ceará.

The MST objective in consciousness-raising is “to reflect upon the mechanisms of the government already existing and those projected, to provide the guarantee of public space to all citizens within this society marked by inequality and contradictions”

(“Democratizar a economia e o poder” July 1994: 27). In understanding the structure of the government, the movement becomes well-educated and knowledgeable about their human and constitutional rights. Unfortunately, as members become more conscious, active, and demanding of their rights, a vision of “*rebeldes brasileiros' sem terra*” is ascertained (“Deu na *Time*” *Revista Sem Terra* Jan/ Feb/ Mar 1998: 16). This projects the MST as a radical organization “with guerrillas fighting capitalism in an attempt to transform the face of the nation” (Ibid.). Although the conceptual basis of this statement is true, the tone of the author is askew.

The MST desires a just society and in the struggle for the realization of a new societal structure, there must be reform. Historically, the movement was founded with the vision and goal of liberation theology; however, the MST revolutionized Christian Base Community ideology into a national struggle working towards change. Some view the ultimate objective of the MST as having a socialist government (Lopez 1999: 33) and even though the movement’s national leader João Pedro Stédile denied this claim on July 4, 1999, some members use the ideology and practice as a model (“Stédile nega que objetivo do MST seja socialismo,” *O Povo* 4 July 1999: 9A).

Che Guevara’s revolutionary lifestyle and socialist, organizational objectives represent a foundational standard for some in the MST. Bogo interprets the valorization of Che Guevara by movement members, as relating to their lifestyles and struggles within the context of any global injustice (1998: 23). Che Guevara’s life also demonstrates the people’s ability to act against atrocities and exemplifies the “beauty in being a

revolutionary” (Ibid.). The MST encapsulates this spirit of being a guerrilla within the structure of an unarmed social movement.

In order for the movement to progress and revolutionize society, it must maintain an agile base. Ninety percent of MST members are young, the most concentrated age group being 20-25 years old (Seiple 1998: 31). The oldest state director is 39 years of age and since the majority of the members and leaders are in the prime productivity period of their lives, their energy and spirit advance the directives and objectives of the movement. By employing this energy, this year’s greatest need in terms of the overall functioning of the movement is a greater number of base level activists. “Then they may spend more time setting good examples, initiating occupations of land, and encouraging discussions about social reform” (Seiple 1998: 35). Motivation and encouragement are the basis of mobilizing the MST.

Important in structuring an agile, motivational base is the role of women. In Ceará, women comprise a majority in leadership roles, as 14 of 19 state directors are women. One factor that may explain how the female state directors maintain their role is that the majority are single-women focusing their energies in developing the movement. Although these women appear to have agency in this role, the majority of women remain confined to traditional roles within familial and social structures. Within the community, herb garden maintenance and small subsistence agriculture preparation are traditional activities undertaken by women. Women are also the main caretakers of the family, in established roles of child-rearing and food preparation. Although the movement seeks a new, just society, the lack of recognition by the MST fixes women to traditional roles.

To create a truly just society, a revolution of societal infrastructures must also seek equality among gender roles.

Attempting to establish a movement with equality among genders, the *Movimento de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais* is a tangent faction of the MST. Comprised of women, this movement began in 1995. The objective is to “discuss and organize gender focused activities to amplify the political participation” of women in working towards agrarian reform and the construction of a gender-equal society (Aparecida dos Santos Jan/ Feb/ Mar 1999: 32). Within their own movement and the MST, these women seek land title in their name. Currently, women must share title with their husband and only have legal right to half of the of the couple’s assets. Legal access does not ensure equal participation or the ability to voice their opinion regarding property. Thus, the women’s landless, rural workers’ movement seeks to establish a framework that promotes gender equality and agency by providing a social movement structure from which to base their struggle.

### **Organizing within a pattern**

The MST is the most socially conscious movement of contemporary Brazil and this is so because the movement’s process requires people to consciously reflect upon their lives and willingly unite with the organization. This progression of awareness and transformation is complex and enacted through the mobilization of rural workers, their families, and resource associates.

“One day, we heard of the landless movement... of agrarian reform... but how to participate?” (MST 1999: 7). “Some time later, Antonio of the MST arrived in our house. He spoke to us of the movement... of the organization... of how life is better on the land” (Ibid. 8). Assisted with such signifiers as songs and symbols, the people rally together in hope of an occupation and in the future, land to call their own (Plummer 1997: 21). With the gathering and enthusiasm of a few individuals, the crux of training and mobilization begins.

The MST “mobilizes to mobilize” (P.I. Pe. Ermanno Allegri). Within two months of entering an area, the movement establishes its organizational structures and gathers resources from other factions of the MST. Mobilization leaders, also known as *militantes*, are established members of *assentamentos* that undertake special training aimed at mobilizing future communities. “Courses of *Frente de Massa* consist of twenty days of traditional education on the history and organization of the MST followed by ten days in the field learning and utilizing these new skills. It is then their responsibility to seek out interested families and hold initial meetings” (Plummer 1997: 30).

Introductory, informational meetings held in a *bate-papo*, or informal discussion group, openly review the movement’s objectives, why MST members feel they must fight for change, and the significance of the MST’s symbols and actions. Many overlook future security and change and only see the organization in a contemporary opportunistic fashion. Some rural workers dismiss educational information about being politically conscious citizens and how to create their own space (Bogo 1998: 16 and MST 1999: 20); they view organizing themselves as a way to secure access to money (IPLANCE

1999: 83). Although money is not an objective of the MST, equal access to resources, both natural and monetary, is an essential component of a just society. Therefore, as people maintain a variety of reasons for joining in the movement, the MST begins to unify its members under the organization's symbols, represented by symbols like the flag, work tools such as the hoe and reaper, study materials, and the MST hymn (Bogo 1998: 13). These symbols unify the group while continuing in the educational and occupation processes.

Congressman José B. Pimentel asserts that the MST can secure livelihood, educational programs, and land with the merging of people into a collective group. Unfortunately, the movement's greatest struggle is in trying to inspire people to become knowledgeable of and active within their current socio-political context. Many are content with the land they work, the house they rent, and their mode of transportation, mainly their bike. These rural workers do not join organizations because they do not see the need to improve their current situation or secure their future when, at present, they have what they want. However, if the *militantes* are successful and illustrate the long-term benefits of joining the movement, beyond monetary opportunities, the organizational objectives and rallying during this mobilization period become self-evident.

Since many Brazilians feel that there is no hope in improving society, the MST provides hope and options for people to find food, land, and dignity within the structure of the movement. The MST promotes an idea of "nation," as exemplified in their communities, in which a united people live in the same territory, want a common destiny,

and have a sense of solidarity (“Reforma Agrária e MST” *Revista Sem Terra* Jul/ Aug/ Sept 1999: 26). The promotion of solidarity and dignity is different from the reality of the Brazilian people who are “children of this nation/ that suffer persecution/ of the powerful” (Nascimento e Silva 1998: lines 202-204).

The most mobilized sector of the MST is the youth. People between the ages of 14 and 20 are an essential part of MST communities and the movement because governing societal structures have not directed them and they have the energy to fight for and implement reform. The movement is also a beneficial outlet for the youth because the organization provides an alternative to drugs, alcohol, and prostitution. With the greater majority in this age bracket centralizing their energies in the movement, the MST has a firm structural foundation from which it battles with rural workers against governing institutions and society. As Fatima stated, organization and mobilization allow members to break from societal constructs and produce for themselves within a community in which they have a sense of solidarity and self-sustainability.

The MST is a mass movement that works to organize the Brazilian people for equitable distribution of land and resources. The movement’s struggle conceptualizes its objectives as agrarian reform, a common culture, and an organizationally reinforced ideology that inspires new members during the mobilization phase. The movement believes that new members are the future *militantes* and leaders of the country and of the MST and therefore, the struggle will only cease when there are no more landless individuals, when agrarian reform is practiced, and when a just society exists (Freire, Panzoldo e Alonso, ed. 1999: 7). Use of new alliances strengthens the collective action

base that seeks these reforms (MST April 1994: 24) but inductees also ensure the survival of the movement in light of new programs, especially the *Nova Mundo Rural* which is reforming credit, production, and educational structures. Not central to the movement's struggle for reform and against new programs, difficulties encompass all facets in constructing a new just society. Overcoming several obstacles is important in order to mobilize new members.

New alliances and members comprise a division between those mobilized to initiate an occupation and those who join an already structured community. Families rallied and educated as new occupational units of the MST receive guarantee of resources and assistance by the movement within the region. Whether families move to become part of a unit or incorporated de facto, due to the family's prior residence on the sought land, the MST accompanies the group until reapportionment and establishes the community's base structure. If a family or other unit wish to unite with an established community, the movement does not restrict access to a land parcel or membership. What remain limited, however, are the family's communal rights; discussed further in the "*Assentamentos*" section of this study are qualifying factors concerning organizational benefits. For the complete integration and assurance of resources, mobilized individuals and families must stem from the organizational base, directed and supported by the movement in an occupation of land.

### **Mobilized to occupy**

Once a rallied group unifies under the direction of the MST, the move to seize land commences. There are five divisions within this phase. First, there is a reassessment of the MST organizational strategy to occupy the land. The presentation of how to seize land follows. The third division reviews land tenure structure and verification of land productivity. The fourth division assesses difficulties the movement encounters with regard to its act of occupying land. Lastly, presented are current occupation numbers for the Ceará. The MST must progress from mobilization to occupation if its organizational foundation is to expand and strengthen.

With raised consciousness and the motivation to control their own lives and destinies, families view their well-being as reinforced and secure within the MST's organizational structure, allowing them to move forward and seize land (Scott 1992: 61). The MST maintains its three core objectives, but the central goal of organizing people remains focused on having these people occupy land. Not only do occupations represent the "mobilization of a dream" (P.I. Fabíola Silva Gomes) but they also "serve both as a visible indication of the need for true agrarian reform as well as minimal habitation for the otherwise landless and homeless" (Plummer 1997: 19). This tenure reaffirms the movement's need to call attention to unequal land distribution within Brazil. The division of the MST and the government illustrates the movement's determination to create a new society with equal land apportionment and agrarian reform.

In general, land occupations are products of strategic decisions and conditions that facilitate the reapportionment processes of land and agrarian reform (Petras 1998: 27).

Known throughout Brazil due to its popularized status, land tenure methodology and terminology is common. A 1996 soap opera, *O Rei do Gado*, re-televised during the summer of 1999, provide visual representations the MST's process of occupation and encampment. In addition, the national news, *Jornal Nacional*, presents such stories as "Manual of Invasion" in which there is a review of the development of the movement and its ideology, although presented from a critical, elitist, governmental point of view (TV Globo, July 1, 1999). This same broadcast depicted occupations as a "call to war" in the "struggle for a piece of land."

The MST is extremely militant in its occupation efforts but there is little basis in the referring to mobilizations and land seizures as a "call to war." After educating the assembled group, it selects the property desired for occupation. The group collaborates with other factions and regional leaders of the movement in setting a date to move onto the land. Scheduling is essential in mobilizing resources, in terms of both people and supplies. Leaders and families from other settlements partake in the actual seizure of land, to provide added numbers in an extended support base. Although an average of 40 to 100 families will permanently reside there, additional people provide emotional and moral assistance through their presence. The occupation period provides a period in which people unite under one banner and feel part of a common goal, bringing individuals together as a unit. Intercommunication with other communities is crucial for the occupying group's physical survival. Areas provide living staples for the group during the occupation and *acampamento* periods. They also act as allies in rallying resources from syndicates, organizations, and the government.

A good repertoire within these factions and the support of associate settlements facilitates the land assessment process during the mobilization and occupation phase. The *Fundaria* division of INCRA visits and decides whether a piece of land is productive or not and upon documenting the activity status of the property, FETRAECE and the MST may mobilize families to occupy the particular area. However, it is a common practice for the MST to assess the area themselves and occupy the land without official documentation that the land lay idle. This creates a difficult situation in which INCRA must demonstrate the unproductivity of the land, while several dozen families reside in *barracas de lona* on the property. In addition, the seizure of unsurveyed lands encompasses the greatest manifestations of violence.

The MST wishes to avoid all social conflicts that underlie the struggle for land and thus the movement maintains a foundation of unarmed rural workers to aid in the occupation process (Carvalho 1999: 36). Maintaining unarmed members is as a means to promote a peaceful tenure of the property. Nevertheless, violence often ensues as large landowners hire gunmen to block the movement's entrance into private areas or to evict the group by means of force. Although not widespread or supported in Ceará, the UDR (*União Democrática Rural*) is an active political party promoting latifundista property rights, including the right to employ individuals that may violently block, eject, or even kill MST members occupying the referenced land. The UDR previously exhibited its force by banding farmers, ranchers, the armed forces, and Congressmen in blocking agrarian reform amendments to the 1985 constitution (Solberg 1990). The MST must

battle the UDR in terms of its political and physical power. Violence, however, has not diminished the movement's mobilization and occupation efforts.

Ceará may have the most *assentamentos* in the region, but the growth of the movement is continual and based in land occupations. In 1996, 15,110 families of the MST seized land in the Northeast region, 695 in Ceará (*Ocupação de terra por região* 1998). These families comprised 176 regional occupations and 5 within the state (*Ocupações de terra do MST* 1998); currently, there are three MST occupations, the oldest having begun in November 1998. The MST continues to mobilize individuals and families as their foundational resource and means by which to seize unproductive land, promote agrarian reform, and establish base communities that exemplify a just society.

## **Acampamentos**

*Acampamentos* are temporary, tent-like housing structures within an area that houses MST members and affiliates after seizing land and before receiving the title. The objective of this section is to provide an overview of the encampment phase. First, there is a presentation of the current status and organizational structure. Following is an examination of funds for resources and support. Since most violence acts occur during this phase, reviewing structures within Ceará illustrate types of common violence, who perpetuates it, and who works towards preventing it. Lastly, outlined is the government process of assessing the group and land in the reapportionment process. *Acampamentos* represent the base of foundational change to current agrarian structures within Brazil.

“Cooking over open flames and sleeping under black plastic make-shift tents, 16,700 families camp in 91 different, national territorial areas, to the displeasure of landowners” (“Olhai as foices” *Veja* 1994: 70). This simplistic portrayal of MST encampments in the popular magazine *Veja* in 1994 remains representative of the movement’s *acampamentos* at the national and state level. To better facilitate the distribution of resources and mustering of a support basis, each state divides itself into regions. Two different areas, the central and litoral, currently house three MST encampments in the state of Ceará. Ladeira and Che Guevara are both encampments remaining for more two years. The third, Guanabara, remains after 6 months. Although Ceará maintains a populace in which 34% have no access to land, there are few MST *acampamentos* due to the difficulty in mobilizing resources (Fatima, speech).

The MST is such a well-established organization, known for and proud of its structure, the movement incorporates the aid of few agencies in its struggle, especially during this phase. The larger organization provides all resources, including food and funding, to *acampamentos*. These resources derive from various MST *assentamentos* donations in the same or neighboring region as the encampment or assets are extensions from one of the movement's "projects" (P.I. Vasconcelos). These ventures include various fundraising scenarios like donation collection and profits from product sales; a national account overseen by 15 directors filters all money and distributes funds to *acampamentos* or *assentamentos* in time of need. As pivotal as the MST is in the survival of its own organization, other alliances provide a greater network of resources and services.

Four organizations aid MST encampments in Ceará; they are IDACE (*Instituto de Desenvolvimento Agricultura no Ceará*), INCRA, FETRAECE, and the CPT. IDACE is an organ of the state that works with landless organizations and movements. Their main function is to accompany groups during the encampment process in order to access basic resource needs such as food, water, and clothing. This organization, however, does not reside with the movement; it only functions as an advisory unit of the government. INCRA, an organ of the federal government, provides residential technicians that accompany the group and provides courses on water, electricity, mechanics, irrigation, and agriculture. Technical support remains highly accessible to all landless organizations since each municipality oversees their function. FETRAECE aids in the development of rural social movements in Ceará by aiding and instructing rural workers in how to

establish an encampment on unproductive land. The CPT accompanies the struggle of the families involved in occupations and *acampamentos* by offering infrastructural assistance through donations of food, transportation, mattresses, hammocks, tent materials, and medical assistance (Paiva, et al. 1999: 3). Donations and assistance constitute the bulk of CPT support and services; however, priests and sisters may individually aid encampments by residentially accompanying the movement or by frequently visiting the community. All of these organizations aim to provide support for landless movements like the MST, but their accompaniment also works to alleviate and avoid some conflicts.

Conflicts may arise from governmental sectors against the landless or from property owners against the encamped groups. Currently, six Cearense *acampamentos* are encountering violence and are in need of attention and resolution. Two of these are of the MST, Guanabara and Ladeira. Fazenda Guanabara resides in the Quizada Municipality and the scheduled court case to resolve the land dispute and tame the violence in June 1999 suffered postponement without a future court date. Located in Quixeramobim is Fazenda Ladeira; overseen by INCRA, this case has yet to be resolved.

Cases of violence within encampments increased from 1998 to 1999. Although most cases involve only threats of violence, several incidents of violence recently erupted and include assaults and murders. Some landowners, or their employees, set fire to the camper's homes, destroying the black plastic coverings of their tents, wood posts, and surrounding areas that may include abandoned structures (Cowell 1990). These scenarios of force, often directed at squatter settlements and movements, stem as a reaction of these

groups beginning cultivation upon the occupied land. Although MST not undertaking any means of production until reapportionment, members remain subject to violent threats and acts. Landless worker assassinations, whether of individuals or groups numerous enough to constitute a massacre, are the result of large landowners hiring gunmen. Within Ceará, latifundarios may also include members and families of the Mafia, becoming more involved in land disputes as it continues to buy large tracts of land and hire private guards/ gunmen to protect the territory. In all cases including those of exhibited force, the landless worker loses. This is due to the fact that in the political arena, the landowner recounts the occurrences and remains more influential with regard to the law. Few gunmen or property owners face trial and expediting the reapportionment process is an arduous process, one often delayed by the proprietor.

Agrarian reform is necessary to equalize everyone's access to land and resources.

Shown below are discrepancies in land holdings illustrated in the 1985 *Censo*

*Agropecuário* by IBGE.

Table 2

Structure of land property in Brazil (1985)

Property size	Number of properties	%	Total area (ha)	%
0 to 20 ha	3,903,998	67	22,375,542	6
20 to 100 ha	1,348,267	22	56,359,506	15
100 to 1000 ha	518,618	8	131,893,557	35
1000+ ha	10,105	1	372,988,905	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,820,988</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>372,988,905</b>	<b>100</b>

(Source: IBGE, *Censo Agropecuário*, 1985 in Stédile and Sérgio 1989: 105)

Given that few owners maintain control over vast areas of land, few workers gain access to the use of the land or its title. Additionally, large estates often leave portions of their

property fallow. Within the Northeast, 15.3% of the land is under cultivation, 69.5% remains unproductive, and 15.2% remains unclassified or exhibits small scale production (“Folha de São Paulo 1996” in Plummer 1997: 35). Reviewing property sizes and production levels is important because these factors substantiate prime importance in the reapportionment process.

The Brazilian constitution states that only the federal government has the power to appropriate land and thus, INCRA directs all processes of agrarian reform. If an *acampamento* seeks title assistance through the state, occupants must purchase the property since reapportionment is unavailable at this level. State governments purchase the desired territory for the movement or group and then sell the land to them through a regulated credit program like the *Banco da Terra*. This is an example of a credit program working to reform land structures; however, the conceptual basis is not congruent with the definition of agrarian reform. The predominant concept is that the government must secure the necessary conditions for encampments to develop into settlements but only after recognition at the national or state level (IPLANCE 1998: 120). Governmental assistance is often slow but FETRAECE counsels social movements like the MST, to resolve legal inquiries in regards to precedence, land rights, and social services. Analyzing and resolving logistical concerns occurs during the initial *acampamento* phase because in the following phase, *assentamentos*, the movement receives title the disputed land and members begin construction of their community’s settlement.

## **Assentamentos**

*Assentamentos*, or settlements, are permanent land areas for which the MST receives title and constructs a community. The objective of these settlements is to structure themselves for permanence and longevity, withstanding economic, political, social, and environmental hardships. This section presents the organization of these communities in five divisions. First, set forth is the composition of the land, in terms of overall structure, agriculture, and housing. Reviewing instituted education programs supports and reinforced this basis. The second half of the section focuses on the availability and mobilization of resources. Outlined are credit and assistance programs that continually aid in community development; in addition, presented are organizations known for continual donations. Established resource links are important in Ceará due to cyclical droughts that devastate agricultural production and can obliterate small subsistence-based communities. Following the presentation of drought relief resources, the intricate structure of MST cooperatives demonstrates the solid composition of this social movement and its ability to mobilize a variety of resources. These five divisions illustrate the MST's organizational support and ability to strengthen and expand these base communities and the overall movement.

## **Settling and Constructing**

Francisco Carnagão states that life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was easier than today because the land system functioned and allowed people to secure employment and food,

even while landowners profited (P.I.). Unfortunately, livelihood security throughout agrarian divisions worsened to include over six million landless in Brazil today. Employment and food remain the only secured offsets of latifundio, feudal-like structures. The MST works towards stabilizing small agricultural investment and production by using *assentamentos* as an exercise of reform that illustrates the vitality of the radical, social reform model of the MST, while also showing that Fernando Henrique Cardoso's economic and agrarian models remain short-sighted. As the MST national 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary slogan states, they struggle "today for a different millenium."

Ceará, with 263 *assentamentos*, is a model of agrarian restructuring. The majority of these settlements maintain over 100 families. The organization of these families, in an effort to establish the community and to construct its physical environment, extends for an average of 2 to 4 years. Settlements' location further impedes its establishment in the interior and away from the metropolis region of Fortaleza. The closer the proximity of a community to an established city, primarily the capitol, resources such as electricity, telephone wires, water, and sewage become more accessible and more easily attainable. Community directors must continually pressure government officials and agencies for these improvements. Metropolitan proximity also promotes greater infrastructure development as municipal politicians levy these improvements as symbols of development and progress within their area.

Candidé is the municipality with the most *assentamentos* throughout Brazil, totaling 43. Additionally, *25 de maio* is the oldest and largest settlement in Ceará. Its size equals that of six to eight *assentamentos* combined, spanning an area of 23,000

hectares. Although there are a few small lakes on this land and resides in the sertão, the majority of the land is productive and under cultivation. The principal, developed means of livelihood within this community and others throughout the state include livestock, grain production, and material preparation (IPLANCE 1998: 21). Fishing and fruit harvests supplement agricultural industry production levels, while artistry, excavation, and mining are small scale activities found in only a few areas of the community. Within Ceará, livestock raising and ranching focus upon cattle and goats. Sustainable agricultural products include cassava, bean, and sorghum; mercantile bi-products are often herbs and honey. The foundational structure of members and its supporters sustain area and agricultural production.

The MST within Ceará employs 80 people, under contract, to work in the struggle of the organization (Paiva, et. al 1999: 14). These individuals work in many facets, as *militantes*, educators, agronomists, veterinarians, and health care professionals. The movement must staff these people due to the inequality among areas supported by public and governmental organizations and those without resource funding (IPLANCE 1998: 92). In attempt to be self-sustainable and to also pay these salaried workers, the MST requires every family within a settlement to provide a 1% tithing of its production to the larger organization (“Olhai as foices” *Veja* 1 June 1994: 71). This small percentage provides the basis for food and monetary support for occupations, encampments, manifestations, and protests. Overseeing these funds at a communal and national level also provides for greater infrastructures.

Housing quality may vary from mud and sticks to concrete structures with finished wood doors and shutters, but the MST provides the base structure of residence. A stable established community decreases migratory levels. The MST estimated in 1996 that *assentamentos* diminished rural exodus rates by 22%, signifying that 33.9 million people remained in an established settlement in the interior (October 1998: 18). An added benefit of a permanent, structured MST community is its dedication to the promotion of education.

### **Reading, Writing, Arithmetic**

Education is looked upon as a foundational necessity that strengthens and provides vitality within base communities. In Ceará, five organizations provide educational programming and support to MST *assentamentos*. INCRA provides technical educational programs, in addition to supplementing communal credit programs for education. The following three organizations are universities throughout the state. The federal university, *Universidade Federal do Ceará*, educated 780 students with R\$ 288,600 in 1998 (Comissão Nacional do Pronera November 1998 in MST 1998: 14). As of July 1999, the mean Brazilian Real exchange rate was R\$ 1.75 to US\$ 1. The same year, the state university, *Universidade Estadual do Ceará*, provided literacy programming to 4,920 students with R\$ 1,820,400 (Ibid.). The third, coordinated university, *Universidade do Vale do Acaraú*, spent R\$ 540,200 on 1,460 students. These three organizations occasionally affiliate themselves with the *Programa Educativa de Reforma Agrária* (PERA), a community education program developed by the MST and

sponsored by the federal government. Unfortunately, these organizations have a difficult time in receiving monetary and material resources entitled to them due to their MST affiliation.

Educational program constructs and ideology are also a cause for hesitancy on behalf of the government. The movement uses the educational philosophy and system of Paulo Freire. Freire introduced universal vocabulary, active dialogues, and key words as a means to educate the individual how to read and subsequently, to become aware of the social reality. The MST uses literature in education and literacy programs to illustrate the circulation of culture via this methodology. The movement uses its own literature, magazines, workbooks, and newspapers to provide examples and vocabulary of land struggles, agrarian reform, definitions of a just society, and ideology. The method provides a basis for culture but also remains an educational tool to conscientize movement members to promote awareness of their reality and thus, their needs (Freire 1997: 86). Imperative in obtaining the manifestation of these needs is the mobilization of resources.

Resource mobilization is difficult for two distinct reasons. First, the government fears the promotion of community-based education due to the ability of transmitting clandestine materials and ideology. This fear stems from the transfer of clandestine information found in the historical foundation of the movement as Christian base communities. For this reason, there has been an increase in the infiltration of spies into *assentamentos*, investigating educational practices and materials, organizational tactics, and promoted ideology. The second reason resources are difficult to obtain is because

the majority of MST members are illiterate and lack substantial base from which to understand their rights. The movement makes remarkable strides in both literacy and education arenas with an award-winning program sponsored by UNICEF that educated more than 7,000 adults while using less than one million Reais in the past year (Paiva, et al 1999: 19). These numbers are remarkable due to the arduous process of literacy campaigns, especially as 49.83% of family heads within Cearense settlements remain illiterate (*O Povo* 29 November 1997: 15A). Nationally, 40% of settlement families are illiterate (*O Povo* 4 December 1997: 1A) and confound the ability for the movement to mobilize and obtain resources.

### **Settlement Resources**

The unification of a community within a settlement structure provides a network in which support, whether food, clothing, or money, is more accessible. Configured settlements also have the ability to sway public opinion to influence change in titling, funding, and service policies. MST members work within the organization to fortify this support and resource base; however, this is often a difficult transition for Cearense members whom previously sought all funding and resources through the mandated Cearense program for agrarian reform, PROCERA (*Programa do Ceará para Reforma Agrária*) (CONCRAB March 1998: 15). PROCERA controlled all assets and network affiliations for small-scale agriculture. Within the MST structure, simplification of attainment and mobilization of resources is due to their direct contact with organizational networks, including all referenced and contacted affiliates of the movement.

Most associations connected with the MST are through various churches or organs of the government. Settlements within the Canindé municipality receive food donations from a local Baptist Church; however, there are typically three stages to food attainment. First, the settlement must access its food surpluses and those of neighboring MST communities. Second, religious organizations receive requests for food donations, particularly the Catholic Church. Lastly, the settlement director asks for resource relief from the local city government. These three stages are distinct within the organization as the MST requests all donations and nothing is without provocation.

Resources would be more accessible if Ceará had more city halls and active municipal governments. Communities would also be able to recognize greater support while facilitating reforms and distributing resources more easily. Additionally, the Secretary of Rural Development, the SDR (*Secretária de Desenvolvimento Rural*), would have greater access to communities in an effort to implement programs in this post-apportionment stage. Lastly, an established network base provides a venue for international organization support of MST settlements; two NGOs contributing to the movement's settlement resources are UNESCO and FAO. The movement however remains largely funded by federal programs.

Agrarian reform and resource distribution from the federal government begins at the national level and trickles down to support the development of *assentamentos* through INCRA at the state level. According to the president of the institute, it's objective is to make land productive (Luiz Vidal, speech) but to also fulfill several of its legal obligations. First, INCRA must construct roads from the settlement to the nearest city

and within the community itself (CONCRAB March 1998: 10). Second, required is the establishment of elementary schools. Wiring of the community for electricity is also an obligation. Fourth, the institute must secure access to potable water and it must also provide technical assistance (Ibid.). The constitutional amendment in 1988 established free technical assistance for all *assentamentos* and small agricultural families. Lastly, the government must install the infrastructure and functional basis for a health post within each community (Ibid.).

Settlement planning and development changed with new policy reforms signed on July 8, 1999. Infrastructure credit allotments now include: R\$ 5000 per family, R\$ 1800 for housing, R\$ 2000 food, R\$ 500 cultivation, R\$ 400 processing, R\$ 100 per development project and an additional credit allowance of R\$ 2500 per family per established program is available through an application process. Additionally, the gestation process of the settlement introduces technicians, projects, and governmental support programs. Sought credit and technical assistance are a mobilization technique to guarantee societal rights (Paiva, et. al 1999: 9). However, neither obtaining these rights nor accessing resources is compliant although provisions are legal guarantees to settled families (MST/ CONCRAB March 1998: 9). The MST thus struggles for reform to include the egalitarian regulation of resource distribution due to difficulties at all levels in the political arena (Ibid.).

### **Dried-up Resources**

As droughts cyclically plague the sertão region every six years, with minor dry spells every two to three years and catastrophic drought periods every thirteen years, agricultural resource management is critical. Due to the small-scale community structure, typical of MST *assentamentos*, livelihood sustainability is nearly impossible during periods of drought. Most agricultural production halts as crops and water resources dry-up. Following each dry period, the MST remains dependent on public support in order to rebuild their community, purchase necessities, and begin cultivation anew. The federal government provides some drought assistance, being US\$ 25 per family on a monthly basis during the extent of the dry period. Neither post-drought public support nor minimal monthly stipends provided by the government assures the survival of small agricultural settlements and thus, the movement promotes the objective and rational of cooperative building.

### **Cooperative Inter-Independence**

Cooperative and communal farming techniques within the sertão “provide a better life than that with a landowner” (P.I. Valériana). Additionally, cooperatives provide an important fundamental structure within the organization because of the isolation of small agricultural producers causes them to be invisible in the economic, political, and social realms of Brazil (“Produção alternativa...” Jul/ Aug/ Sept 1997: 17). Small owners are thus left to agriculturally produce for and feed the entire country as the majority of large rural properties produce for export needs (Plummer 1997: 11).

Cooperatives not only provide a network structure for these small agricultural producers but also establish a foundational structure for resource mobilization for the MST. Collective production provides a unification of land, work, and capital that solidifies the organization (“Produção alternativa...” Jul/ Aug/ Sept 1997: 17). Together, almost any agricultural product can be grown, diversifying the settlement’s and the larger community’s economic and dietary base (Scott 1992: 45). Sold to buyers and large vendors in neighboring towns are products, goods, and livestock; however, transportation of goods to capital cities like Fortaleza remains deficient due to cost.

Fortunately, MST cooperatives provide better conditions for the advancement of political awareness, liberating *militantes* to work throughout the region, and providing an established structure for the mobilization of resources throughout the various phases in the struggle for agrarian reform (“Produção alternativa...” Jul/ Aug/ Sept 1997: 17). Established by the MST in 1992, the Confederation of Agrarian Reform Cooperatives of Brazil (CONCRAB) solidified its resources structure (Ibid.). Internal divisions within this confederation include the Cooperatives of Agricultural and Cattle Production (CPA), Cooperative of Loan Services (CPS), and the Central Cooperatives of Agrarian Reform (CCA). These cooperative associations provide an essential foundational basis within the MST in terms of support and resource networking, utilized throughout the development of the movement but essential to the resource foundation of MST protests and manifestations.

Due to the intricate organizational pattern and network of the MST and its cooperatives, the movement ensures its sustainability. McCarthy defines such work

networks within the informal, nonmovement sect of mobilization structures (1996: 145). However, networks develop into formal, professional associations at the base of protest communities. This progression from sect to sect not only formalizes the mobilization structure but also establishes it as a movement. Within the formal structure of a movement, reoccurring case scenarios provide means for the organization to adapt and formalize mobilization structures to secure its survival. The formation of cooperatives by the MST ensures encampment, settlement, protest, and manifestation survival through such plaguing problems as deficient government resources, drought, and political opposition that may hinder receipt of guaranteed resources and donations. Networks provide the lifeline from which to sustain all factions and actions of the MST.

## **Part II**

### **Protests and Manifestations**

**“Social discontent is universal but collective action is not”(Foweraker 1995: 15). In organizing a movement with the objective of restructuring society, a unified base is essential. This meeting point provides a platform from which to address various concerns and construct the ideological building block. Bahktin’s system of utterance, as described by Carlson, exemplifies how the reiteration of concerns, objectives, and ideology “attempts to wrest a new and personal meaning from a language system already long established by other usages” (1992: 318). Thus, the movement establishes a language onto itself that reaffirms the objective, importance placed on a new, just society. The MST uses the language used throughout mobilization, occupation, encampment, and settlement phases to establish a terminology base. Words like “occupation,” “agrarian reform,” and “just society,” receive meaning for members through action in these phases. However, the terminology lacks the significance and representational value for observers and supporters of the movement who do not partake in mobilization and action. Therefore, the MST collectively mobilizes in the forms of protests and manifestations to provide a tangible representation of the movement’s terminology and ideology through its actions and words.**

**This section of Part II discusses popular collective action by the MST in regard to its mobilization and presentation within protests and manifestations. Protests are public demonstrations of angst against a particular policy, reform, or social reality. They “are constructed” to present particular interests, “build political goals,” and provide a vision of**

the final objective of the movement (Jasper 1997: 10). Manifestations are similar to protests in their illustration and presentation of an ideology or reality of the organized group; however, manifestations remain simply presentational in style with little demonstration of disapproval. These demonstrations work to introduce and reiterate terminology and ideology of the movement to those who are not familiar with the MST. Manifestations therefore, often occur in the urban areas where people uninformed of the work of the MST and where geography separates the urban populace from seeing the atmosphere of the rural worker that the movement represents. Staging of both of these forms of demonstrations signifies their schedule and location work to reiterate the MST language and objective.

Five divisions within this section illustrate the composition of popular collective action within these two forms of demonstrations. First, presented are the individuals involved in the organization and action of protests. Programs and ideologies that explicate the “why” of collective action is the base of the following division. The third division provides a few examples of recent MST protests and manifestations, primarily those within Ceará. Following, is the presentation of common locations for such demonstrations. The final division lists support and resources bases, including donation descriptions and amounts. The most critical element of any collective action is not the specifics of resources mobilization but the involvement of particular individuals and groups in order to organize and to be organized.

## **Protest Actors**

From the young to the old, Brazilian protests and manifestations are not representative of an age group but rather a sect or unified sectors of the populace. The MST rarely collaborates with other organizations, like *Grito da Terra*, unless the particular issue is serious enough to warrant the unification of various groups, although they may have similar objectives. Throughout Brazilian states, leaders and *militantes* of the MST try to organize marches, protests, etc. with the objective of having the oppressed, poor populace heard. Geertz theorizes the importance of these particular actors as significant because they demonstrate to “pre-determined scripts,” illustrating the objective, collective, and historical conformity within the framework of the movement (Silverman 1990: 124).

The average size of a MST protest, manifestation, or celebration within Ceará is 300 people. Rural workers will travel throughout the state to a gathering but the areas which provide the greatest support in numbers are the metropolitan region of Fortaleza, the Litoral, Jaguaribe, the Central Sertão, Maciço de Baturité, Cariri, Aracati and Cratéus (“Solidaridade ameniza dificuldades na avenida” *O Povo* 1 December 1997: 10A). MST protests and manifestations also receive popular support from congressmen, syndicate leaders, religious, members of Christian base communities and pastoral land operators (“Caminhada é barrada no início da BR-116” *O Povo* 3 December 1997: 18A cidade). All of these individuals unite to illustrate and promote MST ideology, often through demands of equal access to programs and funds.

### **Reasoning and Ideology Behind Action**

The “MST advances their objectives by partaking in social action in the form of the occupation of land, marches, education and presentation of proposals for change” (Plummer 1997: 19). The constant presence of MST members mobilized and unified during a collective action period, exemplified by a protest, allows members to propose the question, “So who are we to look to for our rights?” (Scott 1992: 63). This question encapsulates why the MST must be public in their presentation of ideology and needs. The larger the audience to see and hear the presentation, the more recognized social discontent becomes and such forms of collective action illustrate the strength of the people. The manipulated populace either partakes in the demonstrations or observes the actions of the movement, confronted with its ideological precepts. The staging of these protests and manifestations thus, “provoke public dynamic, controversial dialogues” those which create a dialectic relationship between the public and the art of demonstrating (Marrero 1994: 105).

The MST mobilizes its members to become protest actors to provide a visual portrayal “representing certain social interests” by exhibiting the political and ideological context of demonstration (Reinelt 1992: 161). The influence of the movement, its mobilization structures, and its ideology works to “subvert the dramatic world from within by direct challenge to the unity of its dominant voice” (Carlson 1992: 315). The MST provides demonstrations and a solid structure from which to question and challenge the government’s hegemony. An alternative voice, primarily that concerning agrarian

reform, provides the base from which to form the utopian vision of a new society within the construction of the rural, landless worker culture.

Change without constituency consent is unwelcome and thus, protests and manifestations are a visible, forceful way to show the strength and the counterposition of the people to the government. A specific example cited on December 3, 1997 in the *O Povo*, a newspaper based in Fortaleza, quoted the Brazilian Minister of Finance, Raul Jungmann as stating, “the occupation [of his office by MST members] represents a division between the MST and the government” (“Sem-terra ocupam ministério o arrumbam porta de Jungmann”: 10A). Protests and manifestations are important to the illustration of this division and to reinforce the concept that the MST that is capable of organizing against the government and its policies (CONCRAB 1998: 15).

Since the organization of most landless protests is in opposition to the government, outlined in more detail is the question of cause and origin. Many protests by the MST are means to instigating the formation of talks, signing accords, and demanding the previously promised resources (“Violencia da PM no Ceará” *Jornal dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* October 1998: 14). State officials also identify collective action periods as their time to provide negotiation platforms between the federal government, primarily the president, and social movements (Ibid.). Although the state may not alleviate any of the political repression or violence against the protesting workers, the state does facilitate the negotiation process. It is important not to lose sight of the objective of compromise because negotiation provides a recognized and legitimate means for the advancement of collective action, primarily in the mobilization of

resources, and for the government to demonstrate its support of its populace (MST April 1994: 24). In sum, political consciousness is an essential part of a group's social reality (Bogo 1998: 16) due to the fact that there are always people to conscientize about the reality of local problems, primarily the government in terms of resource distribution and agrarian reform.

The proximity of cities to the protest or manifestations allows a visible representation of the struggle as urban sites "both a physical and ideological locus where artistic and social concerns intersect" (Marrero 1994: 102). The adjacency encourages communication and support among MST members, the government and the public; these new levels of interaction decrease the possibility of "invisible repression" of protestors and movement members by the landowners, military police, and government offices (Petras Jan/Feb/Mar 1998: 28). Petras further states that the urban populace support of agrarian reform "serves to neutralize the power of latifundarios in the interior" (Ibid.). The neutralization attributes to the public conscientization and visual representation of interior land occupations; recognition of base communities strengthens the structure with public support. In addition, proximity demands recognition. Since most of the areas occupied and settled by the MST in Ceará are an hour or more drive time away from the capitol, the movement is able to provide visual representations of its struggle by establishing similar campsites in the middle of the streets. This forced presentation of the image of the rural worker lifestyle to the urban populace provides a depiction that manipulates public support to increase donations and outreach services.

**Public recognition and support aids in facilitating all MST processes. First, urban support attributes to greater redistribution of land within the agrarian reform structure (Ibid.). Since there is a greater concentration of people to comment on the unequal distribution of land, public officials are more apt to consider policy reform. In addition, the majority of the wealthy who contribute to campaigns and finances for such politicians and for those who own large tracts of land in the rural area live in the urban centers. Demonstrations are a public way to attract attention, support, and change from these individuals. Second, public collective action by the MST is seen as courageous and dedicated attempt to transform Brazilian society (Stédile, ed. 1997: inside cover). Since violence can ensue among protestors, police, and the larger public, demonstrated action requires planning and motivation to undertake the risks of action. Lastly, collective action introduces the public to MST culture through the presentation of its symbols. These symbols and actions also serve as an affirmation of the collective unity and strength of the organization for its members (Figueiras Jan/Feb/Mar 1998: 35).**

**The collective action process represents strength through a variety of the movement's organizational strategies. Within a protest, manifestation, or celebration, members constantly coordinate themselves into regional and topical sections for meetings. As referenced by Selden, Nietzsche stated that people must first decide what they want and then coordinate their information and action strategies to fit their aim (1985: 98). Organizing allows for the addressing of all problems, whether health care and education programs, ideology, resource attainment, mobilization strategies, or discussion of regional, state, and national reforms and policies. From these meetings, the**

identified problem receives an active solution, obtained through the collaboration and meeting of various movement directors. Although many members feel the directors work on their behalf as delegates in a democratic representative role, the overseeing and mandating approach to egalitarian conformity among all base communities is more representative of a socialist doctrine.

Common reinforcement of MST ideology includes the twenty-four hour a day presentation of objectives through music, speeches and other presentations. As Goody reflects upon the use of presentations within social space, location and demonstration impose cultural and ideological frameworks upon both members and supporters of the movement (1997: 5). The constant reaffirmation of the struggle and the movement's objectives constitutes the fortification of MST members to remain demonstrating until the liberation of resources, reform, or concession of an agreement. The repetitive presentation constitutes the reiteration of ideology in terms of the larger movement and serves to restate the objective for the particular demonstration. The strengthening of the movement through the constant presentation of its ideology and objectives provides the framework that allows the movement to remain uniform in its demonstrations in various venues.

### **Locale**

An organizational tactic of the MST is the selecting of its protest and manifestation locales. Since the majority of these gatherings occur in the capitol, Fortaleza, transportation is the first consideration. The syndicate of a settlement often

provides transportation, by bus or truck, of members to the manifestation; however, a syndicate is unable to secure the ease of travel for members. The following division addresses this issue.

Concentration of protests and manifestations occur within specific areas of Fortaleza. Manifestations transpire in the Central Plaza while establishment of encampments and protests materialize in front of INCRA or the SDR (*Secretária de Desenvolvimento Rural*). Occupations of public buildings, INCRA, Ministry of Finance, and City Halls, are also common venues chosen in relation to the subject of the protest. When advancing national conscientization of a subject, the MST at the national level often organizes public building occupations, like those of City Halls throughout the country in June 1999 and marches to Brasilia in the spring of 1999. Situation of these protests is significant in terms of both its location and the coordination of movement in demonstrating within these areas.

To understand the significance of a public event, the event's importance and meaning is "co-determined by multiple mechanisms" (Silverman 1990: 127 and Willing 1998: 101). First, manifestations situate themselves within the largest, open, public area devoid of government buildings as to provide a stage in which presentation of ideology can occur without protesting a particular state actor. Protests held in front of public, government offices provide a contextual relationship; protestors become a visual representation of angst against a particular office. Since most demonstrations concern national policies and reforms, the MST works to unify its protests of regional offices of national government offices throughout the 23 organized states. Regional and state

offices of the movement organize maintenance and support; however, the unification of protests throughout the nation, in front of the same office, provides a visual staging of the public significance of the demonstration, one that has various facets of organization and explanation.

### **Duration and Timing**

Just as a location of a protest or manifestation coincides with the objective and ideology presented by the organization, so too is the timing of these actions important. At the state level, most gatherings take place within the capitol and getting there is not easy. For the protests in January and April 1999, police redirected and blocked the passage of buses transporting MST members. For the average two-hour journey, members spent over a day and a half traveling on various highways throughout Ceará as the federal police blockaded most of the roads.

Demonstrations that demand reform in regard to resources occur in front of INCRA. However, since most protests counter policies and agrarian reform, the majority of demonstrations in Ceará take place in front of the SDR. Organization of several nation-wide protests occurred in April 1999 due to the *Novo Mundo Rural* policy proposal. In Ceará, more than 300 workers demonstrated against the federal program initiative and remained for nearly one week as the movement's national directors determined the end of the manifestation ("MST protesta no País contra projeto de reforma agrária" *O Povo* 17 April 1999: 1A and "Protesto MST quer modificações em projeto de reforma agrária" *O Povo* 18 April 1999: 3A). Spread throughout twenty-three

states as an example of the movement's strength in organization neither illustration of longevity capabilities nor agreements were objectives of these demonstrations.

Lasting nearly three weeks, the MST camped in front of the SDR while maintaining protests there and at INCRA, demanding the liberation of promised resources for education programs in December 1997. Although participation levels fluctuated over the three weeks, a constant base of nearly 300 members camped there. A notable occurrence during this protest was that the military police injured five MST members when attempting to secure the SDR and attempting to forcibly remove demonstrators ("Violencia da PM no Ceará" *Jornal dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* October 1998: 14). The military was not successful in evicting members but rather created an upsurge of public support.

The MST aligned itself with the press, primarily the largest newspaper distributor in Fortaleza, *O Povo*, to present not only its objectives for this demonstration but also profile participants. The "Photo of the week" released on November 30, 1997 was of a four-month old baby sleeping under a black-plastic tent in front of the SDR ("Foto da semana" *O Povo*: 7A). The following week, the "Photo of the week" showed a young girl of the MST standing in front of the military line as it blocked access to the SDR ("Foto da semana" *O Povo* 7 December 1997: 7A). Presenting faces of landless families who have come to the city to present their hardships and ask for support is a common photojournalistic approach over the past two years. The photographs serve to provoke a visible image, used to provide a cultural identity and "conjure a sense of social memory" (Marrero 1994: 108). Since a large majority of the urban inhabitants have rural ancestry,

photos provide a visual portrayal of that struggle grandparents, parents, or the viewer endured in trying to survive on the land and then faced with the choice to migrate to the urban center. If these viewers had the resources and the organizational means to remain on the land, such migrations may not have ensued. Large donations arrive following photos and articles of this sort, showing support of those facing the struggle urban inhabitants once faced.

Working less to gain public support but rather to show the movement's strength to the government, the MST organized several marches to Brasilia. In the spring of 1999, this movement organized the *Marcha pelo Brasil* in which over 100,000 people participated in the march from state capitols to Brasilia. Although a large number of Cearense members did not continue their march outside of the state, 60 to 70% of the state's MST members did march to Fortaleza. An important realization came from this march, further strengthening the movement and its public relations. The people realized the strength of their own power in organizing and executing an objective, solidifying the need to push for agrarian reform even if the government may not officially recognize the struggles of the people nor those of organizations (Fatima, speech). This affirmation of worth and objective is essential when struggling to obtain reform and resources.

The MST encounters the greatest governmental apathy in the arena of agrarian reform. Although Fernando Henrique Cardoso settled more landless families than his predecessors, he falls short of implementing true reform. Agrarian programs that work by means credit and land purchasing do not constitute the premise of agrarian reform. Agrarian reform is the reapportionment and rettlement of land. Credit and purchasing

programs may aid various settlements, but the programs contradict the conceptual basis of reform. The MST strives to promote its objective of agrarian reform through its phased structure and by presenting information to members and the public in its demonstrations. The MST reforms agrarian structures and without a non-governmental source defining terminology and processes like the movement, the populace must blindly accept policies, programs, and reform.

### **Survival by resources**

Support networks and donations provide the means of survival for MST protests and manifestations. Components discussed are the source of donations, timing of donation and receipt of particular offerings, and examples of goods and services provided. Demonstrations present ideology but it is the mobilization of people and resources that ensures the survival of the demonstration and the movement as a whole.

The MST and its syndicates rally movement resources during protests periods; additional forms of assistance arrive in the form of donations. The main contributors of donations to sustainable protests, known as “appropriate people,” include some politicians, businessmen, and elite; however, the basis of urban support comes from lower to middle class individuals who are sympathetic to the movement and its efforts. Nevertheless, due to the instability of these resources, provisional accounts do not calculate donations when assessing member participation and needs from movement cooperatives. First, the populace, individuals and small businesses, aid in mobilizing resources through food donations, often large bags of beans, rice, and corn. Second, the

distinction and clarification of these supporters as urban affiliates of a rural landless workers' movement is important. Those who have a familial history with the rural area constitute the basis of urban affiliation, primarily those that migrated to the urban areas due to drought, unequal land division, or in pursuit of a more secure livelihood. Even though these affiliates are not secure providers of resources, greater accessibility in mobilizing food, clothing, money, and other resources is available because of the larger populace that can support a demonstration.

Characterized as "sympathetic" supporters of the movement, interviewees provided various rationales for urban support. A common idea throughout the explanations for the connection of Fortaleza to rural areas identified familial ties, whether as descendents of a large landowners or as descendents of migrants forced into the urban setting by drought and lack of access to land and resources. The MST receives the most donations and popular support when demonstrating in the capitol, Fortaleza. Receipt of resources and support stem from constant flows of people who pass, visit, and speak with different members of the movement. The movement maintains an open, welcoming atmosphere for urban inhabitants to go and visit the protest settlement. In addition, the MST supports the visits of individuals and groups to its base communities. The openness provides a format from which the movement is able to illustrate its communal living, community support networks, and teach its ideological precepts.

Discussed in the previous section were some of the most influential demonstrations that received large amounts of support; however, two periods should be re-emphasized. First, during the "great" December 1997 demonstration, the people of

Fortaleza with food, water, and moral encouragement supported MST members for nearly three weeks as over 1,000 soldiers blocked the movement and restricted its demonstration (P.I. José B. Pimentel). Second, at various Catholic Church conferences many clergy members discuss whether the Church as an institution should support an organization like the MST. In April 1999, all of the Brazilian bishops united in Itaici and officially gave their support to the MST and its efforts in the *March pelo Brasil* (“*Marcha dos sem-terra reúne 15 mil no País*” *O Povo* 18 April 1999: 13A Brasil). Supported by popular and syndicate sects, including the Church, a variety of resources are more easily mobilized for demonstrations.

Organization and mobilization of basic foodstuffs originates within the MST. Although all food provisions may not be foreseen, state and regional leaders correlate the efforts of many rural laborers within the Sertão Central and Litoral regions prior to looking towards larger collections from communities and cooperatives (“*Agricultores chegam ao 6o dia acampados em avenida e pedem acordo*” *O Povo* 2 December 1997: 1A). Assessed and valued as providing to part of the smaller collections is the settled family’s 1% tithing to the national organization. Additionally, MST cooperatives may provide resources under a similar stipulation, but many cooperatives and their associates, like COPASAT (*Cooperativa de Prestação de Serviços e Assistência Técnica*) generously provide food stuffs as a way of ensuring the survival of the movement and consequently, their cooperative.

COPASAT donated 4,000 oranges and bananas during the December 1997 demonstration (“*Acampados recebem ajuda da sociedade*” *O Povo* 10 December 1997:

19A). Bulk donations were essential since demonstrators consumed 180 kilograms of rice, 2,000 oranges, 2,000 rolls of bread a day (“Doações ajudam acampados” *O Povo* 10 December 1997: 1A). Food donations allow the demonstration to sustain itself for as long as the presentation of ideology and protest of policy remain forefront and strong.

Variety of agencies provided additional support services and means to continue protesting. A few houses in Messejana aided the demonstrations within Fortaleza by opening themselves up so that breakfast, lunch, and dinner could be cooked there and then transported to the protest site (“Solidaridade ameniza dificuldade na avenida” *O Povo* 1 December 1997: 10A). Students from the federal university’s medical school also attend to the needs of protestors on site, primarily treating acute malnutrition, dehydration, and minor cuts (“Doações mantém há 14 dias trabalhadores acampados” *O Povo* 10 December 1997: 18A cidades). Exhibitions of other means of support transpire through donations like the use of a sound car, allowing for the amplification of speeches, debates and music. All of these resources, whether food, medicine, or the use of equipment provides the impetus around which MST members and the populace may rally support, exhibit solidarity, and more rigidly define and organize a particular sect within society. Exemplifying aspects of this organizational resource mobilization structure is the model presented below.

Although not a theoretical paradigm but a political science model, Lemos provides a “Policy Making Process Model” in her dissertation, in which the first two of three phases give a cursory illustration of the framing process used by the MST (Lemos 1995: 55). The first phase, “Initiation Phase,” states, “popular movements organize

around their needs and demands. Movements frame issues as a means to forge collective identities and attract membership and support of influential groups” (Ibid.). “Diffusion Phase,” the second phase, states three processes of structuring. First, “popular movements seek to expand the scope of the issue by attracting media attention and the support of politically influential reference groups such as scientific associations and politicians” (Ibid.). Next, “the formation of alliance between popular groups and progressive technocrats with the state legitimize popular movement demands and increase their sense of efficacy, encouraging mobilization” (Ibid.). Lastly, “progressive technocrats and popular movements use the alliance to increase their leverage vis-à-vis other interests opposing policy so as to insert the issue in the governmental agenda” (Ibid.). The third phase, “Processing Phase,” is not applicable as it discusses converting issues into government agenda issues (Ibid.).

Related to this model are several mobilization techniques of the MST. The organization of the movement concerning needs, framing issues, and attracting alliances constitute some of the most critical components of the structure and resource mobilization depicted here, especially during periods of protest and manifestation. However, these framing processes are not means of policy making and development of government agendas. The MST seeks the practice of agrarian reform, already a component of Brazilian law and to conscientize the public of its rights and the objective and ideology of the movement. Additionally, focus of the movement remains fixed on expanding its support base, with members and through affiliations, as a means to attract recognition and legitimacy to the movement and subsequently, to gain recognition and

**support for its objectives and the issues it addresses. The movement uses its structure as a means to base the initial stage from which to reform society and construct a new nation.**

## **Creation of Culture**

This section of Part II presents populism within the illustrative approach of how the MST uses its created culture as a means to build power in the political arena and to gain recognition and support. There are seven divisions, the first examining the concept of landless culture while also presenting a cursory introduction to culture theory. The second division presents a few of the organizations juxtaposed to the MST. Following is an introduction of symbolic representations of the movement. Discussion of the presentation of these symbols and their use in the media composes the fourth division. An analysis of literature, both the reproductions by the MST and in support of the organization, follows. The sixth division addresses the creation and production of music as one of the unifying components of this culture. Lastly, there is an examination of how culture fosters the growth of the movement and provides a basis of organizational power in working towards their objectives.

## **Defining Culture**

“Culture is the shared beliefs and understandings, mediated by and constituted by symbols and language, of a group or society” (Zald 1996: 262). Defined more broadly by Foster, Lockhart, and Lockhart, culture “refers to whatever traditions, beliefs, customs, and creative activities characterize a given community” (1998: ix). In essence, culture is a definitive and subjective means by which a particular group is distinguished and distinguishes itself from another. Since social movements like the MST are a smaller division of the larger Brazilian society, images from “cultural stock” present how the

movement defines injustice, how the MST unifies its members to fulfill its objectives, and how it frames the mobilization process (Zald 1996: 266). According to McAdams, McCarthy, and Zald, “framing processes clearly encourage mobilization, as people seek to organize and act on their growing awareness of the system’s illegitimacy and vulnerability” (1996: 8). A constructed and framed culture responds to its societal surroundings and provides a source of communal identity for those involved. Characteristic of postmodernism, contemporary cultural studies asserts the constructedness and the negotiability of these frameworks which serve as boundaries, defining marks and limitations of cultural dissemination (Roach 1992: 12).

Communication within the organization and with its supporters establishes a basis for a new culture, one that validates and develops all aspects of humanity in order to construct a class of solidarity in rural and urban areas, although it must be mentioned that emphasis remains on the rural environment (Strozake May 1999: 3). Conceptualized and promoted is the idea of a solidified class within the construction of a new nation, defined by the MST as people living within the same territory that want a common destiny in solidarity (“Reforma Agrária e MST” *Revista Sem Terra* Jul/Aug/Sept 1997: 26). Attainment of solidarity needed to form a new nation and promote the MST derives from defining the class or segment of society they mobilize to form this new nation and by identifying how unify these people under particular ideologies and cultural constructs.

As Rowe and Shelling identify the “gaucho as a vehicle for the construction of a[n Argentine] national consciousness” (1991: 31), similarly, in Brazil the *cangaço* is the rural laborer and peasant, an image associated with the Northeast and a basic symbolic

representation of the Brazilian worker. This representation is a character symbol of the Northeast region illustrating its unequal distribution patterns; Ceará still characterized by latifundio land structures. Thus, the MST's use of the rural worker as a symbol promotes awareness, raises consciousness, and creates a unified identity. Selden referenced Marx as asserting, "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (1985: 23). Through the processes of defining who the Brazilian, rural laborer is and their social and political condition, presentation and contextualization of the objectives of the landless movement (i.e. defined as the acquisition of land, agrarian reform, and a just society) promote an enhanced understanding of the agrarian reality at the communal, regional, and national levels. Solidarity and a new level of awareness are critical so that MST members are not dependent on other organizations or outside support but rather, provide means for self-sufficiency. Organization and reproduction of mobilization structures are bi-products of the creation and promotion of MST culture.

In constructing a culture, signs are the most significant, representational means by which the group identifies itself and its objectives. Saussure perceived language as:

**SIGN {signified (concept) / signifier (sound – image)}**

This concept is applicable in the interpretation and use of cultural symbols as well as linguistic analysis. First, the MST defines its conceptual base in terms of its objectives, being attainment of land, agrarian reform, and a just society. The movement signifies

these concepts. Cultural products, such as the banner, work tools, hat, and hymn, are signifiers. These images represent the sound and image of the movement. Since “there is no natural connection between the signifier and signified,” the culture and structure of the movement constructs a conventional relationship (Palmer 1997: 19).

Motivated terminology provides a logical connection among these constructs, but there is an absence of foundational and framework understanding. In addition, the relation of the concept dominating the sound and image does not correlate to the “sign” but rather the process of progression and building of the framework that houses both the ideology and practice. Thus, the “sign” is not the sign but rather the ambiguous construct that houses the relationship of the signified and signifier. In terms of the MST, the construct is the organization of the movement in a holistic overview that understands and contextualizes history, ideology, transformation, and objective. In an elementary analysis, the movement could be termed as a sign; however, it is really the construct of the MST that is the sign and not the title of the movement, which is actually a signifier.

Understanding the complexity of “sign” relations has been attempted by several theoretical schools of thought, the two most important being structuralism and postmodernism. Structuralism provides a means to a systematic approach to oppositional relationships, thereby presenting the “other” (Palmer 1997: 146). This is important because a homogenous culture and society cannot transfer new ideas and information between segments of society because the mass base is a cohesive unit that blindly accepts policy, programs, and reform initiatives by the ruling class. By creating an alternative culture from the cultural stock of the societal division for rural, landless workers, there is

a transmission of information from movement members to the “other.” This provides a means to conscientize and transfer new ideologies and information. Transmission of culture is a structuralism precept in which all information, especially that concerning culture, transfers and disseminates from one to the “other,” most often being the transfer from movement members to other rural workers or urban residents that have little to no previous knowledge or understanding of the movement. “Cultural transmission involves the programming of individuals to generate new forms of behavior,” thus creating change as ideological constructs manipulate society (Goody 1997: 251).

As Lévi- Strausse stated, “cultural phenomena should be treated as signs” (Palmer 1997: 36), the question raised is not what is a sign but rather what is cultural phenomena. For this study, a sign encapsulates the construct of the movement. According to Barthe, cultural phenomena aligns a series of common features of a culture to illustrate that “no cultural phenomenon is too small to escape ideological contamination” (Palmer 1997: 35). More simply, cultural phenomena include the repetitive actions and use of symbols that formulate a cultural base that contains historical, ideological, and contextual components. MST phenomena includes the predetermined structure of the movement’s phases in mobilization, occupation, encampment, and settlement, use of the banner and work tools, repetition of the hymn and other cultural symbols presented in the previous sections- all of these “signifiers” represent the “signified” to elucidate the construct of the movement. Therefore, a phenomenon is another means by which to describe the concept and sound – image relationship in a reoccurring, structured manner. Repetition confounds the image and ideological structure while also introducing the terminology of

the movement used in its discourse for mobilization and collective action. The most tangible representation of the movement's terminology and ideology is through its collective presentation in the form of protests and manifestations.

Discourse is a component of social phenomena (Selden 1985: 16). "It is [also] evident that real power is exercised through discourse and that this power has real effects" upon the subject matter, ideology, and information for the basis of decisions (Selden 1985: 98). Therefore, subsequent changes engage conversation and the transfer of ideas. Discussion of needs and objectives is a foundational necessity that strengthens and ensures the vitality of the movement; this dialogue is the essence of the educational programs used by the movement. Discourse concerning credit and technical assistance is also important to the movement as the pursuit of all resources and the obtainment of them illustrates the achievement of enacted societal rights. "When we distinguish initial distributions of resources from the strategic activities that can attract new resources, resource mobilization can be interpreted as a strategic process of cultural persuasion" (Jasper 1997: 31).

Affirmation of a Brazilian cultural identity is a fundamental component in constructing a nation (Sampiao January and February 1999: 15). This ideology must also contain a minimal spirit of critique, the right and responsibility of any citizen in participating in radical, collective change to construct a new, utopian society (Florestan Fernandes as quoted by the MST January 1997: 1). New social constructs base themselves in reformative or revolutionary socialism (Ibid.). Promoted through communal teachings of Marx, Guevara, Castro, and Mao are the ideological frameworks

of socialism and 'leftist doctrine.' Reinforcing the conceptual framework of ideology are pictorial representations, literature, and other forms of propaganda. At the communal level, it is common to view banners with photographs of these icons, T-shirts with the face of Che Guevara, barrettes with the Guevara star, and T-shirts with quotes from Marx, Hegel, or Stalin. As a growing consumer base, the MST invested a new cultural meaning in these symbols (Lane 1997: 9), disengaging them "from its mere actuality and used to impose meaning upon experience" (Geertz quoted in Freilich 1997: 11). In post-structural concept promoted by Michel Foucault, "the only way to resist power is locally-to resist localized practices of repression" by framing the ideological constructs of the movement in a relationship that gives the marginalized voices legitimacy, characteristic of socialism (Powell 1998: 95). Understanding the basic composition and ideology of the MST in creating culture is important because individuals, movements, parties, and organizations within the country oppose this base.

### **Opposition**

According to Pomar, various forms of communication attempt to destroy all types of popular culture, primarily cultures of resistance (October 1998: 5). As implicit in Fiske's understanding culture, "culture is the occasion and the instrument of struggle between contending groups with differing amount of power" (Roach 1992: 10). The MST creates and promotes a resistant form of popular culture to juxtapose the power of the government and organizations that perpendicularly align themselves with the objectives of the movement. In dealing with opposing positions, the MST desires more

equal access to the media because “not only do the news media largely determine our awareness of the world at large, supplying the major elements for our pictures of the world, they also influence the prominence of those elements in the picture” (McCombs 1998: 27). Understanding the inferences of the culture theorist above, it is imperative that the MST know how it is presented to the society at large and to understand the construction of this presentation. Various presentations within media are “active, dynamic social signs, capable of taking on different meanings and connotations for different social classes in different social and historical situations” and therefore, the group that is able to promote its conceptual basis more readily with words, photographs, and artifacts reinforces and promotes a legitimate social and political position, whether by the government or the movement (Selden 1985; 16).

The MST must confront the government in trying to implement agrarian reform within the political arena; in addition, as the government run media attempts to criminalize the MST and its struggle for reform, the movement must also battle the government and media within the public arena (Strozake May 1999: 3). Media, as used here, is either television or printed media of newspapers. In Brazil, the largest television network, owned by the government, disseminates news stories to other networks. In addition, there are two major newspapers in Ceará. There is the *Diário do Nordeste* and the *O Povo*. The *Diário* is a publication offset of the government and rarely publishes news stories concerning the MST, focusing more on reforms and policy of agrarian reform. Considered more of the newspaper of the intellectual elite of the state is the *O Povo*, for which many professors from the universities write and provide a constant

publication of information concerning both policy and opposition. The government run media treats the MST as a violent and radical movement, one that provides an image of the movement in its news broadcasts and various articles as illegal (Ibid.). “The flow of media images hypnotizes and conditions us” into interpreting the movement and its actions as revolutionary, unsubstantiated, and illogical (Powell 1998: 142). Not only is this image promoted nationally, primarily during periods of MST occupations and protests within the capitol, but also some international publications circulate the same imagery.

*Time*, the international publication for Latin America, provided an article with several photographs depicting MST members as radical rebels and violent revolutionaries (“Deu da *Time*” *Revista Sem Terra* Jan/ Feb/ Mar 1998: 16). Reaffirmed through depictions of members as violent in the national media, the MST must counter news publications. Two of the most recent depictions of the MST as violent, revolutionary, and illegal occurred during the summer of 1999. First, images of placed gun supplies illustrate government implications and indictments of MST factions as armed and organized to manifest a violent revolution. Although these claims were unsubstantiated and retracted, the media replication of stories and images provided a stereotypical framework illustrating the movement as armed for revolution. Second, press releases of MST infiltration by members of the Sendero Luminoso provided further depictions of the movement as violent and mobilizing for armed revolution. Providing imagery of a violent movement allows the government to rationalize to the public the need to control and disband the movement.

Although some national and international media present the MST in a more neutral in tone, like *The Economist* publications on April 13, 1996 and July 26, 1997, the lack of open communication by the MST with the public, perpetuates a lack of understanding, a lack of movement consciousness, and little popular support. The various voices “are strictly subordinated to the author’s controlling purpose: there is only one truth” and that is the presentation position of the media (Selden 1985: 18). As a means to solidify a collective consciousness and action for the movement in an effort to counter these opposing facets, presentation of particular images serve as rallying components for the MST’s culture.

### **Symbols**

“Symbols and objects associated with rural tradition, bearers of memory, become refunctionalized in new settings, while, simultaneously, modern symbols and materials become resemanticized” (Rowe and Shelling 1991: 104). Particular symbols of the MST that have been refunctionalized and resemanticized and disseminated in this fashion not only to provide unity but also promote popular culture as a vehicle for the establishment of a new identity (Bogo 1998: 13 and Rowe and Shelling 1991: 119). A few of the rallying symbols that are representative of MST culture are its flag, the red cap, work tools like the hoe and reaper, study materials, and the movement’s hymn. The majority of these articles are components of the rural tradition of agrarian work, but the newer components such as the study materials and the hymn promote consciousness raising.

Cultivated symbols leave tangible representations of the movement's history and ideology for future generations ("Uma Palavra às crianças e aos jovens estudantes do MST" *Desenhando o Brasil* 1998: 7). These items of material culture are non-discursive but act on a multi-dimensional level to provide a physical instrument to frame and constitute a system of meaning, the MST culture (Tilley 1990: 333). Artifacts also serve to construct a proper cultural identity of the movement and meaning for its fifteen-year struggle (Sampiao January and February 1999: 15).

"The people identify themselves with these symbolic manifestations of their culture" (Filgueiras Jan/Feb/Mar 1998: 35). These components are important as unifying symbols for members and supporters of the movement throughout each phase of the movement, not only as these mediums acquire new, enriched meanings for members but for those who witness the development of the movement (Silverman 1990: 125). Tilley claims that the construction of symbols as representational, material objects is a form of discourse (1990: 333). The discussion of meaning, designated to these artifacts, attempts to illustrate a concept that is otherwise unrepresentable, being a new nation characterized by a just society, agrarian reform, and land (Betsky 1997: 30). As Bahktin may summarize, these symbols become signifiers of MST culture, signifying the ideological framework and base for the selection for such signs.

An example of the selective choosing of a symbol as a sign of unification and support is the MST banner. On a red backdrop, centered is a white circle. Within the circle are the words "*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – Brasil.*"

Additionally, there is a depiction of the geographic area of Brazil, colored in green, with

two individuals, a man and a woman, drawn inside the country outline. Significance of these symbols within this artifact is plentiful and only a cursory glance will be approached. First, the red background signifies the red association with communism or socialism, the ideological backdrop for the movement. Due to this connection, the flag also represents the MST's affiliation with other leftist entities like the Worker's Party (PT) and Christian Base Communities (CEBs). The white circle provides a contrast for the drawing of the green, fertile land of Brazil. The workers are apart of the country; however, as the man holds up a machete, the workers symbolize the struggle of the people to rise up and counter the structure of Brazil to regain land access ("Semente perigosa com espingardas pica-pau" *Veja* October 1989: 56).

Just as this symbol is a readable text, so too is the action in which it is used significant of its meaning and its interpreted function (Moore 1990: 103). The prominent location of the MST flag when moving to occupy land, setting up camp for a protest or manifestation, and during marches is representative of the people rising up to counter the hegemonic power of Brazil. It is important to illustrate here that used as a symbol the flag aids in the promotion of hopes and the promulgation of ideology (Plummer 1997: 21). Additionally, the use of work tools in protest and movement is significant because of the rural, landless construct of the MST. The two most common symbols are the hoe and the reaper. Association links the use of these tools with working land, food production, and livelihood. Since members of this movement are rural, landless workers, their tools are inutile since they have no land to work. Therefore, these objects become

signs in a discourse that provides a visual representation and contextual framework of the current condition of the rural laborer (Parmentier 1994: 101).

## **Media**

McCombs discusses the ability of the media to construct the images presented and received in the world; these images thus influence our interpretation of those events surrounding us (1998: 27). In the case of the MST, constructs of the media often counter the movement and its objectives; however, the MST has strategically built its organization to include its own media services. These services include a monthly paper, quarterly magazine, and brochures all printed by the MST's own printing press, a Web site, e-mail links, and a radio station in a few communities. In briefly overviewing these mediums, the essential objective of all is to transmit MST information and ideology as a means to support, strengthen, and expand its constituency support base.

Owning, managing, and running a proper printing press enables the movement to disseminate information concerning its actions and its ideology in several arenas. First, censorship and restriction of materials common of publication by the government or other presses that align themselves with ideologies that are more conservative is not a factor in MST printing. The MST is able to preserve the wording of its message in its publications. "Texts reflect society or class interests" and "liberate alternative voices" (Selden 1985: 17); however, without the assurance of the use of particular words, the significance of the text may be lost. Therefore, MST editors recognize and preserve symbolic wording; whereas, others may not be so sensitive to the materials and the words

as signs. Lastly, the press secures on-time publication of materials, especially the monthly paper, *Jornal dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, and the quarterly magazine, *Revista Sem Terra*. Subscriptions to these two publications are available nationally, the newspaper for R\$ 20 and the magazine for R\$ 25. Sales of these publications are mainly limited to subscriptions as newspaper stands rarely sell these materials and regional offices of the MST receive a particular allotment for sales and promotions each month. International information is more restricted and often only accessible through the internet.

The MST is on-line. Not only does the MST have an official organization site at <http://www.mst.org.br>, but all state offices also have their own e-mail address. The address for the Ceará office is [mstce@baydenet.com.br](mailto:mstce@baydenet.com.br). International accessibility is not the main concern for the MST but rather ease of communication throughout the nation. Due to recent phone tapings by the Brazilian government of regional offices and MST leader phone lines, e-mail provides a somewhat more secure means of transferring information in regard to planning, organizing, and updated status of occupations, encampments, settlements, and protests. Settlements and individual members of the movement do not have e-mail or access to the internet. This resource resides in the regional office, located in the capitol of the organized state. Therefore, disseminated information is not readily accessible from the rural areas to the national level of directors, but a top down approach through information linkages of the internet provides reassurance of the organization's uniformity and its mobilization networks.

“Communication is an essential feature of all semiosis” (Selden 1985: 40). The signifiers of the movement and its culture receive meanings deciphered and interpreted

for the regional offices and members by the national congress. Providing and securing the various forms of communication provides a uniform informational basis and promotion of a uniform culture for communities. Thus, through various media mediums from the national congress, to the printing press, and to various members, communities, and supporters, there is ease in the transfer of ideology and symbols. Two projects that illustrate this transfer are the *Projeto Popular para o Brasil* and *Terra*.

The *Projeto Popular para o Brasil* is an association of various individuals that support the MST, wishing to support the movement in reconstructing a Brazilian nation by working to implement complete social justice (“Trabalhadores em Marcha pelo Brasil” *Jornal dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* September 1998: 10). A just society, as defined by the MST project, encompasses work, health, education, citizen rights, agrarian reform and democracy. The construction of this alternative nation discussed by the “Popular Consul” consists of the MST and various other organizations but the ideological foundation presented, debated, and reaffirmed takes place within the constructs of various MST media. These mediums also successfully rallied support for this project as exemplified on May 8, 1999 when close to one hundred “Friends of the MST” gathered to strategically decide how each “friend” could aid in the MST’s struggle for agrarian reform and in building a new nation (“Encontro dos amigos do MST” *Jornal dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* June 1999: 9). People from diverse segments of society gathered to define their roles in this struggle and publicly align themselves with the movement and publish doctrine of support for the MST. Individual supporters of this project include politicians, intellectuals, lawyers, professors, clergy, and artists. Without

the use of mass media to simplify the communication and information transfer process, a reunion of such diverse individuals for a social movement project would have been nearly impossible.

The 1997 *Terra* project of the MST includes a CD, specific song lyrics for the movement, and a book of photography with quotes from various MST supporters. The most publicized and influential component of this project is the book of photography by Sebastião Salgado. Salgado spent nearly a year travelling throughout various MST communities and taking photos of members, their daily lives, special events, and visual replications of the confrontation between the movement and the government. These photos possess a certain aesthetic value in certain divisions of Brazilian society; however, this sphere of "art" is "always changing and always dynamically related to the structure of society" (Selden 1985: 20). The MST manipulated these photographs to become symbols of the movement, propaganda, and aesthetically appealing for consumer consumption. The national congress adapted these photographs for their use on the all the CD covers, calendars, books concerning the movement, and as decoration within all of the regional offices. As propaganda, the movement promotes art exhibitions to reinforce the visual representation of movement members in their struggle; the federal university's law school in Fortaleza, Ceará in held the most recent exhibition in July and August 1999. Lastly, these photos not only appeal to the viewer's senses but also have been framed and packaged in such a manner, in postcards, books, and posters, as to promote the consumer value of the photographs. As Goody states, "art is representational," but Nye's neo-Marxist critique of such representational art is more

precise for these photographs as he states, “consumer goods are a concretization of false consciousness” (1997: 2 and 1997: 99). Visual representations provide a portrayal, but the conscious understanding of the significance of the photograph and its meaning for the movement is only as great as the level of cognitive understanding and consciousness of the movement already possessed by the viewer. The “symbolic relation” between the interpreter and the object are thus limited to how the interpreter contextualizes the significance of the object based on his/her understanding of MST ideology and objectives (Parmentier 1994: 27).

### **The Printed Word**

Information concerning the MST, its objectives, and its struggle is easily accessible through various forms of printed media. As previously presented, the MST prints its own newspaper and quarterly magazine. In addition, organizational workbooks, manuals, and pamphlets solidify the framework of the movement. An example of these publications in defining the MST structure is the Popular Education workbook that promotes the idea that “education is popular when produced for the use of real, popular classes and [in the case of the MST] a popular movement” (MST April 1994: 9). The MST is able to use these publications to solidify the promotion of its objectives and ideology to unify the process by which to organize all components of the movement. From the perspective of critical realism, the study language or discourse to identify the structures lying behind social reality is not as essential as uncovering and finding ways to change those structures that base society and political systems (Burr 1998: 20). Various

MST literatures do so by outlining social structures, how to construct a base community, and discussion of projects and theorists that reaffirm movement ideology. Supporting literature of the MST is not limited to its own printed materials, outside writers and publishers have aligned themselves with the movement in various fashions throughout recent years.

The greatest producer of agrarian reform literature is the MST. Publishing workbooks on policy, reforms, and how to structure occupations, settlements, and cooperative organizations represent a few of the themes addressed in the movement's workbooks. However, in the last two years the movement directed a sweep of publications for children's consumption. Two of these books are *Desenhando o Brasil* (1998) and *Estórias de Rosa* (1999). The first is a collection of essays and drawings by MST children in response to the question of "What type of Brazil do you want?" The second book, written for children, explains the organizational process of the movement, from the organizational phase to settlement. Both of these books reiterate the ideology and the language of the movement. One of the most essential components of these books is not the reaffirmation of movement objectives but how the children begin to reproduce the ideology within their writing.

In *Desenhando o Brasil*, Gleiciane stated that "we want a better country" (1998: 16) while Maria Raimunda called an end to misery and injustice by proclaiming that she "wants to live in a Socialist Brazil" (1998: 20). Children in elementary school reiterate the language of "new nation" (1998: 24) and end their essays with "MST! Che lives!" (1998: 22). In forming a base of support in the youth, the movement strategically plans

the development of these children to strengthen movement ideology and action in the future as a result of their absorption and processing of movement tradition (Selden 1985: 8). Imposition of MST ideology within this social space provides as a means to ensure the survival of the movement by establishing a base. However, focus of reform literature remains directed toward movement members, supporters, and the larger society, primarily the intellectual elite and not children.

Since 1983, there have been publications of several books regarding agrarian reform, the Brazilian struggle for land, and the MST. A greater influx of materials was apparent after the return of democracy in 1985 and even more followed the 1992 election of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The majority of the books in print concerning Brazilian agrarian reform and the MST are either written by João Pedro Stédile, the national leader of the movement, or edited by him. Other books are often compilations of articles, including a minimum of one written by Stédile. He was born and raised in Lagoa Vermelha in Rio Grande do Sul, received his degree in Economics and worked as an agronomist for the Secretary of Agriculture in Rio Grande do Sul until he became a founding member of the MST in the early 1980's. This man is the main figure in regard to any policy, study, or inquiry regarding reform, land, and social movements in Brazil. From the perspective of the masses, Stédile must approve all information and opinions for validation. Although he receives a salary as a director of the movement and royalties from publications, withheld from the public is information concerning his income.

Additional sources of printed media that support the MST include affiliated literature unrelated to agrarian reform. As part of the 1997 *Terra* project, which included

a photo exhibition by Sebastião Salgado, the release of a CD by Chico Buarque de Holanda, and the book compiling the Salgado photos with excerpts from artists, intellectuals, and politicians, the Nobel laureate for literature, Saramago was present in Brazil for the unveiling of this project. The print medium of newspapers promoted this visit, along with Saramago's recent publications, while reiterating that Saramago supported the MST. Saramago stated in his speech at the opening of this project that he supported the MST because of its objective to construct a just, unified, and egalitarian society ("Saramago ganha Premio Nobel de Literatura" *Jornal dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* November 1998: 20). The public support of such a known writer established a support basis for those who promote socialist ideology, agrarian reform, and most importantly, for those who wish to support the MST, both nationally and internationally. More importantly, such a figure as Saramago drew attention to the MST as an important movement to review and to which to pay more attention. These forms of promotion utilize printed mediums, but music has also become a rallying component of the movement's culture as well.

### **Music**

MST music has not been publicized and popularized to the larger, mass populace as of yet, but the promotion of the music and its themes are working to demonstrate that the struggle for agrarian reform is "everyone's struggle" (Filgueiras Jan/Feb/Mar 1998: 35). As stated on the CD cover, "we are recording our memory and showing our image of a Brazilian society" (*Art em Movimento* 1997). Through the participation of several

artists in recording the MST this CD, *Arte em Movimento* released in 1997 symbolized the importance of the Brazilian fight for land. The objective of the disc was to present Brazil with the songs that represent MST members in their struggle for agrarian reform and to provide reaffirmation of ideology. According to Lyotard, music also attempts to enter a realm in which lyrics legitimize themselves by their performance (Powell 1998: 24).

The songs also serve “to evoke emotion and quicken the heartbeat of those in the large city,” and as João Pedro Stédile further stated, “the music promotes the cultural manifestations of the rural worker and contributes to the construction of identity for our movement” (Stédile quoted by Filgueiras Jan/Feb/Mar 1998: 35). Music is a cultural construct, one that also forms and promotes cultural identity. Through the cultural framing process, music of the MST reiterates the history of movement and its ideology. In addition, since the majority of Brazilians are illiterate, more so in rural areas than any other, oral tradition provides a method for memorization of terminology and ideology. Presentation of this music, both on disc and in performance, is also important because “performance is always more than the text” in that often, commonplace, overlooked signs present new articulated meanings (Reinekt 1992: 113). Music festivals organized and sponsored by the MST exemplify the dynamic and impact of performance.

The movement organized the First National Agrarian Reform Music Festival in 1998. The festival was to promote an incentive for artists, at amateur and professional levels, and for both MST members and movement supporters, to use their artistic creativity to compose songs about agrarian reform (“Participe desse grande encontro da

cultura do campo” *Jornal dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* October 1998: 20). More specifically, for the MST, the lifestyle and culture of rural workers was promoted through these songs as something that has value and should be noticed and respected by the larger Brazilian populace. The reaffirmation and legitimization of ideology and movement constructs was reiterated in each of the chosen songs for the disc but most importantly, through the recording of the national hymn for the movement.

Ademar Bogo wrote and Willy C. de Oliveira composed the “Hymn of the *Movimento Sem Terra*.” The hymn speaks of “our liberty” achieved through “strong arms” and a “valiant” act of “rebellion” in which the MST “will plant on the land as brothers” (Bogo 1997). The embraced, explained, and recontextualized struggle is as a symbol of the MST. Constant presentation and repetition of this hymn reaffirms and legitimizes the movement, its ideology, and actions. Secured by movement leaders playing these lyrics throughout occupation, settlement, and protest and manifestation periods ensures the constant and reaffirmed presentation of meaning. In addition, members of the MST learn the hymn during the instructional phase of mobilization and children learn it in school and sing it every morning before beginning classes. Music of the MST is a well-defined component of its culture that serves as a constant representation of objective.

### **Objective in Creating Culture**

The objective of promoting MST symbols and ideology is to construct the image of the landless, rural worker in a way that strengthens the movement. Although a mass culture stemming from the lives and experiences of people could characterize an

**“authentic popular or folk culture,” the need to be politically conscious and savvy obscures communal values of the MST. Second, taken into account must be the commercial consideration of MST culture creation (Strinati 1995: 43). These two components which taint the authenticity of MST culture do not question the validity of the construct of the culture but rather frame the processes and objectives for the movement’s culture.**

**Political consciousness is necessary in understanding social existence. Selden substantiates this by referring to Marx arguing that “what we call ‘culture’ is not an independent reality but is inseparable from the historical conditions in which human beings create their material lives,” that which is determined and exploited by the social and economic order that directs “the whole cultural life of society” (1985: 24). As such, the movement contextualizes its historical progression and stance on particular political and social issues, like agrarian reform, within a structured microcosm of Brazilian society, the movement’s culture. In promoting the MST, the movement must also illustrate how the segment of society it represents must struggle to survive in its excluded and repressed status by the Brazilian elite. Thus, the MST creates a culture that encompasses the humanity of the political and social struggle (Bogo September 1998: 20). All of these mediums are representations of movement action and ideology; they are “re-presentations” because “culture does not simply consist of in-built tendencies or customary procedures of a socialized kind” but rather provides the impetus for critique (Selden 1985: 25 and 257). MST culture and symbols provides a catalyst for analyzing the current social and political reality.**

One manner through which the MST disseminates its culture and ideology is through the spoken word. Presentations through songs, chants, speeches, and debates are broadcast to the MST community and listening supporters. Audio absorption found during occupations, encampments, protests, and manifestations provide the continual broadcast of the movement's objectives. Select language and framed discourse is an organizational strategy within each the particular event, constituting a production of various forms of social life and a framing process for culture (Burr 1998: 20). Outlined through the language is the ideology and structural context of the movement. Although these presentations affirm the movement's objectives and culture in a main effort to raise awareness, the MST also promotes its culture in a consumer fashion.

In the process of communicating ideas and messages that have a political tone, the defined subject and created culture industry provide an inspirational source from which to base reform (*Democratizar a economia e o poder* July 1994: 44). Art does "carry the seed of subversion" as stated in the film "Builders of Images;" however, the sale of the various components that define MST culture also serves to secure the incomes for MST communities. The movement gathers funds from the sale of newspapers, magazines, CDs, shirts, hats, flags, artistry, and books into a main account overseen by the national board of directors. Treasurers distribute funds to appropriate movement communities. The movement remains faithful in promoting the symbolic nature and importance of these cultural constructs as promotions of ideology, but the artifacts also become devoid of all encompassing characteristics that promote political consciousness and a new national identity as each item is sold as a consumer product.

Symbols, like those sold by the movement “appear to transcend variability and time, to become an idealized object” (Nye 1997: 103); however, these cultural artifacts only appear to have the significance of representing an ideology or cultural construct because the object signifies “false consciousness” (Ibid. 99). Unless the consumer is a member or a supporter close to the movement’s struggle, the flag, the tools, the hymn, everything is devoid of the meaning invested into each symbol by the movement. The MST however, utilizes its culture to promote itself to strengthen the movement in terms of reaching the masses but to also profit from those who would like a representational item of the movement, whether or not they are knowledgeable of or support the ideology promoted by the movement.

In sum, cultural representations of the movement still promote its ideology in a way that raises awareness about the current Brazilian agrarian reality but, the impact and weighted significance of the symbol is often lost as supporters become consumers. Without enlightenment as to the intricate struggle in which the movement is involved by being an active participant in the struggle and understanding each organizational phase of the movement’s development, the artifacts sold are symbols of the MST but are not signifiers of the all inclusive struggle endured by the movement. Cultural symbols of the MST remain significant however to movement members because of their involvement in the lifestyle and manifested ideological constructs. Nevertheless, support of the movement through material consumption is a purely monetary venture as the majority of consumers lack understanding of the struggle and ideology for agrarian reform. The movement thus becomes a mass culture of representations, working towards reform at the

communal level and promoting a culture stock of the rural, landless work at the societal level (Goody 1997: 21). The MST has thus become a form of populism since it constructed a culture, both popular and mass, to build power, to affect changes and reforms within the political arena and to also gain recognition and support for the movement socially and politically.

## **Conclusion**

**“Culture is nothing if not a collective product” (Douglas 1989: 39). As the MST organizes, mobilizes, and structurally constructs itself as a popular social movement, its collective base substantiates a movement culture that builds power to gain recognition and support. “Social movements are conscious, concerted, and relatively sustained efforts by organized groups of ordinary people to change some aspect of their society by using extrainstitutional means”(Jasper 1997: 5). The previous two sections, Part I and Part II, outlined the various phases of the movement, its structure, resources, and culture constructs. “Culture and institutional contexts are of interest primarily because they provide a distribution of resources and a set of legal constraints and opportunities within which to maneuver” (Jasper 1997: 24). This section aligns the culture, structure, and resource mobilization compositions to illustrate the constructedness of the MST.**

**Populism is a vague, loosely constructed theoretical precept that is applicable to a variety of case studies. Using Canclini’s central premise that populism uses culture to construct power, there is “the simulation of the actor” (1995: 191). State and social movements use this means to gain recognition and political legitimacy as to become a functionary of the larger system and to allow for the reconstruction of the popular reality. Culture becomes the mechanism by which to define and satisfy demands from a collective, homogenous base. Creating a unified movement with a common ideological and culture framework thus contextualizes symbolic representations, the movement structure, and its objectives. Populism is the broad term that best encapsulates culture**

construction as a means to manipulate and dominate power structures while leaving room for variability among case examples.

Transmission of cultural constructs is also a means to manipulate mass consciousness. Since “everywhere there is power there is resistance,” postmodernism attempts to provide interconnections between structure and opposition (Powell 1998: 95). Manipulation of the constituency and “other” base provides a means to conscientize the masses concerning the signified, signifier, and construct of the sign. An example of this is the need for awareness and the use of the movement’s culture as a campaign by the movement to inform the public about the *Novo Mundo Rural*. Presenting policy objectives as the “other” while reaffirming the persistent need for development of the movement allows the MST to work within social space, so that it may reform societal structures and introduce alternative reforms and frameworks.

With a continued base of Brazilian landless, presently totaling over six million, the desire for a radical, social reform model that foresees a different future for this populace is one way the movement obtains support base. The MST also manipulates its ideological and information base to counter the government and its policies in an effort to provide additional support for its own organization. Thus, transmission and manipulation become means by which to disseminate and use culture to build power.

The MST utilizes its refined discourse to mobilize resources, as social discontent is common but collective action is not. Collective action begins at the initial phase of mobilization and occupation, representing the inclusion of rural, landless workers as members of the movement. Upon obtaining a membership base and means for accessing

resources, the enabled movement can prolong its struggle to fulfill its objectives due to its established base of collective action. Sustaining the factions and actions of the MST, networks constitute formal, professional associations at the base of these communities to ensure livelihood. This base enables the assembling of resources within the movement and the larger community. A resource base within the movement is its cooperative structure and network among base communities. Additionally, use of culture invokes social memory further promoting mass, urban populace support for the movement. The urban area is an essential component to the movement as it is the site in which former rural residents migrated and it is also the physical and ideological locale in which society intersects, providing an accessible resource base. In addition, the use of the “other,” the urbanite, to support a rural, landless movement provides a sense of conscientizing of the entire Brazilian populace.

Conscientization is a pattern of circularity that provides the incentive of collective action against the current social structures, this reform being a political opportunity structure (Jasper 1997: 35). Comprehension of this opportunity structure is impossible without conceptualization that political consciousness is necessary in understanding social existence, substantiated by the organization of interpersonal networks. Agency provides the conceptual framing process in which motivated people join social organizations committed to change, exemplifying how agency plays a significant role in collective action and the political opportunity structure.

In their dedication for change, an introduced discourse provides an audience and reception opportunity for marginalized voices within a collective, defined structure of

**mobilized and organized individuals. The MST provides the rigidity of the movement with pre-determined objectives as a means to solidify the structure, also explaining why the movement rarely collaborates with other organizations since they may define their objectives differently. Thus, circularity within the movement promotes rationale from a well-unified base working for change within the socio-political structure.**

**Representations and the organization of the movement affirm its objectives and further promote the ideological framework. The framework of the movement, its structure, and culture desire to create change, all motivated to obtain power. Thus, the MST is a collective action base that provides the motivation for agency, a structured framework, and a discourse to create change and construct a base of power for themselves.**

**Reform, which comprises the attainment of land, agrarian reform, and the construction of a just society, aims to illustrate the dialectic relationship among groups in society. Marx saw a dialectic movement as showing progress “through oppositional struggle, toward a utopian communist horizon where each would produce according to ability and receive goods and services according to needs” (Reinelt 1992: 162). Thus, opposing relationships engage each sector against each other, showing their dependence upon the other within the framework of this affiliation. Constraining the dialectic relationship are predetermined, historical frameworks that illustrate structure development does not occur within a vacuum.**

**Illustrations of this relationship include the public art of demonstration, protests and manifestations, in which a larger, public audience receives visual presentations of discontent and the organizing strength of the people. Whether demonstrating or**

organizing a structure phase, the movement works within already constructed structures in a way that optimizes the potential progression and development of the movement. To counter the hegemonic power of the Brazilian government and ruling elite, in regard to land and work structures, the MST comprised a rural, landless worker culture that transcends cultural framing processes to work toward structure reform to satisfy the needs of its constituency. It is also important to note that the dialectic relationship between the movement and the governing class transcends conflicting land and work structures to also include the oppositional ideology between capitalism by the governing class and radical, revolutionary socialism promoted by the movement.

Social mobilization by the MST does not seek a formal response from the state but rather seeks to address a social problem from a culture base as means to reform the state. The mobilized base of the movement transforms the abstract issue of agrarian reform into a “real problem” of survival with persistent deficiencies in areas of food, access to land, and entitlement of citizen and human rights. Members actions signify their attachment to the structure and ideology of the MST, illustrating that the movement addresses real social problems and that members are “not simply pursuing their own interests” (Jasper 1997: 23). Connection of social concerns to the political framework provides a structure from which the movement attempts to reform and revolutionize society. This is an example of critical realism as the underlying structures of society are dissected and analyzed to evaluate the best means to alter those structures that base society and political systems (Willing 1998:101).

Land focused social movements have a long, distinguished history in mobilization formation in regards to land distribution issues and reform in Brazil. Social mobilization has been the most effective means for reform in Brazil due to the historical context of the country which has restricted policy implementation over the past century by two dictatorships, resignation and impeachment of presidents, and the increasing influence of international organizations like the World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Adding to these political constraints, the MST in Ceará must confront existing latifundio land structures, social dichotomies, land reform pilot projects, and drought. Therefore, the MST utilizes the most effective means to address and counter these structural problems by developing a network base from which to organize a formal movement (McCarthy 1996: 145). Adopting a similar movement framework utilized by the CPT and Christian Base Communities, the movement developed and refined its culture, structure, and means of resource mobilization over the past 15 years nationally and 10 years at the state level in Ceará. The movement's framing process establishes its structure and ideology as the collective unit from which to develop.

The MST unified a collective base from which a division of society defines their own culture as a means of creating support, of recognizing their ability to attain power, and reviewing their reformative abilities. Additionally, the movement provides hope and options for people, as the utopian vision of a new nation becomes an underlying objective of the movement. The concept of a new nation is seen as realistic since the organization and mobilization of the MST provides a social construct and means for members to produce for themselves and provides a sense of identity, solidarity, and self-sustainability

for its members. The unity of members begins during the mobilization period and develops throughout each phase, as individuals become a collective unit. Collective representations and common symbols developed from the cultural stock of landless movements and ideological tradition of Brazilian social movements in the Northeast.

In sum, the MST is an example of populism. Within the structuralism framework, the movement's construct is the "sign" while its conceptual basis is the "signified" and its symbolic representations are the "signifiers." Constructed cultural identity compiles concepts signified by signifiers of the movement. Manipulation of constructs illustrates present power structures and those structures constructed to resist the imposition of the dominant power. Thus, the MST constructed a movement with a well-defined structure and means for mobilizing resources, all incorporated in its construct of culture, as a means to build power to gain recognition, political legitimacy, and support to reconstruct the popular reality.

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