



Language

The urban poor may seize land to create homes, but land seizures both historically and today are primarily a strategy by struggling farmers and landless agricultural workers to enable them to cultivate the land. In Europe peasant seizure of land has often been part of a wider revolutionary upsurge, as in France in 1789, Russia 1905 and 1919, Italy 1919 and Spain in 1936-37, but today (unlike urban forms of resistance) is not central to Western protest movements. There is a particularly strong tradition in Latin America of peasant farmers seizing land (with varying degree of nonviolence or violence) from absentee or large landowners and planting crops on the land. Sometimes land seizures were retrospectively legalized by government laws or by sale of land, or even encouraged by leftist politicians, Peasant leagues in Colombia in the 1930s created an independent communist republic in the mountains based on land seized. In the 1950s and 1960s peasants seized land in Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru and Venezuela.

More recently the best known landless movement has been Movimento Sem Terra (MST) in Brazil, founded in 1984, but arising out of the rural and industrial militancy of the 1970s when there were many land seizures. It has continued to organize the landless and unemployed in taking over land from large landowners and multinationals and setting up cooperative farms, as well as organizing slum dwellers in large cities in the southeast, providing them with allotments. But hunger for land, and resistance to its use by large corporations, extends to other parts of Latin America (for example Honduras) and many countries in Africa and Asia.

Borras Jr, Saturnino Jr M. ; Edelman, Mark ; Kay, Cristobal, [Transnational Agrarian Movements: Confronting Globalization](#) [1], Oxford, Wiley Blackwell, 2008, pp. 376

Covers transnational farmer resistance to WTO and other global institutions and high profile global alliances such as the small farmer organization Via Campesina. Case studies include Indonesian forest dwellers chopping down rubber plants to grow rice to eat, and Mexican migrants returning home to transform their communities. Also includes information on early 20th century agrarian movements.

Branford, Sue ; Glock, Oriel, [The Last Frontier: Fighting over Land in the Amazon](#) [2], London, Zed Books, 1985, pp. 336

Branford, Sue ; Rocha, Jan, [Cutting the Wire](#) [3], London, Latin American Bureau, 2002, pp. 305

Well researched account of MST.

Carter, Miguel, [The Origin of Brazil's Landless Workers Movement MST: the Natalino Episode in Rio Grande do Sul \(1981-84\) – a case of ideal interest mobilization](#) [4], Working Paper Series CBS-43-2003, Oxford, University of Oxford Centre of Brazil Studies, 2003, pp. 71

Chabot, Sean ; Vinthagen, Stellan, [Rethinking Nonviolent Action and Contentious Politics: Political Cultures of Nonviolent Opposition in the Indian Independence Movement and Brazil's Landless Workers' Movement](#) [5], Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change, Vol. 27, 2007, pp. 91-121

Desmarais, Annette Aurelie, [La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants](#) [6], London, Pluto, 2007, pp. 254



Examines impact of modernization and globalization on agriculture and explores alternative forms of development and the evolution of an international peasant voice in Via Campesina, formed in 1993 to challenge the neoliberal economic agenda.

Hammond, John L., [Law and Disorder: The Brazilian Landless Farmworkers Movement](#) [7], Bulletin of Latin American Research, Vol. 18, issue 4, 1991, pp. 269-289

See also Hammond, John L., [The MST and the media: Competing images of the Brazilian Landless Farmworkers' Movement](#) [8] Latin American Politics and Society, 2004, pp. 61-90

Hurley, Judith, [Brazil: A Troubled Journey to the Promised Land](#) [9], In McManus; Schlabach, [Relentless Persistence: Nonviolent Action in Latin America](#) [10] (E. IV.1. General and Comparative Studies [11]), Philadelphia PA, New Society Publishers, pp. 174-196

The author, who founded a US support group for the landless, provides excerpts from her journal of visiting sites of land struggle in 1987. She notes intensified confrontations in 1980s between the landed elite and the landless, who resorted to lawsuits, demonstrations, fasts, vigils, marches, mock funerals and, above all, land occupations.

Latin American Perspectives, [Peasant Movements in Latin America](#) [12], no. 4 (issue 167) (July), Vol. 30, Latin American Perspectives Inc, 2009, pp. 213

The whole issue is dedicated to 'Peasant Movements in Latin America' including 2 articles on MST.

Rosset, Peter M. ; Patel, Roy ; Courville, Michael, [Promised Land: Competing Visions of Agrarian Reform](#) [13], Oakland CA, Food First, 2006, pp. 380

Includes chapters on Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, India, Mexico, South Africa and Zimbabwe (the latter refrains from discussing the human rights issues of the government sponsored post 1996 land occupations). Not all chapters discuss social movements, but the book does cover gender and indigenous issues.

Schlabach, Gerald, [The nonviolence of desperation: Peasant land action in Honduras](#) [14], In McManus; Schlabach, [Relentless Persistence: Nonviolent Action in Latin America](#) [10] (E. IV.1. General and Comparative Studies [11]), Philadelphia PA, New Society Publishers, pp. 48-62

Examines 200 peasant occupations in 1972 (assertion of a tradition of 'les recuperaciones') in context of developing forms of protest since the 'great strike' against United Fruit Company in 1954.

Schock, Kurt, [People Power and Alternative Politics](#) [15], In Barnell, Peter ; Randall, Vicky , [Politics in the Developing World](#) [16] Oxford, Oxford University Press, , 2008, pp. 186-207

Pays special attention to Ekta Parishad (an Indian land rights organization), the Assembly of the Poor in Thailand and MST in Brazil.

Schock, Kurt, [Land Struggles in the Global South: Strategic Innovations in Brazil and India](#) [17], In Maney; Kutz-Flamenbaum; Rohlinger; Goodwin, [Strategies for Social Change](#) [18] (A. 1.b. Strategic Theory, Dynamics, Methods and Movements [19]), Minneapolis MN, University of Minnesota Press, pp. 221-244

Stedile, Joao Pedro, [Landless Battalions](#) [20], New Left Review, issue 15 (May/June), 2002, pp. 77-104

Account by participant in evolution of land seizures and of how MST eventually achieved legal possession.



Welch, Cliff, [Movement Histories: A Preliminary Historiography of the Brazil Landless Laborers Movement \(MST\)](#) [21], Latin American Research Review, Vol. 41, issue 1, 2006, pp. 198-210

Wright, Angus ; Wolford, Wendy, [To Inherit the Earth: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for a New Brazil](#) [22], Oakland CA, Food First Books, 2003, pp. 357

Situates MST in the broader context of Brazilian history but also based on first hand research at MST settlements.

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