

# **Grassroots based agrarian reform in Santa Cruz:**

## **A reason to hope for the end of land concentration?**



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Student name:	Jose Alice Diemel
Student number:	s0824984
Supervisor at University:	Olivier Kramsch
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## 1. Introduction

*With my arms tightly wrapped around his waist, motor taxi driver Eddy professionally manoeuvres the motorcycle around the hundreds of deep holes, muddy car tracks and water pools in the road before us. For hours we have been passing through gigantic extensively cultivated soybean fields, followed by thousands of hectares of sugar cane, known to be owned by merely a handful of large land estate holders. After two full days of biking through the countryside of Santa Cruz we slowly start to arrive at Pueblos Unidos, one of Movimiento Sin Tierra's (MST) settlements established in 2004 as a result of a large land estate occupation.*

*Eddy turns his head to me and yells over the noise of the motorcycle that the soy and black bean fields we are passing at the moment are owned by the Pueblos Unidos community. The community's*

*agrarian property looks enormous. The fields stretch beyond the horizon and are structurally numbered with little cardboard signs. Little indigenous children go by on bikes that are far too big for them, while large John Deere machines professionally work the fields. It is almost impossible to match these images of such a professionally cultivated and structurally organized agrarian cooperation with the negative stories I have been told about MST in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. These people do not seem to be incapable at all of cultivating the swampy wetlands of Santa Cruz. Confidently I look around and the feeling that MST might indeed be capable of changing Santa Cruz' inequitable land distribution comes over me.*

*A wooden sign with the text "Bienvenido a Pueblos Unidos" looms up and we enter the village. Excitedly I thank Eddy and start asking around where to find el Jefe del Pueblo. People start turning away from me, warning each other not to give away too much information and the majority do not seem to be willing to talk to me at all. The inhabitants of Pueblos Unidos react with fear and suspicion. After eight hours wait I finally meet el Jefe del Pueblo. Slowly I start to realize that I might have been too quick drawing my conclusions. These people have fought hard and paid high prices for the land that surrounds us, they have been through a lot. The fight for land is not over yet, these people are still right in the middle of it.*

During the last decennium, worldwide campaigns such as the introduction of the UN Millennium Development Goals in 2000 have placed rural poverty on the international agenda once again. Rural development is perceived more and more as an effective way of fighting rural and consequently urban poverty. Nonetheless, enormous amounts of rural workers and small peasants in Latin America still face a lack of opportunities every day to change their way of life. Unequal distribution of agricultural land is an important cause for this rural poverty in Latin America and the political turmoil that often comes with it. While various types of land reform could contribute to diminishing rural poverty, it is especially redistributive land measures that have attracted the attention of many scholars and policymakers over the last decade.

Bolivia is one of Latin-America's countries that has experienced the above mentioned rural poverty, unequal landdistribution and consequently conflicts over agrarian land. For over more than half a century Bolivia has experienced agrarian reforms. Since 1953 many uprisings, policy changes and newly adopted land laws have significantly changed the Bolivian agrarian status quo. For example, over half of Bolivia's total surface has been redistributed between 1953 and 1992 (INRA Estadísticas Agrarias 1953-2002). However, these policy changes and new land laws have not yet been able to improve the position of many vulnerable rural groups. Moreover, agrarian land remains highly concentrated, particularly in the eastern department of Santa Cruz. According to figures from Bolivia's vice-ministry of Rural Development and Agriculture, between 60 and 70 percent of the productive lands in the Santa Cruz are in the hands of no more than 400 families (El Diario Internacional, 2006). Many academics and policy makers seem to agree on the importance of access to agrarian land as a fundamental solution to rural poverty in general and for Bolivia in particular. And redistribution of this agrarian land is the key to rural development. However, the ideas of these scholars and policy makers differ widely on how such redistributive land reforms should be executed. According to a specific branch of academic theories, the state should play a leading role in changing unequal concentration of agrarian land (Borras, Kay and Lohdi, 2007) (Borras, Saturnino M., 2003) (Lahiff, E., S. Borras, and C. Kay, 2007). Other theories denounce the idea of the state as the dominant agency for land reform and prescribe this role to the market (Binswanger, H. and K. Deininger 1993). In the case of Bolivia, it appears that over the past 60 years, neither this state-led nor the market-led approach to agrarian reform has been able to bring about a redistribution of agrarian land. Since both state- and market-led approaches have demonstrated their limits in many other Latin-American, Asian and African

countries as well, more and more academic writings have become to emphasize the need for a new approach to agrarian reform. Within this context, it has become interesting to examine alternative and complementary approaches to the conventional state- and/or market-led methods in order to sort out the profound inequalities within the land distribution situation in Bolivia. The examination of such an alternative and complementary approach with the aim of overcoming the inequitable allocation of agrarian land in Bolivia is exactly what the focus of master thesis will be.

An alternative/complementary approach, lately often referred to and extensively discussed in academic literature on land reform is the bottom up approach. Springing from the recently popular normative believe that 'local is better', scholars on agrarian reform argue that the future of agrarian reform lies in grassroots based organisations, such as peasant movements which go beyond the confines of the market and the state to redistribute land. Academics, like Janvry, Veltmeyer, Borras, Petras and Sadoulet claim that rural grassroots based movements are, in spite of their inferior economic and political positions, very well capable of bringing about social change. Such a bottom up approach consisting of land concentration fighting initiatives from grassroots based rural movements is currently taking place in Bolivia's eastern department, Santa Cruz. In February 2003, *Movimiento Sin Tierra*<sup>1</sup> - Santa Cruz (MST-SC), a rural grassroots based movement was founded as a reaction to the failure of decades of agrarian reform. The establishment of MST-SC was a response to the structural problem of land concentration and the wrongly usage of land. As the state and the market, for decades had proven to be incapable and/or unwilling to change the agrarian status quo, the Bolivian grassroots based movement decided to reform the agrarian sector 'from below' (Hermelinda Fernández Bamba 2003, p198). After the example of the Brazilian landless rural workers movement, *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, the Santa Cruz' *Movimiento Sin Tierra* started occupying under-used and illegally obtained agrarian properties in order to fight the inequitable agrarian land distribution in this department.

This thesis will bring together the current popularity of an grassroots based approach to agrarian land reform with the role the rural grassroots based movement *Movimiento Sin Tierra – Santa Cruz* could play in the redistributive reform presently unfolding in Bolivia's department of Santa Cruz. The research question central to this thesis is the following:

*Is the grassroots based rural movement, Movimiento Sin Tierra- Santa Cruz capable, as suggested in current academic literature to change the inequitable agrarian land distribution situation in the department of Santa Cruz?*

In order to come to a profound answering of this main research question, this research is divided into three sub-questions. However, before going into more detail on the analytical part of this research, the first next three chapters elaborate on respectively theoretical considerations, the research methodology and the context of the Bolivian struggle over agrarian land. Chapter 2 gives an extensive description of the current academic literature on various approaches to agrarian land reform. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology will be discussed, while Chapter 4 elaborates on the context of MST-SC's struggle for land by describing Bolivia's previous land reforms as well as the country's political and societal tensions. From Chapter 5 on the analytical part of the research will commence. The fifth Chapter revolves around the sub-question;

*To what extent has Movimiento Sin Tierra- Santa Cruz thus far been successful in bringing about a redistribution of agrarian land in the department?*

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<sup>1</sup> Movement without land

Chapter 5, firstly describes the origin, the ideology and the characteristics of the movement, before elaborating on the results MST-SC has obtained up till today in fighting agrarian land concentration in Santa Cruz. From this chapter it will appear that although a wide branch of academic literature is convinced that grassroots based movements are very capable of radically changing unequal land distribution situations, MST-SC has not been as successful in changing the unequal distribution of land in Santa Cruz as has been predicted by theorists as Janvry, Veltmeyer, Borras, Petras and Sadoulet. MST-SC has so far during seven years of struggle against the highly unequal land concentration, obtained not more than 142.000 hectares of agrarian land, benefiting merely 1965 families. Based on this data of the only modest capability of MST-SC to change the Santa Cruz land distribution pattern, it becomes interesting to examine why MST-SC thus far has not seem to have been successful in significantly changing Santa Cruz' agrarian distributive status quo. Chapter 6 will form the core of this research, investigating the reasons for MST-SC inability to bring about redistributive change. Firstly in Chapter 6 A, the theoretical considerations on the potential of grassroots based movement on agrarian reform in general will be applied on the case of MST-SC in Bolivia to explain the movement's inability to change land distribution status quo. Central in Chapter 6 A is the following sub-question;

*Can theoretical considerations on the potential of rural grassroots based movements explain the only moderate success of the Movimiento Sin Tierra- Santa Cruz' actions in changing the department's unequal agrarian land distribution situation so far?*

From Chapter 5 it appears that the theoretical considerations on the potential of grassroots based movements in changing inequitable land allocation situations is too positive in its statement when it comes to the specific case MST-SC in Bolivia. MST-SC has not brought about a significant redistributive change in Santa Cruz. However, Chapter 6 demonstrates that the theoretical considerations have not only been too optimistic in their ideas on the capacity of grassroots based movements, they also appear to be incapable of explaining MST-SC's inability to change Santa Cruz' land concentration situation. This finding leads to the answering of the third and last sub-question in Chapter 6 B.

*If currently leading theoretical considerations can not explain Movimiento Sin Tierra- Santa Cruz' moderate success in bringing about redistributive change, than what can be alternative explanation?*

Chapter 6 B thus elaborates on the possible additional explanations for MST-SC' inability to change the Santa Cruz' land distribution status quo, since the theoretical considerations seem to be capable to do this only to a certain extent. Chapter 7 then focuses, based on the findings from the earlier chapters, on the formulation of a holistic answer to the main research question of this thesis.

From a societal perspective, investigating the question whether MST-SC is capable, as suggested in current academic literature to change the inequitable agrarian land distribution situation in the department of Santa Cruz is very relevant, foremost because millions of Bolivians are affected by the current distributive problems of agrarian land. Between 250.000 and 300.000 rural Bolivians are by the country's statistics indicated to be landless (García Linera and Chavéz León 2008, p566). This means that hundreds of thousands of peasants have no agrarian land of their own and are forced to rent land from larger landholders or to work for agrarian companies as day labourers against small wages and with uncertainty of work. This inequitable land distribution and consequently the landlessness of the majority of Bolivia's rural population, makes it extremely difficult for

these people to maintain in their livelihood. Moreover, without a redistribution of agrarian land bridging the gap between Bolivia's rural poor and the rural elite upper-class becomes almost infeasible. Another issue that makes research on agrarian reform in Bolivia especially interesting is the social dynamics and the political disparities within this country. The disproportionate allocation of productive lands and other natural resources over the country, the fight for political autonomy in Bolivia's departments and the presence of ethnic disparities between eastern and western Bolivia makes the country a very interesting case. Land conflicts in Bolivia, are conflicts over more than just land.

Also scientifically, this research is highly relevant since quite contradictory statements exist on how a grassroots based approach to agrarian reform should be executed in order to be successful. In addition, there exists a serious lack of empirical proof for the potential success rural grassroots based movements could have on changing Santa Cruz' inequitable land distribution. Although, a landless movement in Brazil, which from 1984 to 2001 managed to settle over 400.000 formerly landless families onto agrarian smallholdings (Robbles 2001, 148) is an often used example for the success of the 'bottom-up' approach, Bolivia's situation is slightly different from that in Brazil. Therefore, it will be very relevant to profoundly investigate the successes and limits of MST-SC's actions in Santa Cruz as well as the context within which it operates. This way, the before mentioned theoretical considerations concerning the potential of grassroots based initiatives can be evaluated, checked and possibly suggestions can be done to deepen the theory, on the basis of the findings of this research.

As the anecdote at the beginning of this introduction already implies, four months of extensive fieldwork for this research was conducted both in the department of Santa Cruz as well as in Bolivia's capital of La Paz. Interviews were held with local land conflict researchers, regional and national government officials, local lobby organizations and MST members. Moreover, a survey was conducted under a sample of the population of Santa Cruz de la Sierra and a two day stay at one of MST-SC's occupation sites called *Pueblos Unidos* produced relevant information on the struggle MST-SC's delivers. A more extensive description of the fieldwork and methodologies used for this research can be found in Chapter 3.

## 2. Theoretical considerations: various approaches to agrarian land reform.

This chapter will give an overview of academic writings on the potential of various agrarian redistributive programmes and on the potential of grassroots based movements in particular. In the first two sections the arguments in favour and against state-led (SLAR) and market-led agrarian reform (MLAR) are reviewed. Next, the need for and the potential of grassroots based movements as a redistributive alternative is discussed. The last section elaborates on some of, in the literature mentioned, prerequisites for a successful redistribution of land by grassroots based movements. In order to add to the linkage between the theory and the research in Bolivia, the emphasis of the articles used and discussed in this chapter lies on land reform and redistribution processes in Latin America.



### 2.1 State-led agrarian reform

Since the 1960's until the end of the 1980's the state has played a dominant role in land reform processes in developing countries around the world and particularly in Latin America (Veltmeyer 2005, p298). By imposing restrictive measures such as obliging landholdings to fulfil a social-economic function, the state expropriated under-used landholdings and redistributed these to the poorer rural population (Janvry 1998). According to Borras, Lahiff and Kay, a group of pro-SLAR academics, this type of redistributive programme has booked successes in among others Chile, South Korea, Taiwan and Mexico (Borras 2003, p114). Nevertheless, these types of land reform processes, in which the state plays such a central part, have been denounced for their limitations by other scholars.

Critique on SLAR revolves mainly around two important headings, namely; distortion of the land market; and poor programme design and implementation (Lahiff 2007, p1421). Opponents of SLAR criticize the state-led approach for introducing a range of land market distorting measures, such as land size ceilings. Deininger and Binswanger, two neo-liberal opponents of SLAR linked to the World Bank, argue that such restrictive measures will distort the market by limiting the size of potential successful and efficient agrarian companies (Deininger and Binswanger 1995, p267). Such restrictive measures form a serious threat to large scale agrarian initiatives and therefore to tenure security, the two scholars state. Moreover they argue that thus far SLAR methods have failed to achieve the desired results of a more equitable distribution of land (Deininger and Binswanger 1995, p263).

Another point of critique on SLAR focuses on the inefficient and ultimately ineffective manner in which state-led reform programmes have been designed and implemented in the past. According to this critique, it is especially the 'supply driven' nature of SLAR that leads to undesirable outcomes. Productive lands suitable for expropriation are, within state led programmes often selected even before potential beneficiaries have been identified. This way, inexperienced peasants possibly incapable of working the land efficiently become beneficiaries of the donated land (Borras 2003, p110). This supply-led approach could, according to critics lead either to the acquisition of lands that are not suitable for agricultural production, such as swamps or lands in very remote areas or to the expropriation of lands already cultivated by more efficient agrarian producers. Moreover, the exploitive and coercive character of SLAR would provoke resistance by landowners and legal battles over property rights which could seriously slow down the reform implementation (Lahiff 2007, p1422).

A last critique states revolves around the idea that SLAR has in many cases been executed as a top-down method. By heavily relying on the central state and its often complicated bureaucracy for its implementation, this top-down method bears the risk to fail to respond to the diversity in needs at the local level. SLAR would moreover, be excessively expensive while at the same time breeding unaccountable bureaucracies that could easily result in corruption (Lahiff 2007, Borras 2003).

### 2.2 Market-led agrarian reform

Constructed out of the above mentioned critique on the state-led agrarian reform approach, an alternative reform model was formulated in the early 1990s and widely implemented over the course of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Primarily by pro-market scholars and financial institutes like the World Bank, this market-led agrarian reform model (MLAR) was perceived to be the solution to the continual landlessness in developing countries. One of the main assumptions of MLAR is the importance of securing and formalizing private land rights as a tool for empowerment of the poor. Deininger and Binswanger, and De Soto argue that well defined property rights are not only an incentive to work more efficiently and sustainable, but that they also provide the ability to obtain access to financial markets and offer tenure security. Land rights can thus have an enormous positive impact on agricultural



production (Deiniger and Binswanger 1995, p247 and Lahiff 2007, p1419). Another important characteristic of the MLAR approach is the 'willing buyer' and 'willing seller' principle. According to MLAR advocates, both social equity and economic efficiency can best be achieved through voluntary market transactions. A condition for the functioning of this market-based system is the removal of various distortions on land and agrarian markets, such as land size ceilings and subsidies to landowners. At the same time landowners should be encouraged to sell under-used lands and the poor should be enabled to enter the land market by the provision of cheap loans (Lahiff 2007, p1420).

Critics of the MLAR claim that the market-led approach to land reform is grounded on two false assumptions; 1) markets are institutes in which participants are equal and 2) land is solely an economic asset (Lahiff 2007, p1419). MLAR critics state that the presumed voluntary nature of the market-led model glosses over the unequal power relations that are behind the demands for land. The market-oriented approach would benefit sellers (landowners) over buyers (landless peasants, rural workers) since it offers landowners the opportunity to only engage in land reform processes when it is in their interests, while it does not provide the same advantage to potential buyers (Lahiff 2007, p1423-25). It is likely that existing landowners therefore will sell little land or only low-quality land, resulting in a low land transfer and thus a minimal redistribution of land. Borras concludes that market-led land reform policies have underestimated the power of land-elites and have thus been incapable of meeting the needs of rural poor and landless (Borras and McKinley 2006, p2).

By perceiving land merely as an economic factor of production, MLAR advocates have failed to see its other equally important dimensions. Land is, besides an economic resource, a social, cultural, religious and environmental asset. Lahiff argues that market-oriented approaches to landdistribution also downplay the importance of land as a source of political power (Lahiff 2007, p1432). Thus, when confronting unequal landdistribution in Latin America one should deal with land in a comprehensive way.

In the case of Bolivia, both state-led and market-led agrarian reforms have not (yet) improved the unequal distribution of land in the country. Agrarian land reform programmes using a state-led approach were introduced shortly after the agrarian revolution of 1952. During the state-led agrarian reform of 1953 the Bolivian state took measures to eliminate the *hacienda*<sup>2</sup> system and its related peasant-servitude and promised to redistribute land to landless communities. By means of colonization programmes in the 1960s and 1970s that motivated the western rural population to settle in the vast and 'empty' eastern lowlands, the Bolivian state hoped to provide landless population with new opportunities to obtain agrarian land. Moreover, from the 1950s on, the state invested enormously in infrastructure and agrarian and livestock production, mainly in the east (Bonifaz 2005, p3). Although the Bolivian state set up extensive programming in order to change the agrarian situation, it did not turn out as positive as intended. Over half of Bolivia's total surface was distributed during the years after 1953. However, due to widespread corruption huge amounts of these agrarian lands were given away to individuals supporting the government of the day. Land was thus not distributed according to need or economic and social efficiency, but on the basis of political favouritism and patronage.

A market-led approach turned out to be not much more effective in generating change than were the above described stat-led methods. Although Bolivia has so far not seen a strictly market-led agrarian reform, market-led agrarian programmes, in combination with some state interference were introduced in the 1990s. Central to these programmes was the idea that a clarification of land rights in Bolivia would secure property rights and consequently would encourage the trade in landholdings. This increased trade in landholdings was in turn supposed to lead to a more equal distribution of land. This process of regularization aimed to verify the legality of every property right handed out since 1953 and to correct distortions of landownership. Although this market-led

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<sup>2</sup> A large landed estate, often making use of peasant-servitude

approach differs very much in essence from the state-led approach, it has not been much more successful. Since the regularization was met with grave opposition as well as with many problems within the land regularization institute, the process could only partly be executed. Therefore, also a market-led approach has not brought many of the results that were hoped for.

In short, one could say that neither state- nor market-led agrarian reform so far has managed to change the unequal distribution of agrarian land in Bolivia.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.3 A redistributive alternative. The potential of rural grassroots based organizations

As the previous text already suggest have many state in Latin America have been unable or unwilling to take a leading role in the redistribution process and have market-oriented approaches on the same continent showed to be biased towards landowners. Therefore, one could conclude that due to these failing measures and incorrect implementations, neither of the two approaches has appeared to be successful in removing the unequal landdistribution in Latin America. This assumption is supported by empirical evidence showing how SLAR as well as MLAR have brought about only moderate land redistribution in developing countries, like in Bolivia (Borras 2003, Lahiff 2007, Deiniger and Binswanger 1995).

It is important to note that, in addition to the problem of the only moderate success of traditional land reform programmes, namely state- or market-led approaches, Janvry and Sadoulet claim that these moderately successful redistributive programmes have benefited only parts of the rural population (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998). They describe how, from the mid-twentieth century on, state-led land reform campaigns in Latin America expropriated and redistributed traditional oversized and under-used estates amongst former workers of these agrarian businesses. Incorporation of landless workers, who were not formerly employed at these traditional land estates, was often severely resisted by these former employees in order to secure future access to land for their descendants (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p8). Thus, in spite of large-scale benefits for former estate workers, these land reform processes have not transformed the rural sector to the advantage of other landless workers. Janvry and Sadoulet argue that without expanding land reform to include the rural landless workers, pressures to obtain access to land will likely be voiced by rural violence (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p2).

Clearly, a new path is required to sort out the profound unequal land distribution in, amongst many other countries, Bolivia. Springing from the recently popular normative belief that 'local is better', it is argued that the future of agrarian reform lies in grassroots based organisations, such as peasant movements that go beyond the confines of the market and the state to redistribute land. A move in the direction of civil society in the form of rural grassroots based movements seems a logic consequence of the flawed MLAR- and SLAR- approaches of the last decades. However, ideas on the potential that rural grassroots based movements can have in bringing about a more equitable land distribution situation are mixed.

The remaining part of this section will therefore elaborate on the potential of bottom-up approaches as an alternative for or an addition to SLAR and MLAR approaches. The emphasis of this section will be on the potential of rural grassroots based movements and secondly on the conditions under which such grassroots based movements could be successful.

#### 2.3.1 Views on the potential of rural grassroots based movements to change land distribution

In their article on peasant movements in Latin America, Petras and Veltmeyer describe how, at the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century many scholars continued to view rural development and social change in structural terms (Petras and

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<sup>3</sup> Much more detailed information on agrarian land reform in Bolivia is described in chapter 4.

Veltmeyer 2001, p84-96). These scholars explain and analyse dynamics of change and the role of rural populations and their movements, on the basis of underlying structures and processes that are beyond the immediate control of the subjects concerned. One of the processes these so-called structuralists put emphasize on, is the process of modernization that takes the form of essentially capitalist development. These structuralists have a rather negative view on the role the peasantry and rural grassroots based movements in particular can play in achieving social change. They believe that actors of change will encounter great difficulty when attempting to alter the underlying structures of society. The peasantry, and with them rural grassroots based movements will either become a victim of modernization or they will be converted into a completely different social category. But either way, peasantry will come to play a secondary role in society and therefore unable to change the modernization process to their advantage. According to these structuralists, land distributive change is thus not to be expected from the peasantry or aligned rural movements (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001).

Although the above described structuralist line of argumentation has been quite popular throughout the last century, recently - from the end of the 1990's on - a more positive sound on the future role of the peasantry is heard. Veltmeyer and Petras, for example, opposed to structuralist ideas do emphasize the potential of rural grassroots based movements in changing distributive patterns. One of Veltmeyer and Petras' main critiques of the structuralist's tendency is how it denies the importance of human agency (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001, p96). Huizer; Borras; Janvy and Sadoulet; and Veltmeyer and Petras argue that peasant- and landless workers' movements in Latin America can, despite the existence of the, for them, detrimental structures, indeed be a significant social and political force in opposing unequal landdistribution situations. The structuralist belief that the rural population and thus rural grassroots based movements are incapable of leading a struggle for social change, due to poverty, physical weakness and vulnerability is dismissed by both Veltmeyer and Petras, and Huizer as a false assumption (Huizer 1999, p58 and Petras and Veltmeyer 2001, p102). Veltmeyer and Petras refute the idea that 'rural idiocy' would still pervade the countryside. Today rural movements' leading activists and militants are educated, modern, cosmopolitan and have an explicit understanding of national politics. Also Janvry and Sadoulet believe that grassroots initiatives can play a significant role in satisfying the demands of the prejudiced segment of the rural population. Due to the participation of direct beneficiaries in rural movements, rural grassroots based movements have access to information on local needs and could therefore play a central role in transforming currently unequal land distribution situations (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p28). In sum, peasant and rural workers movements are despite their inferior position in national economy and politics very well capable of unsettling the *status quo* on their own behalf.

Aside from the importance human agency plays in processes of social change, Veltmeyer and Petras describe how the current rural context is also advantageous to the emergence and development of rural grassroots based movements. Although Latin American cities have indeed grown immensely due to rural out-migration in the 1960s and 70s, as of the early 1980s their economies entered an era of stagnation, which reduced the absorptive capacity of the industrial-urban sector. These structural restraints in the urban area resulted in an increasing amount of landless and sometimes unemployed rural workers and renters on the countryside. Veltmeyer and Petras claim that in this situation, when the route of urbanization has become less straightforward and large-scale farmers provide rural employment, a process of 'rural proletarianization' comes into existence (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001, p97-100). Large segments of property-less rural workers who remain on the countryside and have relatively strong ties to the land are confronted with the inability to access land and thus start to work for larger agrarian businesses. The contrast between people without land and land without people will, for the remaining rural population, be an important incentive for social rural mobilization. Consequently, new grassroots based peasant movements are born.

Thirdly, the academics suggesting a bottom-up approach as an addition to and alternative for SLAR and MLAR argue that besides being a base of power for social change, the peasantry also forms an alternative for the neo-liberal linear idea of modernization. Reasoned along this line, the conflict between landed elites and landless workers revolves not so much around traditional rural sectors resisting modernity, but is based on a struggle over means of production. Though the structuralist image of the countryside is a negative and static one, the rural sector could also be viewed as a promising sector with successful production cooperatives originated as a result of social mobilization and land occupations. A rural sector with a dynamic rural workforce that has modern and positive attitudes towards the possibility of transformative change can thus form a serious alternative to the structuralist idea of modernization (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001, Huizer 1999, Janvry and Sadoulet 1998).

In sum, the above mentioned scholars claim that rural grassroots based movements are, in spite of their inferior economic and political positions, very well capable of bringing about social change, especially since the current rural circumstances are advantageous to the emergence of this type of revolutionary movements. Consequently, one could expect the rural poor to turn away from market- and state-led agrarian reform campaigns. Judging by the above, it is likely that the rural poor will achieve most result by pressuring the state and large landholders by social mobilization and tactics of direct actions. Although, this path to achieve a more equal land allocation is probably the path of greatest resistance, it is also the path with good prospects as is demonstrated by rural movements over the last decades (Veltmeyer and Petras 2008, p23 and Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p13-23). One example brought up by all mentioned scholars is the success of the Brazilian Rural Landless Workers' Movement (*Movimento Dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, MST). By expropriating more than 7.3 million hectares and settling over 400.000 landless workers onto agrarian collectives through land occupations within 15 years, the Brazilian MST has proven precisely of what rural movements are capable (Robles 2001, p148).

### *2.3.2 Prerequisite for rural grassroots based movements as a successful redistributive alternative*

Petras and Veltmeyer, Borras, Huizer, and Janvry and Sadoulet are very clear and maybe even convincing in their belief that the peasantry will play a significant role in Latin America's land distribution issues. Nevertheless, not much is written in their academic writings on possible or proven preconditions needed for rural grassroots based movements to succeed in their fight against rural inequalities. This section discusses the scarce prerequisites mentioned in their writings for grassroots based movements to change the distributive status quo that are mentioned in the literature.

In order to be successful in bringing about change, these rural movements should comply with certain preconditions according to scholars Huizer, Borras, Janvry and Sadoulet, and Petras and Veltmeijer. The first precondition, revolves around the value of networks linking local land reform movements to one another nationwide in order to create solidarity and mobilize public support. Secondly, these movements have to maintain good relations with global institutions and international partners who are supportive of their case. Thirdly, these rural movements struggling to change the distributive status quo should mobilize public support for the organization and attract new rural activists. Finally, most scholars describe the presence of a broad pro-reform political coalition supportive to land redistribution to be an important prerequisite for rural movements to bring about change. However, there exist contradictory ideas on whether rural movements should interact and cooperate with such pro-reform governments.

#### Intra-movement interaction

The first prerequisite needed for rural grassroots based movements to succeed in their fight against rural inequalities is mentioned by Janvry and Sadoulet. It revolves around the value of networks linking fractions of a local land reform movement to other fractions nationwide, in order to create solidarity, to encourage its members to continue their struggle and to mobilize public support. Such a network between different movement settlements creates solidarity and encourages its members to continue their struggle (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p23). Moreover, by maintaining a network between various settlements, a movement creates an ongoing reserve of political pressure and economic resources that can be activated when there is general or "national" need (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p23). Such a network is characterized by a continuous flow of information, members, and economic resources regional- or nation-wide. Moreover, regional and/or national meetings and demonstrations in which various settlements participate are also an indication of a regional/national network (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p28-30).

#### Alliances with supportive organizations

Local land reform movements should in addition to good internal relations also maintain good relations with global institutions and international partners according to the two scholars (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p28-30). The need for rural grassroots based movements to maintain profound contact without third parties is a prerequisite that is reiterated by Borras and McKinley. The implementation of the redistribution project by politically backed-up rural movements, will according to Borras and McKinley, be most effective with the presence of outside material support, in the form of technical assistance by international organizations, state loans and public investment (Borras and McKinley 2006). Third parties, such as international and national NGO's for example could back up grassroots based movements with financial support. However, it is not just flows of financial aid that characterize the benefits for rural movements resulting from good relationships with third parties. Profiting from extensive networks, such as the one of the Catholic Church is another important advantage for grassroots based movements. Moreover, support from internationally known and influential organizations, such as Amnesty International also yield legitimacy for the movement's work and pressure on national governments (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p19).

#### Widespread public support for the movement

Rural movements struggling to change the distributive status quo, should first of all mobilize public support for the organization's ideology and actions and should attract new rural activists. According to Huizer and, Veltmeyer and Petras, mobilizing public support will not be that difficult since the success of earlier activities of the movement, such as the winning of land and the vision of a better future will automatically attract new members and increase public support (Huizer 1999, p61 and Veltmeyer and Petras 2001, p97). Thus, while the dominant class might have resources like money and the judicial components of the state apparatus, far-reaching motivation and mass mobilization also are important resources of power to change the *status quo* (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001, p97).

#### The presence of a political favourable environment and collaboration between the rural movement and the supportive government

One of the most discussed pre-conditions is the presence of a political environment that is supportive to social change. The need for such political support is only underlined by a few scholars, most notably Borras and McKinley. In their 2006 article on alternatives for SLAR and MLAR programmes, they give grassroots based peasant movements a central role in their general outline of what an alternative land distribution programme should look like. However, apart from independently formed and directed rural workers and landless peasant

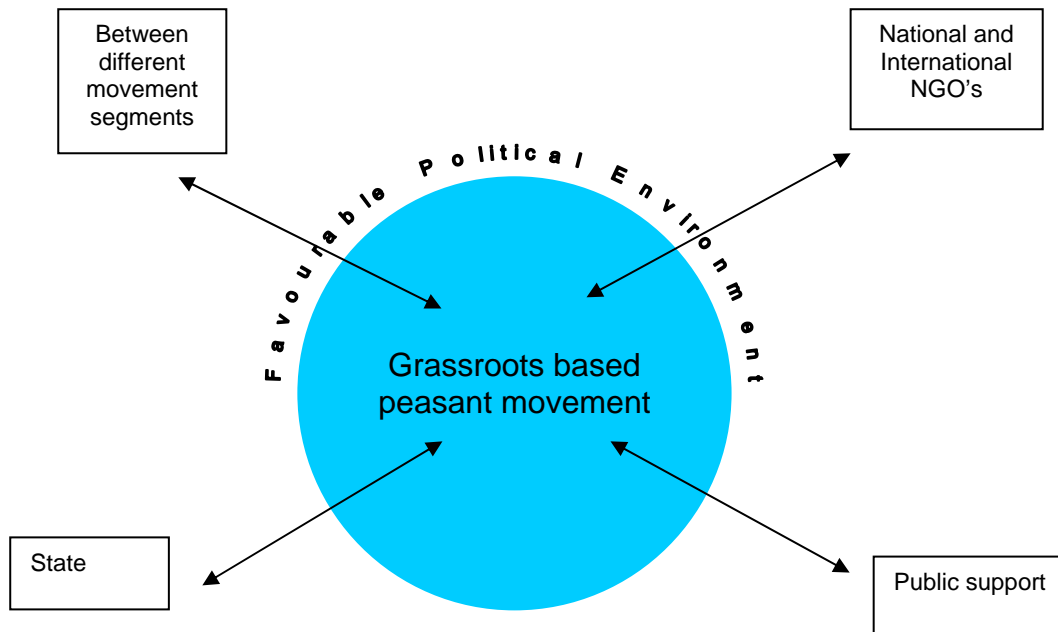
organizations, the two scholars point to the presence of other segments in society needed for an alternative distribution programme. Although rural movements should be independent and autonomous of the state, Borras and McKinley argue that such movements are very unlikely to succeed without powerful political allies (Borras 2006, p3). Therefore, a broad pro-reform political coalition that supports land redistribution and that is strong enough to exercise political influence at a national level would be beneficial to rural movements. Borras and McKinley's idea of the role of the state in revolutionary rural processes is reiterated by Janvry and Sadoulet. They argue that even despite the potential of grassroots based movements, it is needed for governments to give priority to this unfinished task of land reform in order to prevent even more extreme poverty, urban migration and rural violence (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p30).

Although, Borras and McKinley, as well as Janvry and Sadoulet are very convinced of the need for cooperation and interaction between the movements and the state, Petras and Veltmeyer prescribe an exactly opposite role to the state in relation to rural movements. They claim that grassroots based movements should renounce cooperation with the state since in the past reliance on or electoral alliances with 'populist' or 'centre-left' regimes has resulted utterly negative (Petras 2005, p3). Politics of strategic political alliances could alienate the rural movement from its grassroots support and slowdown or paralyze the struggle for agrarian reform (Veltmeyer and Petras 2008, p24-25). Therefore, Petras and Veltmeyer repeatedly assert that rural movements should continue to do what they do best. That is, continue to pressure the state and under-used and illegally obtained land estates, by relying on direct actions such as occupying land estates, blocking roads etc., instead of undermining their social advantages by building electoral alliances.

When schematically illustrated, the prerequisites a grassroots based movement should comply with in order to succeed in bringing about redistributive change, look like they do in figure 1.

Figure 1:

Schematic overview of the prerequisites for a successful grassroots based organization, according to Borras, Huizer, Janvry, Petras and Veltmeijer.



↔ = Interaction between rural grassroots based land reform movement and other actor

Summarized, when support and initiative for redistributive change comes from bottom-up, a pro-reform political coalition is present, the movement has strong public support and has strong alliances within the movement as well as with international and national organizations, rural grassroots based movements should theoretically be capable to radically change current landdistribution situations. However, when taking a look at the more specific case of a rural grassroots based movement in Bolivia, the Movimiento Sin Tierra in Santa Cruz, it appears that changing an unequal distribution of agrarian land in a certain area is even more complicated than is described by the theorists referred to in the previous sections. More importantly, when applying the above described theoretical considerations to the more specific case of MST-Santa Cruz, the theoretical considerations seem only to be capable to a certain extent to explain the unsuccessful attempt of MST-Santa Cruz to significantly change the disproportionate land distribution in the department of Santa Cruz. Therefore, there is a need for further research on the reasons for the failure of the attempt of MST-SC. Chapter 7 will further discuss to what extent the theoretical considerations of Veltmeyer and Petras, Janvry and Sadoulet, Huizer and Borras and McKinley are able to explain the failure of MST-Santa Cruz' in reaching its goal. Additionally, Chapter 8 will pay attention to possible other explanations on why MST-Santa Cruz' attempt to change the department's unequal distribution of land has not been successful.

### 3. Methodology

In order to conduct this research the researcher has stayed in Bolivia for four months. While staying in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, interviews were held with regional government officials, local lobby organisations, local research institutes and MST-SC leading figures. Moreover a survey was conducted in several neighbourhoods in the city. In addition to the four months permanent stay in the capital of Santa Cruz, a two week trip was made to La Paz, Bolivia's capital to visit the national INRA library, to speak to other national land researchers and several national



government officials at the Vice-ministry of land. A second trip was made to the MST-SC settlement *Pueblos Unidos*, in order to conduct fieldwork.

This chapter will elaborate on the research structure and methods used in order to answer the main research question. The first section gives an overview of how the research is structured and which data collection methods have been used during which phase. The second part describes into more detail the research methods that have been used to gather data, elaborating on the procedure of data collection and possible biases.

### 3.1 Research structure and method

As described in the introductory chapter, the goal of this research is to investigate whether Movimiento Sin Tierra-Santa Cruz, a grassroots based peasant movement in Bolivia, is capable of achieving a more equal distribution of agrarian land in the department of Santa Cruz. In order to answer this central question, the research is divided into three sub-questions. The research itself is also divided into three research phases.

#### 3.1.1 Phase 1: Statistical analysis

The first phase of the research consists of a statistical analysis linked to the first sub-question; *To what extent has Movimiento Sin Tierra-Santa Cruz been successful in bringing about a redistribution of agrarian land in the department?*. This statistical analysis focuses on the land reforming results MST-SC has achieved thus far. These results as well as the answering of the first sub-question are discussed in Chapter 5.

Information for this statistical analysis was firstly gathered by examining national land statistics at the *Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria* (INRA)<sup>4</sup>. However, gathering information at the INRA, on occupation of land estates by MST-SC and the obtainment of agrarian land by MST-SC, appeared to be very difficult. Information on land registration is not publicly accessible in Bolivia. By means of special requests one can request specific information on for example MST-SC. Nevertheless, due to the political sensitiveness of the MST-SC subject, due to enormous bureaucracy and possibly even due to the fact that INRA does not have disposal of detailed information on MST-SC occupations and obtainments, it appeared to be impossible to gather useful information on MST-SC at INRA. Therefore, secondary documentation, such as articles from local researchers were used to evaluate MST-SC's actions and achievements over the last decade. This secondary documentation was supplemented by an examination of local news articles and publications of MST itself on MST-SC occupations. The gathered information was then finally discussed with MST-SC leaders in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in order to confirm the correctness of the data and possibly supplement it. Also interviews were held with MST-SC leader Silvestre Saisari and MST-SC's main lawyer Javier Aramayo, during which the origin, ideology, organization structure and methods of the movement were discussed. During a two day stay at *Pueblos Unidos*, the largest MST-SC settlement in Santa Cruz established from a land occupation site, the information gathered through the earlier described instruments were confirmed and supplemented with new data by observing and interviewing MST-SC members inhabiting the settlement.

The first part of the research, the statistical analysis of Chapter 5 demonstrates that MST-SC efforts so far have not been successful in significantly changing the department's unequal land distribution. For that reason the second part of the thesis will revolve around the question why MST-SC seems to have such difficulty bringing about a change in the Cruceño<sup>5</sup> agrarian land allocation situation. This second phase of the research will thus be a descriptive analysis in which explanations for the movements moderate success will be sought for.

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<sup>4</sup> National Institute for Agrarian Reform

<sup>5</sup> Cruceño describes de origin from Santa Cruz

### *3.1.2 Phase 2A: Descriptive analysis based on theoretical considerations*

As a starting point, the descriptive analysis will firstly focus on the theoretical considerations written on the potential for grassroots based movements to bring about redistributive change. Central to this research phase will be the second sub-question; *Can theoretical considerations on the potential of rural grassroots based movements explain the only moderate success of the Movimiento Sin Tierra- Santa Cruz' actions in changing the department's unequal agrarian land distribution situation so far?* Quite a few scholars underline the potential role grassroots based movements in Latin America can play in changing the unequal agrarian land distribution circumstances. These academics state that peasant- or landless-movements can bring about redistributive agrarian change, albeit under certain prescribed conditions. Even though the mentioned theories do not elaborate much on those conditions needed for rural movements to bring about redistributive change, four of the most thoroughly described prerequisites are extracted from the academic literature. These four most important prerequisites mentioned in the literature are; 1) intra-movement interaction; 2) alliances with supportive organizations; 3) widespread public support for the movement; and 4) presence of a political favourable environment. In order to understand the utmost modest success of MST-SC in bringing about redistributive change, it will be examined to what extent these four theoretical conditions explain MST-SC's inability to significantly change the land distribution situation in Santa Cruz. By investigating whether MST-SC complies with the prescribed conditions and thus with the theoretical considerations, the researcher hopes to find an explanation for the movement's inability to fight the distributive inequality of land. Firstly, in Chapter 6 A it is examined whether MST adheres to the three first prerequisites. On the fourth prerequisite, 'namely 'the presence a favourable political environment', there exist contradictory views in the academic world. Therefore, it is examined which of the theoretical views on 'the presence of a favourable political environment' applies to MST-SC and whether such a political environment, supportive to change is indeed favourable for the MST in achieving redistributive change.

Before being able to examine to what extent those four prerequisites can explain MST-SC moderate success in bringing about redistributive change, it is necessary to operationalize these concepts;

#### Intra-movement interaction

The existence of a network between different movement settlements can be evaluated on the basis of the exchange of information, members, and economic resources between different MST-SC settlements. Another indicator of intra-movement interaction is the organisation of frequent regional and/or national meetings and demonstrations in which various settlements participate.

#### Alliances with supportive organizations

The presence of supportive relations between MST-SC and national/international partners could firstly be measured by the financial support MST-SC receives. However, flows of financial aid are merely one of the benefits for rural movements resulting from good relationships with third parties. Another indication of alliances with supportive organizations is the donation of practical and juridical backing, and moral support to the movement. Also pressure exercised on the national government by MST-SC supportive organisations are an indication of the presence of alliances with supportive national and international NGO's.

#### Widespread public support for the movement

The presence of public support for a grassroots based movement, is partly found in the public opinion on such movements. Public opinion is reflected in the way people talk about such a rural movement. Moreover, public

support also expresses itself in the form of media and civil society groups writing and speaking positively about the movement.

### Presence of a favourable political environment

The existence of a politically supportive environment to MST-SC's cause can firstly be determined by the presence of a pro-reform political coalition which is supportive to the idea of agrarian land redistribution. The support from a political coalition can be measured by for example, national government public statements on MST-SC as well as actions from the national government to fight inequitable land distribution. However, such a pro-reform political environment will only be favourable to MST-SC when it is strong enough to actually exercise political influence at a national level in order to change the current land distribution situation.

Research phase 2A, is partly based on the case studies of *Pueblos Unidos* and *Las Trillizas*, two MST-SC's agrarian settlements in the Santa Cruz department. Data on these case studies was collected through field work including interviews, non-participant observations in *Pueblos Unidos* and secondary documentation- and statistics- analysis on both *Pueblos Unidos* and *Las Trillizas*. In *Pueblos Unidos*, several MST-SC members and settlement leaders were interviewed in order to gain better insight into the question whether MST-SC complies with the first prerequisite; the intra-movement interaction. Questions on their knowledge of and contact with other MST-SC settlements as well as their attendance and knowledge of regional/national MST meetings gave better insight in the intra-movement interaction of MST-SC. Compliance with the second prerequisite on alliances with national/international supportive partners, was examined particularly through interviews with MST-SC leader Silvestre Saisari, MST-SC's main lawyer Javier Aramayo and an employee of a local NGO's supporting MST-SC called Mario Espinoza. These interviews shed light on the amount and type of support MST-SC can count on as well as on their ability to build alliances with these organisations. In order to gain better understanding of Cruceños public opinion on MST-SC's ideology and its actions, a survey was held under a hundred citizens from Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Also examining the frequency and tone of the media coverage of MST-SC activities gave insight in the public opinion on MST-SC activities. Concerning the last prerequisite on the importance of a movement's interaction with a pro-reform political coalition, interviews were held with national researchers, several national government officials of the Vice-ministry for land and again with MST-SC leader Silvestre Saisari.

Although, the methods used for information gathering are here above mentioned on the basis of the prerequisites, it is important to keep in consideration in reality the methods used were not strictly coupled to one question or investigation issue. Often an interview with one person shed light on several of the prerequisites examined.

### *3.1.2 Phase 2B: Descriptive analysis based on additional insights*

From Chapter 6 A it will become clear that MST-SC's compliance or non-compliance with these prerequisites does explain the movements difficulties in changing the Cruceño land distributive status quo only to a certain extent. The for this research used theoretical considerations lay too much emphasis on human action, and therefore they overlook the importance of the role social structures play in the strife for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land. Consequently, there is a need for further research on other possible explanation for the movement's meagre results. In chapter 6 B complementary explanations for the movement's failure to achieving a redistribution of agrarian land in the eastern department of Bolivia will be discussed. These complementary explanations will particularly focus within the social structures of Bolivia's and Santa Cruz' society.

For phase 2B of the research again several research methods were used, including some of the above mentioned. Secondary documentation of local and international research institutes such as Fundacion Tierra, *Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado*<sup>6</sup> (CIPCA), *Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*<sup>7</sup> (GTZ) were used to gather general information on MST-SC. Moreover, interviews with researcher and directors of these local land research institutes helped gaining a better understanding of the land reform context and the political and social dynamics of both Bolivia and Santa Cruz. However, more importantly through these interviews insights were gained on possible other explanations for MST-SC's only moderate success in changing Santa Cruz' agrarian distributive status quo. Previous research of international organisations such as Amnesty international, World Justice Programme, Freedom House and local researchers provided insights in the functioning and independence of both the media and the judiciary apparatus. Additionally, also interviews with regional and national government officials as well as with directors of local Cruceño lobby organisations opposed to MST-SC's ideology, like CAO, Fegasacruz.

### 3.2 Research instruments for data collection

The data for this study were gathered using qualitative research methods. Due to the complexness and the extensiveness of the research subject, the use of qualitative methods was chosen in order to provide the researcher with contextual details and a more comprehensive view on the subject. This section will elaborate on the various methods used during the four months research in order to collect sufficient and relevant data.

#### 3.2.1 Case study

##### Choice of case study as a method

The use of a case study as a method of examining MST-SC functioning and activities was chosen because of a limited time schedule to study all cases of MST-SC occupations and land acquiring situations in Santa Cruz. Moreover the formulation of the main research question implicitly entails that in-depth research into the characteristics and functioning of the MST-SC occupations, its organization structure as well as the relations between MST-SC and third parties is needed to clearly understand and analyze the results of the MST-SC occupations in the struggle against land concentration.

##### Choice of Pueblos Unidos and Las Trillizas

The case of *Pueblos Unidos* was chosen because it is one of the most extensive and long lasting MST –SC land occupations in the department. Over a 1000 landless people have been involved in the occupation of several land estates for over more than 9 years. Therefore, the case of *Pueblos Unidos* is a very interesting one that is also well documented and researched by other parties. Since *Pueblos Unidos* has been a moderate success for MST-SC, the case of *Las Trillizas* was chosen due to the fact that it gives a clear indication of MST-SC vulnerabilities. Therefore, the case of *Las Trillizas* is a good case study in order to better understand MST-SC's troubles and context.

##### Procedure of data collection

Data on *Pueblos Unidos* was collected during two days of fieldwork in the settlement itself, through non-participant observation and interviews with several residents and leaders of the village. Moreover, background information about this MST-SC settlement was gathered through secondary documentation analysis and talks with other interviewees in Santa Cruz, such as the national leader of MST-SC, involved NGO employees and Bolivian researchers. Due to the lack of research time as well as due to the tardy realization of the importance of

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<sup>6</sup> Centre for peasant investigation and encouragement

<sup>7</sup> Association for Technical Cooperation

the case of *Las Trillizas*, no case study of this settlement was done. Nevertheless, by means of means of news article, studies by Bolivian research organizations and public statements of MST-SC itself interesting information was obtained.

### Bias

By mainly focussing on *Pueblos Unidos* and *Las Trillizas*, other MST occupations and settlements with different problems and experiences are kept out of the research. There are for example MST-SC settlements in Santa Cruz that encounter problems with other nearby indigenous settlements. Although the case of *Pueblos Unidos* and *Las Trillizas* are very extensive cases, both concerning the amount of people involved and in time, studying mainly these two cases can not give a perfect representative picture of how the MST functions and operates in the whole of Santa Cruz.

### *3.2.2 Interviews*

#### Choice of interviews as a method

In a country as Bolivia, where information and data is not that well documented and organized, doing interviews is a method to reach this otherwise untraceable information. Moreover, in the cases documentation was available up beforehand, an interview with an NGO employee or local researcher provided the opportunity to elucidate possible obscurities. Moreover, by conducting the interviews in a semi-structured way possibilities were created for the interviewee to come up with new and surprising information and explanations.

#### Choice of interviewees

A first set of interviews, taken during the first weeks of the research, was done mainly to get acquainted with the landdistribution situation in Santa Cruz, the related tensions and struggles and the more general political and social circumstances. The interviews were used to elaborate on previously unclear issues and to check the relevance of the planned research and research questions. Interviews were held with local researchers, land experts and various local lobby organizations.

The second set of interviews was held the remaining three months, with people and organizations in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, La Paz and *Pueblos Unidos*, who are more directly involved in the MST-SC struggle for land. The researcher has tried to speak with people from all different interest groups, in order to get a comprehensive and complete picture of the situation. Interviewees in this second set consist of national and local leaders of the MST, inhabitants of the MST-SC settlement *Pueblos Unidos*, national and regional government officials, landowners' representatives and landdistribution experts.

A complete list of the interviewees can be found in Appendix 2.

#### Procedure of data collection

In order to get a broader idea of the views of these organizations, not only directors were interviewed but also lower officials. Employees of these organizations often seemed to be more directly involved with the landdistribution situation itself and less sensitive in giving their own opinion on the matter. Directors often appeared to be more inclined to give official answers corresponding to the policy of the concerning organization or institute.

The interviews that were conducted were semi-structured interviews. By giving the interviewee some space during the interview it became possible for the interviewee to elaborate on his or her vision on the functioning of the MST-SC and the land issue in general. Therefore, it became possible to identify other explanations for the

failure/success of the MST-SC. The interview questions were determined in advance, and differed for the various interviewees. Nevertheless, due to the sensitiveness of the subject, it was decided to vary with the set of questions in order to win trust of interviewees and make the interview go as smooth as possible.

#### Bias

The research would have been more complete if it included more interviews with representatives from interest groups opposing the MST-SC. Including interviews with large landowners for example, whose land has been occupied by the MST-SC, such as Señor Hurtado Paz, might have shed another light on the matter and could have made the research less subjective. Unfortunately, it appeared to be very difficult to get into contact with representatives from this specific group.

Another issue to keep in mind when analyzing the collected data, is the fear felt by many interviewees to speak openly. This fear frequently resulted in giving politically correct answers or sometimes even in unwillingness to talk. Opponents of the MST often, directly after introducing themselves asked whether I was on the hand of Bolivia's president Evo Morales. MST members in *Pueblos Unidos* were mostly scared to talk, afraid of giving away important, maybe even secret information. And Silvester Saisari, leader of MST Bolivia declared he was afraid that given information would be twisted in the media and would give the MST a negative image. Only after a couple of conversations did Silvester Saisari seemed to be at ease during the interviews.

### *3.2.3 Survey*

#### Choice of survey as a method

During the researcher's four months stay in Santa Cruz, a survey under 100 citizens of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, was held in order to get a better understanding of the public opinion and familiarity concerning MST-SC's presence and activities in the department. Although casual talks with taxi drivers and shopkeepers as well as media reporting had already given an indication of the *Cruceño* public opinion on MST-SC, it did seem useful to test this idea on a broader scale. The survey gave a good insight in the *Cruceño* public opinion on MST-SC's actions, on how Bolivia's ethnic problems are related to the land issue and shed light on the influence of the media in the image-forming with regard to the MST-SC. In short, this survey has contributed to the examining of other possible explanations for MST-SC's achievements. In more specific terms; the survey was held to examine:

- the familiarity with MST-SC among *Cruceños* in general
- the popularity of MST-SC among *Cruceños* in general
- relationship between the popularity of MST and origin of the *Cruceño* (*Colla/ Camba*)
- relationship between the familiarity with MST-SC and origin of the *Cruceño* (*Colla/ Camba*)
- the reasons for negative/positive views of MST-SC

#### Choice of respondents

In total, 100 respondents were asked about their knowledge of and opinion on MST activities and presence in the department. These respondents were ordinary citizens of Santa Cruz de la Sierra passing by, and were chosen at random. A third of these respondents were questioned in the two richest areas of Santa Cruz namely, *Avenida Monseñor Rivero* and *Cinecenter*. Another third of the survey was held in the two poorest neighbourhoods of the city, *Villa primer de Mayo* and *Plan 3000*. The last third of the survey was done on the main square, *Plaza de 24 de Septiembre* which is a more mixed area of the city in which it was possible to interview *Cruceños* from all layers of society. In all five occasions the respondents to the survey were chosen at random, being the first people passing the researcher. Nevertheless, during the respondents' selection a representative reflection in both age and sex was kept in mind.

### Procedure of data collection

The survey was held orally and entailed four basic questions, concerning the respondent's origin, the origin of his/her parents, his/her familiarity with MST and his/her opinion on MST. In case a remarkable opinion about the MST was given, the respondent was also asked to further explain his/her point of view.

### Bias

The survey focused, due to practical reasons entirely on the public opinion of *Cruceños* in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. It could be very well possible that when the survey would be held in rural areas of Santa Cruz, the result would be very different. Moreover, the relatively small selection of only a hundred respondents to the survey might not be enough to give a representative reflection of MST popularity and familiarity with MST amongst *Cruceños*. Furthermore, choosing one third of the respondents from richer neighbourhoods and one third from poorer neighbourhoods, is not necessarily a balanced representation of the city. It is more plausible to expect a larger share of poor *Cruceños* in Santa Cruz for example. Additionally, does a respondent questioned in a poorer neighbourhood not necessarily have to be a poor *Cruceño*. Nevertheless, does the researcher believe that even though the survey is not perfectly representative, it could give insight into the public opinion concerning MST-SC as well as into the reasons for the existence of this public opinion.

### *3.2.4 Secondary documentation and statistics*

#### Choice of secondary documentation and statistics as a method

Due to the fact that interviewing all specialists on the matter is impossible and moreover not necessary since a lot of obscurity can be clarified by studying previous research on the subject, this research also makes use of secondary data and statistics. Additionally, national researchers have a good idea of the context of the land struggle and therefore are able to give a more comprehensive analysis.

#### Choice of institutes

Data from the land research institute, Foundation Tierra in particular was used a lot, as their studies are mostly well documented and written by nationally and internationally respected researchers, such as Wilfred Plata and Miguel Urioste. In order not to base the entire research on articles and data from one institute, publications from *Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado* (CIPCA), *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos y Investigación Social*<sup>8</sup> (CEJIS), *Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia*<sup>9</sup> (PIEB) and more specific articles on certain research issues from *Centro de Documentación e Información Bolivia*<sup>10</sup> (CEDIB) and the vice-ministry of land were made use of. Furthermore, research from international research institutes, such as CORDAID, Amnesty International, Freedom House and Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) were consulted.

From government institutions such as *Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria* (INRA) and *Instituto Nacional de Estadística*<sup>11</sup> (INE) statistics were used. Although the INRA is the institute with the largest amount of land data, it was quite difficult to obtain recent data on the current land distribution situation. Due to the sensitivity of the subject, the recent large land reforms and the immense bureaucracy it appeared almost impossible to obtain any data as of 2006, since from then on annual reports have been published anymore.

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<sup>8</sup> Centre for juridical studies and social investigation

<sup>9</sup> Programme for strategic investigation in Bolivia

<sup>10</sup> Centre for Documentation and Information Bolivia

<sup>11</sup> National Institute for Statistics



#### 4. Context description: Bolivia's agrarian reform, political and societal dynamics<sup>12</sup>

In order to gain a better understanding of MST-SC and the circumstances within which it operated, this chapter will discuss Bolivia's agrarian reform over the last half century as well as the country's political, societal and ethnic dynamics. By describing Bolivia's land reforms from the agrarian revolution of 1952 until the agrarian reform measures under Evo Morales in 2006, as well as the country's political, societal and ethnic disparities between east and west Bolivia, this chapter gives a comprehensive view of the background against which MST-SC fights its struggle for equitable land distribution in Santa Cruz. The first section of this chapter elaborates on the agrarian reforms of the last five decades of Bolivia and of Santa Cruz in particular. Secondly, the election of Bolivia's first indigenous president, President Evo Morales and the consequences of this event for the stability and unity of

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<sup>12</sup> The researcher was not allowed to view the complete INRA dataset which gives a comprehensive idea of the developments concerning land regularization, concentration and titling in Bolivia. Therefore, a multitude of documents and publications of the INRA as well as from the vice-ministry of land were used to write this chapter. Due to this multitude of documents as well as due to the use of inconsistent data by both the INRA and the vice-ministry of land, not all data concurs.

Bolivia will be discussed. In the third section attention will be paid to the tensed relationship between east and west Bolivia. Finally, the fourth section elaborates on the ethnic dynamics between east and west Bolivia.

### 4.1 Bolivia's agrarian reform from Bolivia's independence until present

This section describes the many uprisings, political struggles and newly adopted land laws that have significantly changed the agrarian status quo from 1952 until present.

#### 4.1.1 Agrarian reform from 1825 until 1953

In 1825, Bolivia achieved independence from Spain and became a Republic. Although this conquered independence was experienced as a turning point in history for Bolivia, it did not do much to improve the situation of the indigenous population, which at the time represented 80 percent of the Bolivian population (Kay and Urioste 2005, p7). Not only was the indigenous population denied citizenship rights, the indigenous were also seen as an obstacle to modernity, due to their 'inefficient' methods of working agricultural land. The *criollo-mestizo*<sup>13</sup> minority of Bolivia, who controlled the state-apparatus believed that '*la tierra en manos del indio es tierra muerta*' (land in indigenous hands is dead land). Consequently, the *hacienda*<sup>14</sup> system, which began to develop around 1870, expanded and land from indigenous communities was gradually transferred to *hacienda*-properties of the *criollo-mestizo* minority. These developments led to an immense concentration of agrarian land in Bolivia. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the best agricultural and grazing land of most indigenous communities had become part of a *hacienda* (Kay and Urioste 2005, p8). The extension of this *hacienda* system meant an increase of agricultural production, due to the incorporation of new technologies. However, the *hacienda* regime on the other hand also implied the emergence of a feudal system, highly unbalanced power relations and more than often the exploitation of the indigenous population. Not surprisingly did the *hacienda* system meet with significant resistance from in particular the *Quechua* and *Aymara* population, the two largest indigenous groups in Bolivia (Kay and Urioste 2005, p8). Years of growing discontent and indigenous struggle led eventually to the agrarian revolution of 1952. Through the occupation of *haciendas* by indigenous militias, juridical actions and general indigenous uprisings the indigenous reclaimed the land which had been seized from them almost a century earlier (Kay and Urioste 2005, p24). Subsequently this revolution led to the adoption of the Agrarian Reform Law of 1953.

The main objectives of the 1952 agrarian revolution were the elimination of the *hacienda* system, the abolition of peasant servitude and the redistribution of land into the hands of ex- labour service tenants and other landless peasants (Bonifaz 2003, p95, Köppen 2008, p9 and Urioste and Pacheco 2005, p259). With the adoption of the Agrarian Reform Law of 1953, the demanded changes were translated into law and policy. These main objectives of the revolution were clearly summarized by one of the most important slogans of the agrarian revolution of 1952, '*la tierra es para quien la trabaja*'; land should be in the hands of those who work it. In the period following the Agrarian Reform Law of 1953, until 1993, approximately 58 million<sup>15</sup> hectares of land of Bolivia's total surface of 110 million hectares were distributed among more than 759.000 beneficiaries (Breve Historia 2008, p49 and INRA Estadísticas Agrarias 1953-2002, p 68). In the Santa Cruz department, 22 million hectares of agrarian land were redistributed (INRA Estadísticas Agrarias 1953-2002, p68). These numbers seem to indicate an enormous change in land ownership and an improvement of the position of ex- labour service tenants and other landless peasants. However this is not the case. Additional agrarian statistics from INRA show that the distribution of land

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<sup>13</sup> White-indigenous mixed

<sup>14</sup> A large landed estate

<sup>15</sup> According to researcher Bonifaz 59.23 hectares have been distributed in the period 1953-1993, while INRA's Estadísticas Agrarias 1953-2002 estimates this number at merely 57.3 million hectares.

has been enormously inequitable between different types of land holdings. Of the total amount of redistributed land in Bolivia between 1953 and 1993, 40.16 percent has fallen into the hands of agro-enterprises. During the same period only 8.46 percent of the land was redistributed to agrarian small holdings. The most remarkable about these numbers is that in Bolivia agro-enterprises only accounted for 2.24 percent of the total of beneficiaries between 1953 and 1993 (INRA Estadísticas Agrarias 1953-2002, p73). In other words, a huge amount of land became concentrated in the hands of a very small group of businessmen. In Santa Cruz the situation concerning agrarian land redistribution was not much different. In this eastern department, the percentage of land distributed to the agro-business sector was even higher, namely 52.60 percent (INRA Estadísticas Agrarias 1953-2002, p208).

In short the above displayed data shows that, although recipients of small holdings, i.e. previous landless peasants have profited from the agrarian reform to some extent, the main winners of the agrarian reform of 1953 have been the medium-sized holdings and the agro-enterprises.<sup>16</sup> This goes completely against the main objective of the agrarian revolution of 1952; the distribution of land into the hands of ex- labour service tenants and other landless peasants.

#### *4.1.2 Agrarian reform from Ley INRA 1996 to 2006*

Considering the before mentioned data, it is not surprising that between the late 1980s and the first years of the 1990s, demonstrations, street blockades and rural landless and indigenous marches dominated daily life in Bolivia. Disappointing results of forty years of land reform, rising tenure insecurity and multiple corruption scandals led to a renewed struggle for land rights by large groups of indigenous people and peasant farmers. In 1992 the protests and the irregularities in the land distribution process led to an intervention of the agrarian reform institutions. Nevertheless, it took four more years before a new land law was passed in order to legalize a reform of the agrarian reform of 1953. On October 18<sup>th</sup> 1996 *Ley del Servicio Nacional de Reforma Agraria 1715*, more commonly known as Ley INRA, came into force.

Central to this law are three fundamental objectives; the regularization of land rights, the identification and distribution of *tierras fiscales*<sup>17</sup> and the prioritization of handing over titles to indigenous communities.

At the heart of the 1996 Ley INRA lays the regularization and clarification of agrarian land rights, a process called *saneamiento de tierra*. This process of regularization aimed to verify the legality of every property right handed out since 1953 and to correct distortions of landownership, in order to continue the distribution of land to landless indigenous and peasant groups. In addition, this process of *saneamiento* did not only consist of verifying the legality of the acquisition of property titles, but also included the inspection of land usage. Due to the permanent under-usage of a significant amount of large land estates, particularly in the east, Ley INRA included a clause concerning the classification of land rights according to a social or a social-economic function of land. Land holdings not producing for the market, or only in small amounts, such as residential plots, small holdings, communal properties and TCO's<sup>18</sup> were according to Ley INRA obliged to fulfil merely a social function (Ley INRA 1996, art. 2 and art. 41). Therefore, provided that these holdings indeed fulfilled the social function, these 'social' holdings were exempt from tax duties (Ley INRA 1996, art. 3). Hence, from 1953 on small peasants were able to legally own land and produce goods for the satisfaction of their family's needs, without having the obligation of paying taxes. Medium sized holdings and agro-enterprises on the other hand, had to fulfil a socio-

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<sup>16</sup> More specific data on the distribution of agrarian land between 1953 and 1993 can be found in Appendix 5 at the end of the thesis.

<sup>17</sup> State lands that have been identified as distributable agrarian land

<sup>18</sup> A type of landholding that will be discussed further later on

economic function<sup>19</sup> (FES). In other words these properties had to be used for production for the market and therefore had to pay land taxes (Ley INRA 1996, art. 3). If medium-sized holdings or agro-enterprises appeared to not fulfil these requirements, the property was reverted to the state and used for redistribution to rural landless groups. From 1996 on, unproductive and/or abandoned large land estates were thus in theory no longer tolerated. The *saneamiento* process in its totality was to be finished within ten years (Ley INRA 1996, art. 65).

Also part of the *saneamiento* process was the identification of *tierras fiscales*. These are state lands and lands that have been reverted by the state due to unfulfilment of the social-economic function of medium-sized holdings and agro-enterprises. These lands, once identified, were to be distributed to peasant or indigenous communities of the same region (Ley INRA 1996, art. 42 and 43).

Another fundamental reform introduced with Ley INRA in 1996 was the creation of the concept *Tierras Comunitarias de Origen* (TCO's) or Indigenous Community Lands. With this concept the law preserved preferential rights of indigenous communities to the ownership of land in the form of indigenous territories. These TCO's are geographical areas that form the natural surroundings of a specific indigenous group and are given to the original indigenous population of the region by the state. On these collective properties, which are indivisible and unmarketable, the indigenous population lives according to its own rules and costumes (Ley INRA 1996, art. 3 and art.41). Ever since the introduction of the concept of TCO, there has been a major demand for TCO titles in Bolivia and in particular in Santa Cruz. This major demand for TCO titles can be explained not only by the need to secure land ownership for the indigenous population but also by the wish to restore the ancient indigenous form of organization (Kay and Urioste 2005, p32).

### Results of Ley INRA

Although Ley INRA was set in motion in order to rectify the failure of the 1985 reform, the results of ten years of agrarian reform between 1996 and 2006 do not appear to have improved the equality of the land distribution situation significantly. In order to prevent and eliminate unofficial land acquirement as well as the abandonment or under usage of agrarian land in Bolivia, Ley INRA very clearly describes rules and consequences concerning land acquirement and land usage. Nevertheless, the *saneamiento* process gives the impression to have been advanced very slowly. As is illustrates in table 1, after ten years of land regulation only 43 percent of Bolivia's agrarian land has seen some form of regularization, while merely 10 percent has gone through the whole *saneamiento* process and been titled.

Table 1:  
Status of regularization in Bolivia in 2006

Status		Surface in ha		Surface %	
Regularized	titled	11.384.775,55	30.243.867,32	10,66%	28,33%
	before titling <sup>20</sup>	18.859.091,77		17,67%	
In process		15.915.920,23		14,91%	
Without regularization		60.591.935,87		56,76%	
<b>Total surface to be regularized</b>		<b>106.751.723,43</b>		<b>100,00%</b>	

Source: Juan Carlos Rojas Calizaya, INRA 2006.

For Santa Cruz the results of ten years of land regularization are even a bit more dramatic than the results of the country as a whole. Table 2 shows how within ten years only 33 percent of the agrarian land has seen some form of land regularization in the department of Santa Cruz.

Table 2:

<sup>19</sup> Función Económico-Social

<sup>20</sup> Before titling means, that the process of regularization is already accomplished or that there are just a few minor details missing, but that the title is not issued yet and therefore the process of regularization has not yet been concluded.

#### Status of regularization in Santa Cruz in 2006

Status		Surface in ha		Surface in %	
Regularized	titled	4.101.161,14	10.765.247,22	11,14%	29,24%
	before titling	6.664.086,08		18,10%	
In process		1.347.480,58		3,66%	
Without regularization		24.695.464,21		67,10%	
Total surface to be regularized		36.808.222,01			100.00%

Source: Juan Carlos Rojas Calizaya INRA 2006.

Due to this significant delay in the *saneamiento* process, little land in the hands of agro-enterprises not complying with the FES had been identified by 2006. Consequently, little underexploited or illegally obtained land estates were expropriated, reverted to the state and turned into *tierra fiscal*. In turn, between 1996 and 2006 only a very modest amount of *tierra fiscal* was identified and made available for redistribution. As a result, only a small amount of land has been distributed to Bolivia's landless population, who are qualified for this newly redistributable land.

Table 3:

#### Titled surface per type of regularization between 1996-2006 in Bolivia

Department	SAN-TCO <sup>21</sup> in ha	CAT-SAN <sup>22</sup> in ha	SAN-SIM in ha	Total in ha
Beni	2.170.470,59	32.469,09	242.869,15	2.445.808,83
Chuquisaca	198.901,49	494.338,77	63,4826	693.303,75
Cochabamba	426.662,65	92.936,03	44.201,20	563.799,87
LaPaz	559.065,11	350.007,01	54.543,84	963.615,96
Oruro	144.170,87	0	33.814,83	177.985,70
Pando	529.754,38	0	1.079.990,22	1.609.744,60
Potosi	554.172,54	0	125.665,78	679.838,32
Santa Cruz	2.974.896,12	465.174,82	661.090,21	4.101.161,14
Tarija	111.675,97	4.932,09	32.090,34	149.517,40
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.669.769,71</b>	<b>1.439.857,81</b>	<b>2.275.148,04</b>	<b>11.384.775,55</b>

Source: Juan Carlos Rojas Calizaya, INRA 2006

Another issue standing out when examining the results of the 1996-2006 agrarian reform is the fact that reform prioritized one group of landless over the other. As table 3 demonstrates, almost 68 percent of the total amount of titled land accounts for the regularization and titling of TCO land. This TCO regularized land, which is more than 7.6 million of the total amount of 11.4 million hectares titled between 1996 and 2006, was given to indigenous communities. For Santa Cruz the percentage of land titled as TCO's is even more striking. Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the titled land in the department was given away as indigenous territory to indigenous communities in Santa Cruz.

#### Results of Ley INRA explained 1996-2006

Based on the data mentioned above it can be concluded that the land regulation process following the agrarian Ley INRA of 1996 has been advancing very slowly. The two main reasons for this slow progress that are underlined by the majority of consulted literature and interviews will be discussed in this section (Bonifaz 2005, Kay and Urioste 2005, Köppen 2008, Breve Historia 2008, Alcides Vadillo June 29<sup>th</sup> 2009).

<sup>21</sup> SAN-TCO refers to the type of *saneamiento* responsible for the regularization and titling of TCO land

<sup>22</sup> Land regularized and distributed amongst other landless groups fall in one of the other categories SAN-SIM or CAT-SAN

One of the reasons for the slow advance of the *saneamiento* process that is mentioned a lot in the literature is the lack of political will on the part of national and regional government authorities to prioritize the process of land regulation and distribution. Land titles are to be issued by either the president of the republic or by one of the departmental prefects (Ley INRA art.8.I.2 and art. 8.II). The fact that in 2006, 18.9 million of agrarian land had already completely gone through the regularization process but was still waiting to be titled is distinctive for this national as well as regional lack of political will (See Table 2).

The small amount of underexploited or illegally obtained land estates that were expropriated and reverted to the state can be explained by the multitude of obscurities and multi-interpretable regulations registered in Ley INRA. One of the most important consequences of these unclear land regulations was the unfeasibility of testing whether agro-enterprises complied with the obligated socio-economic function. Since the concept of socio-economic function was not clearly defined by law, it appeared very hard to test whether medium-sized holdings and agro-enterprises fulfilled this requirement.

### 4.1.3 Agrarian reform of Evo Morales 2006 Changes due to the agrarian reform of Evo Morales

In 2006, as a reaction to the slow advance in the execution of the *saneamiento* process, the many obscurities in Ley INRA and the lack of transparency, the Morales' administration made an attempt to reform the earlier agrarian reform of 1996. By means of Reform Law 3545, the administration endeavours to speed up and clarify the regularization process, with the aim to conclude the process before 2013 (Breve Historia 2005, p120). Central in this reform process is once again the slogan 'land for those who work it'. The most important moderations of Ley INRA are discussed in this section.

In order to distribute land to 'those who work it', the new Ley 3545 clarified the concept of the socio-economical function (FES) agro-enterprises and medium-sized landholdings had to comply with. By better specifying features and activities contributing to the compliance with the FES, Morales' administration hopes to facilitate the expropriation of land that does not comply with the FES (VMT 2006). Moreover, according to Ley 3545 this compliance with the FES needs to be verified every two years in order to adjust to changing circumstances (Ley 3545 2006, art.32).

Additionally, a constitutional clause on the maximum extension for the surface of agrarian land holdings was approved by a referendum on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2009. This clause states that all landholdings exceeding the maximum property surface of 5.000 hectares are required to return all land exceeding this 5.000 hectares limit (Bolpress 2009). Besides these restrictions on the leeway for agro-enterprises, Ley 3545 also concedes to large landowners. The law includes a relaxation of the rules concerning reversion. Instead of the whole property, only those parts of a property not complying with the FES have to be returned to the state. Additionally, Ley 3545 incorporates a clause defining that expropriated properties would exclusively be given to indigenous or peasant communities without a sufficient amount of land (Ley 3545 2006, art. 42).

Finally, to increase the transparency of the land market, Ley 3545 established that every land transfer has to be registered and validated by the INRA (Ley 3545 2006, second final deposition). In short, it seems that Morales' administration has taken serious steps to clarify earlier land laws and degrees, to reduce bureaucracy and to tackle under-usage of agrarian land. Whether these measures and moderations have indeed shown to accelerate the *saneamiento* process is discussed in the following section.

### Results of the agrarian reform of Evo Morales 2006-2009

The main reasons for the Morales' administration to reform Ley INRA, was the extremely slow execution of the regularization process between 1996 and 2006. By introducing clearer definitions for amongst others the FES and

by setting stricter rules the Morales' administration hoped to speed up the *saneamiento* process. Table 4 shows that these measures have indeed significantly speeded up the process between 2006 and 2008.

Table 4:  
Status of regularization in Bolivia in 2008<sup>23</sup>

Status		Earlier administrations 1996-2006				Morales administration 2006- 2008			
		S in 1000 ha		S in %		S in 1000 ha		S in %	
Regularized	titled	11.384	30.243	10,7%	28,3%	27.795	37.734	26,1%	35,4%
	before titling	18.859		17,6%		9.939		9,3%	
In process		15.915		14,9%		13.383		12,5%	
Without regularization		60.591		56,8%		55.633		52,1%	
<b>Total to be regularized</b>		<b>106.751</b>		<b>100,0%</b>		<b>106.751</b>		<b>100,0%</b>	

Source: Vice-ministry for land 2008 and Juan Carlos Rojas Calizaya, INRA 2006.

When the data for Morales' administration is compared to the data for the period of 1996-2006, it appears that over 16 million extra hectares of land have been titled within a period of only two years. This is an enormous achievement, when these results are compared to the advance of the *saneamiento* process of the previous ten years. However, what has to be taken into consideration is that this quick titling on behalf of Morales' administration is partly due to the fact that in 2006 over 18 million hectares of agrarian land were just 'before titling'. This means that these amounts of land have almost gone through the whole regularization process, but merely lacked a title. During Morales' administration these hectares of land only had to receive a presidential signature in order to become legal properties. This explains why the overall amount of regularized land 'merely' increased with 7.5 million hectares. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between an increase in granted titles due to a faster regularization process and an increase due to political will to sign them (Köppen 2008, P30).

The remarkable speed with which Morales' administration has regularized and titled agrarian land in Bolivia also appears from table 5. When comparing the distributed and titled land per type of landholding during Morales' administration to that of the 1996-2005 period, it is notable how much Morales has focussed on the titling of landholdings such as TCO's, communal properties and *tierras fiscales*. Morales' administration has titled significantly more TCO's, communal properties and *tierras fiscales* within two years than have previous administrations in ten years. However, small holdings, residential plots and agro-enterprises were paid less attention to under the two years of Morales' presidency. This focus on titling of land for and distributing to indigenous communities confirms Morales' intention to prioritize indigenous communities in the distribution of land process.<sup>24</sup>

Table 5:  
Titled land per type of land holding 1996-2008

Type of holding	Earlier administrations 1996-2005	Morales Administration 2006-2008	Total 1996-2008
TCOs	5.762.057	6.856.408	12.618.466

<sup>23</sup> *Tierras fiscales* that are identified and given to indigenous or peasant communities between 1996 and 2006 and thus titled are also included in table 9

<sup>24</sup> The data from table 5 needs to be assessed carefully. It appears that the vice-ministry of land, the publisher of the data in table 10 has included the amount of identified *tierras fiscales* instead of the titled *tierras fiscales* in table 5. This provides for a distorted image. The data from the vice-ministry for land, displayed in table 5 give the impression that in total 18 million hectares of agrarian land have been distributed and titled between 2006 and 2008. However, in reality around 7 million hectares of this land was merely identified *tierras fiscales* and are thus not supposed to be included in a table demonstrating data on titled land. When correcting the total amount of titled land under Morales' administration with the identified and truly titled *tierras fiscales* in table 5, the factual total amount of distributed land under Morales comes to 11.68 million hectares. With this correction the total amount of land titled during two years of Morales administration has become significantly lower, but is still an impressive accomplishment when compared to the accomplishment of the ten previous years.



<b>Small holding</b>	707.714	586.629	1.294.344
<b>Residential Plot</b>	145	130	276
<b>Medium-sized</b>	309.247	350.997	660.244
<b>Agro-enterprise</b>	921.165	539.710	1.460.876
<b>Communal Properties</b>	1.523.125	2.351.120	3.874.246
<b>Tierras fiscales</b>	109.914	7.695.716 <sup>25</sup>	7.805.630
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.333.371<sup>26</sup></b>	<b>18.380.713</b>	<b>27.714.085</b>

Source: Vice-ministry for land 2008.

The somewhat more moderate success concerning distribution and titling of *tierras fiscales* under Morales' administration is underlined by the data from table 6. This table demonstrates that although Morales administration has indeed distributed and titled more than five times the amount of *tierras fiscales* when compared to earlier administrations, it has distributed and titled merely a tiny proportion of the total identified *tierras* between 2006 and 2008.

Table 6:

**Identified and distributed *tierras fiscales* between 1996-2006 and 2006-2009 in Bolivia**

Department	Surface identified		Surface distributed	
	1996-2006 <sup>27</sup>	2006-2009	1996-2006	2006-2009
<b>Beni</b>	131.156	264.383	24.023	2.5
<b>Chuquisaca</b>		50.948		
<b>La Paz</b>	245.951	1.801.109	18.012	45.268
<b>Oruro</b>		54.410		
<b>Pando</b>	974.765	3.700.004	117.000	741.186
<b>Potosí</b>	798	118.439		
<b>Santa Cruz</b>	3.370.545	3.794.714	25.082	197.725
<b>Tarija</b>		32.580	14.882	8.198
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.605.176</b>	<b>9.816.592</b>	<b>198.928</b>	<b>994.878</b>

Source: Breve Historia 2008, p100-101 and INRA Resultados del saneamiento 1996-2009, 2009.

Nevertheless, apart from all the applied nuances, it needs to be said that under Morales' administration the *saneamiento* process has been executed significantly faster than during earlier regimes. From an INRA report of June 2009 it appears that Morales' administration has continued this trend during 2009. Within six month, from January until June 2009, the administration has titled 2.4 million hectares of land (INRA *Resultados del saneamiento* 2009).

#### Results of Morales' agrarian reform of explained

Although Morales' administration has only been in office for four years at the time of writing, it could be argued that his administration so far has achieved a lot concerning the reform of the agrarian sector. It should be taken into account that many of titled lands under Morales' administration have been titled easily in 2006 due to their 'before titling' status. However, other than that, the Bolivian land reforming institutes have made significant progression with the *saneamiento* process, under Evo Morales. In 2008, 26.1 percent of Bolivia's agrarian land has been titled and 47.9 percent has seen some form of *saneamiento*. Almost 7 million hectares of land were distributed to landless indigenous communities and 994.878 hectares of land were distributed to landless

<sup>25</sup> The amount of *tierras fiscales* displayed in table 6 consists of **identified** *tierras fiscales* and **not titled** *tierras fiscales*.

<sup>26</sup> The deviation of 2 million compared to earlier tables can be explained due to the difference in period. The earlier tables include data from 1996 to 2006, while table 6 only includes data up till 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Due to the use of data from overlapping periods (1996-2006 and 2006-2009) the total amount of identified and distributed *tierras fiscales* from 1996-2009 probably turn out lower than the accumulation of the totals from 1996-2006 and 2006-2009.

communities in general. Therefore, at first sight it seems that Bolivia has been through an impressive agrarian reform under Evo Morales the last 4 years.

However, these results need to be assessed very carefully. When we take a closer look at the qualitative results of the process we might come to a less positive conclusion. In the opinion of the researcher it appears that Morales' administration has not appeared to be willing or able to change unequal and illegal landed property, even though this has been the core aim of agrarian reforms in Bolivia ever since the agrarian revolution of 1952. Obviously, many indigenous communities have benefited from the reforms by receiving land in the form of TCO's. However, these TCO's have mainly been composed out of what were *tierras fiscales* and not out of expropriated illegally obtained or under-used large land estates. Additionally, published data on the progress of the *saneamiento* process does not say anything on the amount of illegally obtained or under-used agro-enterprises that have been expropriated. Whether the regularized agrarian lands have mainly been agro-enterprises or mostly state lands makes a huge difference in the consequences for land concentration. Although data on the exact amount of expropriated properties is not available, newspaper articles on the progress of the *saneamiento* process tell a lot about the impeding circumstances under which the process is executed.

Another problem, not (yet) tackled by the Morales' administration is the significant group of rural landless peasants in Santa Cruz. According to Urioste and Kay still about 100.000 rural landless families, mainly second generation *colonizadores*<sup>28</sup> are in search for land in the eastern lowlands (Kay and Urioste 2005, p27). And although INRA has over the past 5 years identified huge amount of *tierras fiscales* that could be distributed to these landless peasants, a lot of these *tierras fiscales* of very bad quality, both in terms of geographic location and fertility (Alcides Vadillo June 29<sup>th</sup> 2009) Therefore these identified *tierras fiscales* are definitely not enough to provide all these families with a piece of agrarian land.

Taking these nuances into account, one could argue that a thorough agrarian change, which provides for a more equal distribution of land by taking on the extreme land concentration in the department of Santa Cruz, has not yet been brought about.

In order to understand why Morales' administration has not appeared to be willing or able to fight unequal and illegal landed property and consequently address the issue of rural landlessness in Santa Cruz, Morales' administration's agrarian reform should be seen in a broader perspective. Therefore, the next two sections will elaborate on the implications of Morales' election in 2005 for Bolivia as a whole and for the relationship between east and west Bolivia.

## 4.2 The election of President Evo Morales and his socialist policies

This section provides insight in the election of Evo Morales as the first indigenous president of Bolivia, his socialist reform policies as well as the context of and the reasons for his election.

During the 1980's and 1990's, in the midst of a worldwide economic recession, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) granted Bolivia enormous loans in order to eradicate Bolivia's high inflation rate and stimulate its economic growth. Unfortunately, this financial injection did not appear to improve Bolivia's economic situation. Between 1985 and 2000, the economy's average growth remained less than 1.0 percent a year per capita and actually became negative during the 1990's (Lehoucq 2008, 115). The wide-ranging structural neo-liberal reforms, imposed by the IMF and WB and connected to the loans, aggravated Bolivia's economic situation even more. Although probably entirely against the IMF's objective, the imposed reforms, such as privatisation of state enterprises and a restriction of government spending, widened even further the gigantic

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<sup>28</sup> *Colonizadores* are migrants from the west. Section 4.4 will further elaborate on the migration issue.

income inequalities the country had already suffered for decades. In those days over 60 percent of Bolivians citizens lived, and today still does live, in poverty (World Bank 2006). Remarkably, poverty mainly existed among Bolivia's indigenous population of which 74 percent lived in poverty and 53 percent even had to get by on less than one US dollar a day (World Bank 2001).<sup>29</sup>

Not surprisingly, the strongly disappointing economic growth of the 1990's turned large numbers of poor, mainly indigenous Bolivians against the new neo-liberal economic policy that seemed to widen the gap between poor and rich Bolivians even further. The social protests were primarily focussed on the exploitation of natural resources, gas in particular. Many Bolivians came to believe that the terms offered to foreign gas extraction companies in Bolivia had been overly generous. No more than 18 percent of all revenues from Bolivian gas production was returned to the country by the foreign companies (Velasquez-Donaldson 2007). Large parts of the population consequently felt deprived of their rightful share of revenues from this valuable resource. Social unrest started to escalate by the late 1990s and became violent in February of 2003 when the citizens started claiming the resignation of President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada.

The protests from Bolivia's indigenous population from the poorer western highlands found political expression in the October Agenda of 2003. In short this Agenda consisted of; 1. the nationalisation of Bolivia's gas resources, 2. the establishment of an *Asemblea Constituyente*<sup>30</sup> in order to give the indigenous more political and cultural rights and 3. a lawsuit against President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada for the use of violence against civilian population during the protest marches earlier that year (Quack 2006, 2).

Under great pressure of the popular demonstrations, President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada was forced to resign his post in the beginning of 2004. Although President Mesa, Lozada's successor, accepted the October Agenda and planned a referendum on the nationalisation of Bolivia's gas resources, he proved no more capable than Lozada had been of coping with the soaring protests and popular demands. By early June 2005, also President Mesa resigned and by December of the same year presidential elections were organised (Lehoucq 2008, 117).

Against this background, Evo Morales wins the presidential elections with a landslide victory of 54 percent in December 2005, becoming Bolivia's first indigenous president (Eaton 2008, 73). The central point of the election campaign of Morales' political party *Movimiento Al Socialismo*<sup>31</sup> (MAS) is the improvement of the position of Bolivia's indigenous population. The Republic of Bolivia needs, in Morales' vision, to be refunded by granting the country's indigenous majority participation in political decision-making mechanisms. In addition, Morales' policy involves the extension of respect for indigenous cultures and traditions. Concerning the unequal distribution of wealth within the country, the MAS government decides to extend indigenous social-economic rights by initiating agrarian redistributive programmes. In a country with such high levels of rural poverty as Bolivia and such extreme concentration of large landholdings, it is understandable that land reform is a priority in Morales' policy. In 2006, Morales' administration makes an attempt to reform the earlier agrarian reform of 1996. By means of reform Ley 3545, the administration endeavours to speed up and clarify the regularization process, with the aim to conclude the process before 2013 (Breve Historia 2005, p120). As already described earlier in this chapter, the slogan of Morales' new land law was once again; 'land for those who work it'. By clarifying the concept of the socio-economical function (FES) in LEY 3545, agro-enterprises and medium-sized landholdings had to comply with, Morales' administration facilitated the fight against under-used and illegally obtained land estates (Ley 3545 2006).

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<sup>29</sup> Living of less than USD 1 a day is the World Bank's indication for extreme poverty

<sup>30</sup> Constituent Assembly

<sup>31</sup> Movement towards Socialism

Additionally, in the area of control over natural resource exploitation President Morales nationalised the natural gas industry, in order to redistribute the nation's wealth equally over all departments and to stimulate less developed sectors (Crabtree 2007, 2).

#### 4.3 Disparities between East and West Bolivia and Santa Cruz' demand for autonomy

Bolivia's western highlands, the *Altiplano*<sup>32</sup> and the eastern lowlands of Bolivia, the *Oriente* (to which Santa Cruz belongs) are strongly opposed to each other, in a political and economical as well as in an ethnic sense. The *Altiplano* is characterized by its poorer, mainly indigenous, MAS supporting population. The *Oriente* on the other hand, can be typified by its abundant natural resources and its modern and mainly white/mestizo, MAS opposing population. These differences have divided Bolivia for decades. However, the growing indigenous demands for political, economic, and cultural rights starting at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as the electoral victory of the indigenous Evo Morales sharpened the relationship between the two parts of Bolivia.

The electoral victory of Bolivia's first indigenous leader forms a breach with the past of white/*mestizo* dominance in Bolivian politics and therefore presents an enormous challenge to the established interests of the Santa Cruz department. As previously described, the department of Santa Cruz is characterized by its abundance of natural resources such as natural gas and productive land and has a modern, export-oriented economy. However, the emergence of Santa Cruz as Bolivia's wealthiest and most productive region is a fairly new phenomenon.

For decades, Santa Cruz was an underdeveloped department, isolated from central rule from La Paz. Its position changed however at the beginning of the sixties, when the government decided to open up the previously unexplored and unexploited vast plains of Santa Cruz to national development (Eaton 2008). Colonization programmes were set in motion in the 1960s and 1970s, motivating the western rural population (mainly *Quechua* and *Aymara* indigenous) to settle in the vast and 'empty' eastern lowlands, and thereby providing this landless population with new opportunities to obtain agrarian land for their own. In addition to these colonization programmes, the state privileged the investment in hydrocarbon refineries and agrarian and livestock production in the east. Investments in extensive infrastructure projects were made and roads from the western capital to Santa Cruz as well as roads connecting Santa Cruz to Argentina and Brazil were constructed in a matter of years (Bonifaz 2005, p3). From these years on Santa Cruz developed itself into one of the most prosperous and rich parts of the country, producing the highest percentage of GDP. Thanks to the bulk of subsidies, loans and aid money Santa Cruz received from the national government, the department could easily overtake the growth rate of the rest of the country. Between 1938 and 1948, for instance, almost all of Bolivia's external debt was invested into development projects in Santa Cruz (Eaton 2007, 78). Nowadays, Santa Cruz counts for less than a quarter of Bolivia's population, whilst providing 42% of its tax revenues (Eaton 2008, 14).

Another factor disproportionately benefiting Santa Cruz was the radical process of economic stabilisation and liberalisation experienced by Bolivia in the eighties and nineties. Due to the existence of a strong and well developed private sector as well as a great wealth in natural resources, Santa Cruz could prosper well during these years of neo-liberal policy. Some scholars indicate the absence and neglect of the central government in the decades before the sixties as the factor that promoted the growth of an independent and free market system in Santa Cruz, in contrast to the state interfered economy in the rest of Bolivia (Eaton 2007, 78).

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<sup>32</sup> Altiplano means plateau

In particular because two decades of neo-liberal market reforms had brought Santa Cruz substantial economic advantages, Morales' redistributive economic reform politics at the beginning of the 21st century formed a serious threat to the market-oriented economic preference of Santa Cruz. Especially, the gas and land redistributive programmes introduced by the MAS government served as a substantial stimulating force for large scale protest from Santa Cruz against the national reform policies. The redistribution policies of Bolivia's two most profitable natural resources, land and gas, became the most important underlying source for the dispute between the impoverished Western highlands and richer Eastern lowlands.

### Natural resources in Santa Cruz

The reason for the national redistributive policies on gas and agrarian land to be such an important factor for Santa Cruz to fight Morales' administrations reform plans, comes from the fact that Santa Cruz' economy mainly revolves around the productive use of these two natural resources.

Over 22 percent of Bolivia's total gas production is concentrated in Santa Cruz, which is the country's second largest natural gas producer (Weisbrot and Sandoval 2008, 8). The new Hydrocarbon Law No. 3058 the government passed in 2005 as well as the placement of the Bolivian hydrocarbon sector under state control in 2006 have experienced a lot of protest from the eastern gas producing department. This discontent of the Santa Cruz population with the new gas policies is firstly based on the feeling that Santa Cruz is under compensated by the newly introduced distribution system for its gas producing activities. The second objection of the Santa Cruz population with the current gas policy is based on the fear that the nationalisation of the Bolivian hydrocarbon sector will severely deteriorate Bolivia's international trade position.

The abundance of productive agrarian land in Santa Cruz is the second issue feeding the dispute between Santa Cruz and the socialist oriented *Altiplano*. Bolivia's productive agrarian land is highly concentrated in the department of Santa Cruz. However, not only nationally is agrarian land concentrated, the productive land within Santa Cruz itself is also extremely concentrated, in the hands of a small group of land holding elites. Especially for this group of land owning Cruceño elites, Morales' distributive reform policies form an enormous challenge since the agrarian land distribution in Santa Cruz is quite different from that in the rest of Bolivia. The agrarian reforms from 1953 until 1993 have had very different effects on the eastern and western parts of the country. Partly due to the significant investments made in Santa Cruz by the Bolivian state in the 1980s and 1990s, the agrarian reforms from the 1950s on have had a very different outcome on this eastern department of the country than it had on the western part of the country.

In the western highland part of Bolivia the agrarian reform of 1953 effected the distribution of agrarian land in this region quite seriously. Before 1953 the agrarian land in the west was mainly divided amongst large landed *haciendas*. However, between 1953 and 1992 the indigenous communities regained most of their previously lost land. In these highlands, the regained agrarian land was fragmented into very small pieces of family plots, creating an immense web of *minifundios*<sup>33</sup> which gave the western indigenous population a way to individually satisfy their basic family needs. However, the liberalization of the markets, significant population growth and the degradation of land due to very intensive agriculture, stagnated western production and trapped a large part of the western rural population in a vicious poverty circle. This economic desperate situation left many peasants with no other option than to choose for a better life in the eastern lowlands of the country.

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<sup>33</sup> Very small land holding used mainly for residence and family production

The eastern part of Bolivia on the other hand prospered under the agrarian reforms which included the liberalisation of markets, advantageous credit opportunities and huge government investments in infrastructure and agriculture. Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century no settlement of the eastern lowlands had yet occurred and not much of the Santa Cruz department's land was cultivated. After the introduction of stability measures in the mid 1980s however, the amount of cultivated land increased to over a million hectares. New crops such as soya, sunflower and wheat made large-scale extensive agriculture possible and rapidly developed agrarian estates continued to grow and expand (Kay and Urioste 2005, p19). Within thirty years Santa Cruz had transformed itself from an unexplored insignificant department into the export motor of Bolivia. Nevertheless, this transformation of Santa Cruz, into a large-scale extensive agricultural department had consequences for the department's vulnerable groups, such as indigenous, landless peasants and *colonizadores*<sup>34</sup>. The development of the department was accompanied by a process of land concentration in the hands of a small political influential *criollo-mestizo* group. Large capitalist enterprises continued to monopolize land from near indigenous communities or appropriated state land. This land in the hands of large landowners was often not only used for agricultural purposes but also for speculative ends, which means that large plots of agrarian land were not cultivated at all. Land was thus not distributed according to need or economic and social efficiency, but on the basis of political favouritism and patronage (Bonifaz 2003, Kay and Urioste 2005, Köppen 2008). This corruption consisted of the donation of immense amounts of land to individuals supporting the government of the day. During the military government of Hugo Banzer from 1971-1978 alone, 17.9 million hectares of land were donated to beneficiaries in Santa Cruz (Bonifaz 2003, p101). Moreover, data shows that until 1978 over 95 percent of land donations has been to individuals, which emphasizes the extent of political favours in the department (Bonifaz 2003, p97). These donations of agrarian land to politically supportive businessmen are another very important reason for the failure of the agrarian reforms of 1953 and consequently the highly unequal landdistribution in especially Santa Cruz between 1953 and 1993. Up to the end of the twentieth century it has been quite common for agro-enterprises to extend their properties to surrounding vacant lands, lands that were later identified as state lands or e.a. *tierras fiscales*. Due to these overlapping property claims the distribution of *tierras fiscales* has time and again been postponed (Köppen 2008).

The deepening crisis in the highlands, the state-tolerated land trafficking in the east and consequently the growing difference in economic progress between east and west led to an increasing polarization of the country.

#### Santa Cruz' response to Morales' redistributive policies

The endangerment of the established interests of Santa Cruz by the MAS reform policies revolves thus partly around, the redistributive policies concerning both productive land and natural gas. The redistribution of Cruceño under-used or illegally obtained landholdings as well as the redistribution of the department's natural resources, negatively affect Santa Cruz elites who for decades were leading actors in these areas. The policy of dividing up large landed estates in Santa Cruz to the benefit of landless indigenous peasants in the rest of the country would diminish the *Cruceño* elites' economic means. In addition, the strong and well developed private sector of Santa Cruz, that strongly benefits from the continuous exportation of gas by multinational corporations would be negatively affected by the nationalisation of Bolivia's gas industry. Finally, in the eyes of many Santa Cruz residents, the resource rich department should not be shouldering the economic burden of an overly dependent country (Ballvé 2004, 2).

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<sup>34</sup> *Colonizadores* are migrants from the west. Section 4.4 will further elaborate on the migration issue.



Already since the inferior performance of Bolivia's traditional political parties during the national elections of 2005, the *Cruceño* elites lost an important part of their national political power base. Based on this diminishing influence in national politics as well as on the introduction of for Santa Cruz very threatening MAS' reform policies in 2006, the Santa Cruz' movement for autonomy was brought alive. The struggle for autonomy for Santa Cruz is mainly led by *Cruceño* economic and political elites, who are strongly interconnected and therefore for a strong front against Morales' reform policies. In 2004, hundreds of thousands of Santa Cruz' residents answer the call from the *Comité Pro Santa Cruz*<sup>35</sup> (CPSC), leading the autonomy demand, to demonstrate on behalf of autonomy for the Santa Cruz department. In June 2004, more than half a million movement participants sign a petition demanding a referendum on autonomy for the eastern departments. Santa Cruz demanded far-reaching regional independence in order to defend Santa Cruz' productive structures including; increased levels of political self-government and most importantly of greater autonomy in policy concerning the distribution of natural resources (Prado 2008, 197). Besides Santa Cruz, also other Bolivian departments such as Tarija, Pando, Chuquisaca and Beni demanded autonomy (Eaton 2008, 6). Precisely a year after the Santa Cruz petition for autonomy was offered to Bolivia's government, President Mesa agrees in June 2005 to hold a nation-wide referendum on departmental autonomy. While 56 percent of Bolivia's citizens rejected regional autonomy in this referendum held on July 2, 2006, 71,1 % of voters from the Santa Cruz department voted in favour of autonomy (Corte National Electoral).

Although, President Morales pledged his MAS party would respect the autonomy referendum results, he and his party failed to include significant autonomy measures in the new Bolivian constitution (Eaton 2008, 7). In response, the opposition-dominated eastern departments organised an unofficial autonomy-seeking referendum in May 2008 which in Santa Cruz was overwhelmingly approved by 82 percent of the voters. In the next month, three other eastern Bolivian departments (Beni, Pando and Tarija) followed suit, clearly showing how the polarisation of Bolivia's society had only grown since the beginning of social unrest in the late 1990's (Lehoucq 2008, 120).

In addition to the more general claim of Santa Cruz for autonomy, the *Cruceño* economic and political elites also use different measures to oppose Morales' administration's policy on land in particular. In 2006 the *Cruceño* regional government, the *Cámara Agropecuaria del Oriente*<sup>36</sup> (CAO), el *Comité Pro Santa Cruz* and the *Federación de Ganaderos de Santa Cruz*<sup>37</sup> (FEGASACRUZ) together established a *Comité para la defensa de la tierra* (Committee for the defence of land). This committee was founded with the goal to avoid the *saneamiento* of agrarian land, especially large land estates in Alto Parapetí, where the government planned to create a TCO. A good example of the persistence of Santa Cruz' cattle ranchers and agro-businesses federations to fight Morales' redistributive policies as well as the national *saneamiento* process, is the occurrence of a struggle between landowners and the delegates from the Vice-ministry of land in the same region in 2008. A group of around 70 landowners demanded the regularization process to be stopped by forcing INRA officials out of their field office, in February 2008. When the Vice-minister of Land, Almaráz and the national director of INRA, Rojas entered the region to notify the landowners the *saneamiento* process was commencing, things escalated further. The INRA team, including Almaráz and Rojas was taken hostage and threatened to death, before they were later freed by other INRA officials (Vice-ministry Bulletin No 36, 2008). Later that year interdepartmental highways were blocked by a group of landowners in order to prevent the process of *saneamiento* to take place. These incidents, clearly demonstrate how the regularization of large land estates has been, and still is a complicated process

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<sup>35</sup> Federation of Private Entrepreneurs of Bolivia–Santa Cruz

<sup>36</sup> Agricultural Chamber of Eastern Bolivia

<sup>37</sup> Cattle farmers Federation of Santa Cruz



encountering many difficulties, due to which the *saneamiento* of these large land estates has been very slow. In short, the above mentioned implies that although indigenous communities have sincerely prospered by Morales' land reform, in reality the concentration of agrarian land does not seem to have changed very much. The sometimes ten thousands of hectares of underused or illegally obtained agrarian properties have roughly remained untouched under 58 years of agrarian reform, including the reforms under Morales' administration. Therefore, concentration of agrarian land is still very high in Bolivia and particularly in the department of Santa Cruz. Hugo Salvatierra, vice-minister for rural development and agriculture published figures on land concentration in Santa Cruz which demonstrated that between 60 and 70 percent of the productive lands in the department are in the hands of no more than 400 families (El Diario Internacional, 2006). Families such as Gutiérrez, Landívar, Hurtado Paz and Marinkovic own up to 80.000 and in some cases over 100.000 hectares of land individually (Bonifaz 2005 and Constituyente Soberana 2006).

Concluding, it can be said that due to Santa Cruz' strong demand for political and economic independence, it appears to be difficult for Morales' administration to execute its redistributive reform policies in this Bolivian department.

#### 4.4 Ethnic disparities

Throughout this chapter it has become clear that the conflict over Bolivia's natural resources has tensed the relationship between the *Altiplano* on the one side and the *Oriente* on the other. The conflict over Bolivia's natural resources even motivated certain groups from the resource-rich Santa Cruz to call for more departmental autonomy, as previous sections explained. In addition, ethnic disparities due to decades of migration from western departments to the eastern department of Santa Cruz complicate the tensions between the *Altiplano* and the *Oriente* even more.

As discussed earlier on, Bolivia can roughly be divided into the western *Altiplano*, consisting of the departments of La Paz, Oruro, Potosí and parts of Cochabamba, and the eastern *Oriente*, consisting of simply the department of Santa Cruz.<sup>38</sup> The rest of the country is called the Llanos, corresponding with the departments of Pando, Beni, Chuquisaca and Tarija. However, the cleavage between the *Oriente* and the *Altiplano* goes beyond the purely geographical, economical and political differences. Ethnic disparities are an additional dimension, dividing the population of the *Oriente* and the *Altiplano*. According to this ethnic division, Bolivia could also be divided between a *Colla* and a *Camba* population. *Colla* is the name of the Bolivian population living on the *Altiplano*, who are mainly from *Aymara* or *Quechua*<sup>39</sup> origin. The *Colla* population is characterized by its traditional folkloric costume, its spiritual ancestral culture and its conventional way of production. These generally poor highland people, who adhere a traditional way of living close to *Pacha Mama*<sup>40</sup> are in sharp contrast with Santa Cruz' *Camba* population. *Camba* is a term describing the white/*mestizo*<sup>41</sup> descendants of Spanish colonizers, living in the eastern Lowlands of Santa Cruz. *Cruceños* claim to represent the modern part of Bolivia, due to the department's well developed private sector, the enormous amount of foreign investment, its natural resources as well as due to its modernized /capitalist production and consumption. Therefore, the *Camba* population represents itself as urban, cosmopolitan white middleclass people participating in a 'global' middle-upper class consumer society (Gustafson 2008, 357). In contrast, *Cruceño* regionalists argue that highland *Collas* are trapped in a culturally conservative irrational collectivism derived from pre- Spanish culture (Gustafson 2008, 356). However, this *Colla* – *Camba* division is more than just a way of describing and defining the differences

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<sup>38</sup> See appendix 4: Map of Bolivia

<sup>39</sup> Quechua and Aymara are two of Bolivia's many indigenous populations

<sup>40</sup> Mother Earth

<sup>41</sup> Bolivian from a mixed Bolivian indigenous and Spanish descent

between the two types of population. It is a way to create identity, more specifically a collective *Cruceño* identity (Prado 2008, p183). This *Cruceño* identity is based on collective history, myths, traditions, language and culture and is celebrated through symbols like regional food, dance and music (Prado 2008, p183). The distinction between *Colla* and *Camba* Bolivians is not only a way of separating eastern lowland people from those originating from the western highland within Bolivia as a whole. The *Colla* – *Camba* contrast is, due to decades of migration from western departments to the eastern Santa Cruz, also an important social dynamic in the department of Santa Cruz itself.

With the opening up of Santa Cruz in the sixties, state-sponsored migration programmes were set in motion in the 1960s and 1970s, spurring poor indigenous groups from the *Altiplano* region (mainly *Quechua* and *Aymara* indigenous) to settle in the vast and 'empty' eastern lowlands. This way, these landless groups from the west were provided with new opportunities to obtain agrarian land for their own. Even more extensive spontaneous migration from west to east followed up the state-sponsored colonization schemes in the 1980s and 1990s (Kay and Urioste 2005, p9). From the 1960's until today, over half a million people from Bolivia's highlands settled as rural smallholders, urban merchants and labourers in the Eastern lowland department (Gustafon 2006, 355).

This large-scale migration significantly reshaped the social and political landscape of Santa Cruz and changed its society into a multicultural one. Many of the western migrants settled in the *Norte Integrado* (Integrated North) consisting of Ichilo, Obispo Santiesteban and Sara<sup>42</sup>, where they established colonies that today are lively trading and farming municipalities (Gustafon 358). Consequently, the *Norte Integrado* region, as well as other Santa Cruz regions such as San Ignacio de Velasco, are the stage of tensions between small migrant landholders and large-scale soy farmers and cattlemen. The migrant owners of these small landholdings are often threatened by the continuous frontier expansion of large-scale agricultural producers, cattle ranchers and natural resource extracting companies.

When speaking of indigenous populations in Santa Cruz, it is important to keep in mind that indigenous groups in Santa Cruz are only those indigenous groups which are originally from the Santa Cruz department, such as the *Guarayo* and *Guarani* Indians. Indigenous groups from the *Altiplano*, such as *Quechua* and *Aymara* Indians, who are migrated to Santa Cruz from the 1960s on, are not treated as indigenous in this department because they are not originally from Santa Cruz. *Aymara* and *Quechua* Indians (first and second generation) who are considered indigenous on the *Altiplano*, are in Santa Cruz not considered indigenous but *colonizadores*, or migrants in English.

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<sup>42</sup> See the map of Santa Cruz in Appendix 4, for the location of these three *Cruceño* provinces.

## 5. Movimiento Sin Tierra – Santa Cruz

The previous chapter, on agrarian reform and social and political dynamics in Bolivia, shows that even though the many uprisings, policy changes and newly adopted land laws have significantly changed the agrarian status quo, the position of many vulnerable groups in the country has still not improved significantly. In addition to disappointing results of forty years of land reform, Bolivia experienced a strangling external debt which in the 1980s led to hyper-inflation and consequently a profound economic crisis. Consequently, from the 1980s on, various revolutionary (mainly urban) movements started to emerge in order to call attention to this slowly progressing and still unfinished agrarian reform. Movimiento Sin Tierra- Bolivia, founded in February 2000 is one of these revolutionary movements.

Chapter 5 will provide the reader with a description of MST-SC's characteristics and functioning. Firstly it will discuss the origin, ideology and methods of Movimiento Sin Tierra. In the second section, the results resulting from the movement's struggle and its actions will be evaluated. The last two sections will provide the reader with more specific information of the MST-SC cases of *Pueblos Unidos* and *Las Trillizas*. A detailed discussion of

those two MST-SC settlements will shed more light on the exact functioning of the movement as well as on the reactions of neighboring large scale land owners on the actions of this movement.

### 5.1 The movements origin and ideology

As a reaction to the before mentioned economic crisis and the meagre results from the agrarian revolution of 1952, demonstrations, street blockades and indigenous marches dominated daily life in Bolivia between the late 1980s and the 1990s. Movimiento Sin Tierra- Bolivia (MST-B) was founded in February 2000, in the Bolivian department of Tarija, as a reaction to the failure of decades of agrarian reform. The agrarian revolution of 1952 had eliminated the *hacienda* system and abolished peasant servitude in the western highlands of Bolivia and therefore improved the living conditions of these peasant farmers to a certain extent. However, in the eastern lowlands not much had changed since the introduction of the Agrarian law of 1953 and an immensely unequal distribution of agrarian land remained. Ley INRA, accepted in 1996 promised recuperation and assured to distribute *tierras fiscales* to landless peasant communities. Nevertheless, four years later the situation had not much improved for Bolivia's landless population. The *saneamiento* process was executed exasperatingly slow and close to none hectares of *tierras fiscales* were distributed. In 2000, still 300.000 of landless families worked as agricultural labourers or had to rent land to cultivate, in order to make ends meet. At the same time 18 million hectares of agrarian properties were under-used in Bolivia (Otero 2003, p17 and Silvester Saisari 26 August 2009). To make matters even worse, the landless in the east of the country faced, besides the frustration of the paralyzed *saneamiento* process, also other problems. Due to a vast increase of migrant settling in Santa Cruz as well as to population growth overall, the active labour force in the department doubled within thirty years. From the 1950s on the most important national industries and enterprises in Bolivia had become state-owned, in particularly railways, electricity and the mine- and hydrocarbon-industry. Consequently, state employment kept on growing to such proportions that until the 1980s state employment in terms of salaries corresponded with 10 percent of Bolivia's GDP (Kay and Urioste 2005, p27). However, due to privatisation of several previously state-owned economic sectors in the 1980s as well as due to the beginning of the industrialization process in that same decade, urban employment opportunities decreased significantly, particularly in Santa Cruz. (García Linera and Chavéz León 2008, p543-546). Consequently, urban citizens tried their luck in rural areas which as a result led to a huge demand for agrarian land.

In this context, the MST-B responded to a structural problem of land concentration and the wrongly usage of land. As the state, for decades, had proved to be incapable or unwilling to change the agrarian status quo, the Bolivian MST decided to reform the agrarian sector 'from below' (Hermelinda Fernández Bamba 2003, p198). After the example of the Brazilian landless rural workers movement, *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, the Bolivian grassroots based movement started occupying under-used agrarian properties. During its first land occupation in El Gran Chaco, a province of the department of Tarija, where the contrast between large land estates and the presence of poor agricultural labour force without land is enormous, MST-B was created.

With the occupations of under-used agrarian estates the MST-B aims to achieve two goals. Firstly, by occupying land estates it exercise pressure on the government and hopes to fasten the execution of the *saneamiento* process. Secondly, it attempts to expropriate large land estates that do not comply with the socio-economic function, distribute it to landless peasants and therefore create a fairer agrarian land distribution (Ángel Duran 2003, p365 and Hermelinda Fernández Bamba 2003, p200).

In 2000, the movement was merely active in eastern department of Tarija. However, during the MST-B Congress in October of 2001 the movement decided to continue its occupation policy in Tarija and extend its actions to the

departments of La Paz en Santa Cruz. MST-SC was officially create with the start of the occupation of *San Cayetano* and *Piray*, and *La Luna* and *La Moneda*.

## 5.2 MST-SC membership, its method and organization structure

MST-SC does not have a clearly defined amount of members. The movement generally works with local communities which have issues with a neighbouring large landowner. MST-SC supports these communities with an investigation of the area and with the planning and coordination of an occupation. While working together, members of such communities, willing to execute an occupation become MST-SC members (Silvestre Saisari 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2009). In 2004 the amount of these associates was estimated at around 50.000 in the whole of Bolivia. Between 250.000 and 300.000 were estimated to be landless peasant (García Linera and Chavéz León 2008, p566). MST-SC members are therefore only those who are directly involved in the occupation of an under-used land estate, in cooperation with the MST-SC. A large majority of these MST-SC members in Santa Cruz are immigrant peasants from the *Altiplano*<sup>43</sup>, most of them are second generation immigrants. Their parents were often migrated peasant in the rural areas of Santa Cruz, working either as agricultural labourers or by renting land in order to be able to maintain in their livelihoods (Alcides Vadillo 29 July 2010). The children of these first generation migrants often followed their parents' example or in case situation became unsustainable on the countryside, they moved to the cities in order to become street vendors, bus drivers or some other kind of badly paid worker. As employment opportunities changed in the end of the 1980s, beginning of the 1990s these second generation migrants returned to the countryside, started criticizing the status quo in land distribution and demanded agrarian land for their families.

MST-SC's way of operating starts with the execution of investigations on land use in the concerning department. On the countryside, they investigate which land estates have been abandoned for years, which properties do not comply with the FES and which lands have allegedly been illegally annexed by large nearby land owners. Generally, before occupying a property, the movement submits a demand for *saneamiento* of the concerned area with the INRA. Only when after a couple of months the government does not seem to undertake any action, the MST decides to occupy the land estate (García Linera and Chavéz León 2008, p556 and Silvestre Saisari 31 July 2009). Although occupying land is illegal, according to Bolivian law, the movement considers it justified to use illegal means in order to fight even greater illegality, which is the under-usage of agrarian land according to the MST (García Linera and Chavéz León 2008, p560).

As indicated above, one of the main principles of MST-SC is that the movement does not plan an occupation or other action, unless a demand or initiative comes from local communities themselves. (García Linera and Chavéz León 2008, p549-550 and Javier Aramayo 29 July 2009). In such a case, MST-SC coordinators support the concerning local communities to identify the properties suitable for occupation, plan the action and decide who will be part of the occupation and when it will be executed. In Santa Cruz, MST-SC is mainly active in the provinces of Sara, Velasco, Cordillera and Obispo Santistevan.

The actual occupation is very often done at night. A group of, between 30 and 200 MST-SC members, men, women and often also children, occupies an abandoned property by setting up small primitive shacks. As soon as possible, they sow crops in order to be able to feed themselves as well as signalling to the 'owner' of the property that they plan to stay (Silvestre Saisari 31 July 2009). Frequently MST-SC occupations are evacuated by state police forces shortly after their commencement. Once evacuated from the occupied property, the 'MST –SC occupation group' usually comes back to occupy the same property once again and continue their actions until *saneamiento* of the area is promised by the government. Another option, once evacuated from the original

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<sup>43</sup> The Bolivia highlands, consisting of the departments; La Paz; Oruro, Potosí and a part of Cochabamba.

property is to occupy an adjacent property, which very often is owned by the same proprietor (Wilfredo Torres 23 August 2009).

Although, MST-B occupations have always been peaceful, they quite often meet with grave violence on the side of landowners. In the case *Los Yuquises*, an occupation in the north of Santa Cruz, the MST-SC settlement was attacked several times by a paramilitary group, allegedly hired by the concerning landowners. During these attacks many MST-SC members were injured and 16 were killed, including a ten year old boy (Felipa Ramos 22 August 2009). Moreover, many MST-SC occupations were confronted with threats, torture and nightly intimidating visits from landowners' representatives (Wilfredo Torres 23 August 2009).

As mentioned above, MST-Bolivia started with the movement of landless in Tarija. At the end of 2001 the movement was expanded with the creation of similar movements in La Paz and Santa Cruz. Since these movements are active in several regions in the three departments, Movimiento Sin Tierra thus consists out of a national level, a departmental and a regional one. The regional levels include the coordination of the occupation and later on the settlement, while the departmental level focuses more on the investigation of correct land usage and the progress of *saneamiento* process. At the national level, the central MST-B strategy is outlined and discussed. These different levels and departments are connected to one another in a 'brotherly structure'. The relation between these fractions is horizontal instead of vertical, like is often the case in other social movements. MST-B chose this organizational structure in order to emphasize the equality of all coordinators and levels of organization within the movement. Another advantage of this form of collective leadership is that it strengthens the movements' continuity, as the movement is not totally dependent on one leader. In case one of MST-B coordinators is bribed, threatened or murdered, the collective leadership stops the movement from collapsing (García Linera and Chavéz León 2008, p554).

### 5.3 MST-SC' achievements and occupations

After reading the above elaboration on how MST-B emerged, on their ideology and on how the movement attempts to reach its goals, one arrives at the question whether MST-SC is indeed capable of bringing about redistributive change in the department of Santa Cruz. This section elaborates on MST-SC's actions and the related achievements in Santa Cruz thus far.

#### 5.3.1 MST-SC occupations

The Movimiento Sin Tierra became active in Santa Cruz in 2003, with the occupation of *San Cayetano* and *Piray*, and *La Luna* and *La Moneda*. Later in 2004 and 2005 MST-Santa Cruz extended its occupations among others to the properties of family Hurtado Paz in the province of Obispo Santistevan. From 2003 to 2005, the movement executed 11 major occupations in the department of Santa Cruz, mainly in the provinces of Guarayos and Obispo Santistevan. Only the occupation of *Tierra Prometida* was executed before the creation of MST-Santa Cruz. This occupation was carried out by landless peasants who, when MST-SC was established joined the movement. Therefore, the occupation of *Tierra Prometida* is also incorporated as a MST-SC occupation. In total, MST-Santa Cruz occupied 16 under-used agrarian properties, with around 4000 MST member families. How much hectares MST-Santa Cruz has exactly occupied is hard to say, since most occupations merely concerned small parts of the occupied properties.

Table 7:  
**MST occupations in Santa Cruz<sup>44</sup>**

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<sup>44</sup> Table 12 only includes the most significant occupations, in other words these occupations in which more than 40 families engaged.

Name of property	Province	Period of Occupation	Number of families
Tierra Prometida	Ichilo	1999 - 2009	120
San Cayetano	Obispo Santistevan	July 2003-July 2005	265/ 350 <sup>45</sup> (SC and P)
Piray	Obispo Santistevan	July 2003-July 2005	„
Terebinto	Andres Ibañez	July 2003	250
Cabezas	Cordillera	July 2003	no data
Estrellas de Guapay	Sara	July 2003	11 communities <sup>46</sup> =1100
La Luna	Guarayos	Sept 2003-August 2004	800/1500 (LL, LM and P)
La Moneda	Guarayos	Sept 2003-August 2004	„
Pistola	Obispo Santistevan	Sept 2003-August 2004	„
España	Guarayos	May 2004	200
Los Yuquises	Obispo Santistevan	August 2004-May 2005	628 /1200
ASPASFE	Ichilo	2005	60
15 de Octubre	Ichilo	April /May 2009	150
Nuevo Amanecer	Obispo Santistevan	April /May 2009	70
Avaroa	Obispo Santistevan	April /May 2009	100
Villa Nueva	Obispo Santistevan	April /May 2009	85

Source: Composed out of collected data from local newspapers, INRA documents and conversations with MST-SC leader Silvestre Saisari.

When viewing Table 7, it is remarkable that most occupations did not last more than a month. This is due to the fact that MST-SC did not seem to be able to maintain the lands they occupied for a long time (Silvestre Saisari 26 August 2009). Because of repeatedly violent incidences, and constant evacuations led by government forces, MST-SC generally ceased occupation of a property after a couple of weeks, sometimes months (Aramayo 2006, p553). Due to the continuous confrontation with violence, MST-SC was compelled to diminish its occupations in extent and in number of involved people. Additionally, the election of Evo Morales for President in December 2005 changed the context for MST-B. Morales' progressive and drastic plans for agrarian reform were a source of new hope for the movement. Therefore, from 2005 on MST-B changed its policy and started to apply a more socio-juridical strategy, meaning that until 2009 no new occupations were executed (Aramayo 2006, p553). This socio-juridical approach is a less offensive strategy and among others encompasses the submitting of demands for *tierras fiscales* and the involvement in negotiations concerning the new Constitution and the agrarian Ley 3545. During these negotiations MST-Bolivia endeavoured to incorporate land rights for landless communities (Aramayo 29 July 2009). Evidently, MST-B has significantly changed its position in the struggle over agrarian land for landless communities, over the last 4 years. However, according to Silvestre Saisari, the current leader of MST-Bolivia, does this temporary stop on land occupations not mean the MST-B has ceased its actions against unequal land distribution. Since 2006, the movement tries to get an idea of how much their new socio-juridical approach in combination with the new government's policy, can offer concerning agrarian land for the landless. In order to give Morales' administration a chance, MST-B decided to keep low for a while. Nevertheless, MST-B leader Saisari assures, that MST-B will not cease its occupations and its fight against land concentration in the hands of only a small group of businessmen until landless peasants in Santa Cruz are given land to cultivate (Silvestre Saisari 26 August 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Table 12 indicates for some MST occupations two different amounts of families involved. This is due to the fact that different sources gave varying data on the number of families involved in the concerning occupations. The exact number of families involved should be somewhere in between 3828 and 5185.

<sup>46</sup> It is estimated that these 11 communities consist of around 1100 families (communities often consist of between the 40 and 160 families)



### 5.3.2 Obtained agrarian land due to MST-SC occupations

As discussed above, most MST-SC occupations in Santa Cruz so far did not last very long. Most of the land occupations in Santa Cruz were evacuated by state police forces shortly after their commencement. Therefore and also due to the level of violence, MST-SC was confronted with, the movement has not been able to prolong their occupations long enough in order to exercise enough pressure on the government to regularize the under-used properties and revert them to the state. The movement has thus never actually received the property they occupied. However, in the case of the occupation of *Los Yuquises*, a property in the province of Obispo Santistevan owned by the family Hurtado Paz, the movement did receive 16.686 hectares of agrarian land. MST-SC did not receive the actual occupied property but two other properties (*La Luna* and *La Madre*) previously owner by the same family. During the *saneamiento* process of the region it was discovered that Family Hurtado Paz had taken possession of neighbouring *tierras fiscales*, which they had baptized into *La Luna* and *La Madre*. Therefore, these properties were reverted to the state and subsequently donated to the group of MST-SC members who have been part of the occupations of Hurtado Paz' under-used and illegally obtained land estates. The land was thus donated as a collective property to the community of MST-SC members, who baptized the agrarian land into *Pueblos Unidos*. This collectively held and cultivated land is according to Ley 3435 indivisible and unmarketable. The MST-SC members can therefore not sell the donated land on the market nor divide it among each other, the land it to be cultivated collectively.

Strictly seen, these 16.686 hectares of agrarian land given to the MST-SC is the only agrarian land obtained by MST-Santa Cruz as a result of an occupation. Nevertheless, table 8 shows that MST-SC has obtained over 100.000 hectares of agrarian land in Velasco, under the names of *Tierra Hermosa*, *Chirimoya* and *Tierra Firme*, together called *Las Trillizas*. These pieces of agrarian land however, were donated to MST-Santa Cruz as a result of a demand for *tierra fiscal*, and are therefore not the result of successful occupations. Moreover, the donation of another almost 25.000 hectares of agrarian land in to the movement, in the provinces of Sara and Ichilo is still in process (table 8). When this land will be donated to MST-SC, it will be just as in the case of *Pueblos Unidos*, be the result of a MST-SC occupations.

Table 8:  
Agrarian land obtained by the Movimiento Sin Tierra-Santa Cruz

Name of property	Province	Number of families	Dotated hectares	Date of dotation
La Isla	Guarayos	isla + madre 190	isla + madre 16.686	Sept 2006
La Madre	Guarayos	isla + madre 190	isla + madre 16.686	Sept 2006
Tierra Prometida	Ichilo	120	9.985	in proces
Tierra Hermosa	Velasco	225	15.237	Dec 2008 <i>tierra fiscal</i>
Chirimoya	Velasco	80	40.222	Dec 2008 <i>tierra fiscal</i>
Tierra Firme	Velasco	250	44.795	Dec 2008 <i>tierra fiscal</i>
Estrellas de Guapay	Sara	11 comunidades	15.000	in proces

Source: Composed out of collected data from local newspapers, INRA documents and conversations with MST leader Saisari.

Summarized, MST has so far in the department of Santa Cruz, obtained (or nearly obtained) almost 142.000 hectares of agrarian land, benefiting 1965 families as a result of seven years of land occupations and demands

for *tierras fiscales*. This result combines both the obtained land due to occupations, as well as due to requests for *tierras fiscales*. One could say that, the three demands for *tierras fiscales* in 2008 have in the end brought in more than have the 12 property occupations by 3600 MST members over 2 years<sup>47</sup>. In compassion, purely the occupations by MST-SC have brought in 41.000 hectares, while the demands for *tierras fiscales* have brought in over 100.000 hectares. The requests for *tierras fiscales* has thus produced more than twice the result for the movement than have the land estate occupations.

Nevertheless, when comparing these results, one should bare in mind that demanding and accepting *tierras fiscales* in the end does not change anything about the unequal land distribution situation in the department, since the donation of *tierras fiscales* does not touch upon under-used or illegally obtained large land estates.

### 5.3 Pueblos Unidos<sup>48</sup>

*Pueblos Unidos* is an agrarian settlement grown from a successful MST-SC occupation in Obispo Santistevan, in the west of the Santa Cruz department. This section discusses the specific MST-SC case of *Pueblos Unidos*, because this occupation is one of the most extensive and long lasting MST-SC land occupations in the department. What makes the case of *Pueblos Unidos* particularly interesting is the fact that the donation of the 16.686 hectares making up *Pueblos Unidos*, is actually the result of a MST-SC occupation. The previous MST-SC occupiers of properties from Hurtado Paz, eventually collectively received 16.686 hectares of land, making *Pueblos Unidos* the only MST-SC success story obtaining agrarian land as a result of land occupations. A detailed description of this previous MST-SC occupation will shed more light on the exact functioning and methods of the movement.

#### 5.3.1 History on the struggle for Pueblos Unidos

*Pueblos Unidos* is an agrarian settlement developed out of a land occupation of *Los Yuquises* a property owned by the Family Hurtado Paz in Montero, a municipality in the province of Obispo Santistevan. In this north-western municipality of Santa Cruz, soy, rice and sugarcane is cultivated for the export market. The fact that 75 agribusinesses cultivate 250.000 hectares of agrarian land in this region, while 3.000 peasant families have merely 100.000 hectares to support their families' basic needs, demonstrates very well the unequal land concentration in the department (Omar Quiroga and Eulogio Núñez 2005, p9).

In June 2004, after thorough investigation of the area and public INRA documentation, MST-SC announced that the property of *Los Yuquises* was officially registered as *tierras fiscales*. Moreover, did MST –SC discover that no agriculture activity was executed on the property. Since, by Bolivian law, wrongful obtainment and abandonment of agrarian land is illegal, MST-SC demanded *saneamiento* of the area and demanded the land to be donated to the landless peasant communities in the region (Omar Quiroga and Eulogio Núñez 2005, p13). In August 2004, after two months of fruitless waiting for *saneamiento* of the property by the INRA, MST-SC entered the property of *Los Yuquises* peacefully and settled with tens of families. Already some days later, Family Hurtado Paz demanded the evacuation of the MST-SC settlement on their property (Omar Quiroga and Eulogio Núñez 2005, p15). After a month of no government response to the MST-SC occupation of the property of *Los Yuquises*, the *Camera Agropecuaria del Oriente* (CAO) decides to intervene and chose sides for Family Hurtado Paz. On September 15, the CAO published an open letter in the *La Razón* newspaper, demanding Bolivia's President Carlos Mesa to take measures in order to defend private property in Santa Cruz. In the same letter, the CAO warned that in case of no government reaction the property owners 'would defend their property rights with

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<sup>47</sup> The property occupations of 2009 are not included in this cost-benefit analysis, since it is too early to say anything about the results of these actions.

<sup>48</sup> United Peoples

their own measures' (Omar Quiroga and Eulogio Núñez 2005, p16). Even more surprisingly, it turned out that two weeks later the Prefect of Santa Cruz, Ruben Costas had signed an authorization, without approval of the national government, for a military intervention in order to clear the MST-SC settlement on the property of Family Hurtado Paz. Even though the meddling of third parties provoked rising tensions, no official action was undertaken by the Prefect or the national land reform institution. However, in the following months clashes between MST-SC members and armed men allegedly hired by Hurtado Paz took place several times. *Pueblos Unidos* was confronted with threats and nightly intimidating visits from landowners' 'representatives' (Wilfredo Torres 23 August 2009). Numerous members of the MST-SC settlement became seriously injured, 20 mysteriously disappeared over the months and even some members died during these assaults (Silvestre Saisari 26 August 2009). In the mean time however, the MST-SC settlement was baptized into *Pueblos Unidos* and grew from 400 families to a 1000. After some quiet months, the Cruceño Prefect again interfered in January 2005 and demanded the INRA to regularize the property and its surroundings. No serious response came from the INRA, but another incident demonstrated how much the tensions concerning the MST-SC occupation in Obispo Santistevan has risen. On 9 May 2005, shortly after a press conference on the Santa Cruz' main square, concerning the perished and disappeared inhabitants of *Pueblos Unidos*, MST-SC leader Silvestre Saisari was beaten and kicked unconscious by several members of *Unión Juvenil Cruceñista* (Silvestre Saisari 26 August 2009). This daytime attack on the MST-SC leader by associates of this junior movement striving for an autonomous and Colla<sup>49</sup>-free Santa Cruz indicated how a very local rural conflict between a landowner and landless peasants has developed into a much bigger social problem. Then finally, in May 2005 almost immediately following the violent incident on Santa Cruz' main square, INRA offered MST-SC 12.113 hectares of *tierras fiscales* scattered over three provinces in Santa Cruz (Omar Quiroga and Eulogio Núñez 2005, p19). Although accepting INRA's offer would have provided numerous Santa Cruz' landless with a piece of agrarian land, it would on the other hand not have solved the more fundamental issue of the many under-used land estates and the unequal distribution of agrarian land in the department. Therefore, the movement decided to refuse the offer and declared it should guarantee the presence of MST-SC in *Los Yuquises* and that it would plan new land occupations in the department (Omar Quiroga and Eulogio Núñez 2005, p20). Four days later, the peaceful evacuation of *Pueblos Unidos* by 550 policemen and army troops was demanded by the national government and on 23 June 2005, the *saneamiento* of *Los Yuquises* finally started (Omar Quiroga and Eulogio Núñez 2005, p20-22). Nevertheless, did it take until September 2006 before MST-SC was given 16.686 hectares of agrarian land, in the form of two expropriated land estates previously owned by Family Hurtado Paz, *La Madre* and *La Isla* (Table 8). The settlement of *Pueblos Unidos*, cleared on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2005 from the property of *Los Yuquises*, was recreated on these 16.686 hectares of agrarian land given by INRA in September 2006 and still exists today.

### 5.3.2 Characteristics of *Pueblos Unidos*

At some points during the occupation in 2004 and 2005, *Pueblos Unidos* consisted of over a 1000 families. However, over the years due to the hard and sometimes dangerous living conditions in the MST-SC settlement, many families ceased their participation, before the movement was given 16.686 hectares of cultivatable land in 2006. Therefore, nowadays the new *Pueblos Unidos* consists merely of 190 families (Aniceto Maldonado 22 August 2009). Living conditions in the settlement are very basic. Besides the 190 primitive one-room shacks *Pueblos Unidos* consists merely of a mechanic water pump, a basic medical emergency shacks, an improvised primary school, three little basic grocery shops and a regularly used football field. The agrarian settlement is located 253 kilometres north of Santa Cruz and 11 kilometres from the nearest village, Peta Grande. A bus line

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<sup>49</sup> Colla is the (racist) term for people originating from the highland departments of Bolivia. People originating from the eastern lowlands are called Camba.

from the municipal capital Montero only runs as far as Peta Grande, a neighbouring village and thus leaves *Pueblos Unidos* difficult to reach. Especially during the rain season, when the road between Montero and Peta Grande becomes impassable, *Pueblos Unidos* is nearly unreachable. Besides the absence of public transport, *Pueblos Unidos* also lacks a linkage to the electricity and phone network, like many other small villages in the neighbourhood.

The life in the village and the cultivation of the surrounding agrarian land, is managed by a team of 12 *dirigentes*<sup>50</sup>. These village leaders are each responsible for their own task such as; education; land and territory; bookkeeping; internal order; productive development; public health etc. Moreover, village gatherings are held every couple of weeks to discuss the life within the village itself, the progress of *Pueblos Unidos*' agrarian production and the settlement's position concerning political developments and surrounding land estates.

Collectively, the 190 families cultivate, the in 2006, 16.686 hectares of donated agrarian land. Nevertheless, over 14.000 hectares of the 16.686 hectares of the property are not suitable for cultivation. 4000 hectares of the property consist of a lake and the rest of the property lies very low and is therefore, due to too much damp not suitable for cultivation (Aniceto Maldonado 22 August 2009). However, with the remaining cultivatable 2000 hectares of the total property, the village cultivates soy and beans for the national market on an impressive scale. With a tight seeding schedule and the use of high tech agrarian machinery, the collective agricultural settlement of *Pueblos Unidos* can support her inhabitants in their livelihood. However, even though *Pueblos Unidos* harvested good crops over the last years, they still have a hard time to make ends meet. Due to a large depth, originating from the purchase of 2 trucks, to transport the crops to the market and a huge agricultural machine, the agrarian village faces financial problems. The way to overcome these financial problems is to produce enough to make profit on the market in order to pay off the depth. However, since not all area of the property can be used for agriculture, it is hard for the settlement to cultivate on a scale, large enough to earn back the investment in its machinery (Aniceto Maldonado 22 August 2009).

Besides this collectively cultivated part of the property, the inhabitants of *Pueblos Unidos* also cultivate agricultural products, such as banana, rice and *yuca*<sup>51</sup> for private use. This more private cultivation is done on a number of hectares closer to the village itself. Moreover, the rest part of the property that is not resided or cultivated collectively or individually, is used for hunting and collecting wood. The Río Grande, along which the village is settled is used for its fish.

Aside from financial insufficiency and the difficult living conditions, *Pueblos Unidos* has become a calm place to live, since the end of 2008. Before 2008, conflicts with and threats from the previous owner of the property, Family Hurtado Paz, occasionally took place. However, since more than a year the situation is stable and the future of the collectively cultivating community looks promising.

## 5.4 Las Trillizas <sup>52</sup>

*Las Trillizas* is just like *Pueblos Unidos* a MST-settlement. However, instead of being a settlement growing from a land occupation, *Las Trillizas* is established out of a demand for *tierras fiscales*. It is situated near the city of Santa Rosa de la Roca, in the Cruceño province of Velasco. Different than *Pueblos Unidos* however, *Las Trillizas* is an aggregation, consisting of three MST-SC settlements called *Tierra Firme*, *Tierra Hermosa* and *Chirimoya*. The case of *Las Trillizas* is described into more detail in this chapter, because this MST-SC settlement experiences still very serious threats from neighbouring cattle ranchers farms and agro-industrial businesses, even though the settlement already received legal collective property right over this agrarian piece of land in

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<sup>50</sup> Chiefs of the settlement

<sup>51</sup> Yuca is a potato-like vegetable introduced in the Oriente by Colla migrants.

<sup>52</sup> The Triplets.

2008. This case therefore perfectly shows the precariousness of recent achieved MST-SC successes. Moreover, it gives a good idea of the strength of the Cruceño large landowning elites as well as how far these landowning elites are willing to go in order to maintain their privileged position.

In November 2006, almost a year after the inauguration of Bolivia's first indigenous President Evo Morales, the people of MST-SC requested the donation of more or less 100.000 hectares of *tierras fiscales*, what is nowadays called *Las Trillizas*. In that same month the INRA acknowledged the request and exactly a year later, in November 2007 the INRA granted MST-SC 40.222 hectares named *Tierra Firme*, 15.237 hectares named *Tierra Hermosa* and 44.795 hectares named *Chirimoya* (INRA Resolución DTF 20/2007 -21/2007 – 22/2007). However, the donation and titulation of the 100.000 hectares of agricultural land to the three MST-SC settlements became only official after President Evo Morales officially granted the executive titles to MST-SC on December the 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008. In the meantime however, protest began to grow in the province of Velasco. Although the land requested by MST-SC was categorized *tierra fiscal* by the Bolivian Authorities, in fact the 100.00 hectares were illegally used by two Velascian landowners named, Guido Solis and Americo Gemio (Silvester Saisari 26 August 2009). Supported by the sub-prefecture of Velasco, the Comité Civico of Velasco and the Velascian *Union Juvenil*<sup>53</sup>, the two Velascian landowners tried for several times during the summer of 2007 to interrupt the settlement of MST-SC members in *Las Trillizas* (Bolpress, CEJIS, Kaosenred). Also later on, in 2008 this group tried to avoid the true settlement of peasant farmers on what they concerned to be their agricultural land, by invading the villages, intimidate, abuse, steal from and in some cases even torture the inhabitants of *Las Trillizas* ([www.cejis.org](http://www.cejis.org), [www.kaosenlared.org](http://www.kaosenlared.org), [www.bolpress.com](http://www.bolpress.com) etc.). From the beginning of 2010 more serious attacks started to take place on the three villages; *Chirimoya*, *Tierra Firme* and *Tierra Hermosa*. Frequently, the settlements were assaulted by significant groups of armed men entering houses, beating men and women and above all emphasizing that the land of *Las Trillizas* did not belong to MST-SC. In order to put a hold on the harassments a MST-SC delegation travelled to La Paz in February 2010, to speak with the Vice-Minister of Land, Mr. Víctor Camocho and INRA Director, Mr. Juan Carlos Rojas, asking them to protect the inhabitants of *Las Trillizas* from the assaults and protect MST-SC's land rights formulated in INRA Resolution DTF 20, 21 and 22. The INRA promised precautionary means by way of another resolution (Resolution DTF 008/2010). However, in reality the resolution was not executed and the inhabitants of *Las Trillizas* kept suffering new assaults on their villages during which communal building and the village school were destroyed.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2010, *Tierra Hermosa* was once again violently attacked. Women and children were hit; houses were set on fire; radio instruments, GPS equipment and vehicles were stolen. Five inhabitants disappeared. Fortunately, Bolivian Authorities decided that same day to sent a delegation to *Las Trillizas* on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, consisting of the Vice-Minister of Land, Mr. Víctor Camocho, INRA Director, Mr. Juan Carlos Rojas and two MST leaders, Silvestre Saisari and Anastasio Serrudo in order to settle the dispute. However, when arriving in *Las Trillizas* the delegation was met with extreme violence. The Vice-Minister of Land was beaten up, two other delegation members were hospitalized and in total 11 men and women living in *Tierra Hermosa* disappeared. The agricultural production of the villages was destroyed and all 289 inhabitants of *Las Trillizas* were violently evacuated.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of May MST-SC started a hunger strike in front of the *Palacio de Justicia*<sup>54</sup> in an attempt to ask for public support and ask the state for practical support such as shelter and food. Moreover, the strike aimed to provoke a state intervention in the province of Velasco in order to restore peacefulness, so that the inhabitants of

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<sup>53</sup> The Provincial Youth Movement associated with extremist ideas and violent behaviour. The movement is affiliated with the *Committee Pro Santa Cruz*, for which it acts as a strong arm (Gustafson 2008).

<sup>54</sup> Palace of Justice

*Las Trillizas* could return to their villages. However, up till the time of writing neither the Bolivian Government nor the INRA has come forward with a solution to restore *Las Trillizas* land rights and to investigate the assaults on the villages and prosecute the ones responsible.

## 6. Explaining the reasons for MST-SC's inability to bring about redistributive change

From chapter 4, on the agrarian change in Bolivia from 1953 to 2009 it becomes clear that land distribution in Bolivia is exceptionally unequal, especially in the department of Santa Cruz. Change is therefore needed in order to achieve a more equitable distribution of land. However, the past has shown that neither state-led nor market-led reform approaches have brought the Bolivian rural poor the results they hoped for. Moreover, Chapter 5, on the origin and achievements of Movimiento Sin Tierra in Santa Cruz shows that so far it has not been easy for the movement to bring about a more equal distribution of land on a significant scale. The movement has fought the under-usage of agrarian land and the illegally obtainment of agrarian lands by both land occupations and requests for *tierras fiscales*, for almost seven years now. Nevertheless, MST-Santa Cruz has obtained merely 142.000 hectares of agrarian land, benefiting only 1965 families. Although the obtainment of this amount of agrarian by the movement is an important achievement, the section on *Las Trillizas* also shows the temporality of these results. Even legally obtained property rights, such as in the case of *Las Trillizas* do not seem to provide the movement's members with enough tenure security to cultivate their collective land safely. Moreover, the achievements of MST-SC are in comparison to the total estimated amount of landless peasant families in Bolivia (between 250.000 and 300.000) not very significant. It is important to realize that to expect one rural movement in Santa Cruz to



bring about a total agrarian redistribution of land in the department, is unrealistic (García Linera and Chavéz León 2008, p566). Nevertheless, one also has to acknowledge that considering the enormous amounts of time (seven years), the vast number of people involved (3828 families) as well as the huge suffering and danger these people have experienced (physical abuse, disappearances, deaths) 142.000 hectares of agrarian land, benefiting only 1965 families is at the least to be called disappointing. Moreover, these results especially do not seem to be a great success when it is taken into account that legally obtained property rights, such as the property rights in *Las Trillizas*, are threatened frequently by neighbouring landowners and that the Bolivian state does not appear to be able or willing to protect these property rights.

When thinking this analysis over, the question rises why MST-SC does not seem to be able to change the status quo concerning land distribution in Santa Cruz in a more convincing way. Has MST-SC not maintained its connections with national and international NGO's carefully enough? Should SMT-SC have been cooperating more with pro-reform political parties? Or has it not been able to sustain its internal relations within the movement itself? In order to find an answer to the question why MST-SC has not been able to obtain more land for the landless population in Santa Cruz and thereby change the land distribution structure, Chapter 6 will firstly focus on the theoretical considerations from the scholars who have already been discussed in chapter 3.

According to a part of the current theoretical academic literature on grassroots based agrarian change, grassroots based movements are very well capable of bringing about redistributive change. Even though they face significant economic and physical vulnerabilities, a significant number of scholars refutes the idea that 'rural idiocy' would still pervade the countryside.

By these scholars, today's rural movements' leading activists and militants are believed to be educated, modern and cosmopolitan and to have an explicit understanding of national politics. However, in order to be successful in bringing about change, these rural movements should comply with certain preconditions according to these scholars such as Huizer, Janvry and Sadoulet, and Petras and Veltmeijer. The first precondition revolves around the value of networks linking local land reform movements to one another region wide, in order to create solidarity and mobilize public support. Secondly, these movements have to maintain good relations with global institutions and national/international partners who are supportive to their case. Thirdly, these rural movements struggling to change the distributive status quo, should mobilize public support for the organization and attract new rural activists. Finally, most of these scholars describe the presence of a broad pro-reform political coalition supportive to land redistribution, to be an important prerequisite for rural movements to bring about change. However, there exist contradictory ideas on whether rural movements should interact and cooperate with such pro-reform governments. Summarized, the academic literature on the potential of grassroots based rural movements to bring about redistributive change reasons that, as long as a movement works hard to; keep communicating between its different segments; to build alliances with national and international support organizations; to mobilize public support; and as long as the movements interacts or even cooperates with a pro-reform government, these grassroots based movement have a fair chance of changing the agrarian distributive status quo.

Remarkably however, these theories for the most part pay attention to human agency. Put differently, the theoretical considerations mainly lay emphasis on the influence a grassroots based movement itself can exercise on its environment. Although this perspective is very positive and movement-empowering, it is in the opinion of the researcher also incomplete and too much centred on the capacity of the movement itself.

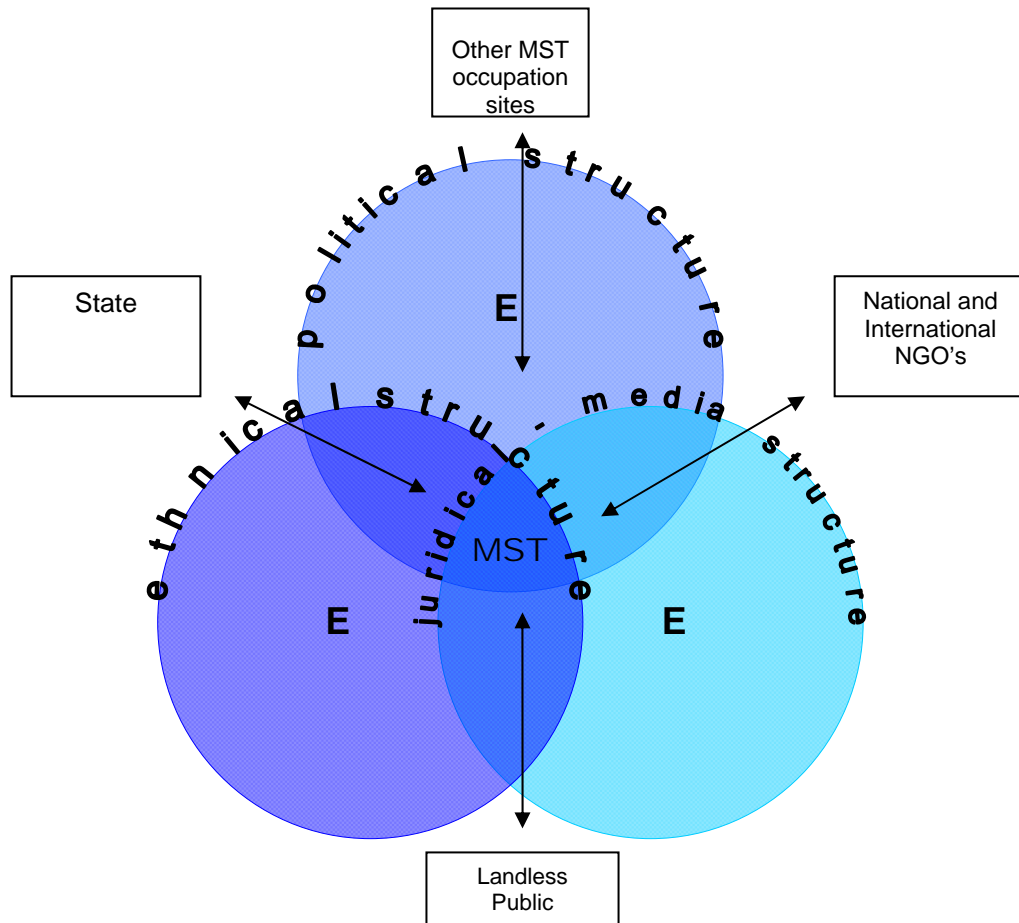
In this line of thought on the potential of rural movements a very important aspect is overlooked. The discussed scholars, active in the field of land reform and grassroots based movements, do not pay attention to the broader



context within which movements operate. None of those scholars refers to the important role societal structures play in the strife for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land. First of all, the above discussed theoretical considerations neglect the fact that rural grassroots based movements are often economically and physically very vulnerable due to the influence of present structures. Therefore, even though these movements might have an enormous drive to change society and build alliances with supporting NGO's, the state and the public, their vulnerable position often impedes the interaction of these movements with societal actors. However, these social structures do not only weaken grassroots based movements' physical and economic positions, they also hamper the movements by constraining their ample space. Although, the group of theorists referred to in this research, does mention the influence of the presence of a favourable political environment on the success of a movement, they totally ignore the influence of other structures which together form society. Transparency in government activity; the independence of the media apparatus and judiciary; ethnic disparities in society; and the influence a powerful group of political/economic elites can exercise on these structures, all play a significant role in how much ample space a movement has in changing the status quo. For that reason, it is highly relevant that these structural aspects will be included in the research on the question; why MST-SC does not seem to be able to constructively add to changing Santa Cruz' agrarian distributive status quo.

Figure 2 incorporates both the prerequisites extracted from the theoretical considerations used for this research on the subject of grassroots based movements, as well as societal structures which the researcher thinks should be integrated in the model. The schematic overview, which is an extension of figure 1, illustrates in what context and under which conditions MST-SC struggles for a more equitable society.

Figure 2. Schematic overview of the context and the conditions in which MST-SC struggles for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land.



The boxes in Figure 2 represent the actors in society besides MST-SC, with whom MST-SC should uphold a relation. These boxes are connected by arrows to MST-SC standing in the middle, which characterize the actions MST-SC undertakes or should undertake according to the four theoretical prerequisites in order to bring about redistributive change.

The circles represent the three most important structural aspects of Bolivia's society that influence MST-SC attempts to change the agrarian distributive status quo. Firstly, there is the circle which stands symbol for the political structure of Bolivia's society. This circle corresponds with the fourth theoretical prerequisite which states that the presence of a broad pro-reform political coalition supportive to land redistribution, is an important prerequisite for rural movements to be successful in bringing about change. The other two circles, displayed in Figure 2, represent structures of Bolivia's society that have not been included in the theoretical considerations of the several scholars cited for this research. Nevertheless, according to the researcher these two societal

structures exercise such an important influence on the ability of MST-SC to bring about change, that they are incorporated in Figure 2 and consequently in the rest of the research. One of these additional two circles represents the juridical and media – structure in Bolivia, that also hampers MST-SC in its struggle for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land in Santa Cruz. The last circle symbolizes the ethnic structure of Bolivia's population which is neither included in academic considerations on grassroots based movements, but which destabilizes Bolivia as a whole and therefore also significantly impedes MST-SC fights against land concentration.

Another important factor of Bolivia's and mainly Santa Cruz' society, is the Cruceño elite power that is already shortly described in Chapter 4. The Cruceño elite is integrated in both Figure 2 as well as in the rest of this research because of the significant influence this group exercises on the Cruceño society. Due to the fact that this elite group from Santa Cruz has so much influence on the political structure, the ethnic structure, the media apparatus and the judiciary, all structures within which MST-SC operates, the Cruceño elite indirectly also exercises significant influence on the actions and ample space of MST-SC. The E's, positioned in the middle of the three circles in Figure 2, represent the influence Cruceño elite groups exercise on the three structures and thus indirectly on MST-SC. In the middle of all this stands MST.

This research, that will search for an answer to the question whether MST-SC is incapable of bringing about agrarian redistributive change, incorporates thus both human agency aspects and structural aspects. A difficulty however, with this seemingly logical distinction between structural and human agency aspects, is that society can not that easily be divided into these two categories. As Anthony Giddens, a British sociologist renowned for his theory of structuralisation, describes; social structures and human action can not simply be reduced to two opposing features (Giddens 1984). According to Giddens, there exists an ongoing interactive and reciprocal relationship between human agency and social structure. Social structures and human action are dependent upon each other, but they also constrain each other. Projecting Giddens' theory on the theoretical framework of Figure 2, one could say that the human agents, represented by the boxes together with MST, influence and are influenced by Bolivia's social structures, represented by the three circles. There is interaction between those two features. Bolivia's political and ethnic structures, for instance are affected by and affecting, MST-SC and the landless public at the same time, according to Giddens' theory. Therefore, it is important to realize, when examining those human actions and social structures in the case Bolivia and of MST-SC, that both can not be considered solid features immune for outside influence. However, practically seen, it is quite difficult to describe and analyse the context of MST-SC' struggle if no differentiation is made between structural aspects and human actions. Hence, throughout the analysis of Chapter 6, a division will be made between human agency aspects and structural ones. However, later on in the conclusions, attention will be paid once more to the symbiosis, in order to not oversimplify the actions of MST-SC and other actors in relation to the Bolivian and Cruceño social structures.

#### Description of the chapter layout

To begin with, this chapter discusses whether the, in the literature stated preconditions a grassroots based movement should comply with, make sense in the case of MST in Santa Cruz and whether they can explain MST-SC's failure to thoroughly bring about redistributive change in the department. However, since it appears that the theoretical considerations are only capable of explaining MST-SC's failure to set about change to a certain extent, this chapter discusses also aspects of Bolivian society in which the movement operates. By discussing these additional aspects, the researcher hopes to find a more comprehensive explanation for MST-SC's failure in fighting the inequitable landdistribution in the Santa Cruz' department.

Chapter 6 is divided into two different analytical categories. The first analytical category, which is described in Chapter 6A, revolves around factors the movement can actually influence itself, the human agency-part so to speak. The first analytical category discusses to what extent MST-SC complies with the following prerequisites: 1) MST-SC's relations with global institutions and national/international partners, 2) networks linking local land reform movements to one another region wide, and 3) the mobilization of public support. After analyzing MST-SC's grade of complies with the three proposed prerequisites, attention will be paid to the question why MST-SC does or does not comply with these prerequisites and what the consequence of this (non-)compliance entails. This concluding section will describe economic and physical vulnerabilities of MST-SC that impede interaction between the movement and other societal actors.

The second analytical category, which is described in Chapter 6B, focuses on the structures within which the movement operates and by which it is often held back. These structures consist of: 1) the political structure and the interaction/cooperation between MST-SC and pro-reform political parties, 2) the ethnic structure and 3) judicial and media structure.

All these three structures, but especially the ethnic structure and the judicial and media structure are very much influenced and shaped by the presence of a powerful elite network in Santa Cruz. Therefore, in the second analytical category the influence of these elite-power structures will be discussed thoroughly in a separate section, as well as integrated in the other sections on favourable political environment, stable ethnic environment and independent judicial and media apparatus.

### 6A. Human agency aspects.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the theoretical considerations, on the potential of grassroots based movements to bring about redistributive change, mainly emphasizes the influence a grassroots based movement itself can exercise on its environment. This accent on the capacity of the movement itself is reiterated in first three of the four prerequisites, proposed by currently active scholars in the field of rural grassroots based

movements. This analytical category describes to what extent MST-SC complies with these three prerequisites; 1) MST-SC's aptitude to interact between the various movement segments; 2) MST-SC's ability to build alliances with international and national like minded parties; and 3) the movement's capacity to mobilize public support for its cause, will be discussed in this analytical category.

### 6A.1 Interaction between different movement segments

The first prerequisite for grassroots based movement to comply with in order to succeed in bringing about agrarian reform from bottom-up, that is proposed by currently active scholars in the field of agrarian reform is interaction between the different segments of the movement. In the case of MST-SC this implies the maintenance of a network linking various different local land occupation settlements to one another department (or even nation) wide. Such interaction creates according to the scholars, solidarity on the departmental level which in turn encourages its members to continue their struggle. This interaction is characterized by a continuous flow of information, members, and economic resources between the different MST-SC settlements.

#### 6A.1.1 Flow of members and information

The flow of members and information between the different MST-SC members and settlements is very limited. Inhabitants of MST-SC village *Pueblos Unidos* for example indicated that they indeed have heard about other MST-SC settlements, such as those in Velasco and the difficulties these people face. However, none of the interviewees or fellow inhabitants has ever visited another MST-SC settlement nor met MST-SC members from other settlements (Felipa Ramos 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2009 and Wilfredo Torres 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2009). Only selected groups of settlement leaders get the chance to meet each other at, for example annual congresses and other meetings. However, there is no trend of deliberately staying in contact with MST-SC members living in other settlements in Santa Cruz. This lack of contact between MST-SC members from different settlements is largely due to practical reasons. Most MST-SC settlements are situated in very remote areas and are therefore quite difficult to reach. The lack of cell phones, transport and above all money complicates the opportunities of contact between MST-SC members from different settlements even more. Therefore, the largest part of communication between the various MST-SC villages is facilitated by MST-SC and MST-B leaders, Anastasio Serrudo and Silvestre Saisari. These two men travel frequently between the capital of Santa Cruz and the various MST-SC settlements (Silvestre Saisari 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2009). In that way Saisari and Serrudo are in fact the means of communications themselves between the different members scattered over the department of Santa Cruz, and provide, in such way information on other MST-SC members and settlements. Almost all information to and between MST-SC members is thus orally transmitted.

#### 6A.1.2 Flow of economic resources

As described before, there does exist some interaction between the various MST-SC settlements in the form of information exchange and to a far lesser extent also in the form of member exchange. However, a continuous flow of money is nearly absent between different MST-SC settlements. Due to the fact that MST-SC as an organisation is not very affluent, most of the costs that come with the land occupations and the building of settlements are thus paid for by the MST-SC members themselves (Señor Alí 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2009). Since the actual establishment of a settlement, after the official donation of land asks for an enormous investment and because settlements keep facing difficulties maintaining themselves even after the establishment, it is not possible to exchange economic resources from older more well established settlements to MST-SC members in newer occupied areas (Javier Aramayo 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2009). The reason for MST-SC settlements to be incapable to financially support newer occupations and settlements is probably due to the fact that most MST-SC settlements have only been established a couple of years ago. These settlements, such as *Pueblos Unidos* and *Las Trillizas*

still face, up till today a lot of financial and other difficulties and are therefore not capable of sustaining other occupations taking place somewhere else in Santa Cruz.

Although, it thus appears to be very difficult for MST-SC settlement to financially support each other in case of difficulties, simply due to the lack of resources, these MST-SC fractions do support each other morally. The reaction of various MST-SC fractions to the violent evacuation of *Las Trillizas*, in April 2010 is a good example of this moral support. Various settlements from Santa Cruz, but also from Tarija formed one front against the powerful elements harassing the inhabitants of *Las Trillizas*. The fractions promised to practically support the residents of *Las Trillizas* and collectively mobilize themselves against the government, in case the government would not appear to be willing or capable to protect *Las Trillizas'* rights and arrest and prosecute the ones guilty of assaulting this MST-SC settlement (MST-B Res 005/2010).

### 6A.1.3 Meetings, workshops and annual congresses

One of the ways MST-SC tries to create solidarity and motivate its members to persist their struggle against land concentration is to organize meetings, workshops and annual MST-B congresses. As mentioned earlier MST-SC settlement leaders do meet each other every couple of months during meetings in the capital of Santa Cruz. During these meetings the progress of the occupations, difficulties of the settlements and MST-SC strategy are discussed (Aniceto Maldonado 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2009). Additionally, MST-SC organizes workshops on an annual basis which are accessible for all MST-SC members. These workshops teach on subjects such as the democratic internal organization of settlements and methods for collective cultivation of the settlement's land, in order to empower the movement's members (Julio Rodriguez 2009 and Silvestre Saisari 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). Since June 2001, MST-B also organizes Annual Congresses for MST-Bolivia as a whole and interested other peasant communities, peasant organisations and agrarian unions. These congresses have a special value due to the vertical structure MST-B upholds. Since MST-B is organized in a loose structure, it is important for the various MST fractions to frequently meet and discuss for example MST-B's ideology. Moreover, MST's national representatives are elected and MST-B's strategy to fight land concentration and its striving methods are discussed.

Although, there does not exist frequent interaction between the majority of MST-SC members living in MST-SC's settlement, MST-SC settlement leaders do meet each other every couple of months during meetings and workshops in the capital of Santa Cruz. Moreover, the annual MST-B congress allows for the possibility to increase internal coherence by the synchronization of a general MST-B strategy and methods. Financially seen, it appears to be very difficult to for MST-SC settlement to support each other in case of difficulties, simply due to the lack of resources. However, these MST-SC fractions do support each other morally in case of trouble.

### 6A.2 Alliances with international and national NGO's

From chapter 5, which describes Movimiento Sin Tierra in Santa Cruz it appears that MST-SC operates on the basis of a well structured plan, when it comes to occupying underused or illegally obtained agrarian land. Land occupations are coordinated and supported from the MST-SC head office in the capital of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. For occupations, the movement works closely together with the local population and only executes occupation on their demands. In addition, MST-SC only carries out occupations on the basis of thorough regional research on the usage of land, prior to the actual execution of a land occupation. The occupation group sets up

small primitive shacks and sows crops, immediately after the actual occupation of an abandoned property in order to be able to feed and maintain themselves as well as to give a signal to the 'owner' of the property that they plan to stay (Silvestre Saisari 31 July 2009). One could thus conclude that MST uses a well thought through strategy to execute land occupations. However, successfully carrying out land occupations is just one of the many phases in the fight against land concentration in Santa Cruz. After this first phase, MST-SC faces a multitude of further difficulties and potential threats. In the phase directly following the actual occupation for example, MST-SC has to secure the livelihood of the hundreds of occupying families. Furthermore, the occupation of abandoned properties alone does not automatically bring the movement legal rights over the property and therefore more equity within the land distribution situation. MST thus has to enforce *saneamiento* over the occupied piece of land by the INRA, in order to be able to make claims over the property rights at a later stage. But even when MST-SC manages to obtain the property, it very often encounters serious difficulties with maintaining the land and protect it against aggressive claims from previous 'landowners', as is seen in the case of *Pueblos Unidos* and even more serious in the case of *Las Trillizas*. Summarized, it becomes clear that although MST seems to be successful in occupying land to some extent, they do need support from third parties in the following stages, as suggested by several scholars. 'Occupying land is one thing, maintaining the land and making rightful claims on it is another' (Alcides Vadillo, 29<sup>th</sup> of July 2009).

It becomes clear that MST-SC needs financial, technical and moral support from influential societal actors as well as from international parties in order to not just occupy land but to ensure a sustainably equitable distribution of agrarian land in the department on the longer term as well. The following sections elaborate on the kind of support MST-SC needs from third parties and to what extent MST-SC has been capable of maintaining such relevant relationships.

#### *6A.2.1 Practical support and capacity building support*

In the first place, it is highly essential for MST-SC to maintain profound contact without third parties in order to be able to back up their MST-SC members in the field, with financial support. MST-SC families occupying abandoned properties for example need to be maintained in their basic needs for the first couple of months following the occupation, while they await for the first crops to be harvest. These occupying families give up their previous livelihood without having any guaranties for a better life and have to provide for their basic needs for several months, sometimes even years in anticipation of the *saneamiento* process (Felipa Ramos 22 August 2009 and Wilfredo Torres 23 August 2009). For those MST-SC members financial support, or at least support in the form of food supplies would mean a relief of the harsh living conditions under which they live during the occupation period. Previous MST-SC occupations show that very often these occupations cease before generating any result, due to the fact that families are not able to maintain in their basic needs for such a long period. Therefore, financial or practical support could ensure the persistence of land occupations for a longer time, which in the end could make MTS-SC occupations more effective.

Aside from flows of financial aid, MST-SC is also in great need of more technical expertise from third parties. As mentioned before, after the occupation of a property, MST-SC normally insists that the INRA starts a *saneamiento* process in order to determine to whom the occupied territory rightfully belongs. However, very often occupations have not led to the start up of a *saneamiento* process (Silvestre Saisari 26 August 2009). MST-SC has a lawyer at its disposal, but is doubtful whether this man has sufficient juridical expertise to handle the complicated and politically sensitive land claims. Moreover, biases within the judicial system form significant



problems for MST-SC<sup>55</sup>. For this part of the process, MST-SC thus needs juridical expertise from both national and international NGO's.

And finally, national or international partner organisations could also support MST-SC members by offering educational programmes on agrarian topics in order to empower them and provide them with practical tools to manage the cultivation of the occupied land once they legally obtain it. So far, MST-SC has received financial and practical support only by *Centro de Estudios Jurídicos y Investigación Social*<sup>56</sup> (CEJIS), *Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado*<sup>57</sup> (CIPCA) and MST-Brazil.

- CEJIS; The Centre for Social and Juridical Investigation is one of MST-SC most intensive supporting organisations. In the first place, CEJIS provides MST-SC with technical backing, by placing office space at MST-SC's disposal, so that among others Silvestre Saisari can support his members from the capital. Furthermore, CEJIS supports MST-SC morally by writing about MST-SC efforts in changing the inequitable land distribution balance. The centre publicizes articles on MST-SC, both on its website and in its three monthly published magazines (*Artículo Primero*) and enables the movements Communication Committee to publicize MST-SC's public statements on CEJIS' website. CEJIS is financially supported by the Dutch NGO HIVOS, however HIVOS does not explicitly support MST. Merely a small part of CEJIS' budget is distributed to MST-B (Javier Aramayo 29 Julio 2009).
- CIPCA; the Centre for Peasant Investigation and Encouragement has only been involved in MST-B activities since 2008. The beginning of the cooperation between MST-B and CIPCA started shortly after MST-SC's changed its position vis-à-vis the struggle for agrarian land and temporarily stopped occupying land estates in order to give the new MAS-government a chance to implement their new policies. For this reason, CIPCA never technically or morally supported MST-B's occupation activities. The main objective of CIPCA's involvement with MST-B's activities is the improvement of the productive basis of MST-B (Mario Espinoza, 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). CIPCA supports MST-B settlements, such as *Pueblos Unidos* with the activation and fortification of the settlements production capacity. By means of an alternative energy programme for MST settlements in the Gran Chaco (Tarija), in *Pueblos Unidos* and in *Las Trillizas* for example, CIPCA endeavours to strengthen the settlements' capacity to maintain in their livelihoods (Mario Espinoza, 2009). Moreover, CIPCA is the only national organisation supporting MST-B on the juridical and political level. By coordinating and arranging cooperation between MST-B and the Bolivian Ministry for rural development, CIPCA endeavours to increase the issue of landlessness on the national agenda. Moreover, CIPCA coordinates MST-B's demands on *tierras fiscales*, by strengthening MST-B's legal expertise (Aniceto Maldonado 22nd of August 2009).
- MST-Brazil; MST-Bolivia maintains close relations with its Brazilian counterpart, which fights land concentration since 1984 by occupying abandoned or legally obtained land estates as does MST-Bolivia (McKeon, Watts and Welford 2004, p25). Due to MST-Brazil's success in acquiring land for the country's landless population, it advises MST-Bolivia from time to time on its strategy and activities. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two landless organisations should not be seen as a cooperation, but merely as a frequent exchange of thoughts and ideas Silvestre Saisari 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2009).

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<sup>55</sup> The bias within the juridical system will be explained into more detail in the second analytical category

<sup>56</sup> Centre for Juridical Studies and Social Investigation

<sup>57</sup> Centre for Peasant Investigation and Encouragement

- European Union and *Agronomes et vétérinaires sans frontières*<sup>58</sup> (AVSF); these two organisations together provide merely practical support. They execute a by GPS systems run project in *Las Trillizas* aimed to map out the arable lands that could be cultivated collectively by the settlements (CEJIS 12-05-2010).

It becomes clear that MST-SC receives financial, technical and juridical support from CIPCA and CEJIS, two national organisations and from MST-Brazil and the EU, two international actors. However, this support is quite minimal. The support from CIPCA to fortify MST-SC's settlements production capacity, CEJIS' practical support in the form of offices and EU support by means of GPS land measurements, all focuses on aiding already obtained and established MST-SC's settlements. Only MST-Brazil's advice concretely adds to the earlier phase of MST-SC occupational actions in their fight against Cruceño land concentration.

#### *6A.2.2 Political pressure, yield legitimacy and moral support*

Aside from financial, technical and legal support, the need for ideological support is another good reason for MST-SC to maintain good relations with pro-land reform national and international organisations. On the one side, international governmental institutes or NGO's that are willing to exercise political pressure on the INRA and the Bolivian government, can be of great help for MST-SC in order to actually get the *saneamiento* process started on occupied territory. On the other hand, MST-SC could benefit significantly from the legitimate positions of these kinds of organisations. Support from internationally well known and influential organizations, such as Amnesty International and the European Union could yield legitimacy for the movement's work (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p19). For the Brazilian MST for example the European Union has been an important source of support for securing legal advisors, training legal specialists and mobilizing international community around such issues (McKeon, Watts and Wolford 2004, pp43). In Bolivia however, MST-SC does unfortunately not, or barely receive moral support from such well known international institutes/organisations. It does receive support from:

- Amnesty International; on the international level, not much attention has been paid to the activities of MST-SC thus far. Amnesty International has been the only internationally prominent organisation asking attention for the flaws of the Bolivian legal system. Additionally, Amnesty International called attention to the violent attack on Silvestre Saisari on Santa Cruz' main plaza on May 9<sup>th</sup> 2005 (Amnesty International May 17<sup>th</sup> 2005).
- Vía Campesina, Upside Down World, ALBA TV and other international activist organisations; Several international activist organisations or online activist magazines such as the ones mentioned above, report frequently on the developments concerning MST-B actions in their fight against land concentration in Bolivia. Vía Campesina for example supports MST-SC morally, while Upside Down World has in the past reported the violent evacuations of MST-SC occupations and has done interviews with MST-B leading characters. Although, these journalistic organisations form a counterbalance to the biased *Cruceño* media, they are in the opinion of the researcher too unknown in Santa Cruz and therefore do not reach the large majority of Santa Cruz' population in order to make a significant contribution to MST's struggle ([www.viacampesina.org](http://www.viacampesina.org), [www.upsidedownworld.org](http://www.upsidedownworld.org), [www.albatv.org](http://www.albatv.org)).

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<sup>58</sup> Agronomists and Veterinaries Without Frontiers

- Fundación Tierra and *Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia*<sup>59</sup> (PIEB); National organisations that, in comparison to the international online reports can indeed make a difference, all be it on a very small scale, are investigation institutes such as Fundación Tierra and PIEB. Fundación Tierra has for example, reported occupations in La Paz (Collana) and in Gran Chaco (Pananti) in descriptive case studies, while PIEB has done profound studies on MST's struggle for land in the Gran Chaco (Tarija). Besides from the publications of studies on the work of MST-B and lately the publication of MST-SC official public announcements on the website of Fundación Tierra, these national organisations do not explicitly support the movement nor have they openly chosen sides for MST-SC. However by describing the situation in which MST-SC conducts its actions and by explaining the complicated land distribution situation from the landless' point of view, these organisations give MST-SC publicity and shows the population of Bolivia and the international community how urgent the need for solutions really is ([www.ftierra.org](http://www.ftierra.org), [www.pieb.org](http://www.pieb.org)).

It can be concluded that MST-SC does indeed enjoy national and international support on a morally supportive level to a certain extent. Several international activist organisations or online activist magazines report frequently on the developments concerning MST-B actions in their fight against land concentration in Bolivia. Additionally, national investigation institutes such as Fundación Tierra and PIE describe the situation in which MST-SC conducts its actions and explain the complicated land distribution situation from the landless' point of view. These organisations therefore give MST-SC publicity and show the population of Bolivia and the international community how urgent the need for solutions really is. Although, this is a positive development in terms of reaching out to the public, it is questionable whether these statements made by above mentioned organisations can reach the wider national and international public. Besides from Amnesty International, no other internationally prominent organisation has asked attention for the precarious land distributive situation in Bolivia. It is therefore doubtful that these initiatives will be able to put significant pressure on the Bolivian state in order to improve the landless' situation.

From interviews with MST-SC leader (and nowadays MST-B's national leader) Silvestre Saisari it appears that MST-SC itself has not been exceptionally active in approaching potential donors or supportive organisations. Nevertheless, the discussed problems indicate the serious need for national and international involvement of NGO's. Why MST-SC does not seem to be able to build relevant relationships with like minded organisations will be elaborated later on.

### 6A.3 Interaction with the (landless) public, mobilizing public support

A third prerequisite grassroots based movement should comply with in order to succeed in bringing about agrarian reform according to the theoretical considerations of scholars in the field of agrarian reform this research refers to, is the need to mobilize public support for the movement's cause. According to Huizer and, Veltmeyer and Petras, this public support within the rural landless population partly originates on its own since additional

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<sup>59</sup> Programme for strategic investigation in Bolivia

land occupying movements arise when earlier rural grassroots based organization initiatives prove to be successful. The winning of land, the building of successful cooperatives in other regions as well as solidarity and the vision of a better future will attract new rural activists and increase support for the organization (Huizer 1999, p61 and Veltmeyer and Petras 2001, p97). The scholars state that while the dominant class might dispose of resources like money and the judicial components of the state apparatus, far-reaching motivation and mass mobilization on the part of rural movements also are important resources of power to change the *status quo* (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001, p97).

This paragraph discusses to what extent MST-SC complies with the third prerequisite to mobilize the public opinion in favour of its cause. In order to gain a better understanding of the public opinion and familiarity concerning MST-SC's presence and activities in the department, a survey was held in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. In total, 100 respondents were asked about their knowledge of and opinion on MST activities and presence in the department. These respondents were ordinary citizens of Santa Cruz de la Sierra passing by, and were chosen at random. The survey was executed in five different neighbourhoods, including richer and poorer areas of the city, in order to include the ideas of *Cruceños* from all layers of society.<sup>60</sup> Aside from the focus on public opinion, this section also describes the methods of MST-SC to reach out to the public as well as the stand towards MST-SC of other *Cruceño* peasant organisations.

### 6A.3.1 Public opinion

In the case of MST-SC, the mobilization of public support does not seem to arise on its own as Huizer, Veltmeyer and Petras assume in their theory on the potential of grassroots based movements. MST-SC actually has to make a serious effort in order to convince the *Cruceño* population of the relevance of their cause and therefore the legitimacy of their actions. The survey, executed in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, demonstrates that the majority of the interviewees have a negative image of MST-SC. Almost 50 percent of the interviewees indicate to perceive MST-SC as a negative force in society and merely 27 percent favours MST-SC.<sup>61</sup> Since one would expect public support to be higher under landless and poorer population of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, the survey was held in varying neighbourhoods of the city. Plan3000 and Villa Primer de Mayo are known to be areas where mainly the poorer and landless population of Santa Cruz lives, who are thus more or less in the same position as MST-SC members. Nevertheless, also in these two neighbourhoods, public support appears to be very low. In Plan3000 and Villa primer de Mayo, merely 37 percent of the interviewees indicates to be positive about MST-SC's ideology and their actions.

One of the most mentioned reasons for people to have a negative image of MST-SC revolves around the fact that according to the interviewees, the occupation of land by MST-SC is an illegal action, since the occupied land already has an owner. A second reason for this negative image of MST-SC is based in the perception that MST-SC members are in fact not at all landless but possess agrarian land in another department and use MST-SC occupations as a means to obtain more agrarian land. Another motivation often mentioned to explain the negative image MST-SC has among *Cruceños*, lays in the perception that MST-SC members obtain agrarian land through land occupations in order to resell the land later on. These negative images of MST-SC members who already own agrarian land in other parts of the country and who resell the land they obtained through MST-SC land occupation, is an idea supported by Luis Valdomar, Director for land issues at the *Cámara Agropecuaria del Oriente*<sup>62</sup> (CAO) and Carlos Roca, Head of the department for land issues for the Prefecture in Santa Cruz. Both men state to find it the existence of 100.000 landless peasant families in Santa Cruz is very unlikely to be true as

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<sup>60</sup> More detailed information on the data selection procedure and possible biases are discussed in Chapter 3 on the research methodology.

<sup>61</sup> The remaining 23 percent of the interviewees has no opinion or a moderate point of view.

<sup>62</sup> Agricultural Chamber of Eastern Bolivia

Kay and Urioste claim (Kay and Urioste 2005, p27). During an interview with Luis Valdómar, he stated that MST-SC is merely a group of swaggerers, who in fact already own land, because in the opinion of Luis Valdómar most Bolivians already received agrarian land during the last decades of agrarian land reform (Luis Valdómar 17<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). Both Luis Valdómar as well as Carlos Roca seem to deny the seriousness of the rural landless problem in Santa Cruz.

The negative perception of land owning and land reselling MST-SC members, shared by a large part of the survey interviewees, the CAO and the Prefectura, is however very likely to be an incorrect perception. Firstly, evidence that a significant landlessness problem indeed exists in Santa Cruz is provided by both Kay and Urioste's study on Bolivia's agrarian reform of 2005 and by national official statistics from INE, Bolivia's national statistics institute (Kay and Urioste 2005, p27 and INE 2003).

Secondly, interviews with MST-B leader Silvester Saisari, CIPCA researcher Mario Espinoza, Vice-Ministry of Land official Dionisio Gutierrez and interviews with several *Pueblos Unidos* inhabitants provide a quietly different image of MST-SC members, to that of the negative perception of land owning and land reselling MST-SC members. Both Mario Espinoza of CIPCA and Dionisio Gutierrez of the Vice-Ministry of Lands explain that it is practically impossible for MST-SC members to individually resell their newly obtained land since the law only prescribes collective donation of agrarian land, and therefore makes individual selling of land impossible (Mario Espinoza 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 and Dionisio Gutierrez 11<sup>th</sup> August 2009). Moreover, the successfully collective cultivation of the agrarian property of *Pueblos Unidos*, as was described in Chapter 5, suggests otherwise.

Finally, interviews with MST-B leader Silvester Saisari, CIPCA researcher Mario Espinoza provide an image of MST-SC members indicating that MST-SC members are not at all the owners of agrarian property elsewhere in Bolivia. Additionally, from interviews with inhabitants of *Pueblos Unidos* it appears that these inhabitants, previous to the land occupation in 2004 maintained in their livelihoods by working as agricultural labourers or by renting agrarian land (Señor Ali 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2009, Felipa Ramos 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2009 and Wilfredo Torres 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2009). None of these MST members, neither members known by them owned land previously to the land occupations.

It thus appears that incorrect ideas on MST circulate in Santa Cruz, consequently providing the movement with a very negative image. The majority of the survey interviewees indicated that they base their negative ideas mainly on what they see on television and read in the newspapers, or hear from family and friends. Therefore, it is interesting to pay attention to the dispersion and persistence of narratives on MST-SC through the *Cruceño* media. This discussion be dealt with in Chapter 6B, in the section on the Santa Cruz' media apparatus.

### 6A.3.2 MST methods to reach out to the public

So far it has become clear that the majority of Santa Cruz' population is not very positive on MST organisation. Therefore, according to Silvester Saisari the movement does a lot to counteract the false statements on the movement origin and intentions, and to mobilize public support.

#### Media

In the interview of 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2009, Silvester Saisari describes how MST-SC the first couple of years frequently used the printed press and television to bring the MST story into the world. However, this instrument did appear to be not very successful in mobilizing the mass, because words of the MST-B leader were often twisted in the media and therefore only sorted a negative image of the movement. Inhabitants of *Pueblos Unidos* reiterate this statement by telling how *Cruceño* newspapers during the occupation of *Los Yuquises* mainly illustrate the

situation from the side of the landowners and portrays MST-SC members as criminals (Wilfredo Torres 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2009).

#### Press conference

The movement also often uses press conferences to inform the *Cruceño* population on MST-SC actions and progress the movement made in changing Santa Cruz' land concentration. In May 2005 for example Silvestre Saisari held a press conference on the city's main square, *Plaza 24 de Septiembre* on the casualties, disappearances and human rights violations against MST-SC members of Pueblos Unidos. Shortly after this press conference, MST leader Silvestre Saisari was beaten and kicked unconscious by several members of *Unión Juvenil Cruceñista* on Santa Cruz' main square (Silvestre Saisari 26 August 2009 and Amnesty International 2005). Since this incident MST-SC has become more reluctant to discuss the movement's activities, ideology and difficulties in public.

Nevertheless, in June 2010 MST-SC members who were part of the violently evacuated Las Trillizas held presentations again on the city's main square, *Plaza 24 de Septiembre*. By reporting on the violent assaults on their villages the members hoped to gain some understanding under the *Cruceño* population in order to pressure the government to undertake action. Moreover, MST-members part of *Las Trillizas*, started on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2010 a hunger strike in front of the *Palacio de Justicia*<sup>63</sup> in an attempt to ask for public support and ask the State for practical support such as shelter and food. The strike aimed to provoke a State intervention in the province of Velasco, based on general public indignation. However, up till today no such public support has become visible, neither has the Bolivian Government nor the INRA come forward with a solution to restore Las Trillizas land rights and to investigate the assaults on the villages and prosecute the ones responsible.

#### Lack of private media apparatus

The apparent ineffectiveness of these methods to mobilize public support and the aggression against MST-SC members in the capital of Santa Cruz ask for another approach, such as for example a more private broadcasting apparatus for the movement to communicate safely and correctly to the *Cruceño* population. However, due to practical constraints, such as the lack of financial means and the relative smallness of the movement make it very complicated to set up such a communication tool. At the time of writing MST-SC has no MST-website, neither a movement magazine nor a MST newspaper. However, MST-B has lately established a communication committee that publishes public statements on websites of for example *CEJIS* and *Fundación Tierra*. Although, this is a positive development in terms of reaching out to the public, these statements on the above mentioned websites do not reach the wider public. Almost three weeks after the publication of official MST-SC statements on the CEJIS website on the attack of *Laz Trillizas*, the link to this specific statement had not even reached 300 hits on the CEJIS website ([www.cejis.org](http://www.cejis.org)).

### *6A.3.3 Mobilize the support of other Cruceño peasant organisations*

Another way to broaden its support base, is to stay in close contact with other *Cruceño* peasant and indigenous organisations that share MST's struggle against the status quo, such as the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia*<sup>64</sup> (CSUTCB) and the *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente*<sup>65</sup> (CIDOB). These other peasant and indigenous organisations are for example present during MST-B annual Congresses in order to discuss ideas and ideologies. Additionally, these peasant organisations held marches

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<sup>63</sup> Palace of Justice

<sup>64</sup> The Bolivian Union (Confederation) for Peasant Workers

<sup>65</sup> Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia



together with MST-B between 2000 and 2004, such as the *la Primera Marcha por la Tierra, el Territorio y la Dignidad*<sup>66</sup> in June 2000 (Equipo Nizcor 2002). Moreover, indigenous organisations have publically condemned the violent actions against MST settlements, such as was the case with *Las Trillizas* in April 2010 (Voto Resolutivo 2010). However, although these organisations support each other from time to time on a moral level, they do not form one front and are financially too weak to be able to truly sustain each other in case of difficulties. These ad hoc relationships with other peasant and indigenous organisations therefore are not strong enough to actually contribute to a more powerful and consolidated position of MST-SC.

It appears that although MST-B and MST-SC in particular try to reach out to the public through press conferences, public announcements on websites and in newspapers, marches and strikes, these attempts are made in vein. According to reactions of *Cruceños* in the streets, it seems that the movement has not succeeded to provide the population of Santa Cruz with a positive view of MST-SC activities.

### 6A.4 Conclusions

The above sections of Chapter 6A, describe how MST-SC adheres to the first three prerequisites only to a minor extent. The movement seems to be incapable of; undertaking and upholding important alliances with national and international parties; of arranging frequent interaction between the different movement segments; and thirdly of mobilizing *Cruceño* public support for its cause.

This insight brings us to the question why MST-SC does not seem to be able to change the status quo concerning land distribution in Santa Cruz in a more convincing way. Why has MST-SC proved itself incapable of building important alliances with international and national NGO's and of mobilizing Santa Cruz' public support? And how is it possible that MST-SC is only partly capable to maintain sufficient cooperation and solidarity between the various movement segments? One possible explanation could be that the movement does not exploit the most popular methods. As the survey on the public opinion of the inhabitants of Santa Cruz de la Sierra on MST-SC actions and methods demonstrated, it seems that the use of illegal occupations of large land estates is not very popular among the interviewees. The majority of these interviewees point out to have problems with the occupation of land estates that already have an owner (according to the perceived owners at least). Thus by using this method, it appears to mobilize public support. The, by MST-SC execution of land occupations of under-used and/or illegally obtained land estates, is a method which is not legal within the current Bolivian social and juridical structures. One could state however, that these current social structures leave MST-SC with little choice to use other effective methods that are compatible with the current social and juridical structure of Bolivia, within which it operates.

Another possible explanation of MST-SC' inability to significantly contribute to bring about distributive agrarian change, are the economic and physical characteristics which make the movement vulnerable and which impede its actions. These lines of thought brings us to the connection with the next chapter on the structural aspects of Bolivia's and Santa Cruz' society that might have an influence on MST-SC' struggle. The choice of illegal methods as well as the movement's economic and physical vulnerabilities both have a connection to the social structures of Bolivia's society within which MST-SC operates.

As already shortly discussed in the introductory of Chapter 6, it is not merely the unwillingness and incapability of MST-SC to adhere to the three theoretical prerequisites that impedes its struggle against land concentration in Santa Cruz, it are also the social structures of Bolivia's society that play an important role in

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<sup>66</sup> The first march for land, territory and dignity.



hampering MST-SC' ability to fight its struggle against land concentration. Chapter 6B will elaborate on these structural aspects and the ways in which they influence MST-SC's actions.

## 6B. Structural aspects

In their theoretical considerations on the potential grassroots based rural movements can have in bringing about distributive agrarian change, the theoretical considerations of the several scholars used for research, put mainly emphasis on the role these movements can play themselves. In other words, these scholars underline the importance of human agency in the process of agrarian reform. The emphasis on the capabilities of rural grassroots based movements themselves flows from the idea that peasant- and landless workers' movements in Latin America can indeed be a significant social and political force in opposing unequal land distribution situations, despite the existence of for them detrimental structures. The structuralist belief that the rural population and thus rural grassroots based movements are incapable of leading a struggle for social change, due to poverty, physical weakness and vulnerability is dismissed by both Veltmeyer and Petras, and Huizer as a false assumption

(Huizer 1999, p58 and Petras and Veltmeyer 2001, p102). Veltmeyer and Petras refute the idea that 'rural idiocy' would still pervade the countryside. Today rural movements' leading activists and militants are educated, modern, cosmopolitan and have an explicit understanding of national politics, according to these scholars. Peasant- and landless workers' movements are thus perceived to be very well capable of unsettling the *status quo* on their own behalf, despite their inferior position in national economy and politics.

However, in the specific case of MST-SC in Bolivia, the opposite of this statement seems to be more correct. MST-SC seems to be heavily impeded by its economic and physical vulnerabilities.

One of these most impeding vulnerabilities that MST-SC experiences is its weak financial position. During land occupations, the problems linked to a lack of financial means become very clear. MST families occupying abandoned properties need to maintain themselves in their basic needs during the occupation and for the first couple of months following the occupation, while they await for the first crops to be harvest. These occupying families, which are mainly poor agrarian labourers give up their previous livelihood without having any guaranties for a better life and have to provide for their basic needs for several months, sometimes even years in anticipation of the *saneamiento* process (Felipa Ramos 22 August 2009 and Wilfredo Torres 23 August 2009). Previous MST-SC occupations show that very often land occupations cease before generating any result due to the fact that families are not able to maintain in their basic needs for such a long period. The lack of financial means is thus a strongly impeding factor for the movement. For those MST-SC members joining an occupation, financial support, or at least support in the form of food supplies would mean a relief of the harsh living conditions under which they live during the occupation period and possibly a more successful occupation. The problems indicate the serious need for national and international involvement of NGO's.

A second factor severely constraining MST-SC members is their physical vulnerability. Besides from the financial constraint, fear for the other actors' harassments and actions seriously impedes MST-SC capability to persevere its land occupations. During occupations the MST-SC members are continuously aware of the danger of violent evacuation by landowner groups. People live of their savings during the occupations, their children live in dangerous circumstances and have no access to education. For these reasons it is very important for MST-SC members, participating in an occupation to have quick, short term results. These members are not capable to last an occupation for more than a couple of month, at the utmost a year, while landowners do have financial reserves and a more comfortable position to fight a land occupation over a longer period of time. A factor complicating the situation even more flows from the fact that MST-SC occupations or settlements nearly uphold contact with each other due to remote positions of the settlements and due to the lack of financial means to travel. Consequently, the large part of occupying MST-SC members experience the land concentration problem in Santa Cruz from their own individual perspective. On the individual level in the settlements, not very much attention is paid to the larger ideological struggle against general land concentration in the department of Santa Cruz.

A very serious implication of this physical and financial vulnerable position of MST-SC members is that they mainly focus on acquiring shorter term goals, namely the achievement of a piece of agricultural land for their family and for their direct MST-SC colleagues in order to be able to sustain their families in the future. Consequently, there is a trend visible within the MST-SC. MST-SC members are no longer fighting for a just cause (namely the ending of land concentrations in the hands of land elites, and ending the misuse of agrarian land) but are fighting for their own future and the future of their children. The struggle for the inhabitants of MST-SC settlement *Pueblos Unidos*, for example stopped when they obtained and safety assured agrarian land, and their rights protected for their own area. MST-B leader Silvestre Saisari is the only one who maintains contacts between the different occupation sites and who lives the ideology. In order to involve other MST-SC leading members in the larger, more ideological struggle and to let them look beyond the shorter term practical results,

the movement needs once again more financial means, in order for these members to travel and support other occupation sites.

These previous examples demonstrate how much MST-SC and their fight against unequal distribution of agrarian land is impeded by its economic and physical characteristics. This physical weakness and economic vulnerability of MST-SC' members are caused by poverty and hence determine the member's position and opportunities within Bolivia's society. By denying these MST-SC' member's vulnerabilities, Veltmeyer, Petras and Huizer completely neglect the enormous influence social structures exercise on MST-SC's abilities to bring about change. As Giddens, the sociologist cited at the beginning of Chapter 6 argues, there always exist interaction and mutual influencing between social structure and human action. Implementing Giddens' theory, on social structure and human action, on the specific case of MST-SC in Bolivia, it appears that MST-SC' actions as well as actions of other concerned actors are influenced by several social structures. Therefore, Chapter 6B pays attention to these structural aspects that together form Bolivia's society. Transparency in Bolivian government activity; the independence of the media apparatus and judiciary; ethnic disparities in Bolivia; and the influence a powerful group of political/economic *Cruceño* elites can exercise on these structures, all play a significant role in how much ample space MST-SC has in changing the status quo. Following from this insight, Chapter 6B discusses into more depth the structural aspects that influence MST-SC's attempt to bring about a more equitable distribution of agrarian land.

Chapter 6B firstly discusses the advantages and disadvantages for MST-SC of the presence of Bolivia's favourable political environment towards agrarian reform. Secondly, elite structures that are very present in Santa Cruz' society and which impede MST-SC actions, will be elaborated on. This section describing Santa Cruz' elite is subdivided in 1) a subsection describing the power base of the *Cruceño* elites, 2) a subsection explaining how the *Cruceño* elite consolidates its economic power within other societal structures like the regional political-institutional structure as well as in the media apparatus, and 3) a subsection, discussing Bolivia's ethnic disparities and the way the *Cruceño* elite anticipates on this phenomenon by using an ethnically based discourse. Thirdly, this chapter includes a section on the malfunctioning of the judicial sector and the implication of this malfunctioning for MST-SC struggle for a more equitable distribution for land.

## 6B.1 Favourable political environment

In their 2006 article on alternatives for SLAR and MLAR programmes, Borras and McKinley give grassroots based peasant movements a central role in their general outline of what an alternative land distribution programme should look like. They state that, apart from being independently formed and directed, landless peasant movements can significantly benefit from the presence of other reform supportive segments in society. Political actions supporting agrarian change are an example of these societal segments beneficial for landless movements. Although rural movements should be independent and autonomous from the state, Borras and McKinley argue that such movements are very unlikely to succeed without powerful political allies (Borras 2006, p3). Therefore, a broad pro-reform political coalition that supports land redistribution would be favourable for rural movements. Borras and McKinley's idea of the role of the state in revolutionary rural processes is reiterated by Janvry and Sadoulet (Janvry and Sadoulet 1998, p30).

Although, Borras and McKinley as well as Janvry and Sadoulet are very much convinced of the need for cooperation and interaction between the movements and the state, Petras and Veltmeyer prescribe an exactly opposite role to the state in relation to rural movements. They claim that grassroots based movements should renounce cooperation with the state since in the past reliance on or electoral alliances with 'populist' or 'centre-left' regimes has resulted utterly negative (Petras 2005, p3). Politics of strategic political alliances could alienate

the rural movement from its grassroots support and slowdown or paralyze the struggle for agrarian reform (Veltmeyer and Petras 2008, p24-25).

Although MST-SC operates independently from the Bolivian state or one of its political parties, it appears from interviews with MTS-SC members that the movement has started to change its policy since the inauguration of President Evo Morales in December 2005. In the view of Silvestre Saisari, leader of MST-B, this election of Evo Morales for President, in December 2005 changed the context for MST-B (Silvestre Saisari 31<sup>st</sup> July 2009). Morales' progressive and drastic plans for agrarian reform, with an emphasis on the needs of indigenous and peasant communities were a source of new hope for the movement. Therefore, from 2005 on MST-B (and therefore also MST-SC) changed its policy and started to apply a more socio-juridical strategy, meaning that until 2009 no new occupations were executed (Aramayo 2006, p553). This socio-juridical approach is a less offensive strategy and among others encompassed the submitting of demands for *tierras fiscales* and the involvement in negotiations concerning the new Constitution and the agrarian Ley 3545. During these negotiations MST-B endeavoured to incorporate land rights for landless communities in the agrarian Ley 3545 (Aramayo 29 July 2009). Additionally, in order to give Morales' administration a chance, MST-B decided to keep low for a while and diminished its land occupations. Nonetheless, MST leader Saisari assures, that MST will not totally cease its occupations and its fight against land concentration in the hands of only a small group of businessmen until landless peasants in Santa Cruz are given land to cultivate (Silvestre Saisari 26 August 2009).

Evidently, MST-B has significantly changed its position in the struggle over agrarian land for landless communities, over the last 4 years. MST-SC has linked its strategy and future success to a certain extent to that of the currently leading political party of Bolivia, Morales' *Movimiento Al Socialismo* (MAS)<sup>67</sup>. According to Janvry and Sadoulet's theoretical output on the relation between landless peasant organisations and political allies, this could be considered a very wise decision, since MAS is a progressive pro-agrarian reform party. The new agrarian policy of Morales' administration revolves around the paradox of illegal land concentration in the hands of very few landowning elites in the East of Bolivia in combination with the enormous Bolivian mass of landless peasants. By clarifying the concept of the socio-economical function (FES) agro-enterprises and medium-sized landholdings should adhere to, and by approving a ceiling for the maximum extension of agrarian land holdings, Morales' administration endeavours to speed up and clarify the regularization process, with the aim to force back illegal agrarian land concentration (Breve Historia 2005, p120). It thus seems that the MAS administration pursues the same goals as does MST-SC, and that both actors could complement each other in their struggle against illegally obtained and under-used large landholdings.

### *6B.1.1 Opposition to the MAS administration's agrarian reform in Santa Cruz*

Although data on the exact amount of expropriated properties is not available, newspaper articles on the progress of the *saneamiento* process tell a lot about the impeding circumstances under which the process is executed. Particularly in Santa Cruz department, the MAS' administration meets a lot of violent opposition when implementing its reforming agrarian strategies. Based on these reactions to MAS' policy, the question rises whether the MAS administration is strong enough to implement its agrarian reform programme, and exercise its political power on a national level.

The strong opposition to MAS' agrarian reform policies in the eastern part of Bolivia appears for example from the establishment of the *Comité para la defensa de la tierra*<sup>68</sup> in 2006. This committee, consisting of the

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<sup>67</sup> Movement towards Socialism

<sup>68</sup> Committee for the defence of land

*Cámara Agropecuaria del Oriente*<sup>69</sup> (CAO), el *Comité Pro Santa Cruz* and the *Federación de Ganaderos de Santa Cruz*<sup>70</sup> (FEGASACRUZ) is led by Santa Cruz' Prefect Ruben Costas. It was founded with the aim to avoid the *saneamiento* of large agrarian land estates in Alto Parapetí<sup>71</sup>, were the government planned to create a TCO. Representatives of both the CAO and the Prefecture claim that the establishment of the Committee has only been a matter of discourse in order to criticize the MAS' administration's way of executing the *saneamiento* process (Señor Roca 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 and Luiz Valdomar 17<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). However, reactions from the MAS' administration and examples from the field do suggest otherwise. Abalberto Kopp, an employee at the Vice-ministry of land describes the committee as a instrument of the landowning Cruceño oligarchy to provoke violent resistance against the MAS' agrarian reform programme (Abalberto Kopp 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). In addition, the actions of large landowners against MST-SC properties and the *saneamiento* process, suggest that the establishment of the Committee revolves around more than just discourse.

In February 2008, a group of around 70 landowners in the South of Santa Cruz demanded the immediate cessation of the *saneamiento* process and prohibited the entrance of INRA officials on their land. When, a few days later, the Vice-minister of Land, Alejandro Almaráz and the national INRA director, Mr. Juan Carlos Rojas visited the region to notify the landowners the commencement of the *saneamiento* process, they was taken hostage and threatened to death (Vice-ministry Bulletin No 36, 2008). Later that year interdepartmental highways were blocked by a group of landowners in order to prevent the process of *saneamiento* to take place.

Another example, that expresses both the limited powerbase of the MAS' government in the peripheries of Bolivia in changing the current land concentration situation as well as the influence local land owners are willing to exercise, is the earlier described case of *Las Trillizas*. This agrarian settlement, donated to MST-SC in 2008, has been frequently assaulted by groups of armed men allegedly hired by the two Velascian landowners, named Guido Solis and Americo Gemio (Silvester Saisari 26 August 2009). Inhabitants of the settlement were intimidated, houses set on fire and some people were even severely beaten. After a request for protection, from the MST-SC settlement, the MAS' government promised precautionary means by way of a resolution (Resolution DTF 008/2010). However, the resolution was not executed and on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2010 *Las Trillizas* was once again violently attacked, which caused the violent evacuation of all 289 inhabitants of the settlement. In a reaction to the harassments, Bolivian Authorities decided to send a delegation to *Las Trillizas* on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, consisting of the Vice-Minister of Land, Mr. Víctor Camocho, INRA Director, Mr. Juan Carlos Rojas and two MST leaders, Silvestre Saisari and Anastasio Serrudo in order to settle the dispute. However, the delegation was met with extreme violence; the Vice-Minister of Land was beaten up, two other delegation members were hospitalized and in total 11 men and women living in *Las Trillizas* disappeared. Up till the time of writing, neither the Bolivian Government nor the INRA has come forward with a solution to restore *Las Trillizas* land rights and to investigate the assaults on the villages and prosecute the ones responsible.

Those two examples indicate quite clearly how little power the MAS government can or wants to exercise in the eastern department of Santa Cruz in order to execute the *saneamiento* process and to protect its Bolivian civilians. Although the intention of the MAS' government to fight agrarian land concentration may be present, a lack of force used by the Bolivian Authorities to execute the regularization process can seriously impede the success of MST-SC land occupations and its requests for *tierra fiscal*. Also the results of the MAS' administration's agrarian policy so far show the limited progress in redistributing agrarian land from under-used and illegally obtained large land estates to Bolivia's landless population. From 2006-2009 the Morales'

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<sup>69</sup> Agricultural Chamber of Eastern Bolivia

<sup>70</sup> Cattle farmers Federation of Santa Cruz

<sup>71</sup> A region in the very South of the Santa Cruz department

administration titled over 16 million hectares of agrarian land. When compared to the advance of the *saneamiento* process of the previous ten years, between 1996 and 2006, only 11 million hectares were titled, this appears an enormous achievement. Particularly, indigenous communities benefited from Morales' land policy so far, by receiving vast amounts of land in the form of TCO's. However, these TCO's have mainly been composed out of what were *tierras fiscales* and not out of expropriated illegally obtained or under-used large land estates. Additionally, published data on the progress of the *saneamiento* process does not say anything on the amount of illegally obtained or under-used agro-enterprises that have been expropriated. Whether the regularized agrarian lands have mainly been agro-enterprises or mostly state lands makes a huge difference in the consequences for land concentration.

In short, the above implies that although indigenous communities have sincerely prospered by Morales' land reform, in reality landlessness has not diminished in Santa Cruz and the concentration of agrarian land does not seem to have changed very much. Apparently, there exists a great discrepancy between MAS' administration's intentions and the execution of their policy. Not only the examples of MAS government's incapacity to stand up against *Cruceño* land reform opposition, also government policy documents and interviews with government representatives clearly indicate that although MAS pleads drastic agrarian reform, the results of the agrarian reform so far leave much to desire. The question rises, what priorities the MAS administration has chosen and whether these priorities are in line with its intentional agrarian policy and with MST-SC fight against illegal land concentration.

### 6B.1.2 MAS administration priorities concerning land reform

La Nueva Política de Tierra, the official Vice-Ministry of land document describing the MAS government's vision on Bolivia's agrarian revolution to come, describes how the agrarian policy of the MAS administration revolves around 1) the abolition of the *latifundia*, 2) the reversion and expropriation of under-used and illegally held large land estates and 3) the redistribution of *tierras fiscales* to indigenous and landless peasant communities (Nueva Política de Tierra 2008, p65-91). The MAS administration expects that 90 percent of Santa Cruz' large landholdings do not have legal land titles. However, government representatives argue that expropriating these illegally held large amounts of agrarian land is almost impossible, due to the strong and sometimes violent opposition (Adalberto Kopp 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). The described inclination toward confrontational tactics, as described in la Nueva Política de Tierra, is contradicted by government representatives. According to Adalberto Kopp, an employee at the *Unidad de distribución de tierras fiscales y de Asentamientos Humanos*<sup>72</sup> at the Vice-Ministry of land, purely confrontational tactics are not feasible in Bolivia at the moment. The government has to balance between a policy of confrontation and a policy of consolidation when it comes to fighting illegal agrarian land concentration (Adalberto Kopp 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). On the one hand, the government has to confront the establishment of paramilitary groups in Santa Cruz and demonstrate its willingness to change the agrarian status quo. However, it can not risk violent confrontations and consequently risk a division of the country into a government supporting west and a state policy opposing east. Therefore, over the past 4 years no large land estates have been forcefully expropriated by the state (Dionicio Gutierrez 11th of August 2009). According to Dionicio Gutierrez, Head of the *Unidad de saneamiento y titulación de tierras bajas*<sup>73</sup>, at the Vice-ministry of land, the Bolivian government is powerful enough to execute its agrarian policy and expropriate underused and illegally obtained land (Dionicio Gutierrez 11th of August 2009). The government however chooses at the moment to focus its policy on the processing of peasant and indigenous community requests for *tierra fiscal*, in order to avoid

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<sup>72</sup> Unity for the distribution of state land and human settlement

<sup>73</sup> Unity for the regulation and titulation of the Lowlands



conflict with the *Cruceño* landowning opposition. Gutierrez adds that the MAS administration over the last 4 years has identified so much *tierra fiscal* that expropriation of agrarian land from large illegally held land estates is no longer necessary. Only when, after the distribution of all *tierra fiscal* and after the completion of the *saneamiento* process, landless peasants and indigenous communities still appear to exist, the government will start the expropriation of illegally held land estates in Santa Cruz (Dionicio Gutierrez 11th of August 2009).

This administration's interpretation and implementation of its agrarian reform policy underlines the researcher's expectation that up till today expropriations have barely been executed successfully. This very moderate position of the MAS administration concerning illegally held agrarian land, has important implications for Bolivia's landless peasants and thus for MST-SC. Due to the government's moderate position and unwillingness to force back illegal land property, landless peasant and indigenous communities are forced to request for *tierra fiscal* in order to obtain land. However, this *tierra fiscal* is by many labelled as low quality, second-degree and remote agrarian land (Alcides Vadillo June 29<sup>th</sup> 2009 and Adalberto Kopp 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). Moreover, by focussing mainly on the distribution of *tierra fiscal* for the coming years and thus postponing the completion of the *saneamiento* process, the MAS administration un-intentionally gives large landowners time to re-organize their estates and bypass the law. By sub-dividing the landholding into smaller holding under various family names, the in 2009 raised land ceilings are widely bypassed (Enrique Ormachea, p 25-26).

An additional aspect of MAS administration's ideas of land reform that impedes MST-SC fight against land concentration in Santa Cruz is the negative perception the MAS administration seems to have of MST-SC. In the opinion of Adalberto Kopp, MST-SC lacks a clear ideology and their occupations are too often inimical to indigenous communities<sup>74</sup> and natural reserves (Adalberto Kopp 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). The excessive agrarian expansion caused by MST-SC, is both by Kopp and Gutierrez perceived as a problem instead of a solution for Santa Cruz' land concentration. According to the official agrarian policy of the MAS administration, MST-SC should cease its land occupations and focus its efforts mainly on the requesting of *tierra fiscal*, as do other peasant organisations (La nueva política de la tierra, p 50).

### 6B.1.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings of this section, one could state that MST-SC has linked its hope for real agrarian reform to the agrarian policy of the MAS administration. Morales' progressive and drastic plans for agrarian reform have been a source of new hope for the movement. Therefore, from 2005 on MST-B changed its policy and started to apply a more socio-juridical strategy, meaning that until 2009 no new occupations were executed (Aramayo 2006, p553). The MAS administration's agrarian policy indeed looks quite progressive and beneficial for Bolivia's landless population. However, the frequent confrontation with violent opposition in Santa Cruz when implementing its reforming agrarian strategies, has changed the administration's stand on agrarian reform in this department. One would expect the MAS administration and MST-SC therefore become natural allies and formulate a common strategy for the struggle against land owning elite in Santa Cruz. However this is not the case.

One reason explaining the lack of such a common strategy between MAS and MST-SC is the fact that in practice it appears that the MAS administration is much more reserved in the implementation of its agrarian policy in Santa Cruz than government policy letters imply. According to government officials, the Bolivian government is powerful enough to execute its agrarian policy and expropriate underused and illegally obtained land, however it chooses to avoid confrontational tactics in Santa Cruz in order not to destabilize the country. At the moment it focuses its policy on the processing of peasant and indigenous community requests for *tierra fiscal*. The

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<sup>74</sup> These are indigenous communities originating from the Santa Cruz department



implementation of MAS agrarian reform therefore, absolutely does not coincide with the confrontational occupation actions of MST-SC.

A second reason for the non-existing cooperation between MST-SC and MAS is the quite negative perception the MAS government has of MST-SC. The fact that the MAS administration perceives MST-SC negatively revolves partly around the fact that MST-SC' actions would be inimical to indigenous communities of the Santa Cruz department. This argument from the MAS administration surprises the researcher. According to MST-SC leader Silvestre Saisari, MST-SC has never had problems with indigenous communities neighbouring MST-SC land occupations (Silvestre Saisari 26 August 2009). Moreover, some indigenous organisations themselves even openly support MST-SC, as the public condemnation, by several indigenous organisations, of the violent actions against MST settlements demonstrates, in the case with *Las Trillizas* in April 2010 (Voto Resolutivo 2010). Additionally, Gutierrez' argument that MST-SC occupations are responsible for unwanted agrarian expansion is difficult to understand, since MST-SC simply can not contribute to agrarian expansion since the movement only occupies land estates that were previously owned by another (illegal) proprietors.

The MAS administration's negative perception of MST-SC can largely be explained by the fact that landless peasants and in particular MST-SC do not appear to be one of the administrations political priorities. The landless group is, other than indigenous groups difficult to define. This characteristic makes the landless group unattractive as a priority for its future electoral champagnes. Moreover, the illegal methods of MST-SC make it difficult for the MAS' administration to openly support MST-SC especially since the movements focus is on confrontational actions while MAS tries to restrain from these.

For these reasons, it has become very unlikely for MST-SC to be able to benefit largely from the presence of the MAS, agrarian reform supportive government. The MAS administration does not provide MST-SC' with the means the movement needs to achieve its goals, which is the decrease of illegal land concentration in the Santa Cruz department. With the above discussed positioning concerning illegal land property in Santa Cruz, the MAS administration avoids confrontational policies towards Santa Cruz land owners and therefore will not be capable of changing the unequal distributive status quo in the department. As the MAS administration has ceased its intention on forcing back illegal land concentration due to aggressive opposition, it has become nearly impossible for MST-SC to continue their actions against under-used and illegally obtained land estates. The movement can on the basis of the government's priorities no longer expect this government to protect the movement's property rights and even their lives, as is demonstrated by the weak reaction to the harassments against MST-SC in the case of *Las Trillizas*.

One could therefore conclude that Veltmeyer and Petras so far seem to be right with their theoretical consideration on the relationship between grassroots based movements. Cooperation with the reform supportive administration has so far not, or only very modestly contributed to the success of MST-SC. This is not because the link to the MAS administration's policy has alienated MST-SC from their supporters, but because it has paralyzed the movement's struggle since MST-SC decided to cease its land occupations under the administration of the MAS. The presence of a pro- agrarian reform political coalition does thus not implicitly means this political coalition will be in favour of the movement's actions. Nevertheless, this analysis of the interaction between the MAS and MST-SC also demonstrates that a grassroots based movement such as MST-SC needs to be able to trust on the protection of the government, in order to be able to fight its struggle for a more equal distribution of agrarian land. Concerning MST-SC in Santa Cruz, this is not the case.

## 6B.2 Cruceño elite-power structures

As the chapter on the relationship between MST-SC and the Bolivian (MAS) government demonstrates, MST-SC's success in bringing about a renewed and more equitable agrarian distribution is highly dependent on social structures within which the movement operates. Besides the favourable political environment, the last chapter elaborated on, there exist various other structures which influence the way MST-SC pursues its goal. Examples of these structures within Bolivia's and Santa Cruz' society are 1) Santa Cruz' political-institutional structure, 2) the department's media apparatus, 3) the country's ethnic structure and 4) the judicial structure. These structures are in turn, influenced by *Cruceño* (landowning) elite groups who mobilize themselves against the landless peasant movement. The mentioned structures therefore impede MST-SC heavily during its struggle. This section elaborates on these societal structures which define the borders of MST-SC's ample space and the way in which they influence MST-SC struggle for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land.

Firstly, the base from which the *Cruceño* elite extracts its power is discussed. Since *Cruceño* elites have consolidated their power in more than just the economic sector, the second section of this chapter elaborates on the elite influence in other sectors of society, like the political-institutional and media sector. Last of all, ethnic disparities play a significant role in Bolivia's society and more specifically in MST-SC's fight over agrarian land. Since MST-SC members are mostly *Colla* migrants and the *Cruceño* elite mainly consists of *Cambas*, Bolivia's ethnic disparities will be explored in the final section of this chapter. In all three sections, the link between the functioning of the structures and the effect they have on MST-SC's struggle will constantly be made, in order to give an impression of how MST-SC is impeded by the existence of these various structures.

### 6B.2.1 Cruceño elite powerbase

The Santa Cruz' elite thus exercises power over various structures of the *Cruceño* society with the goal to secure their privileged position. The ways in which this elite group influences these specific social structures will be described later in this chapter in several sections. However, in order to be able to understand how these elites exercise their power, one first has to understand where this elite group derives its power from. This section will elaborate in that power base.

The basis for *Cruceño* elite's power is the economic sector, which for a large part revolves around agriculture. For all of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Santa Cruz elites were owners of agricultural plantations, worked by farm labourers, which produced goods for regional markets. From the 1950s on, however, these traditional *haciendas* were replaced by modern and extensive agro-businesses, producing sugar, wheat, cotton, soy, and beef for both the national and the export market (Eaton 2008, 73). Also nowadays, the *Cruceño* agricultural sector is the largest and represents 17 percent of the regional GDP (Padro 2008, 162). However, over the years the emphasis of the agricultural sector switched and moved from sugar and cotton to mainly wheat, soy (70 percent). The second sector from which the *Cruceño* elite derives its power, is the extensive cattle breeding industry. With 1.9 million heads of cattle, Santa Cruz represents 33 percent of the national cattle breeding industry (Prado 2008, 164). To a lesser extent, *Cruceño* elites are also involved in land speculation and forestry activities. Every day over 1.000 hectares of land are deforested in Santa Cruz by internationally and *Cruceño* elite owned companies (Prado 2008, 165). Although Bolivia, in the 1950's experienced one of Latin America's most significant land reform programmes, significant agrarian land redistribution occurred merely to the western departments. As a result, land ownership in Santa Cruz remains highly concentrated among small elite that holds vast tracts of land (Eaton 2008, 73).

With the boom in Santa Cruz' economy that began in the 1970s, elites who had previously been involved in agriculture, began to invest their profits in industrial, financial and service sector activities (Eaton 2008, 73).

Respectively these sectors represent 22.3, 4.4 and 15 percent of the regional GDP. While the financial and the industrial sector are both very much interlinked with agricultural activities, the services sector mainly revolves around education (universities), media, tourism and real estate (Prado 2008, 165-186). This characteristic of the *Cruceño* elite, the tendency to diversify their power base is a very important one. By investing in banking, services and media businesses and thus linking these various sectors together the *Cruceño* elite strengthen their economic and political position by enlarging and diversifying their domains of power (Prado 2008, 170). Good examples of these *Cruceño* elites who have diversified their power by investing in various sectors, are Oswaldo Monasterios and Branko Marinkovic (Prado 2008, 172). Monasterio has been senator of the political party MNR from 1993-1997, he is the owner of the Santa Cruz based TV network, *Red Unitel*, he owns ten thousands hectares of agrarian land and lastly he is assumed to be the largest shareholder of *Banco Ganadero* in Santa Cruz. Marinkovic has a similar résumé. Also Marinkovic owns up to a hundred thousand hectares of agrarian land, is the largest shareholder of the *Cruceño* newspaper '*El Día*', is assumed to be the second largest shareholder of *Banco Económico*, based in Santa Cruz and has up to 2009 been the President of the *Comité Pro Santa Cruz*.<sup>75</sup> Of course not every elite in Santa Cruz is entangled in so many sectors and for such large shares as are Marinkovic and Monasterio. Nevertheless, these examples give a good idea of how diversified elite power in Santa Cruz is and how well they are organized.

Additionally, these elite groups are not only represented in almost all economic sectors, they are also organised in such a strong way that together they form a homogeneous, extremely powerful group. Elites from the agricultural sector are either organized in the *Cámara Agropecuaria del Oriente*<sup>76</sup> (CAO) or the *Federación de Ganaderos de Santa Cruz*<sup>77</sup> (FEGASACRUZ). Elites involved in business are represented by the *Cámara de Industria y Comercio*<sup>78</sup> (CAINCO) and all these elite groups together are gathered in the *Comité Pro Santa Cruz*<sup>79</sup> (CPSC) an unelected entity dominated by business and agro-industrial elites, which looks after the interests of *Cruceño* elites as a whole in relation to the rest of Bolivia (Eaton 2007, 86). By organizing themselves in such a way, every member of this Santa Cruz oligarchy thus depends on the others; the agriculture supports the industry, and the agro-industry in turn supports the services and financial sector. However, despite this diversification into non-agricultural activities, agriculture remains the dominant activity of Santa Cruz' economic elite (Eaton 2008, 74).

### 6B.2.2 Elite power consolidation in a superstructure

The above section described the economic sectors which the *Cruceño* elite derives its power from. Moreover, it explored how the elite consolidated this power by linking one economic sector to the other. However, merely economic power would not have brought *Cruceño* elites in the position they find themselves in today. Their influence seems to go far beyond economic power alone. Also cultural, social, political and institutional aspects of society have contributed to their current position. The Santa Cruz elites have thus consolidated their power within other sectors of society, and in that way created, as Fernando Prado calls it, an 'economic power exceeding superstructure' (Prado 2008, 182). These other sectors include foremost the political-institutional sector and the mass-media.

#### Political- institutional power

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<sup>75</sup> Not for all of these ascriptions, a academic reference can be found. However, many newspaper articles and articles on critical leftish websites underline these ascriptions of both Marinkovic and Monasterio.

<sup>76</sup> Agricultural Chamber of Eastern Bolivia

<sup>77</sup> Cattle farmers Federation of Santa Cruz

<sup>78</sup> Chamber of Industry and Commerce

<sup>79</sup> Federation of Private Entrepreneurs of Bolivia–Santa Cruz

One of the sectors in which the *Cruceño* elites have consolidated their power, in order to look after their economic interests, is the political-institutional sector of Santa Cruz. This sector consists of the Santa Cruz Prefecture, the national political parties like *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario*<sup>80</sup> (MNR) and *Acción Democrática Nacionalista*<sup>81</sup> (AND) which are in one way or the other favourable for *Cruceño* elites and the *Comité Pro Santa Cruz*<sup>82</sup> (CPSC).

Since the inferior performance of Bolivia's traditional political parties during the national elections of 2005, the *Cruceño* elites lost an important part of their national political power base. It is in this context, that the *Comité Pro Santa Cruz* (CPSC), began to play a significant role in the protection of Santa Cruz elite interests in relation to those of the national government (Gustafson 2006, 363). It was for example the CPSC who initiated and kept up the Santa Cruz demand for autonomy, as described earlier in the chapter. The CPSC is thus closely involved in Santa Cruz' politics and it has strong connections with the Santa Cruz' Prefecture. This close inter-linkage of political views and collective ideas of both the Prefecture and the CPSC appears for example from the fact that the current prefect of the department, wealthy landowner Ruben Costas, was elected in December 2005 as CPSC President (Easton 2008, 85). The interconnectedness of those different *Cruceño* elite committees with the Prefecture, as well as the overlap of their ideas also appeared from the interviews held with Luiz Valdomar, director for land issues at the CAO and Señor Roca, head of the department of land issues at the *Prefectura*. Both Valdomar and Roca for instance share the idea that large landownership in Santa Cruz does hardly exist and that MST-SC members are rabble-rousers who are not landless at all (Señor Roca 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 and Luiz Valdomar 17<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). Another indication of the close cooperation between the Prefecture and the CPSC is the fact that, in collaboration with the CAO and FEGASACRUZ, they established the *Comité para la defensa de la tierra* in 2006, as is described in the section on Bolivia's political structure. This committee was founded in order to both confront the national *saneamiento* process of under-used and illegally obtained land estates as well as to stop the occupation of these same land estates by the MST-SC.

The CPSC appears to be not merely an entity to mobilize *Cruceño* support against threatening national politics. It also seems to be used as an instrument to confront opposing actors within the Santa Cruz department itself. CPSC, in the form of its strong arm junior movement, *Union Juvenil Cruceñista*<sup>83</sup>, and the Prefecture have for example occasionally been physically involved in their struggle over agrarian land in the department of Santa Cruz. According to MST-SC, representatives of the Velascian *Union Juvenil* as well as from the Velasco subdivision of the Prefecture were present during the violent evacuation of *Las Trillizas* in April 2010 ('MST-B Resolución 005-2010). Moreover, before 2006, MST-SC occupations have often been evacuated by the departmental police already within a couple of weeks, in some cases even within days. This again is a clear indication that the landowning elite in Santa Cruz have strong ties with the departmental prefecture institutions and that these institutions have often worked beneficial for the landowning elites in their fight against MST-SC. This intertwines of *Cruceño* elite interests with regional political bodies has clearly drastic consequences for MST-SC's struggle for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land.

#### Media apparatus

As already appears from the Marinkovic and Monasterio examples earlier in this chapter, Santa Cruz' media apparatus is for a large part privately-owned by *Cruceño* elites. Up to 85 percent of the national media is privately-owned and in the hands of financial interest groups who are far from sympathetic to the current MAS government (Reporters sans frontiers 2010). The NGO indicates that many newspapers and television stations tend to feature

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<sup>80</sup> Nationalist Revolutionary Movement

<sup>81</sup> Nationalist Democratic Action

<sup>82</sup> Committee in favour of Santa Cruz

<sup>83</sup> Union of *Cruceño* Youth

opposition rather than pro-government opinion pieces. Also according to Freedom House, an independent watchdog organization that supports the expansion of freedom around the world, the media in Bolivia is still weak in Bolivia. A survey executed by Transparency International underlines this statement by asking attention for the lack of independency of the Bolivian press. During a survey of Transparency International, 42 percent of the interviewees appear to perceive the Bolivian press to be corrupted or even extremely corrupted (Transparency International 2008). This partiality of the media in Santa Cruz has drastic consequences for MST-SC's struggle for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land. In Santa Cruz, the media is to a large extent owned by the same group that holds control over the financial industry and who own a large share of agrarian landholdings. It is therefore not surprising that Silvestre Saisari and other MST-SC members argue that their statements on occurrences concerning for instance the evacuation of a MST-SC occupation are often twisted in the media (Silvestre Saisari 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2009). A good example of the partiality in Santa Cruz' media apparatus, is the media report concerning the violent evacuation of *Las Trillizas*, during which the Vice-ministry of land was beaten, all 289 inhabitants of *Las Trillizas* were chased away and 11 residents disappeared. *El Deber*, the mostly read and privately owned *Cruceño* newspaper reported the incident but put a totally different emphasis on the occurrence than do for instance CEJIS and MST-SC itself. The *El Deber* newspaper article on the incident was first of all published almost a month after the incident and paid no attention what so ever, to the violent evacuation of the MST-SC settlement, the disappearance of the inhabitants or the Vice-ministry being beaten (*El Deber* 22-05-2010). The article only focused on the hindrance caused by a MST-SC protest action, organized at the Santa Cruz INRA office and later in front of the *Palacio de Justicia* in order to ask attention for their detrimental situation. Moreover, *El Deber* classified the violent evacuation of *Las Trillizas* as a conflict between members of MST-SC and indigenous *Chiquitano* peasants of the region. This statement is completely incorrect. MST-SC itself, the INRA, CEJIS and Fundación Tierra, all indicate that the conflict revolves around two Velascian landowners trying to chase away MST-SC members from their *Las Trillizas* settlements. Additionally, the violent evacuation of *Las Trillizas*' inhabitants is condemned by several indigenous *Chiquitano* organisations and can therefore impossibly have been executed by these indigenous communities (Voto Resolutivo 2010).

This type of news coverage, which according to CIPCA and MST-SC happens a lot, provides MST-SC with a very negative image, which became apparent from the lack of public support showing from the public survey done by the researcher. Although no hermetic link can be made between the negative reporting on MST-SC cases and the lack of public support, the reactions of the survey interviewees on the question how they perceived MST-SC, do point in the direction of the biased media. Because of the fact that the *Cruceño* media, linked to elite corporations is severely hampering MST-SC attempts to mobilize public support, it has become almost impossible for MST-SC to inform and convince the *Cruceño* population of their struggle for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land.

### 6B.3 Ethnic structure

A third social structure that has an important influence on the way MST-SC fights its struggle against *Cruceño* land concentration is the ethnic structure of Bolivia's society. As described already in Chapter 4, a division can be made between *Colla* Bolivians originating from the *Altiplano* and *Camba* Bolivians originating from the *Oriente*. This division has become more prominent and on the forefront since the election of Evo Morales' as President and the focus on indigenous Bolivians in his policy. The focus of Morales' on Bolivia's indigenous population is however not an all indigenous including policy. The MAS administration's policies on agrarian and social issues merely revolve around additional rights and privileges for indigenous populations from the *Altiplano*, such as

*Quechua* and *Aymara*<sup>84</sup> indians. This combination of the for Santa Cruz detrimental central policies and the exclusion of *Cruceño* indigenous groups, such as the *Guarani* and the *Guarayo*, from MAS' for indigenous advantageous measures, led to the revival of the *Camba* identity. The ethnic distinction between the population of *Altiplano* and *Oriente* is thus for a large part a created distinction. The difference between *Colla* and *Camba* Bolivians could therefore also be perceived as a difference in identity than as an ethnic difference. This section will elaborate into more detail on this ethnic or identity division between the *Altiplano* and *Oriente*, as well as on the consequences this division has for the struggle of MST-SC. However, before going into more detail on this subject one note has to be made in order to clarify the definition of indigenous in the Bolivian context;

When speaking of indigenous populations in Santa Cruz, it is important to keep in mind that indigenous groups in Santa Cruz are only those which are originally from the Santa Cruz department, such as the *Guarayo* and *Guarani* indians. Indigenous groups from the *Altiplano*, such as *Quechua* and *Aymara* indians, who are for large parts migrated to Santa Cruz from the 1960s on, are not considered to be indigenous in this department since they are not originally from Santa Cruz. *Aymara* and *Quechua* indians (first and second generation) who are considered indigenous on the *Altiplano*, are in Santa Cruz considered and described as *colonizadores*, or migrants in English.

The discourse on the ethnic/identity differences between the *Altiplano* and the *Oriente*, which revived shortly after the election of Evo Morales, is mainly led by Santa Cruz' elites. The *Cruceño* elite use the term *Camba* as a *Cruceño* identity to mobilize public support against according to them inequitable, ethnic tinted and excluding national policies (Prado 2008). The intensification of regionalist sentiment in defence of *Cruceños* as *Cambas* is in addition to the national politics as described earlier, also a reaction to the indigenous *Quechua* and *Aymara* migration from the poorer Andean regions to Santa Cruz over the past four decades (Gustafson 2008, 356). From the 1960's until today, over half a million people from Bolivia's highlands settled as rural smallholders, urban merchants and labourers in the Eastern lowland department (Gustafson 2006, 355). The earlier described differences in economic and political interests between the *Altiplano* and the *Oriente* has intensified this discourse on the difference in identity between *Colla* and *Camba* Bolivians. However, the constructed *Cruceño* identity also appears to be used to mobilize *Cruceño* public support against elite-opposing elements within the Santa Cruz department itself.

Due to the fact that MST-SC mainly consists of *Colla* migrant members, the discourse on the difference in identity between *Colla* and *Camba* Bolivians has a significant effect on MST-SC capacity to change Santa Cruz' land distribution pattern. The *Colla* identity of MST-SC is used by elite organisations to mobilize public support against the movement, and therefore have a very negative impact on MST-SC attempts to win the public support of Santa Cruz inhabitants. The Prefecture, the CAO and FEGASACRUZ, *Cruceño* organizations in which Santa Cruz' elites are very well represented, stress for instance the difference between *Camba* and *Colla* inhabitants of Santa Cruz when it comes to land distribution. They emphasize the importance to firstly distribute agrarian land to *Camba* inhabitants of the department and then, when enough land appears to remain for distribution after *Camba* inhabitants are provided with agrarian land, also *Colla* peasants are allowed to demand land (Luiz Valdomar 17<sup>th</sup> of August 2009, Señor Roca 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 and Señora Capobianco 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2009). This discriminatory statement which is based on the origin of MST-SC members, is reiterated by the public opinion. From the result of the survey, held on the streets of Santa Cruz de la Sierra it also appears that the *Colla* identity of the MST-SC members does not work favourable for MST-SC. The argumentation used by many interviewees, for the overtly negative perspective on MST-SC, is the fact that according to the interviewees *Camba* inhabitants

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<sup>84</sup> Evo Morales himself is *Aymara*



of Santa Cruz should be prioritized concerning the distribution of *tierra fiscal*. *Cambas* first. Additionally, the friction between the *Colla* and *Camba* inhabitants in Santa Cruz, is demonstrated by the fact that 76.5% of the *Camba* interviewees<sup>85</sup> indicate to view the MST-SC negatively, while only 36.7% of the *Colla* interviewees<sup>86</sup> indicate to have a negative perspective of the movement. The results of this survey thus express the difficulty for a predominantly *Colla* landless peasant movement to mobilize public support in a department consisting of mainly *Camba* inhabitants.

In a way the struggle over agrarian land between MST-SC and large landowners is a miniature of the national conflict. The MST-SC members are poor, *Colla* and MAS supporting peasants, while large landowners are prosperous, *Camba* and MAS opposing elites. This does not only make it difficult for MST-SC to mobilize public support in a mainly *Camba* department, it also has the potential to polarize the national conflict over the control over Santa Cruz even more.

### 6B.4 Judicial structure

From the above sections, it becomes clear that the *Cruceño* elites have strongly consolidated their power within different sectors of Santa Cruz' society. Santa Cruz' economy, politics, media apparatus and identity discourse is for a large part dominated by these elites. By exercising so much influence on Santa Cruz' society, the *Cruceño* elite, including the landowning elites of the department, are also able to strongly counter MST-SC struggle for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land.

In this section another social structure that impedes MST-SC' struggle will be discussed. This section will revolve around the Bolivian judicial structure, its functioning and its weaknesses.

In their reports on the functioning of Bolivia's judiciary sector, several NGO's and independent research institutes indicate that the judiciary is one of the weakest branches of the Bolivian government (Bretelsmann 2010, Amnesty International 2010, Freedom House 2009). The judiciary branch severely lacks independence from the government and is absolutely not free from other improper influences or biases (World Justice Project 2009). On a scale from 0,00 to 1,00, Bolivia's judiciary scores only a 0,36 on impartiality and accountability, while for efficiency and effectiveness it scores a 0,45 (World Justice Programme 2009). Amnesty International reiterates the concern that the principle of separation of powers is not respected, with regards the Judiciary, the Executive and the Legislative (Amnesty International 2010).

Also corruption and the lack of transparency appear to be a significant problem of the Bolivian judiciary sector. Bolivia seems to be one of the most corrupt countries in a region not known for its integrity. In 2006 the country received a 2.7 out of a total of 10 for transparency, on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, placing Bolivia on 105th out of the 168 countries ranked (Freedom House 2009). Furthermore Bolivia's population itself indicates to perceive the country's judiciary to be very much affected by corruption. To the question; 'To what extent is the judiciary in your country affected by corruption?', 61 percent answered to perceive the judiciary to be extremely corrupt (Transnational International 2009). In addition, also the more specific land regulation part of the judiciary seems to be extremely involved in corruption. According to the Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2009, a fourth of the Bolivian population, who have been in contact with the land services in 2008, reported to have paid a bribe. 66 percent of the population indicated to see the problem of grand political corruption in land matters to be a very serious problem (Transparency International 2009).

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<sup>85</sup> Those interviewees who have at least one *Camba* parent

<sup>86</sup> Those interviewees who were born in the Altiplano or who's parents are from the Altiplano



Another shortcoming of the Bolivian judiciary is its inaccessibility. Due to the fact that the sector only consists of fifty-six public defenders or 0.8 defenders for each 100,000 Bolivians it is very complicated for Bolivian citizens to bring a case before court. Moreover, the user fees, transportation costs, and the necessity of bribery to ensure prompt attention and favourable outcomes, place civil proceedings beyond the reach of most Bolivians (Freedom House 2009). This quite negative paraphrase of Freedom House on the accessibility of the Bolivian Judiciary for ordinary citizens is reiterated by the Rule of Law index 2009 of the World Justice Project. This index accredits the country's judiciary with merely a 0.27 on a scale of 1.0 of the accessibility of juridical processes (World Justice Project 2009). Moreover, this index indicates that Bolivia's judiciary scores quite low when it comes to the prohibition of crimes against both persons and properties, and the punishment connected to this.

Consequently, particular attention should be paid to the need to strengthen the justice system. Although, there have been important reforms since the mid-1990s, which have increased institutional differentiation and theoretically enhanced the independence of the judiciary, current political tensions undermine the ability to discuss proposals for reform of the judiciary (Amnesty International 2010). An important consequence of this inability to reform the judiciary sector and to find lasting solutions to the longstanding problems around independence, is the prevalence of impunity. This impunity, as well as the corruption and the lack of accessibility severely constrain MST-SC in its struggle. The physical abuse of Silvestre Saisari on Santa Cruz' main plaza in 2005 for example, but also the disappearances and violent harassments in MST-SC settlement *Las Trilizas* have until today gone unpunished. It has according to Silvestre Saisari appeared impossible to enforce proper investigation of these incidents and consequently the prosecution of the perpetrators, even though the physical abuse on the main plaza in 2005 was recorded by several media cameramen (Silvestre Saisari 26<sup>th</sup> of August). Additionally, the corruption within Bolivia's land regulation institutes, as described earlier in chapter 4 as well as indicated by Transparency International, makes it very complicated for the MST-SC to insist on the protection of their property rights or the execution of a promised *saneamiento* process.

Although, it is apparent that arguing the consolidation of *Cruceño* elites in Bolivia's justice system would be an exaggeration, it has also become clear from this section that the weak Bolivia judiciary leaves a lot of place for unlawful interference of, for instance the wealthy and MST-SC opposing large landowning elites.

## 6B.5 Conclusions

The consolidation of elite power in the *Cruceño* political institutions, civil society and the media apparatus, as well as the instable unfavourable ethnic composition of Santa Cruz and the weakness of Bolivia's judiciary all form an important obstruction to MST-SC ability to bring about change.

*Cruceño* elite groups, who are quite powerful due to the fact that they are represented in almost all *Cruceño* economic sectors, are also organised in such a strong way that they form together a homogeneous, extremely powerful group. Moreover, the Santa Cruz elites have consolidated their power within other non-economic sectors of the *Cruceño* society, and in that way created an, economic power exceeding, superstructure. Consequential partiality of the media in Santa Cruz, as well as the elite influence in the Santa Cruz political-institutional sector, has drastic consequences for MST-SC's struggle for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land. Another structure, present in Bolivia's society that seriously hampers MST-SC struggle is the ethnic contrast between the highland *Colla* and the lowland *Camba* population. A collective *Cruceño* identity which is partly created and used by Santa Cruz' elites to mobilize public support against for them detrimental policies or groups severely hampers MST-SC' attempts to mobilize public support for their cause.

It has thus become clear that the *Cruceño* elites have consolidated their power strongly within different economic and other non-economic sector of Santa Cruz' society, such as the political-institutional and the media

sector. However, it would be an overstatement to argue that the *Cruceño* elite has also consolidated its power in the judiciary sector. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Bolivian judiciary sector is completely free from *Cruceño* elites' interference. The judiciary branch severely lacks independence from the national and regional government and is absolutely not free from other improper influences or biases. Due to the weakness of Bolivia judiciary there is more than sufficient opportunity for unlawful interference of, for instance the wealthy and MST-SC opposing large landowning elites. Therefore, also the independence of Bolivian judiciary is a societal aspect that severely impedes MST-SC's struggle against land concentration in the department of Santa Cruz.

### *7. Concluding remarks*

The aim of this research has been to explore whether MST-SC is capable, as is suggested in current academic literature, to significantly contribute to change the unequal land distribution situation in the department of Santa Cruz. In order to answer this question it is wise to first conclude, to what extent MST-SC has up till today been successful in bringing about a redistribution of agrarian land in the department. Subsequently, an analysis is given of the reasons for MST-SC's only moderate contribution to a significant change of the current distribution of agrarian land in the department of Santa Cruz. Finally, this concluding chapter will finish with a discussion on possible biases in the research and recommendations for further research.

## 7.1 Evaluation of MST achievements

It appears to have not been easy for the movement to bring about significant distribution of agrarian land. The movement has fought the under-usage of agrarian land and the illegally obtainment of agrarian lands by both land occupations and requests for *tierras fiscales*, for almost seven years now. In total, MST-Santa Cruz occupied 16 under-used agrarian properties, with around 4000 MST-SC member families. However, due to the level of violence MST-SC was confronted with, the movement has not been able to prolong its occupations long enough in order to exercise enough pressure on the government to regularize the under-used properties and revert them to the state. As a result of these seven years of land occupations and demands for *tierras fiscales* since 2005, MST-Santa Cruz has obtained merely 142.000 hectares of agrarian land, benefiting only 1965 families. Although the obtainment of this amount of agrarian land by the movement is an important achievement, the achievements of MST-SC are in comparison to the total estimated amount of landless peasant families in Bolivia (between 250.000 and 300.000) not very significant. It is important to realize that to expect one rural movement in Santa Cruz to bring about a total agrarian redistribution of land in the department, is unrealistic (García Linera and Chavéz León 2008, p566). Nevertheless, one also has to acknowledge that considering the enormous amounts of time (seven years), the vast number of people involved (3828 families) as well as the huge suffering and danger these people have experienced (physical abuse, disappearances, deaths) 142.000 hectares of agrarian land, benefiting only 1965 families is at the least to be called disappointing. One could conclude that within seven years, MST-Santa Cruz managed to assist barely 0.67 percent of all landless families in Bolivia. Realizing that MST-Santa Cruz is, after MST-Tarija the most active MST movements in Bolivia, these results could in the least be called modest. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that although MST-SC has indeed obtained some agrarian land for the department landless population, this granting of agrarian land to MST-SC is not a guarantee that the movement is absolutely certain of their rights to use the land and live on it. The example of the MST-SC settlements of *Las Trillizas*, demonstrates how uncertain and how poorly protected the MST-SC land rights are in reality.

## 7.2 Analysis of the reasons for MST-SC's inability to bring about significant change

### Human agency aspects

According to the current theoretical academic literature on grassroots based agrarian change, however, MST-SC should be very capable of bringing about redistributive change, even though the movement faces significant economic and physical vulnerabilities. In order to be indeed successful, in bringing about change, MST-SC should comply with certain preconditions according to these scholars. In chapter 6, the compliance of MST-SC with these four prerequisites was explored, in order to find an explanation for MST-SC's fairly limited success in achieving an agrarian redistribution. From this exploration it appeared that, concerning the first prerequisite, MST-SC does enjoy national and international support, both on a practical as well as on a morally supportive level. However, premature cessation of the MST-SC occupations, the lack of public support and the extremely slow execution of the *saneamiento* processes demonstrate the highly necessary additional support that is needed for MST-SC to become more successful in obtaining agricultural land for Bolivia's landless population. From interviews with MST-SC leader (and nowadays MST-B's national leader) Silvestre Saisari it appears that MST-SC itself has not been exceptionally active in approaching potential donors or supportive organisations.

Concerning the second prerequisite on intra-movement interaction, it appears that there does not exist frequent interaction between the majority of MST-SC members living in settlement. MST-SC settlement leaders however do meet each other every couple of months during meetings and workshops in the capital of Santa Cruz. Moreover, the annual MST-B congress allows for the possibility to increase internal coherence by the synchronization of a general MST-B strategy and methods. And morally, the MST-SC fractions support each other

in case of trouble.

In relation to the third prerequisite on the mobilization of public support for MST-SC ideology and actions, it appears that although MST-B and MST-SC in particular try to reach out to the public through press conferences, public announcements on websites and in newspapers, marches and strikes, these attempts are made in vein. According to reactions of *Cruceños* in the streets, it seems that the movement has not succeeded to provide the population of Santa Cruz with a positive view of MST-SC activities.

MST-SC thus only adheres partly to the first three prerequisites. The movement seems to be incapable of undertaking and upholding important alliances with national and international parties, frequent interaction between the different movement segments does not exist and MST-SC appears to experience severe difficulty in mobilizing *Cruceño* support for its cause. MST-SC does not, or only partly complies with these three theoretical prerequisites. However, the question remains whether this non-compliance explains MST-SC fairly modest success in achieving a more equitable distribution of agrarian land. In the opinion of the researcher, this non-compliance with the three prerequisites only partly explains MST-SC's failure to bring about significant change. Without good relations with national and international organisations MST-SC will continue to lack financial and technical support, as well as an instrument to pressure the Bolivian government from outside the country. Moreover, without a strong network within the movement, the different segments are not able to support each other adequately in case this is needed. And finally, without the support of the *Cruceño* public, it becomes almost impossible for MST-SC to execute its actions and convince the Bolivian government of the need to thoroughly redistribute agrarian land.

### Structural aspects

However, it remains questionable whether the movement's non-compliance can be blamed on the movement itself, as is suggested by several theories on grassroots based agrarian reform. These theories pay for the most part attention to human agency and mainly lay emphasis on the influence a grassroots based movement itself can exercise on its environment. Although this perspective is very positive and movement-empowering, it is in the opinion of the researcher also incomplete and too much centred on the capacity of the movement itself. In this line of thought on the potential of rural movements a very important aspect is overlooked. The discussed scholars, active in the field of land reform and grassroots based movements, do not pay attention to the broader context within which grassroots based movements operate. None of those scholars refers to the important role societal structures play in the strife for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land. First of all, the above discussed theoretical considerations neglect the fact that rural grassroots based movements are often economically and physically very vulnerable due to the influence of present structures. Therefore, even though these movements might have an enormous drive to change society and build alliances with supporting NGO's, the state and the public, their vulnerable position often within society impedes the interaction of these movements with societal actors.

One of these most impeding vulnerabilities that MST-SC experiences is its weak financial position. Previous MST occupations show that very often land occupations cease before generating any result due to the fact that families are not able to maintain in their basic needs for such a long period. The lack of financial means is thus a strongly impeding factor for the movement. A very serious implication of this vulnerable position of MST-SC members is that they mainly focus on acquiring shorter term goals, namely the achievement of a piece of agricultural land for their family and for their direct MST-SC colleagues in order to be able to sustain their families in the future. Consequently, there is a trend visible within the MST-SC in which MST-SC members are no longer fighting for a just cause (namely the ending of land concentrations in the hands of land elites, and ending the misuse of agrarian land) but are fighting for their own future and the future of their children. The ideological base

for MST-SC struggle thus seems to be eroding, not because of a changing agrarian land situation, but because to the fact that MST-SC members, due to their vulnerabilities only have the means to fight short and clearly demarcated struggles for smaller pieces of land.

Due to this lack of sufficient financial means it has become difficult for the movement to acquaint national and international organisations with their struggle and to request their support. Moreover, these same vulnerabilities impede MST-SC to build alliances with the state and to mobilize public support for its cause. This difficulty is aggravated by the absence of a sufficiently independent and functioning media apparatus, which could help MST-SC's story to be heard. MST-SC thus finds itself in a kind of negative vicious cycle, in which financial means are needed to inform third parties of their situation in order to obtain financial means. MST-SC is thus trapped in its position within the broader context, within the wider social structures within which the movement operates. The vulnerable position of the movement is a clear indication that the movement is restraint by various social structures within Bolivia's society.

The second aspect that is overlooked by theories on the potential of grassroots based movements in bringing about change is the context or structures in which the movement operates. Although, theorists do mention the influence of the presence of a favourable political environment on the success of a movement, they completely ignore the influence other structures within society can have on MST-SC. Transparency in government activity; the independence of the media apparatus and judiciary; ethnic disparities in society; and the influence powerful groups of political/economic elites can exercise on these structures, all play a significant role in how much ample space a movement has in changing the status quo

The firstly discussed social structure that influences MST-SC struggle, was the structure of Bolivia's national politics. The pro-land reform national government of Bolivia, has as the theory describes, a significant impact on the functioning of MST-SC. However, this impact does not necessarily has to be very a positive one. Due to MAS administration's agrarian policy that is progressive and beneficial for Bolivia's landless population, one would expect the MAS administration and MST-SC to become natural allies and formulate a common strategy for the struggle against land owning elite in Santa Cruz. However since the MAS administration is the frequently confronted with violent opposition in Santa Cruz when implementing its reforming agrarian strategies, it has changed its stand on agrarian reform in this department. MAS' administration does no longer wish to execute a land reform policy which is confrontational regarding *Cruceño* large land owning elites. Consequently, MST-SC and MAS have not been able to build an alliance together to confront the *Cruceño* land concentration. Another reason explaining the lack of such a common strategy between MAS and MST-SC is the quite negative perception that MAS holds of MST-SC. This negative perception of MST-SC can largely be explained by the fact that landless peasants and in particular MST-SC do not appear to be one of the administrations political priorities. The landless group is, other than indigenous groups difficult to define. This characteristic makes the landless group unattractive as a priority for its future electoral champagnes. For these reasons, it has become very unlikely for MST-SC to be able to benefit largely from the presence of the MAS, agrarian reform supportive government. The MAS administration does not provide MST-SC' with the means the movement needs to achieve its goals, which is the decrease of illegal land concentration in the Santa Cruz department. The movement can on the basis of the government's priorities no longer expect this government to protect the movement's property rights and even their lives, as is demonstrated by the weak reaction to the harassments against MST-SC in the case of *Las Trillizas*.

One could therefore conclude that Veltmeyer and Petras so far seem to be right with their theoretical consideration on the relationship between grassroots based movements. Cooperation with the reform supportive

administration has so far not, or only very modestly contributed to the success of MST-SC. This is not because the link to the MAS administration's policy has alienated MST-SC from their supporters, but because it has paralyzed the movement's struggle since MST-SC decided to cease its land occupations under the administration of the MAS. The presence of a pro- agrarian reform political coalition does thus not implicitly means this political coalition will be in favour of the movement's actions.

A second structural aspect of Bolivia's society that influences MST-SC' struggle is the extensive power of the *Cruceño* elites. The consolidation of elite power in the *Cruceño* political institutions and the media apparatus is an important societal structure that impedes the movement's ability to bring about change. *Cruceño* elite groups, who are quite powerful due to the fact that they are represented in almost all *Cruceño* economic sectors, are also organised in such a strong way that they form together a homogeneous, extremely powerful group. However, the *Cruceño* elite power revolves around more than economic power. Merely economic power would not have brought *Cruceño* elites in the position they find themselves in today. Their influence seems to go far beyond economic power alone. Also cultural, social, political and institutional aspects of society are influenced by this elite group. Consequential partiality of the media in Santa Cruz, as well as the elite influence in the Santa Cruz political-institutional sector, has drastic consequences for MST-SC's struggle for a more equitable distribution of agrarian land.

Another structure, present in Bolivia's society that seriously hampers MST-SC struggle is the ethnic contrast between the highland *Colla* and the lowland *Camba* population. A collective *Cruceño* identity which is partly created and used by Santa Cruz' elites to mobilize public support against for them detrimental policies or groups severely hampers MST-SC' attempts to mobilize public support for their cause. The earlier described differences in economic and political interests between the *Altiplano* and the *Oriente* has intensified this discourse on the difference in identity between *Colla* and *Camba* Bolivians. The *Cruceño* elite use the term *Camba* as a *Cruceño* identity to mobilize public support against according to them inequitable, ethnic tinted and excluding national policies (Prado 2008). Due to the fact that MST-SC mainly consists of *Colla* migrant members, the discourse on the difference in identity between *Colla* and *Camba* Bolivians which is led by the *Cruceño* elite has a significant effect on MST-SC capacity to change Santa Cruz' land distribution pattern. The *Colla* identity of MST-SC is used by elite organisations to mobilize public support against the movement, and therefore have a very negative impact on MST-SC attempts to win the public support of Santa Cruz inhabitants.

The last social structure present in Bolivia's society that has a significant influence on MST-SC' struggle in bringing about redistributive change in Santa Cruz is the Bolivian judicial structure. Bolivia's judiciary branch severely lacks independence from the national and regional government and is absolutely not free from other improper influences or biases. Due to the weakness of the judiciary there is more than sufficient opportunity for unlawful interference of, for instance the wealthy and MST-SC opposing large landowning elites. Therefore, also the independence of Bolivian judiciary is a societal aspect that severely impedes MST-SC's struggle against land concentration in the department of Santa Cruz.

A thorough analysis of the factors impeding MST-SC in its struggle for a more equitable agrarian distribution demonstrated that the selection of theoretical considerations used in this thesis can only up to a certain extent explain why MST-SC up till now has not appeared to be capable of bringing about change. Key to the scholars' inability to explain MST-SC' incapability to change the agrarian land concentration is that the focus of the scholars is merely on human action. Next to the, by the scholars indicated human action of MST-SC itself, also social

structures seemed to play an important role in MST-SC' inability to change the agrarian land concentration. These social structures severely impede the movement's possibilities for action. Judicial and media independence, ethnic instabilities between east and west Bolivia and the elite power structures in Santa Cruz, influencing the before mentioned structures all have had an influence on the attempt of MST-SC to bring about change. This attempt of MST-SC to achieve a more equitable distribution of agrarian land, is therefore not only determined by the decisions and actions undertaken by the movement itself, as the theories suggest. The ability of MST-SC to change the land concentration situation in Santa Cruz is also, or maybe even more, influenced by the way the *Cruceño* and Bolivian society is structured.

Based on the description of MST-SC' actions to influence its *Cruceño* surroundings and the way various social structures influences the movement, one could conclude that it is very unlikely for MST-SC to be capable of significantly changing the inequitable agrarian land distribution situation in the department of Santa Cruz. By fighting the department's land concentration and thus indirectly by fighting the *Cruceño* agrarian elites, MST-SC is trying to change power structures within Santa Cruz. At the same time however, it is seriously impeded by these same power structures in its fight against land concentration. MST-SC thus finds itself in a deadlock. The movement is stuck in a negative vicious cycle, in which additional instruments, support and insights are needed to increase the movement's ability to inform third parties, build alliances in order to obtain additional instruments, support and insights. MST-SC is thus trapped in its position inside Bolivia's social context, i.e. within the wider social structures.

A purely bottom-up land reform, merely based on the initiatives of MST-Santa Cruz would therefore in the view of the researcher not be a very likely solution for the department's inequitable land distribution. As this research thorough analysis demonstrates, MST-SC is merely one actor in the midst of a very political and complicated struggle for agrarian land. More realistic it would therefore be to incorporate the wider context within which this *Cruceño* land reform takes place. Significant attention should be paid to the other factors of Bolivia's society such as the ethnic and political disparities between the east and the west, the weakness of Bolivia's judiciary sector and the *Cruceño* elite's penetration in both the department's media apparatus as well as regional politics. A more comprehensive bottom-up approach, including initiatives focussing on an independence judiciary, free media and reconciliation between Bolivia's two ethnic groups, would certainly amplify the chances of MST-SC struggle against unequal land distribution in Santa Cruz. Nevertheless, the struggle for and against land reform in the Bolivian department of Santa Cruz will remain a complicated one, which MST-SC will be able to influence only to a modest extend.

### 7.3 Discussion on possible biases and recommendations for further research

This last section consists of a discussion on possible biases in the research. Additionally, it makes a suggestion for further research.

#### Possible biases

Because of the wide extension of the research and the inclusion of that many elements of MST-SC as well as of elements of the *Cruceño* society that influence MST-SC's struggle, it has become difficult to describe every factor into detail. Therefore, especially the sectors on Bolivia's weak judiciary and on the elite consolidation in the media, could have been more elaborate on when more research time in Santa Cruz would have been spend on these specific topics. However, due to the merely 3 months timeframe but also due to the sensitivity of the subject it has not been possible to describe this section of the research into more detail.



Also the choice of *Pueblos Unidos* as a case study, might have had an influence on the research as a whole. The fieldwork in this MST-SC settlement has definitely produced a lot of valuable information on the movement's methods of operation, the way of living, the origin of the members as well as their relation to the large landowners they fight against. Nevertheless, throughout the research and the incorporation of the data, it became more and more clear that the case of *Las Trillizas* is also a very interesting struggle of MST-SC. The case of *Las Trillizas* gives a couple of clear indications of MST-SC vulnerabilities concerning, for instance the lack of state policy on the problem of landless peasants in Santa Cruz; the enormous consolidation of elite power in various sectors of the *Cruceño* society; as well as the movement's inability to uphold or create relations with supportive third parties. Therefore, the case of *Las Trillizas* would have been a good case study in order to better understand MST-SC's troubles and context. However, due to the lack of research time as well as due to the tardy realization of the importance of the case of *Las Trillizas*, no fieldwork in this settlement was done. Nevertheless, by means of news article, studies by Bolivian research organizations and public statements of MST-SC itself sufficient information was obtained in order to include this case in the research as well.

### Recommendation for further research

Another issue that could shed new light on MST-SC's potential to successfully fight land concentration, lies within the relationship between social structure and human agency. Theoretical considerations of Veltmeyer, Petras, Janvry, Sadoulet, Huizer and Borras all mainly focussed on the human agency aspects of MST-SC struggle. Therefore, this research has examined the movement's actions to strengthen its internal organisation, its relation with national/international NGO's and with the Bolivian public. However, all these actions undertaken or not undertaken by MST-SC are within the frontiers of Bolivia's social structures. The researcher therefore, has complemented this somewhat limited theoretical view, by incorporating Bolivia's and Santa Cruz' social structures in the analysis of MST-SC's ability to change Santa Cruz' unequal land distribution.

This research has thus treated the influence Bolivia's social structures have on MST-SC, however it has left out an analysis on how MST-SC's actions have influenced Bolivia's social structures has been left out. According to Anthony Giddens, the British sociologist previously mentioned, the influence MST-SC's actions can have on Bolivia's social structures are evenly important as the influence of social structures on MST-SC. Giddens claims that there exists an ongoing interactive and reciprocal relationship between human agency and social structure. Social structures and human action are dependent upon each other, but they also constrain each other. This description by Giddens on the relationship between social structure and human action could be another potential for a more successful MST-SC action towards land concentration. According to Giddens, MST-SC does not have to restrain its actions to the boundaries of Bolivia's and Santa Cruz' societal structures, it has the capacity to influence and even change them. The movement could therefore try to change Santa Cruz' inequitable distribution of agrarian land, by moving beyond the frontiers of Bolivia's social structures. Giddens claims that MST-SC has the ability as a social actor to produce and reproduce Bolivia's structures.

A suggestion for how to change these structures could for example be an investment in a MST-SC owned broadcast system in order to reach the public on its own. MST-SC could in that way portray itself more positively and provide the public with an answer to the Santa Cruz' prejudiced media. In that sense, MST-SC itself could thus change the disadvantageous social structure of media, albeit on a small scale. There probably exists an infinite list of actions MST-SC could undertake in order to change the *Cruceño* social structures. However, this thesis does not provide the researcher with enough time to further investigate these possibilities for MST-SC to change Santa Cruz' unequal land distribution. Nevertheless, it could be highly interesting to examine these possible actions to be undertaken by MST-SC. Therefore, the researcher would recommend further research on

the question whether it will be possible to change the Santa Cruz' society at will. And moreover, what it would take to change these, to MST-SC so disadvantageous social structures in their struggle against agrarian land concentration in the department.

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Decreto Supremo N° 28735 Modificaciones en la aplicación de precios consecionales y limites de superficie, June 2006

Decreto Supremo N° 28736 Emergencia de saneamiento (para campesino y mujer), June 2006

Decreto Supremo N° 28737 Personal del INRA y la participación de las organizaciones sociales, June 2006

Decreto Supremo N° 28738 Desconcentración técnica del INRA, June 2006

Estatuto del Departamento Autónomo de Santa Cruz, December 2007

Ley N° 1715 Ley del Servicio Nacional de la Reforma Agraria, October 1996

Decreto Supremo N° 24784 Reglamento del ley 1715

Ley N° 3545 Modificación de la Ley N° 1715 November 2006

Decreto Supremo N° 29215 Reglamento del ley 3545

## Appendix 1: List of interviewees

Ali, Señor

Inhabitant of Pueblos Unidos and active MST-member  
23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2009 in Pueblos Unidos, Bolivia

Aramayo, Javier

First lawyer of *Movimiento Sin Tierra- Santa Cruz* (MST-SC)  
29<sup>th</sup> of July 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Capobianco, Señora

Employee, responsible for issues such as land occupations, of the *Federación de Ganaderos de Santa Cruz* (FEGASACRUZ)  
26<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia.

Chavez, Adolfo

General Director of the *Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia* (CIDOB)  
23rd of June 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Espinosa, Mario  
Researcher at the *Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado* (CIPCA) and specialist in MST-related development projects  
5<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Gutierrez, Dionicio  
Head of the *Unidad de saneamiento y titulación de tierras bajas*, Vice-ministry of land  
11<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 in La Paz, Bolivia

Kopp, Adalberto  
Employee at the *Unidad de distribución de tierras fiscales y de Asentamientos Humanos*, Vice-ministry of land  
13<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 in La Paz, Bolivia.

Maldonado, Aniceto  
Coordinator of village chiefs of Pueblos Unidos  
22nd of August 2009 in Pueblos Unidos, Bolivia.

Plata, Wilfredo  
General researcher at the national department of *Fundación TIERRA*  
13<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 in La Paz, Bolivia.

Ramos, Felipa  
Inhabitant of Pueblos Unidos and active MST-member  
22nd of August 2009 in Pueblos Unidos, Bolivia

Riester, Jurgén  
Director of *Apoyo Para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano* (APCOB)  
4<sup>th</sup> of June 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Roca, Señor  
Head of the department of land issues in Santa Cruz, *Prefectura*  
25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia.

Saisari, Silvestre (first interview)  
General coordinator of *Movimiento Sin Tierra- Santa Cruz* (MST-SC)  
31<sup>st</sup> of July 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Saisari, Silvestre (second interview)  
General coordinator of *Movimiento Sin Tierra- Santa Cruz* (MST-SC)  
26<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Torres, Wilfredo  
Inhabitant of Pueblos Unidos and active MST-member  
23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2009 in Pueblos Unidos, Bolivia

Vadillo, Alcides (first interview)  
Director of the Oriente department of *Fundación Tierra- Santa Cruz* and former president of the *Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria* (INRA)  
18<sup>th</sup> of June 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Vadillo, Alcides (second interview)  
Director of the Oriente department of *Fundación Tierra- Santa Cruz* and former president of the *Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria* (INRA)  
29<sup>th</sup> of July 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Valdomar, Luiz  
Director for land issues, of the *Cámara Agropecuaria del Oriente* (CAO)  
17<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia.

### Survey

- Cinecentre
- Monseñor Rivero
- Plan tres mil
- Plaza 24 de Septiembre
- Villa primer de Mayo

## Appendix 2: List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

APCOB	Apoyo Para el Campesino-Indígena del Oriente Boliviano (Support for indigenous peasants in East Bolivia)
CABI	Capitanía del Alto y Bajo Izozog (Captaincy of the Lower and Higher Izozog)
CAO	Cámara Agropecuaria del Oriente (Agricultural Chamber of Eastern Bolivia)
CAT-SAN	Saneamiento integrado al Catastro (Regularization integrated into cadastre)
CEDIB	Centro de Documentacion e Informacion Bolivia (Centre for Documentation and Information Bolivia)

CEDLA	Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Laboral y Agrario (Centre for labour development and agriculture)
CEJIS	Centro de Estudios Jurídicos y Investigación Social (Centre for juridical studies and social investigation)
CIDES-UMSA	Postgrado en Ciencias del Desarrollo - Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (Postgraduate Development Sciences – Major University of San Andrés)
CIDOB	Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of Bolivia)
CIPCA	Centro de Investigación y Promoción del Campesinado (Centre for peasant investigation and encouragement)
CPTI	Centro de Planificación Territorial (Territorial Planification Centre)
CSUTCB	Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (The Union Confederation for Peasant Workers)
FEGASACRUZ	Federación de Ganaderos de Santa Cruz (Cattle farmers Federation of Santa Cruz)
FES	Función económica y social (Social-economical function)
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Association for Technical Cooperation)
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture and Development
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (National Institute for Statistics)
INRA	Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (National Institute for Agrarian Reform)
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement towards Socialism)
MDRayMA	Ministerio de Desarrollo Rural, Agropecuario y Medio Ambiente (Ministry for Rural Development, Agriculture and Environment)
MST-B	Movimiento Sin Tierra – Bolivia (Movement Without Land – Bolivia)
MST-SC	Movimiento Sin Tierra – Santa Cruz (Movement Without Land – Santa Cruz)
PIEB	Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia (Programme for strategic investigation in Bolivia)
SAN-SIM	Saneamiento Simple (Elementary regularization)
SAN-TCO	Saneamiento de TCO (Regularization of Indigenous Community Lands)
TCO	Tierras Comunitarias de Origen (Indigenous Community Lands)
VMT	Viceministerio de Tierras (Ministry of Land)

### Appendix 3: Map of Bolivia



## Appendix 4: Map of the Santa Cruz department





Source: United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations - Cartographic Section  
[http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/bolivia/Santa\\_Cruz.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/bolivia/Santa_Cruz.pdf)

## Appendix 5: Additional data on Bolivia's land distribution 1953 - 1993

**Table 1:**  
Distributed land between 1953 and 1992 in Bolivia  
Categorized by department.

Department	Dossiers	Beneficiaries		Surface (S)		(S) Department
	amount	amount	%	1000 ha.	%	1000 ha.
Chuquisaca	1.864	19.242	2,53	1.419	2,48	5.152
La Paz	10.196	256.848	33,82	7.846	13,69	13.398
Cochabamba	7.441	160.151	21,09	3.188	5,56	5.563
Oruro	1.449	44.321	5,84	4.080	7,12	5.358
Potosí	4.197	124.647	16,41	4.130	7,21	11.821
Tarija	3.421	28.031	3,69	2.328	4,06	3.762
Santa Cruz	12.237	107.213	14,12	22.111	38,58	37.062
Beni	6.994	17.579	2,31	11.279	19,68	21.356
Pando	661	1.404	0,18	920	1,61	6.382
<b>Total</b>	<b>48.460</b>	<b>759.436</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>57.305</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>109.858</b>

Source: INRA Estadísticas Agrarias 1953-2002, p68

**Table 2:**  
Distributed land between 1953 and 1992 in Bolivia  
Categorized by type of holding

Type of holding	Dossier	Beneficiarios (B)		Surface (S)	
	amount	amount	%	in ha.	%
Small holding	26.639	269.179	35.44%	4.850.838,83	8.46%
Medium-sized holding	13.555	123.567	16.27%	16.231.728,88	28.32%
Agro-enterprise	4.147	17.005	2.24%	23.011.055,23	40.16%
Residential holding	548	3.999	0.53%	23.866,10	0.04%
Communal property	2.990	333.403	43.90%	12.289.511,14	21.45%
Without data	581	12.283	1.62%	898.322,57	1.57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48.460</b>	<b>759.436</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>57.305.322,75</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: INRA Estadísticas Agrarias 1953-2002, p73

**Table 3:**  
Distributed land between 1953 and 2002 in Santa Cruz  
Categorized by type of holding.

Type of land holding	Dossier	Beneficiaries		(S) Distributed	
	amount	amount	%	1000 ha.	%
Small holding	7.115	54.751	38,00%	2.252	6,30%
Medium-sized holding	5.351	22.025	15,30%	7.360	20,50%
Agro-enterprise	4.066	11.140	7,70%	18.892	52,60%
Residential holding	107	1.328	0,90%	1	0,00%
Communal property	367	21.479	14,90%	808	2,30%
TCO	17	31.653	22,00%	6.243	17,40%
Without data	114	1.786	1,20%	346	1,00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.137</b>	<b>144.162</b>	<b>100,00%</b>	<b>35.905.056,24</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Source: INRA Estadísticas Agrarias 1953-2002, p208