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## The Continuing Struggle for Agrarian Reform in Brazil

### Abstract

Brazil is infamous for its enormously skewed distribution of income, wealth, and land. In a country where 4 percent of landowners own 79 percent of the land, an ongoing movement for land reform continues to be a source of conflict and violence in the countryside (Kay 2001: 755). Extreme poverty is highly concentrated in rural areas. Although rural workers comprise only 18 percent of the total population (Filho 2007), it is estimated that as many as 6 million families are in need of land (Thomas: 9). This struggle for land, in Brazil and elsewhere, is framed by its supporters as a fight for social justice. The landless poor are socially excluded and often denied full civil rights as citizens of Brazil. Implementing a comprehensive land reform program would alleviate poverty, empower rural workers, and help ensure all Brazilians full and equal access to the civil, economic, and social rights envisioned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### Keywords

Human rights, Brazil, Income, Poverty, Land ownership, Civil rights

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## The Continuing Struggle for Agrarian Reform in Brazil

By Sarah Mogab

“Agrarian Reform, above all, should be recognized as an obligation of national governments...within the framework of human rights and as an efficient public policy to combat poverty.” (World Forum on Food Sovereignty, 2001)

Brazil is infamous for its enormously skewed distribution of income, wealth, and land. In a country where 4 percent of landowners own 79 percent of the land, an ongoing movement for land reform continues to be a source of conflict and violence in the countryside (Kay 2001: 755). Extreme poverty is highly concentrated in rural areas. Although rural workers comprise only 18 percent of the total population (Filho 2007), it is estimated that as many as 6 million families are in need of land (Thomas: 9). This struggle for land, in Brazil and elsewhere, is framed by its supporters as a fight for social justice. The landless poor are socially excluded and often denied full civil rights as citizens of Brazil. Implementing a comprehensive land reform program would alleviate poverty, empower rural workers, and help ensure all Brazilians full and equal access to the civil, economic, and social rights envisioned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Why does inequality matter? Severe inequality concerns much more than just assets and income. The poorest have unequal access to essential services such as education, healthcare, sanitation, and clean water. Furthermore, they lack access to information systems and political power. States with high levels of inequality waste human capital and potential as huge portions of society are denied the opportunity to reach their full capabilities. Inequitable societies are further characterized by elite capture of government and power. This is readily apparent in Brazil where even today the landed elite have prevented any real reform of rural relations. Inequitable societies are often more unstable with less social cohesion than equitable ones. This is especially true when there are horizontal inequalities, or inequalities between groups of people comprised on ethnic or religious divisions in society. Finally, high inequality, in land distribution specifically, predicts lower overall growth rates and increased social instability.

Development scholars and practitioners have begun to challenge the previous certainty that economic growth alone will eliminate poverty. The United Nation’s “Report on the World Social Situation” and the World Bank’s “2006 World Development Report” both point out that although some developing economies have recently recorded enormous growth, the poorest in such economies remained fixed in poverty. Further, the gap between rich and poor often seems to widen with growth. These trends are most pronounced in inequitable societies. Such observations have prompted a reconsideration of the connection between poverty and inequality.

Implementing land reform can reduce inequities in Brazilian society and alleviate extreme poverty. Large disparities in land distribution continue to be a significant cause of entrenched poverty. Land “provides a means of livelihood to many, facilitates access to credit markets, has an insurance value, determines influence in local politics, permits participation in social networks, and influences intrahousehold dynamics” (World Development Report 2006). Land ownership leads to higher investments in education, potentially breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

In sum, comprehensive agrarian reform can help ensure the civil, social, and economic rights articulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and thus is a human rights concern. Article 25 of that document states that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food.” In Brazil, a continuation of current rural policies prevents millions from enjoying this basic human right. Agrarian reform is essentially a vehicle for redressing centuries of exploitative relations between a powerful landed elite and a disempowered landless majority.

### **The Struggle for Land in Brazil**

Colonial Brazil was divided by the Portuguese Crown into just fifteen large land tracts. Since the colonial era, land ownership has continued to be highly skewed and strongly associated with great wealth. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the unequal distribution of land has been a source of conflict.

After World War II, Brazil implemented a development plan based on import substitution industrialization (ISI). This development strategy inherently focused on urban centers and ignored rural regions. ISI quickly turned into an economic disaster for Brazilians as the government financed its development schemes by simply printing more money. The result was rampant inflation which was most acutely felt in the impoverished countryside where food costs and land rents escalated quickly. Wealthy plantation owners quickly bought up the land, now untenable for the peasantry. Throughout the 1970s, modernization of agriculture, hydroelectric dam building, and the foreclosing on a large number of small landholdings further increased the number of landless peasants and further skewed land distribution patterns. These problems were most intensely realized in the three southern temperate states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Parana.

Although there were isolated incidents of protest throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the landed elite feared more widespread peasant rebellions. They were convinced that such a rebellion might—to their detriment—spark a communist revolution. These factors contributed to the military coup of 1964. Later, in response to the growing demand for land and in an effort to placate the countryside, the military regime initiated a settlement program in the Amazon basin. The idea was to ease land pressures in the south and bring vast new areas of the frontier into productive cultivation.

Some landless families, sensing that this was their only opportunity out of poverty, made the journey three thousand miles north to the heart of the rainforest. There, the land produced little and the settlers soon became ill with various tropical diseases. After the land was cleared, large corporations and private landholders, supported by the government security services and enticed with tax incentives, forced out the settlers and indigenous peoples. Many of the settlers returned to the South disillusioned, impoverished, and still landless.

In response to the growing injustices and poverty in the countryside, the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Worker’s Movement, or MST), emerged in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in 1979. The original members of the MST were heavily influenced by the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), established in 1975 by Catholic Bishops documenting ongoing violence, often perpetrated by the state, over land in the Amazon region. On September 7, 1979, the fledgling movement occupied an estate known as Macali. After just one year, the state governor, hoping the problem would go away, granted the settlers the right to stay at Macali. This early success

inspired hundreds of more families to join the movement. Even more importantly though, the win at Macali fixed land occupations as the main method of protest utilized by the MST.

Today, the MST has 1.5 million members and is broadly considered to be one of the most influential social movements in Latin America. They have been at the center of the ongoing occupations with 180,000 landless families currently living in MST encampments (Filho 2007: 77). At each encampment leaders try to ensure full participation by all members of the new communities, including women and children, and community decisions are democratically reached. The encampments typically provide healthcare, technical training, and education, services the government has long failed to deliver to rural areas.

The MST is controversial however. Although predominately seen as a peaceful movement, there have been reports of MST members utilizing violence; MST supporters however insist that it has been in self defense only. Property owners have become increasingly frustrated and dissatisfied with the police response to the invasions. Many have begun to create private militias which target rural activists. It is estimated that over 1,000 activists have been murdered; many of these victims were members of the MST.

Many critics of the movement equate the land occupations to the stealing of private property. The 1988 constitution calls for expropriating land that is not fulfilling a “social function.” However, the meaning of “social function” is left vague and as one might expect has been differently interpreted by dissimilar groups. For example, in 2005 a eucalyptus forest in Sao Paulo State, which supplies a working paper factory, was invaded three times. Many see the MST as a threat to foreign investments and the larger Brazilian economy.

Despite the varying opinions of the MST they are irrefutably successful at keeping agrarian reform on the government’s agenda. However, although agrarian reform now finds some support in Brasília, there is still much division over how such reform should be implemented. In the past, Brazil has attempted to implement both state-led and market-led reforms. Neither of these methods were very successful, partly due to the fact that no past reform program has been broadly enacted nor accompanied with a comprehensive plan for developing the agricultural sector.

The state-led model of agrarian reform usually connotes large state intervention of asset redistribution. It is often criticized as an inefficient tactic resulting in the distortion of land markets. Proponents argue that the distortions are temporary and that market relations will inherently be re-established. There have been some successful cases of state-led reform notably in the Republic of Korea and Japan. In these cases, agrarian reforms tackled outmoded feudal systems prior to the industrialization of their economies. Others states, such as Bolivia and the Philippines enacted state-led reforms with disappointing results.

The second model of agrarian reform is often referred to as market-led reform or willing-buyer, willing-seller. One example of market-led reforms implemented in Brazil was the World Bank’s highly controversial pilot project, Cedula de Terra. This project involved land sales to groups of landless workers financed by twenty-year loans. Critics argue that the project inflated land prices and created economic non-viability as the impoverished participants became highly indebted and possessed no realistic way of generating enough wealth to maintain the debts. Participants had no agency in choosing the land or in negotiating land prices. Proponents of the project contest these

claims and argue that most participants are paying on time. However, there is widespread agreement that the project will not result in broad land redistribution nor will it narrow the rich poor gap.

The United Nations Development Program's International Poverty Center (IPC) has argued that a mixed model, taking the best elements of the previous models, can be used as the basis for land reform. The goal is to develop programs that address inequality and poverty, but also help create economically viable farms and landholdings. The new model calls for substantial public investment both by the state and through international donors. The IPC also affirms the need for agrarian reform to be part of a larger strategy aimed at pro-poor growth.

Simply redistributing land will not eliminate poverty. Most rural poor are in need of further technical training, for example, in improved agriculture methods and simple record keeping. Additionally, impoverished Brazilians need to access minimum social services such as healthcare and clean water. As one might guess, ill workers are inherently less productive than healthy ones. A successful land reform program must be comprehensive and designed with these considerations in mind.

Continued pro-poor growth depends upon improving agrarian systems for small landholders because growth within the agriculture sector is essential for reducing rural poverty. It is estimated that "a 33 percent increase in yields can reduce poverty by about 25 percent" (Thomas 2006: 87). Brazil must further invest in technological improvements such as irrigation schemes to help small-scale farmers improve yields, increase private savings, and successfully compete in the global market place.

A comprehensive land reform program must also address land tenure and land rights. Clear land tenure increases incentives for farmers to invest and develop their private landholdings. Additionally, secure land tenure is associated with better access to credit and greater productivity, all of which will ultimately further contribute to improving agricultural yields and alleviating poverty.

Any land reform program will result in winners and losers and therefore it is a conflict ridden process. Moreover, a comprehensive land reform program, if broadly implemented, will require huge economic sacrifices by the state. However, the benefits for Brazilian society far outweigh the costs associated with such programs. Reforming land distribution will alleviate poverty and ensure that millions of those now socially excluded will become full citizens able to compete in the marketplace and enjoy the rights and empowerment associated with land ownership.

## Annotations

"Commentary on Land and Rural Development Policies of the World Bank." 2004. In *Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform, Working Document*. FIAN and La Via Campesina.  
[http://viacampesina.org/main\\_en/images/stories/pdf/Global\\_Campain\\_WB\\_policies\\_fact\\_sheet.en.pdf](http://viacampesina.org/main_en/images/stories/pdf/Global_Campain_WB_policies_fact_sheet.en.pdf)

Annotation: This article critiques the World Bank's development strategy paper "Reaching the Poor," and its May 2003 policy paper, "Land Policy Research Report-Land Policies for

Growth and Poverty Reduction.” This critique was produced by two organizations that advocate for large scale agrarian reform in Latin America, FIAN and La Via Campesina. These organizations argue that market-led models of land reform have proved woefully inadequate in the region. Further, the organizations maintain that implementation of the strategies proposed in the two documents assessed here, would negatively affect the rural poor.

“Land & Conflict: Key Issues, Lessons Learned, Program Options, Rapid Appraisal Guide, Resources.” 2005. US Agency for International Development: Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (April).  
[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/crosscutting\\_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CM\\_M\\_Land\\_and\\_Conflict\\_Toolkit\\_April\\_2005.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/crosscutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CM_M_Land_and_Conflict_Toolkit_April_2005.pdf)

Annotation: This is a short policy paper that focuses on the connection between land and violence. A discussion of agrarian reform in inequitable societies is included. It is noted that the potential for violence is raised where there are large disparities in landholding patterns. The policy paper outlines programming options and includes a rapid appraisal guide for development practitioners.

“On the Front Line: Human Rights Defenders in Brazil 2002-2005.” 2005. Justica Global and Terra de Direitos.  
<http://fdclberlin.de/fileadmin/fdcl/Publikationen/relatoriodefensores2005ingles.pdf>

Annotation: This report, published collaboratively by two prominent NGOs working in Brazil, includes discussion of the challenges facing human rights defenders in Brazil. The beginning of the report reviews international and regional treaties or legislation drafted with the intent of protecting human rights workers. The authors argue that such legislation has not been consistently implemented in Brazil. The authors go on to document 51 cases of threats, attacks, murders, and other abuses against human rights workers in Brazil all occurring within the timeframe of 2002-2005. A number of the documented cases involve the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) members or advocates. Any reader interested in human rights in Brazil should find this report useful.

“Report on the World Social Situation.” 2005. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. New York: UN Publications.

Annotation: The United Nation’s Department of Economic and Social Affairs publishes the Report on the World Social Situation on a biennial basis. The 2005 report focused on the problems surrounding inequality within and between nation states. It is noted in the report that the world is becoming more unequal with large differences in opportunities, education, and healthcare within societies. Also discussed are the relationships between entrenched poverty and inequality, violence and inequality, and the role of the state and civil society in combating inequality. It is concluded that issues surrounding equity and inequality must be addressed in order for the development agenda to progress. This is a comprehensive look at

the consequences of the vast disparities readily apparent around the world. It would be a helpful resource for any reader interested in not only land reform, but development issues in general.

“A Thin Red Line.” 2005. *The Economist* (May 19).

Annotation: The authors of this article discuss the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) backed occupation of private property in Brazil in comparison with the World Bank model for land reform. The discussion highlights the ongoing debate over which model works best, government led or market led land reforms. The market led model utilized by the World Bank assists farmers to buy land in groups. The sale is made possible through government grants and loans. Opponents of the model, including MST members, argue that farmers accrue unreasonable debts. This short article gives a quick overview of the two perspectives in this debate.

“This Land is Anti-Capitalist Land: Agrarian Reform in Brazil.” 2007. *The Economist*. (April 26).

Annotation: This short article gives a brief overview of the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) and the need for land reform in Brazil. The authors argue that MST has changed focus from land reform to attacking agribusinesses. Further, they say that the MST risks losing the government’s focus on land redistribution by doing so.

“World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development.” 2006. Washington DC: World Bank.

Annotation: The World Bank publishes a World Development Report annually. Each report focuses on a different aspect of development. The 2006 Report centered on equity and its impact on development. Inequity between and within countries is addressed. The eighth chapter of the report discusses the benefits of, and the need for, greater equity in land distribution. This accessible report would be helpful for any reader interested in development, poverty alleviation, or land reform.

Aldrich, Stephen P., Eugenio Y. Arima, Marcellus M. Caldas, Cynthia S. Simmons, and Robert T. Walker. 2007. “The Amazon Land War in the South of Para.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97 (3): 567-592.

Annotation: In this article the author explains why the Para region of the Brazilian Amazon continues to see persistent and intense violence over land. The authors are particularly interested in the political ecology of the region, specifically how social and political processes are affecting Amazonian deforestation. The article, while providing useful information on Para, the area where tensions over land reform are frequently manifested, tends to focus on theoretical discussions of place and the impact of violence on the ecology of the Amazon forest.



Assuncao, Juliano. 2006. "Land Reform and Landholdings in Brazil." *UNU-WIDER* 2006 Research Paper No. 137. [http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/working-papers/research-papers/2006/en\\_GB/rp2006-137/](http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/working-papers/research-papers/2006/en_GB/rp2006-137/).

Annotation: This research paper evaluates the land reform programs initiated in the 1990s in Brazil. The author concludes that the programs did not improve access to land for the average rural Brazilian. Although an increase in land ownership is seen in the poorest rural households, all other rural classes actually saw a decrease in land ownership over the period of reforms. This paper provides a clear overview of the failed state-led attempts for broad land reform.

Barham, Brad, Steve Boucher, Michael R. Carter, and Juan Sebastian Chamorro. 2002. "'Market-friendly' Reforms and the Operation of Credit and Land Markets in Central America" in *Northeast Universities Development Consortium Conference*. Williams College. <http://www.williams.edu/Economics/neudc/papers/MarketFriendlyReforms.pdf>

Annotation: This paper, prepared for the Northeast Universities Development Consortium Conference at Williams College, assesses the recent "market-friendly" reforms in Honduras and Nicaragua, and the details of the schemes in both states are discussed. The authors conclude that the reforms did not raise rural farming incomes or reduce rural poverty. Although the article does not focus on Brazil, its discussion of other market-led land reforms in neighboring countries is helpful for understanding regional trends.

Beehner, Lionel. 2005. "Land Reform Revisited." Council on Foreign Relations. (December 24). [http://www.cfr.org/publication/9475/land\\_reform\\_revisited.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/9475/land_reform_revisited.html)

Annotation: This is a short article focusing on the main debates surrounding land reform. The author touches on land reform in Brazil, but mainly provides a general overview of the topic. Land reform is defined and a brief historical overview of past land reform efforts around the world is given. Most interesting is the author's discussion of transformational versus populist land reforms. Transformational reform occurs when a government seeks to break down institutions and systems which initially created concentrated land holdings. Populist reforms are usually utilized by a state to undermine challenges from the rural left to its hold on power. They are usually superficial and short lived, and often after there is a re-concentration of landholdings which leads to more social movements fighting for another round of land distribution. This article would be helpful for any reader interested in the issue of land reform in any society.

Borras Jr., Saturnino M., and Terry McKinley. 2006. "The Unresolved Land Reform Debate: Beyond State-Led or Market-Led Models." *International Poverty Centre Research Brief* November (2). <http://www.undp-povertycentre.org/pub/IPCPolicyResearchBrief2.pdf>

Annotation: This short article focuses on the need to find a third model of land reform. The authors call for addressing legitimate demands of social justice, as well as finding a reform

system that creates economically viable agrarian sectors. The authors also include a brief overview of the state-led and market-led models of reform. For each model, they discuss the merits and the drawbacks of strictly following either approach. Finally, they suggest a third model which would have elements of both the state-led and the market-led approaches.

Branford, Sue and Jan Rocha. 2002. "The Founding of the MST" in Cutting the Wire: The Story of the Landless Movement in Brazil. London: Latin American Bureau.

Annotation: This book chapter provides an in depth look at the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) The authors are empathetic towards the subject matter and frame the movement as "one of the most powerful popular movements in the world." The first chapter "The Founding of the MST" provides a detailed account of the early foundations of the movement, as well as explaining how and why the movement began. The decision to invade Macali, the first estate targeted by the movement, is discussed at length here.

Bryant, Coralie. 1998. "Property Rights for the Rural Poor: The Challenge of Landlessness." *Journal of International Affairs* 52 (1):181-205.

Annotation: Coralie Bryant is a professor at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs. In this older article Bryant discusses the need to not only put land reform on the international community's agenda, but also to legitimate land tenure through property rights. Bryant argues that rural poverty must be addressed through agrarian reform. The article also includes an overview of past failed attempts at land reform in Brazil.

Caldeira, Rute. 2008. "Up-dating Its Strategies and Amplifying Its Frames: The Landless Rural Workers' Movement in Brazil and the Displacement of the Struggle for Land." *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 7:133-149.

Annotation: Caldeira is a researcher focusing on human rights, poverty, and forced migration at the University of Manchester, School of Law. This article provides an historical overview of the MST and their activities in Brazil. Caldeira also discusses the history of land occupations and their strategic use in the struggle for land rights. Additionally, the article includes discussion of how the MST recently changed tactics and now focuses on using the legal system to advocate for agrarian reform in Brazil.

Cintrao, Rosangela, Beatriz Heredia, Sergio Pereira Leite, Leonilde Medeiros, and Moacir Palmeira. 2006. "Regional Impacts of Land Reform in Brazil," in Michael Courville, Raj Patel, and Peter Rosset (eds.), Promised Land: Competing Visions of Agrarian Reform. Oakland: Food First Books.

Annotation: This chapter in Promised Land looks at a study, designed and implemented by the authors, which focused on changes caused by the introduction of land reform settlement projects in Brazil. The authors administered questionnaires in six regions with a high concentration of settlement projects. Their findings reveal that most settlements were

initiated by the MST or similar peasant movements, only 10 percent were established because of government actions. Settlements have led to greater stability in livelihoods and many settlers now have access to credit. Many settlers also stated that they now feel empowered and in control of their lives. However, analysis of the questionnaires also revealed that social services, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, remain inadequate in rural Brazil.

Cotula, Lorenzo, Julian Quan, and Camilla Toulmin. 2006. "Policies and Practices for Securing and Improving Access to Land." In *International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development*. Porto Alegre, Brazil: IIED.

Annotation: This issue paper was prepared for the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development held in 2006 at Porto Alegre, Brazil. The paper includes analysis of the links between poverty reduction and land access. The authors also discuss women and land access, the role of markets in provision of land access, indigenous people's rights to land, and violent conflict over land. The conclusion offers policy recommendations.

Courville, Michael and Raj Patel. 2006. "The Resurgence of Agrarian Reform in the Twenty-first Century," in Michael Courville, Raj Patel, and Peter Rosset (eds.), Promised Land: Competing Visions of Agrarian Reform. Oakland: Food First Books.

Annotation: This is the introductory chapter of Promised Land and the authors are two of the book editors. In this introduction, they give a historical overview of past demands for agrarian reform. They argue that current social movements for land reform are developed and supported by the landless poor and small farmers who are entirely dependent on access to arable land for subsistence. Moreover, they point out that skewed land distribution patterns are found throughout the developing world not just in Latin America. The chapter ends with a brief look at the cases selected for discussion in the book.

De Janvry, Alain, Elisabeth Sadoulet, and Wendy Wolford. 2001. "The State in Latin American Land Reforms," in Gustavo Gordillo, Alain De Janvry, Jean-Philippe Platteau, and Elisabeth Sadoulet (eds.), Access to Land, Rural Poverty, and Public Action. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Annotation: This chapter looks at the history of state-led reforms in Latin America. The authors suggest that the eighty year legacy of attempted agrarian reforms have not provided adequate access to landless peasants. Further, the authors suggest that past reforms have not helped small landholders become economically competitive. This is a useful chapter for any reader interested in past reform attempts in the region.

Deere, Carmen Diana and Magdalena Leon. 2001. "Institutional Reform of Agriculture: The Impact of the Women's and Indigenous Movements." *Latin American Research Review* 36 (2):31-63.

Annotation: This article provides an overview of agricultural reforms in the Latin American region. The authors are specifically concerned with evaluating how such reforms were impacted by the growing women's and indigenous movements. They conclude that while some reforms are still in progress, as in Brazil, overall women's movements have played an important role in triggering agrarian reforms. They find the impact of indigenous movements to be much more mixed in the region.

Fernandes, Bernardo Mancano. 2005. "The Occupation as a Form of Access to Land in Brazil: A Theoretical and Methodological Contribution," in Sam Moyo and Paris Yeros (eds.), Reclaiming the Land: The Resurgence of Rural Movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. New York: Zed Books.

Annotation: Reclaiming the Land gives an overview of recent peasant movements around the world. The authors argue that the emergence of these movements is in reaction to neo-liberal policies that have undermined rural labor forces. The book includes discussion of various cases in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This particular chapter assesses the use of land occupations in the struggle for Brazilian land reform. The author argues that there are various types of occupations currently utilized. The three most common to Brazil are: (a) recuperation, or the recuperating of contested land that was once worked by the peasantry; (b) forfeited lands, or occupying land belonging to the state in frontier areas; and (c) occupation of *latifundios*, or the traditional plantations. The author argues that land occupations are a form of negotiation and resistance for the peasantry. This detailed discussion of occupations will be helpful for any reader interested in the MST and land reform in Brazil.

Filho, Jose Juliano De Carvalho and Maria Luisa Mendonca. 2007. "Agrarian Policies and Violence in Brazil." *Peace Review* 19 (1):77-85.

Annotation: This article begins by addressing three official documents; the original National Agrarian Reform Plan Proposal, the second National Agrarian Reform Plan, and a letter written by the MST for President Lula. The authors compare what the Brazilian state promised regarding land reform and what was actually delivered to landless rural workers. This article does a good job of presenting the recent history and current status of land reform attempts in Brazil. It also documents the escalating violence in the countryside. The authors conclude that if current policies are continued, the human rights abuses and violence in the countryside will most likely also continue.

Green, Duncan. 2006. "Equality, Inequality, and Equity: Where Do These Fit in the Poverty Agenda?" in From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World: Oxfam.  
[http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/downloads/FP2P/FP2P\\_Equality\\_inequality\\_equity\\_BP\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/downloads/FP2P/FP2P_Equality_inequality_equity_BP_ENGLISH.pdf)

Annotation: This pithy article includes a clear and concise overview of why inequality matters. The author argues that inequality slows economic growth, and destabilizes societies.

Further, it is suggested that global trends are actually increasing the numbers of poor and marginalized within states and between states. The author argues for international action to reduce inequality. Throughout the article he uses a human rights framework to discuss the problems surrounding the inequitable distribution of wealth and power around the world.

Kay, Cristobal. 2001. "Reflections on rural Violence in Latin America." *Third World Quarterly* 22 (5):741-775

Annotation: Cristobal Kay, a professor of Development Studies and Rural Development with the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague, has published numerous books and articles looking at development in Latin America. In this article he attempts to look at the connections between rural violence, and agrarian structures and state policies. He does this through a comparative approach, focusing on the cases of Chile, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador. He argues persuasively that ongoing rural violence is due to unequal agrarian systems coupled with socially exclusionary models of development in the region.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2002. "Why East Asia overtook Latin America: Agrarian Reform, Industrialization, and Development." *Third World Quarterly* 23 (6):1073-1102.

Annotation: In this article the author compares the economic development of Latin America with that of South Korea and Taiwan. The author tries to understand why Latin America, which began industrializing decades before South Korea and Taiwan, has fallen so far behind. The author concludes that broad state-led interventions for land reform were initiated prior to industrialization in many Asian countries, whereas in Latin America state attempts at industrialization were attempted prior to any broad land reform. The clear discussion argues that small landholders are crucial in any development effort.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2005. "Reflection on Rural Poverty in Latin America." *The European Journal of Development Research* 17 (2):317-346.

Annotation: In this article, Cristobal Kay argues that neo-liberal measures to reduce poverty in Latin America could produce the opposite effect and actually increase the numbers living under the poverty line in the region. Kay suggests that poverty is a consequence of political, economic, social, and cultural structures particular to the area. These structures must be significantly altered through reform to produce any significant reduction in poverty. This article is helpful for any reader interested in trying to understand the patterns and causes of poverty in the region.

Leite, Sergio 2006. "Agrarian Reform, Social Justice, and Sustainable Development" in *International Conference of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development*. Porto Alegre, Brazil: FAO.  
[http://www.icarrd.org/icard\\_doc\\_down/Issue\\_Paper4.pdf](http://www.icarrd.org/icard_doc_down/Issue_Paper4.pdf)

Annotation: This issue paper was prepared for the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development held in 2006 at Porto Alegre, Brazil. The author argues that agrarian reform should be reframed as a strategic vehicle for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. In addition to agrarian reform however, the author also calls for increased social services such as healthcare and education. Additionally, the author discusses the potential of land access to increase the political representation and social inclusion of the world's poorest. This is an accessible report with a comprehensive agenda for poverty reduction centered on land reform.

Meszaros, George. 2000. "Taking the Land into their Hands: The Landless Worker's Movement and the Brazilian State." *Journal of Law and Society* 27 (4):517-41.

Annotation: In this article Meszaros, a legal scholar, discusses the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) and the Brazilian state. In particular, the author explores how the MST used the 1988 constitution, which called for agrarian reform, to legally legitimate their social movement. The author discusses the origins of the land problem in Brazil, as well as the development of the MST movement as a response. Further, he examines the state institutions tasked with carrying out agrarian reform. Overall this article provides a clear introduction to the problems of land reform in Brazil.

Ondetti, Gabriel. 2006. "Repression, Opportunity, and Protest: Explaining the Takeoff of Brazil's Landless Movement." *Latin American Politics and Society* 48 (2):61-94.

Annotation: Ondetti is an assistant professor of political science at Missouri State University and often focuses on the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST). In this article Ondetti discusses the development and sudden intensification of the MST. Ondetti argues that state repression against the movement resulted in broader public support for the movement. The article provides a clear historical account of the MST. It would be very useful for any reader interested in political theories of social movements and state repression.

Patel, Raj. 2007. "Glycine Rex," in Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System. Brooklyn: Melville House.

Annotation: Stuffed and Starved is a popular, recently published book that examines the politics of modern food systems. Patel addresses the paradox of how half the planet is obese while the other half starves. In the chapter entitled "Glycine Rex," Patel discusses the introduction of Soy farming for export into Brazil. He argues that soy production has contributed to the condition of landlessness faced by millions in Brazil today. The end of the chapter also includes a discussion of the MST social movement. This is a clearly written and detailed account of how soy production has affected Brazil's rural poor.

Pereira, Anthony. 2003. "Brazil's Agrarian Reform: Democratic Innovation or Oligarchic Exclusion Redux?" *Latin American Politics and Society* 45 (2):41-65.

Annotation: Anthony Pereira is a Professor of Political Science focusing on Brazilian and Latin American Studies at Tulane University. In this article he discusses the government of Cardoso from 1995-2002. He argues that the Cardoso land reforms preserved the agrarian structure of recent decades and ultimately did not improve life for the socially excluded rural poor. This article gives a thorough overview of the Cardoso administration's attempts at land reform. It is a useful article for any reader interested in past land reform programs.

Quirk, Patrick W. 2007. "How to be a Good Friend (When you are 4,000 Miles Away)." *Foreign Policy in Focus* (September 24). <http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/4571>

Annotation: This short article focuses on the Friends of the MST (FMST) solidarity network. Various chapters of the FMST are located around the world and work to raise awareness and funds for the MST movement in Brazil. The author, a sympathetic founding member of one such FMST chapter, explains the importance of the FMST work for the MST movement in Brazil. This is a useful piece that looks at the international aspects of the Brazilian movement.

Rocha, Jan. 2003. "'Cutting the Wire': The Landless Movement in Brazil." *Current History* 102 (661): 86-90.

Annotation: This essay draws from the book Cutting the Wire co-written by Jan Rocha and Sue Branford (2002). Jan Rocha is British journalist who has lived in Brazil since 1969. This short article gives a concise historical summary of the movement for agrarian reform in Brazil. The effects of the modernization of agriculture are discussed, as well as, the government sponsored resettlement programs into the Amazon basin during the 1960s and 1970s.

Rosset, Peter. 2006. "Moving Forward: Agrarian Reform as a Part of Food Sovereignty," in Michael Courville, Raj Patel, and Peter Rosset (eds.), Promised Land: Competing Visions of Agrarian Reform. Oakland: Food First Books.

Annotation: In this concluding chapter of Promised Land, the author reiterates the human right to food sovereignty. The author then posits that the rural world is in a state of crisis and that the leading international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, have supported policies which have led to this crisis situation. The case for redistributive land reform, discussed at length throughout the book, is also summarized. Finally, the author concludes with a list of guidelines for moving forward towards substantial reform. The author argues that reform must include secure tenure to land, land distributed to the landless must be of good quality, and that investment in rural areas to ensure basic services such as healthcare and education must accompany any land reform program.

Sadoulet, Elisabeth and Alain de Janvry. 2001. "Access to Land and Land Policy Reforms." *UNU-WIDER*. WIDER Policy Brief. [http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/policy-briefs/en\\_GB/pb3/](http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/policy-briefs/en_GB/pb3/)

Annotation: Through a discussion of the possible methods of land acquisition, the authors evaluate land reform in the developing world. This policy paper focuses on not only Latin America, but all developing regions. The authors are interested in understanding how different modes of access affect poverty and inequality differently. Discussed are intra-family transfers, access through community membership, land sales and rental markets, and state sponsored market-led land reform. They conclude with a policy agenda aimed at development practitioners which emphasizes the need for comprehensive reform programs. The authors state that a comprehensive land policy would include institutional reform and rural development interventions that create economically competitive landholdings.

Sauer, Sergio. 2006. "The World Bank's Market-Based Land Reform in Brazil," in Michael Courville, Raj Patel, and Peter Rosset (eds.), Promised Land: Competing Visions of Agrarian Reform. Oakland: Food First Books.

Annotation: In this chapter of Promised Land, Sergio Sauer discusses the Cedula da Terra pilot project of the World Bank in detail. The author bases this chapter on a 2002 study, sponsored by several Brazilian land reform organizations, which uncovered many of the problems now associated with the project. Cedula da Terra involved land sales to groups of landless workers financed by twenty-year loans. The study found that many participants perceived that they were economically worse off, because of the high debts associated with the program. Further, it was discovered that the participants had almost no choice in the land plots, nor were they able to negotiate prices with the landowners. The author concludes that severe poverty in Brazil will not be alleviated through market mechanisms.

Skidmore, Thomas E. 2004. "Brazil's Persistent Income Inequality: Lessons from History." *Latin American Politics and Society* 46 (2):133-150.

Annotation: Thomas E. Skidmore, a leading scholar of Brazilian politics, is affiliated with the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. In this short article he analyzes the question of income inequality in Brazil from a historical perspective. He does this by looking at past economic policies in Brazil. The author concludes that Brazil's focus on primary product exports, tax and public benefits policies, and pension systems have consistently favored Brazilian elite.

Thomas, Vinod. 2006. From Inside Brazil: Development in a Land of Contrasts. Washington D.C.: Stanford University Press and the World Bank.

Annotation: This short book, written by a top World Bank official, gives a brief summary of development in Brazil today. The book includes sections which focus on institutions, welfare, sustainability, quality, productivity, and future development in Brazil. It provides an overview of the country in general, but it does not focus on, nor argue for, agrarian reform.



However, the author does discuss in detail the inequalities throughout Brazilian society and how and why they originated and what can be done from the World Bank's perspective to resolve the inequities.