Insurgent Planning and Rural Transformation:
a comparison of Social Movements in Venezuela and Brazil

by

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ABSTRACT

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Insurgent planning is an emerging theory that looks at planning practices carried out by communities in opposition to oppressive policies. Insurgent planning literature has highlighted the potential of marginal groups for planning their own alternative society when official planning is unable to serve people's interests. These first studies demonstrated the need for further study to assess its potential. In this thesis, I first outline a framework which defines cases of insurgent planning factors determining its success, and then hypothesize that cases can be found in the social movement literature. To test this framework, I then look at two such examples – the Bolívar and Zamora Revolutionary Current (CRBZ) of Venezuela and the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) of Brazil. I conclude that these movements do contain episodes of insurgent planning that bear out in the factors determining its success while introducing new questions regarding alliances between insurgent planning activists and sympathetic governments.
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Abbreviations

CRBZ – Corriente Revolucionaria Bolívar y Zamora

FNCEZ – Frente Nacional Campesino Ezequiel Zamora

FNCP – Frente Nacional de Campesinos y Pescadores

FNCSB – Frente Nacional Campesino Simón Bolívar / Frente Nacional Comunal Simón Bolívar

INCRA – Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária

INTI – Instituto Nacional de Tierras

JEN – Jorge Eliécer Nieves communal council

LP – Los Picachos communal council

LTDA – Ley de Tierras y Reforma Agraria

MPPO – Movimiento para el Poder Popular Obrero

MST – Movimento Sem Terra

PSUV – Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela

PT – Partido dos Trabajadores
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INTRODUCTION

Across the world, governments are struggling to cope with both economic recession and deficits, and as a result many find themselves implementing, often under the auspice of international financial bodies, austerity programs that claw back on social services and wealth redistribution and have the result of reducing the impact of the state in the economy. In developing countries, such policies have been implemented since the debt crisis of the 1980s, generating more poverty and more dependence on the global economy. These instances are seen by many as a failure by state planning to respond to the needs of populations, generating backlash and serious questioning about the way forward for solving development problems.

In this context, interest in alternatives to state planning, centred on the needs and capacities of communities, has arisen, pointing to new possibilities for safeguarding and improving people’s livelihoods. Recent literature in planning has highlighted the original paths charted by “insurgent” communities who, faced with repressive state policies disguised as attempts to involve their participation, initiated alternative planning processes of their own.

From the shantytowns of South Africa to the Bedouin hamlets of Israeli-occupied territory, small communities have been organizing to both resist state attempts to control them and to build their own alternative societies. The field of insurgent planning studies these examples and it has shown that, when state planning works to oppress or marginalize communities, these can organize on their own, to carry out their own planning processes. Insurgent planning theory is helping shed new light on insurgent movements, depicting
them as new forms of planning practice, capable of improving society, as opposed to simply undermining state-sanctioned planning.

This brings a new perspective to the study of contentious politics in general, which has so far focused on the protesting activities of insurgent movements. In a world where states are increasingly demonstrating the limits of their ability to respond to the challenges facing humanity, insurgent planning theory can provide a valuable contribution to social science by analyzing examples where communities have initiated their own planning processes in opposition to regressive state policies. By synthesizing the different examples of insurgent planning offered by communities a new framework is emerging which could be used to determine the potential of insurgent planning in new contexts.

This synthesis requires carefully reviewing the existing literature on insurgent planning to identify the factors that contribute to insurgent planning, the diversity of contexts in which insurgent planning can take place, as well as the diversity of outcomes to which it can lead. This thesis builds a comprehensive theoretical framework of insurgent planning based on the existing literature and then tests this framework by looking closely at two examples of insurgent groups, which have not yet been identified as practicing insurgent planning: the Bolivar and Zamora Revolutionary Current (CRBZ) of Venezuela and the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) of Brazil. It is argued that the CRBZ and the MST practice insurgent planning on their own right, and that their experiences can help shed new light on the conditions leading to and outcomes of insurgent planning.

The Bolivar and Zamora Revolutionary Current (CRBZ) of Venezuela, is a revolutionary group active since the early 1990s that has, for over a decade now, entered into a partnership with the national government headed by Hugo Chávez. Venezuela offers the interesting example of a national government that for a decade and a half has rejected
neoliberal policies and explicitly advocates socialism, having implemented a number of policies aimed at redistributing wealth among the population, improving the accessibility of public services and nationalizing key sectors of the economy. This context brought an interesting challenge to pre-existing revolutionary groups like the CRBZ, which on the one hand have been supportive of a number of these policies and sought to work with the socialist government, while on the other hand struggling to avoid getting sucked into the state apparatus and the clientelistic networks of wealth redistribution which still characterize politics in that country. This study is based on a field research conducted in Venezuela in the winter of 2013.

This field study is complemented with a literature review of another Latin American revolutionary group, the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST) of Brazil. This famous social movement has been active in the Brazilian countryside for over two decades now and has accumulated rich experience in opposing government rural policy and establishing its own autonomous communities based on alternative principles. It has also recently experienced the election of a progressive government, which has had a significant impact on its practice for over a decade and adds further interest to studying this organization as an example of insurgent planning.

Over the course of the thesis, two arguments are made: 1) episodes of insurgent planning can be found within the activities of social movements, and as such the field of insurgent planning should be expanded to include an assessment of the activities of social movements; 2) the success of insurgent planning will be determined by the existence of leadership steering the insurgency forward, a depth of analysis with regards to the power dynamics affecting the community, and the state’s own orientation to and political capacity in crushing the insurgency or letting it achieve at least some of its objectives.
The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter reviews the literature and conceptualizes a theoretical framework. The origins of insurgent planning in the planning literature are traced and all available case studies of insurgent planning are reviewed. In the second chapter, the research methodology is described, which draws on field research in Venezuela and literature review.

In the third chapter, the CRBZ is examined, first by providing background on the political, social and economic dynamics in Venezuela and a history of the CRBZ, followed by an analysis of the organization through the insurgent planning framework. In the fourth chapter a similar analysis is undertaken for the MST.

Finally, in chapter five, the two cases are discussed in light of the literature review which brings up contradictions found with the theoretical framework and suggest a few modifications for future study of insurgent planning. This chapter also concludes the thesis.
CHAPTER 1 – INSURGENT PLANNING

This chapter reviews the literature on insurgent planning. After a brief historical overview the chapter provides a survey of case studies of insurgent planning. A theoretical framework is then presented identifying the common elements found in the cases to provide a more detailed definition of insurgent planning. The chapter then discusses outcomes of insurgent planning and offers a theory of the success of insurgent planning, based on an evaluation of the cases presented. The chapter ends with a presentation of the research questions to be applied to the Bolívar and Zamora Revolutionary Current of Venezuela (CRBZ) and the Landless Workers Movement of Brazil (MST) in the subsequent chapters.

THE ORIGINS OF INSURGENT PLANNING

The roots of insurgent planning can be traced back to the works of Davidoff (1965) and his notion of advocacy planning, which challenged the conception of planning put forward by rational-comprehensive planners. Whereas the latter placed planners at the center of the planning process, Davidoff called on planners to “engage in the political process as advocates of the interests of government and other groups”, arguing for “plural plans” and the broadening of planning to “all areas of public interest” (Davidoff, 1965:332). This approach suggested that the planner need not be placed at the centre of the planning process but could be viewed as one participant among others. Coming off this initial decentring of the planner, Grabow and Heskin (1973) crafted the concept of radical planning in their call to build “foundations for a radical concept of planning”. They characterized modern planning as being “elitist”, “centralizing” and “change-resistant”. They then developed their argument for a radical concept of planning: a dialectical synthesis of
rational planning and more spontaneous community action. In this view, planning becomes akin to social experimentation, and the job of the planner is “to facilitate social experimentation by the people” (1973:112). Planning becomes an activity of civil society and ultimately leads to social transformation. Contributions to radical planning redefined the role of the planners and justified the inclusion of marginalized social groups in the planning process. Friedmann (1987) went even further by also referring to community organizers, activists and even normal citizens as “planners”, whether they were acting in collaboration or in opposition to official planning practices. By opening the field of planning activity to non-professionals, Friedmann inspired a redefinition of “planning as social transformation” (Beard, 2003). He also inspired a new school of planning thought which would take radical planning even farther.

These initial foundations were complemented by other planning theorists who put forward various methodologies by which planners could overcome the obstacles brought by oppressive or exploitative dynamics by focusing on practical tools at the disposal of the planner, such as communication and community participation in planning processes. These include equity planning, participatory planning and communicative planning (Forester, 1989; Healey, 1999; Innes, 2004; Krumholz, 1994). Friedmann (1987) suggested that what were ultimately needed were “new models of production, reclamation of territorial life, collective self-production, and decentralized power” (Sweet and Chakars, 2010:200), all models that rational planning was unable to deliver, trapped in the narrow confines set by its focus on the role of the professional planner and its blindness to various social dynamics. Nevertheless, radical planning up to that point still had the professional planner as a central point of reference, and its ends were still based on the planner's willingness or ability to act in the interest of communities.
**Planning and Insurgency**

In the 1990s and 2000s, radical planning would undergo a transformation as planning theorists became interested in its relationship to the notion of insurgency, which allowed them to shift the focus away from the official, state-sanctioned “planner” towards the marginalized community and non-state organizations (Holston, 1998; Sandercock, 1998). A new generation of scholars began studying different social struggles in the “Global South” through the lens of planning theory (Sletto, 2013; Meth, 2010; Sweet and Chakars, 2010; Miraftab, 2009; Meir, 2005; Beard, 2003). The concept of insurgent planning evolved through a series of case studies. Beard (2003) attempted to uncover the origins of “insurgent” planning practices by studying the case of young community activists in Indonesia, who used the cover of formal institutions created by state planning, in this case community planning offices, to organize their own informal activities contributing to the national struggle to bring down an oppressive regime. Beard (2003) finds that formal, top-to-bottom planning practices aimed at neutralizing social mobilization also made possible the gestation of effectively organised insurgent practices characterized as “planning”.

Sandercock (1999) first defined insurgency as “challenging existing relations of power in some form. Thus it goes beyond “participation” in a project defined by the state. It operates in some configuration of political power, and must formulate strategies of action. Insurgent planning practices may be stories of resistances, and not always successful . . . of resilience . . . or of reconstruction” (cited in Sweet and Chakars, 2010:200). This definition stresses an oppositional character, the presence of a formal planning process that is distorted by power relations, requiring an alternative project by those who feel disempowered. In her own elaboration of insurgent planning practices, Miraftab (2009) outlines three “guiding principles” of insurgent planning: they are counter-hegemonic, in
that they oppose the current power structure; they are transgressive, in that they entail actions that cross the boundaries set by authorities, such as legality, or national borders; and they are imaginative, in that they pursue alternative models of society. This definition adds the concept of alternate spaces in which the protagonists of insurgent planning both carry out some of their insurgent activities and establish alternative social structures. The literature on insurgent planning suggests a number of common elements that can be drawn from the different case studies.

**INSURGENT PLANNING CASES**

Beard’s case study set in Indonesia foreshadowed the concept of insurgent planning without using the term. In effect, her study bridged the gap between the concepts of radical planning and insurgent planning, by identifying the common weaknesses of radical planning up to that point. Beard set out to study the “more minor, seemingly insignificant acts that precede radical planning” (2003:14). She thus identifies a process in which community activists engage in both official and covert planning, with both aspects combining to allow members of the oppressed community to learn the skills and confidence necessary to struggle for social transformation. This process takes place over three instances of planning occurring within a community-based, state-sponsored agency. In the first instance, local women activists use the spaces provided by this agency to respond to the needs of their community and establish a woman’s health clinic. In this instance, the participatory spaces provided by formal planning served to build capacity and develop a sense of collective agency. Beard argues that this would be crucial for evolution towards radical planning. In the second instance, the community resists an initiative of the community-based planning agency which had been taken without their consultation. Through their collective agency, they are able to overturn the initiative and replace it with another one more attuned to their needs, with regards to securing their land tenure. Finally,
in the third instance, local activists use the same community-based planning agency to obtain state support for the construction of a community library. They then use the library, covertly, for political education, which soon comes out in the open when the opportunity arises to demonstrate against the authoritarian government, the Suharto regime, and contribute to bringing it to an end. While only the third instance shows an insurgent practice, the author argues that it would not have been possible without the first two which, while occurring within the framework set by the authorities, developed the necessary skills, experience and confidence among the community. As such, while it depicts a case of radical planning, rather than a stand-alone case of insurgent planning per se, Beard’s study can be seen as the illustration of how insurgent planning can emerge over time out of the dynamic of initially more conventional planning processes.

Following Beard, Meir (2005), in his study of Bedouin resistance to Israeli territorial planning practices in the Negev desert, was the first scholar to use and define insurgent planning in a case study. He describes how the Bedouin respond to an attempted relocation by the Israeli planning authorities by setting up their own Bedouin settlements, establishing their own alternate governance structures with elected authorities, conceiving their own plans, submitting them to the official authorities, and carrying out minor infrastructural development in their settlements. Meir reports that, while the alternate structures were never formally recognized by Israeli authorities, they appeared to have an effect in their interventions, with the granting of access to Bedouin representatives in the formal planning process, the creation and recognition of formal regional Bedouin councils, the provision of health and education services through the regional councils, as well as the re-assertion of a collective Bedouin identity. What Meir describes is a concerted effort by specific Bedouin communities to preserve their existing settlements and livelihoods as well as to engage, on their own terms, with the external planning authorities that were attempting to force them
into something different. The means they employed included setting up alternative structures that not only challenged the formal planning authority but also served specific purposes for their community. They achieved clearly identifiable outcomes in terms of human development through improved provision of services and empowerment through increased participation in the planning process and the establishment of their own regional councils.

Miraftab (2009) studied insurgent planning in the context of squatter mobilization in Cape Town, South Africa. She finds that the squatters made the break from radical to insurgent planning when they rejected the framework set up by the state to negotiate evictions and resettlement, and began taking up the responsibility for planning their own community. In her case study, a community of informal dwellers occupying land outside Cape Town was originally slated to be evicted by the planning authority and relocated 40km outside the city. The community organized to resist their eviction. At the same time, another group of informal dwellers, living in the overcrowded area where relocation was planned, decided to occupy the housing built for the original group of planned evictees. Both communities of informal dwellers ended up rejecting the official plans and used a diversity of tactics to resist eviction, set up their own alternative governance structure and provided services that the formal authorities were incapable or unwilling to provide to the informal settlements. Their activities included informal negotiations with authorities; capacity building; creating their own data on their situation; squatting; reconnection of disconnected services; and mass mobilization and protests. Eventually, around half of the squatters were evicted forcefully and relocated, but the other half set up shacks on sidewalks and maintained their organized structure, continuing to provide services and organize activities. In this case, the insurgent planners made a rupture with the formal planning authority to set up their own alternative one, after realizing the formal process was a sham. Miraftab
uses this to make the distinction between “invited spaces” and “invented spaces”. Invited spaces are spaces created by a formal, oppressive authority to encourage participation from a community and lend legitimacy to an oppressive activity, while invented spaces are set up by the oppressed community themselves to design their own alternate plans, following a rejection of the invited spaces of the formal planning process. In Miraftab’s study, insurgent planning thus takes place when participation mechanisms distorted by power relations are countered by an alternate planning process used by a community to serve its own purposes. It also has as an outcome the lasting establishment of an alternative governance structure that the community uses to provide services, even though its effort to resist a particular oppressive measure may have been eventually defeated.

In another study of insurgent planning practices in South Africa, Meth (2010) unsettles common conceptions of insurgent planning and its romantization through her study of women-led vigilante practices in Durban neighbourhoods. She challenges the notion of grassroots, community-powered social movements aimed at redressing state- or other oppressor-committed injustices, with her depiction of informal organization of justice in marginalized communities through outright violence. In this case, marginalized black communities in Durban, exasperated by the ineffectiveness of the police force in curbing crime in their communities, set up their own vigilante squads which are not afraid to resort to violence, including beatings to death, as punishment for crimes such as theft and rape. This extends the common definition of insurgent planning, which sees it in the form of communities mobilizing against the state and/or the market (Meth, 2010). In this case, community members commit repressive acts against fellow members of their marginalized community. Meth argues that vigilantism, in a case like this where an oppressed group organizes for its own security, must be seen as an insurgent practice. To support this, she first emphasizes that the vigilante squads were set up in defiance of the formal state
authority, which was seen as ineffective and uninterested in solving the problems of the community. Criminal justice is after all a branch of governance that must be planned for, and the actions of the neighbourhood groups in this case represent an insurgent practice. Second, Meth highlights the fact that, in one neighbourhood, women were at the center of the creation of the vigilante squads, in response to police indifference to rampant rape violence. This shows that vigilantism, though it can be seen as acts of violence and repression, can also in some cases arise from the mobilization of a marginalized group, in this case the women, as an instrument of resistance, in this case against patriarchy or male domination. It also highlights the fact that, even within marginalized communities, there exist relations of exploitation and oppression between differentiated groups, based in this case on gender. Third, Meth raises the issue of the values that underlie the insurgent planning practices celebrated by mostly-Western social scientists. These hold ‘democratic’ values particularly close to their heart, however the Durban vigilante case points to other sets of values, based on resolving the concrete problems they face, that can also inspire insurgent planning and play a role in the emancipation of marginalized groups. This case study does not emphasize particular outcomes of the insurgent planning practice, leaving the impression that the overall effects of the vigilante squads on crime were ambiguous. However the organization of women into squads able to fight back and eliminate aggressors can be considered a form of empowerment.

Sweet and Chakars (2010) referred to insurgent planning in their study of Buryat resistance to the colonial interventions of the Russian state, in particular policies leading to centralization and assimilation of this Siberian national group. They set their study under the frame of decolonization and Indigenous struggles, using the definition of insurgent planning as a set of oppositional practices used by marginalized groups to overturn oppressive planning practices. Their study challenges the linearity found in other insurgent
planning stories, by looking at the Buryat story over a century of different insurgent battles and noting the shifting identities taken on by this community under the effect of colonialism and imperialism of the Russian and Soviet states. Sweet and Chakars want to emphasize that as a result of this dynamism of identity, insurgent planning may not be strictly oppositional and that viewing it thus might restrict the ability to understand it. They also compile the various activities undertaken by Buryat activists to resist attempts by the Russian state to colonize their land and assimilate them: “spiritual activities, language promotion, demonstrations and petitions, revival of previously taboo historical figures and topics, and conferences bringing indigenous peoples together to consider common experiences and seek strategies to strengthen their indigenous identity” (Sweer and Chakars, 2010:206).

Finally, Sletto (2013) applied the concept of insurgent planning to study relationships between different actors in the context of international service-learning. His case study is that of a service-learning studio, which was set up as part of a cooperation agreement between local authorities in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, and a planning institute of the University of Texas at Austin, in which the author, a professor there, and his students were brought in to provide training to local residents from the impoverished informal settlement of Los Platanitos, on the outskirts of Santo Domingo, as they were struggling with waste disposal problems. According to the author, he and his team were originally brought in to provide technical training in a scheme directed by the top hierarchy of the local planning office, and in which the local residents were only expected to be taught skills that they were expected to use in a project designed by the authorities. The author describes the relationships within this scheme as being clientelistic, because the local residents were dependent upon local politicians who held the keys to resource and service provision. Borrowing Miraftab (2009)’s terminology, he describes this
situation as an invited space. He then describes his team’s struggle to contribute to establishing, with the local residents, invented spaces from which they could find their own solutions to their problems free of clientelistic relations. He used critical research techniques and the interactions his students had with residents to stimulate their autonomy and the use of the skills they had learned. He also invited participation of social movements from other neighbourhoods of the city that had previously established their own autonomous organizations to deal with similar problems of solid waste management. These organizations contributed to capacity-building of the local residents, although interestingly, they also reportedly developed paternalistic attitudes toward them, leading the residents to yearn for their own autonomy and to openly call out the leaders of these organizations. As they gained capacity and confidence they began to set up meetings with authorities outside of the invited spaces to determine the “terms of engagement” of the project. They ultimately set up their own autonomous organization to manage solid waste disposal, establishing a funding scheme to acquire the necessary capital and to be able to provide services.

This study sheds new light on the protagonists and outcomes of insurgent planning. The actors identified in this study are the external technical experts, the professor and students, brought in to train the residents; the local residents themselves, initially supposed to be passive beneficiaries; and the social movement organizations brought in later by the technical experts-turned-insurgent planners. Sletto paints a complex picture of insurgent planning in which external cooperators decide to step out of their role to encourage disempowered people to become autonomous. In turn, these local residents, as they gain capacity and are brought into new situations where they can learn the limits of the clientelistic system from other communities develop their own leadership and begin organizing themselves to turn the terms of engagement more to their advantage, so that they are ultimately able to turn a clientelistic project into something that they own as a
community. To characterize the special role played by the external experts, Sletto steps over
the dichotomy between representatives and non-representatives and brings up the concept
of “interlocutors”, who, as planners acting out of a desire to empower people, initiate a
process of insurgent planning, drawing from international service learning pedagogy. This
is an improvement on previous studies which provided scant details about the internal
dynamics leading to organization-building and gave no place to specific “leaders”, or in this
case, interlocutors, in setting an agenda of demands and strategy to steer the insurgent
planning process. Sletto demonstrates that insurgent planning can arise from the conscious
initiative of a group of dedicated organizers with a desire to empower a community by
applying an analysis of the dynamics of oppression.

Sletto also clearly outlines two outcomes of the process, “endogenous building of
organizing and technical capacity” and “development of community-based strategies for
solid waste management”, which the researchers had also conceived of at the outset. In
other words, the insurgent planning involved organizing and building the capacity of a
disempowered group to allow them to then set up their own planning structure to respond
to their own needs as a community outside the frames set up by the formal authorities
which had originally developed the whole scheme with the intent of consolidating a
clientelistic relationship.

THE FEATURES OF INSURGENT PLANNING

Having examined the different cases studied under the framework of insurgent
planning, it is now possible to identify the common elements that bind them together,
building on the guiding principles provided by Miraftab (2009). These can be summed up as
1) the conscious mobilization of an oppressed community around a set of demands; 2) the
introduction of a plan or policy targeting the community and opening a space for its
participation; 3) the use of “invented spaces” amid a repertoire of actions and strategies;
and 4) the waging of the struggle at a local level by residents. Following this discussion two areas which, while important to planning, were covered less consistently in the literature on insurgent planning will be considered, namely the question of the actors involved in insurgent planning and the outcomes of insurgent planning processes.

**Mobilization and Identity**

First, at the macro level, all cases are set within the more or less conscious mobilization of an oppressed community around a set of demands. Here, consciousness, community and mobilization constitute three separate but interrelated elements. The most basic is the agency of an oppressed community. In the cases studied by Meir (2005), Miraftab (2009), Meth (2010) and Sweet and Chakars (2010), the community is a national minority suffering from various degrees of colonial domination. Meir and Sweet and Chakars in particular refer to entire ethnic communities, whose livelihoods and traditions are at odds with the interests and policies of the state they now live under. The communities studied by Beard (2003), Miraftab (2009), Meth (2010) and Sletto (2013) are all suburban slum dwellers, who live mostly in a state of informality and uneasy equilibrium vis-à-vis the authorities. Both Miraftab and Sletto denote patterns of clientelism which, beneath the formal institutions, contribute to stabilizing the livelihoods of those communities while consolidating the established power relations. In all the cases except Sweet and Chakars, the authors also mention the implementation by state authorities of structural adjustment measures, at the present or in a recent past, which have had the effect of reducing the quality and accessibility of services to the communities, in areas such as waste management, housing and public infrastructure. Often these measures are referred to as falling under the neoliberal reforms that were implemented globally since the 1980s in an effort to reduce state expenditures and intervention in society. Finally, Meth describes a
situation in which women inside a community decide to take care of justice and crime punishment on their own, acknowledging a situation of gender oppression.

What binds all these conditions together is that they imply a set of power relations in which the community behind insurgent planning is oppressed by a ruling elite, be it in a national, class, gender or multilayered character. In turn, this state of oppression generates a sense of identity, a collective consciousness on the part of the community. This sense of collective identity can be found along cultural, national and/or spatial lines. It can also refer in many cases to an acute political consciousness, meaning a somewhat enhanced awareness of the political dynamics governing the community’s livelihood, as opposed to ignorance, apathy or cynicism. Beard stressed both these aspects in Indonesia, when the youth who took the initiative of the project set out to stimulate both collective identity and political understanding among their fellow residents. This was also what the “interlocutors” described by Sletto in Santo Domingo had in mind, although a collective identity and political consciousness also seem to have arisen from the interactions between community members and external organizations. The slum residents of Durban and Cape Town studied by Meth and Miraftab also developed an identity of their own based on space and their socio-economic situation, recognizing their state of exclusion. The cases studied by Meir and Sweet and Chakars are even more obvious because they concern an already existing national group which became subjected to another nation state and is struggling to maintain its culture and livelihoods. The authors find that in these cases, the struggle to preserve and reinforce their identity was central to insurgent planning. In short, a relatively strong sense of collective identity can be found in all these cases. Alongside this stands the fact that the community in question has decided to mobilize against perceived injustice, producing a set of demands on the state. Miraftab and Meir, for example, describe communities trying to resist their eviction and organizing behind a comprehensive list of
demands that include not only halting their eviction but also introducing access to a number of services and increased social investment in their community. The women described by Meth are also not only oppressed, but have risen up against their condition by taking up arms and organizing their own punishment of criminal acts. Beard and Sletto also describe a group of residents not only dissatisfied with their marginalization, but taking it upon themselves to get what they want from the state. Here, the case described by Sweet and Chakars stands out once again, with mobilization appearing limited and dispersed over a century of insurgent planning. While they certainly talk about protests and other contentious actions, it is hard to read from their article whether this represented broad mobilization from the community as a whole. Without this, it is hard to qualify this case as “counter-hegemonic”, one of Miraftab’s guiding principles of insurgent planning, which encapsulates well this criterion of struggle against oppression.

**PLANNING ALTERNATIVES**

The second recurring condition is the existence of an official plan or other type of state intervention geared towards the community in question. In the cases studied by Meir, Miraftab and Meth, the original plans are seen as sham consultation processes, if not plans designed to outright oppress the community to benefit other groups. In view of this, the communities ultimately decide to set up their own insurgent planning process, while either shunning the official planning process or using it creatively within a wider plan of their own creation. In the cases studied by Beard and Sletto, the original formal plan is more general in nature and is not seen as particularly oppressive by the targeted community, but not particularly helpful either. It falls within the existing pattern of clientelism which prevents it from being meaningfully beneficial to the population, but the authors both uncover a process where, within the official planning process and with the help of tools put at their disposal, the beneficiaries develop their own leadership and step outside the boundaries to
set up their own insurgent planning process. Sweet and Chakars’ study stands out here for the absence of a single identifiable policy triggering insurgency. They rather identify a long-term process, with ebbs and flows, in which a nation progressively absorbs the traditions and institutions of a subordinated nation, across a whole century and different political regimes in power. Upon closer examination however, this process appears to be made up of various plans that have over time contributed to the national repression of Buryat people, notably agricultural collectivization, centralization, the merger of the Buryat territory with other territories and the imposition of unelected governors by central federal authority for example. Some practices of insurgent planning identified in the study are in reaction to those, while other practices were born as a result of the deeper impact of central Russian or Soviet planning on Buryat affairs. The authors are in effect tying together all forms of possible insurgent planning that occurred in Buryatia in over a century. Tied together, they contain the elements found in the other case studies, although a closer examination of specific struggles would solidify the illustration. Nevertheless, the second guiding principle identified by Miraftab, stating that insurgent planning is “transgressive”, by crossing the boundaries of formal planning, broadly applies to these cases. Insurgent planning can be understood to occur when an oppressed community questions or rejects altogether a formal planning process and sets up an alternative one, on its own terms.

**INVENTED SPACES**

The third element common to all cases of insurgent planning is the use of strategies and actions that rely on both invented and invited spaces, using the terms set forth by Miraftab. In this respect, we can see that nearly all the case studies show such a pattern, which Sandercock had summarised as following the steps of resistance, resilience and reconstruction. The resistance phase consists of strategies and practices aimed at stopping or slowing down the perceived attack on the livelihoods of the community. In Beard, Meir,
Miraftab, Meth and Sweet and Chakars for example, it takes the form of protests, sit-ins, occupations and blockades, through which the concerned people hope to raise awareness about their situation and also physically halt the planning process. In Sletto, this aspect is not discussed explicitly but can be found in the slum residents’ defiance of the authority of the social movement organizers. What makes this resistance part of a planning process however is that it is followed by resilience and reconstruction. Practices in the resilience phase are less spontaneous and are aimed at ensuring the survival of the community in a broader sense. In this respect, Meir describes the Bedouin’s strategy of using legal institutions to make their broader constitutional rights respected. Miraftab mentions activities such as community kitchens and informal negotiations which involve a more conscious effort on the part of the community to maintain itself and organize on its own. In a similar vein, on the cultural side, Sweet and Chakars describe attempts from writers and other intellectuals to reproduce and preserve elements of Buryat culture for the benefit of all Buryat people. Resilience can include direct political actions, service provision and organization-building such as Bedouin or Durban and Santo Domingo slum residents’ efforts to build their own organizations to meet their needs. Finally, the strategies and practices falling under the category of reconstruction add another dimension to the concept of insurgent planning. Meir refers to this as an attempt to “present an interpretation of [a community’s] historical and contemporary reality that is different from that presented by the planning establishment throughout the years” (2005:208). This can be found in the discourse of all the studied communities. The slum dwellers of Jakarta, Cape Town, Durban and Santo Domingo Norte and the Bedouin of the Negev, for example, all challenge the official attempt to delegitimize their rights and citizenship because they live in a state of informality or nomadism that is not accepted by the state. These communities respond that they either have historical claims to the land they live on, as in the case of the Bedouin, or
that their existence as a community is no less legitimate than that of a state which has failed in its responsibilities towards them. Sweet and Chakars also enumerate a number of attempts by Buryat people to re-assert their culture and some form of national self-determination, amidst a trend of loss of local and sub-national autonomy in Russia. However, there is little evidence of the creation and use of invented spaces. Aside from the setting up of ephemeral Buryat congresses in 1905 and 1917, which the authors do not dwell on and do not connect to previous and latter actions, there appears no evidence that Buryat activists rejected the formal institutions as the only site of struggle and attempted to set their own terms of engagement. As such, it seems unclear again how this case can be considered insurgent planning, unless we amalgamate the concept with the much broader category of contentious politics. In other words, for there to be insurgent planning, in the case studies found on the subject, there has to be a challenge against not the only the actions, but the discourse, the definition of legitimacy, held by official planning authorities. Insurgent planners are building new organizations with an alternate model of society. Miraftab summed the same idea up as her third guiding principle of insurgent planning: it has to be imaginative, by “promoting the concept of a different world as being both possible and necessary” (2009:33).

Localism

Finally, the fourth criteria of insurgent planning we can draw from the case studies is its local dimension. Although not explicitly discussed by any of the authors, it stands out clearly as a key aspect which can differentiate insurgent planning once again from the wider body of social movements. In the cases studied by Beard, Meth, Miraftab and Sletto, virtually all take place at the level of a neighbourhood, with the communities dealing with and directing both their actions and demands mostly towards local authorities. In the case studied by Meir, many villages and hamlets from one area are involved in the insurgent
process, and they also deal mostly with a regional authority. Again, the case studied by Sweet and Chakars stands in contrast, with the various movements seemingly dealing with higher levels of authority, whether the federal Russian government or the Buryat republic. The table below summarises the criteria of insurgent planning.

Table 1 Criteria of Insurgent Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case studies</th>
<th>Collective consciousness</th>
<th>Response to formal plan or policy</th>
<th>Use of invented spaces</th>
<th>Locally-based insurgency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meir (2005) / Negev Bedouin</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miraftab (2009) / Cape Town</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meth (2010) / Durban</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet and Chakars (2010) / Buryatia</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sletto (2013) / Santo Domingo</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alongside these criteria which appear more or less sharply across the different case studies, are other elements whose characteristics are relatively overlooked, and upon closer inspection, come with wider variations from one case to another.

**Who are the insurgent planners?**

The characteristics of who does insurgent planning are not touched on with much detail in most case studies and as such it cannot be considered a core element of insurgent planning, but it is interesting to lay out what the case studies have found with regards to the people behind insurgent planning. The studies made by Beard (2003) and Sletto (2013) show a clear initiative from a group of people, which can include outsiders, to stir up the participation of the wider community, a sort of initial plan to stimulate insurgent planning.
In both cases, these initial insurgent planners use the existing tools provided by official planning authorities to develop the capacities and confidence of community members so that they may later on carry out on their own terms the project outside the framework set by established authorities. In the case studied by Beard, these vanguard insurgent planners are youth from the community, while in the case studied by Sletto, this role is played by his students, who were brought in by the official planning authorities as technical assistants but who consciously worked to empower the community members. Not only that, but they come in with a theoretical understanding of insurgent planning and other analyses of power relations, allowing them to directly apply this knowledge to a concrete case and make it work better. Other cases do not go into as much detail about the specific make-up of insurgent planning groups. Meir does single out a leadership in the Negev Bedouin movement, in the form of the elected Regional Council for Bedouin-Arab Unrecognized Villages (RCBUV). This council provides advice and coordination to the local planning councils set up in each village, and is the contact point for negotiating with the authorities and public communication in general. In Miraftab (2009) and Meth (2010), the insurgent planning groups are described in broad terms as the community at-large, though in the case studied by Meth, the insurgent planners represent a specific demographic group within the community, namely women and while there is mention of leaders within vigilante squads, no reference is made to their role and responsibilities. Finally, in Sweet and Chakars (2010), the insurgent planners are described either as general members of the Buryat nation or small groups of “young intellectuals”, depending on the action mentioned by the authors. There seems to be a difference between insurgent planning initiated at the outset by a group of people concerned with the empowerment of a marginalized community and armed with an analysis of power relations, and insurgent planning arising from a more or less spontaneous escalation of collective action carried out by a marginalized group in response
to oppressive planning practices. In any case, the fresh insight provided by Sletto should lead to a more detailed study of the role agenda-setting “interlocutors” can take in initiating insurgent planning.

**OUTCOMES OF INSURGENT PLANNING**

The outcomes of these insurgent planning cases have also been reported in different degrees of detail. Two categories of outcomes can be identified: 1) creation of an alternative institutional arrangement; and 2) meeting the original demands and/or achieving concrete impacts.

The first category of outcomes concerns alternative organizations or other institutional arrangements set up by insurgent planners to carry out planning on their own terms. These include the women’s vigilante squad in Durban, the squatters organization in Cape Town, the neighbourhood waste disposal organization in Santo Domingo Norte and the Bedouin regional councils and planning office. The case studied by Sweet and Chakars at first glance seems to lack the creation of any organization set up by the subordinate group. Some seemingly short-lived organizations can be found in individual actions mentioned in passing by the authors, such as the Buryat congresses set up during the 1905 and 1917 revolutions in the Russia, but the authors don’t make any emphasis on organization-building, choosing to focus on cultural aspects. It seems that the Buryat insurgent planners’ efforts on the political and territorial arenas were focused on attempting to influence the outcome of territorial restructuring from the federal state. It is hard to imagine that this insurgent planning process can address the challenges brought by oppression and marginalization if the insurgents are not able to organize outside the framework set by the official authorities. As such, the different cases discussed here point to a variety of possible outcomes in the realm of insurgent planning. It is also worth pointing out here that these alternative institutions can be set up in parallel with various levels of government,
depending on the scale of the struggle. In most cases, the parallel institutions were set up in a municipal context, while the ones set up by the Bedouin and Buryats appear to have had a wider regional reach.

The second category of outcomes relates to the extent to which the initial demands put forth by the insurgent planners have been met or other concrete gains achieved for the community, that is, concrete changes to their existing situation, often not limited to the repeal of the policy they are struggling with. In most cases, insurgent planning arose out of a particular struggle for improvements in the community’s living standards. Beard’s insurgent planners set up an underground planning structure and educated fellow community members in order to improve their neighbourhood’s infrastructure. The neighbourhood residents in Santo Domingo Norte are also primarily concerned with developing an effective waste management system, while the slum residents of Durban and Cape Town seek ways to provide the services that city authorities are denying them, such as crime punishment and adequate housing. The Bedouin communities studied by Meir meanwhile were able to secure the provision of educational and health services from official authorities, services which had originally been denied to them. Once again, the case studied by Sweet and Chakars is less detailed, with little mention of concrete gains by the Buryat insurgent planners other than some degree of cultural revival. Here again we see a wide variety of outcomes from one case to another, which point to the different ways in which insurgent planning can unfold.

The analysis of insurgent planning outcomes reveals contrasts between the different cases (see diagram below). Although the variations may be due to different analytical foci on the part of researchers, it is possible to separate the cases into three groups. First, one case appears to have come short in terms of achieving any far-reaching impact. The Buryat insurgent planners studied by Sweet and Chakars (2010) seem to have failed in bringing
about either a sustained alternate planning structure or concrete improvements to the livelihoods of their people. While the authors stress the efforts toward resuscitating or reinforcing the Buryat identity, this aspect is a starting point for any insurgent planning to take place, and as such is insufficient as a unique outcome. The second group includes the cases that have achieved setting up an alternate planning structure, while not seemingly having had the demands of the movements met. Here we can find the slum residents of Cape Town and Durban respectively studied by Miraftab (2009) and Meth (2010). The organizations they set up, whether a general planning office or a more specific vigilante squad, are described as having achieved a certain level of recognition in the community and an ability to carry out work neglected by the official planning authorities, but the extent of their effectiveness in responding to immediate demands in the community remains unclear. Finally, the third group includes cases of insurgent planning that have seen at least some of their initial demands met, on top of having successfully established an institutional arrangement on their terms of engagement. These are the Negev Bedouin communities and the Los Platanitos slum residents studied by Meir (2005) and Sletto (2013) respectively. These communities have not only set up their own functioning planning organizations, but they have also reportedly won at least some of the concessions they were seeking from the state. The Negev Bedouin were able to secure state investment for education and health care in their communities, while the Los Platanitos residents were allowed to develop their own solid waste disposal system. We must stress here that it is not necessarily the full achievement of all original demands that is important, as this is a function of a wide array of factors, but the relative degree to which concessions have been gained. Finally, the case studied by Beard (2003) stands apart because its insurgent planning components are divided across different struggles, and in the final instance, insurgent planning practices are deployed for a very broad objective – regime change – the outcomes of which cannot
decisively be linked to the actions of the small community group. This case, alongside that of Sweet and Chakars (2010), ultimately do not fit inside our framework for insurgent planning due to the aforementioned lack of both invented spaces and local detail, and as such they will be left out of the rest of our analysis.

Table 2 Outcomes of Insurgent Planning cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case studies</th>
<th>Alternate Structure(s) of Governance*</th>
<th>Demands met and/or other gains/concessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beard (2003)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meir (2005)</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miraftab (2009)</td>
<td>Set up</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meth (2010)</td>
<td>Set up</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet and Chakars (2010)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sletto (2013)</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alternate structure can be effectively set up by community, but not recognized by state and continually repressed

The divergence in outcomes among the different cases raises the question of the effectiveness of insurgent planning strategies and their success. Now that the different elements characterizing insurgent planning cases and their outcomes have been identified the theoretical framework can be completed with an analysis of the factors that may explain the divergence in outcomes, that is, the different levels of success encountered by the different insurgent planning cases.

EVALUATING INSURGENT PLANNING

Two broad categories of factors affecting the success of a case can be identified. These two categories are:

- The nature of the insurgent community; and
- The level of “vulnerability” of the state or the opportunity of the insurgent community to force concessions from the state.
THE NATURE OF THE INSURGENT COMMUNITY

The nature of the insurgent community can be divided into the following aspects: 1) a strong leadership motivated by the empowerment of the community; and 2) a depth of analysis of the dynamics of oppression and marginalization.

As highlighted earlier, leadership is not clearly identified or even mentioned in most of the case studies. The case of the Los Platanitos residents is the most detailed in this respect, with the author and his team themselves constituting part of the leadership in this insurgent planning process, or the “interlocutors” as Sletto refers it to more specifically. The interlocutors initiate the process by deciding to step beyond the boundaries set by the planning framework created by the authorities. The interlocutors desire to empower the community by not contributing to reproduce unequal power relations. Over the course of the process of capacity-building, negotiations and struggle with municipal authorities and even leaders from other neighbourhood organizations, leaders within the community then begin to emerge. The case of the Negev Bedouin also highlights the role of leaders, in the form of the RCBUV, an NGO which coordinates and advises the local planning councils, while acting as the contact point with Israeli authorities. In this case too, there is a leadership providing direction and capacity-building to the movement. Finally, the cases of the Cape Town and Durban residents make little if any mention of leaders and their specific responsibilities in bringing about and carrying out insurgent planning. While this may be due to the authors’ intentions in both cases to highlight the role played by the community as a whole, there is also no explicit evidence of an absence of leadership. As such, I hypothesize that having a leadership capable of providing direction and guidance to the insurgent community is a factor of success for insurgent planning.

Next is the depth of analysis found in the insurgent community, which should determine the extent to which the planning will be transformative and transgressive. This
depth of analysis may refer to the understanding of the dynamics of oppression and marginalization affecting the community, which helps formulate an effective strategy to overturn these dynamics. The depth of understanding may include not only an understanding of the direct relationships between the community and the authorities, but also the wider relations tying this situation to the global level, especially in the case of Third World nations which still find themselves in relations of dependency. I argue that depth of analysis plays a role in the success of insurgent planning because it allows the insurgent planners to come up with strategies and solutions that go to the roots of their problems and anticipate potential obstacles. In the case studies, most authors did not go into many details about the level of analysis of the communities’ situations, but as we have seen earlier there was a consciousness of the state of oppression and/or marginalization to begin with. There seems to be only one example where the insurgent planners made a concerted effort to analyze the community’s conditions in depth and apply that to their strategy for community empowerment. In the case of Los Platanitos, Sletto explains that his students would go through sessions in which they would reflect on their activities with the community and how they were helping reproduce relations of dependence or not, and how the community members themselves were learning. This was based on the understanding that, as foreign technical experts brought in by the municipal authorities, they would end up reproducing the existing power relations if they adhered to the role awarded to them in the official plan, in spite of any goodwill on their part. That understanding allowed them to step outside those boundaries and conceive an insurgent plan. The community members themselves went through a process where, from initially distrusting the municipal authorities, they come to also distrust NGO leaders and understand the political system as a whole better. All this has helped make the outcome of this insurgent planning process relatively successful. In the other cases, it is harder to find hints of the analysis behind the actions of the
insurgent movements, and in fact, since none of them originate from “interlocutors” actually versed in the insurgent planning literature, it can be assumed that the relationship between practice and theory was not as strong and the process more spontaneous in general. While these movements should in no way be discarded for this lack of theoretical reflection, it will be interesting, following Sletto’s experience, to examine other insurgent planning efforts that rely on more explicit theoretical reflection to see how they also contribute to success.

**STATE VULNERABILITY**

The other category of factors of success relates to the cost-benefit opportunity as seen from the perspective of the authorities. Three aspects of this category are relevant: 1) the strength of the state to intervene and impose itself on the insurgent community; 2) the state’s legitimacy among the community and wider population; and 3) the strategic interest of the state towards the area or community undergoing the insurgent planning.

The strength of the state can be measured in its ability to exert power, notably through the rule of law and monopoly on violence, in the community in question or the region in general. The state’s ability to use repression, whether through the legal system, police or military, decreases the likelihood that it will make concessions to the insurgent planners and allow them to set up alternative structures of governance. Among the four cases, that of the Negev Bedouin can be argued to have the biggest disproportion between the power of the state and that of the insurgents, with Israel counting on a massive military might which it can use to control and expand its territory. On the other hand, the residents of Santo Domingo Norte and Cape Town were only dealing with municipal authorities, which can rely on police forces. This discrepancy doesn’t seem to have played a role in the outcome for the Negev Bedouin however, as their RCBUV gained the acceptance of the state as a representative of the Bedouin and was able to secure the provision of public services. The residents of Santo Domingo Norte were similarly allowed to do their own planning with
no resistance from the state. The residents of Durban and Cape Town however had a more difficult time. In the case of Cape Town, the municipal authorities ended up using force to carry out the planned eviction and clear away the resistance put up by insurgent planners. For this aspect, we see that it is not so much the potential force that the state can count on which is determinant, but the level of force it chooses to employ over other means. In the case of Durban it was the absence of police and rule of law that created a space for the vigilante squads to operate and that led to the insurgent planning response. Since the insurgent planning was aimed at countering violence against women however, the insurgents were taking on a different power structure with deep roots: patriarchy (Meth, 2010). It is clear from Meth’s account that there was still a long way to go for women in that context to challenge male domination and establish their autonomy and use of violence. The outcomes of the case studies show that success is more likely for insurgent planners if the state does not resort to force in dealing with the situation.

Second, the state’s legitimacy can play a part in determining the outcome, to the extent that the insurgent community on the one hand believes it is right to engage in insurgency and that the state feels confident in repressing the movement. Here the perceived legitimacy of the state must be considered not only from the point of view of the insurgent community, but also among the wider population. In the case of the Negev Bedouin, it is clear that the insurgent community views little legitimacy in the Israeli state, due to its refusal to recognize their institutions and tradition and its stated intent to submit them to a lifestyle alien to them. The state can still however expect to count on the loyalty of the majority of the population, which limits the pool of sympathy the insurgents can garner and so the extent of their insurgency. The lack of state legitimacy among the insurgent community however reduces the state’s ability to drive a wedge among members of that group, and increases the support behind alternate structures set up through insurgent
planning. This, coupled to the state’s reluctance to use force, improves the likelihood of concessions and success for the insurgent planners. In the other cases, the municipal authorities also lack legitimacy among shantytown dwellers due to their unwillingness or inability to provide basic services. This mistrust, which in the case of the Los Platanitos residents even extended to NGO leaders from better off neighbourhoods, became a driver in setting up autonomous structures of governance. Here, the authorities’ indifference to insurgent organizing also led to relative success. In the case of Durban, the lack of legitimacy of police forces was also a driver in setting up vigilante squads. Meth however suggests that those squads were not successful in widely establishing their own legitimacy, in part due to the confrontation with another deeply ingrained power structure, patriarchy, leading to at best ambiguous results. Finally, in the case of Cape Town, the authorities were not so reluctant to use force and repressed the movement. Despite the setback, Miraftab emphasises that the insurgents are still holding on to their organization, maybe in part due to the authorities’ failure to establish legitimacy in spite of their use of force. Through the question of the legitimacy of the state, we must look primarily at the relationship between the insurgent community and the state, and how this might incline the population to lean towards one rather than the other. Secondly, it is also important to see if the same relationship extends to the wider population, eroding further the state’s ability to contain the movement. Once again however, this isn’t sufficient to explain the outcome. A state that is cornered on the level of legitimacy can still resort to force to repress an insurgency it finds threatening. That is why we must also look at a third and final aspect of this category of factors.

This final aspect is the relative importance given by the state to the insurgent community or to the area in general in which the insurgency takes place. The hypothesis is that, the more the insurgent community is isolated from state power, the likelier it is that
the state will let insurgent activities take hold. This analysis seems to hold for the case of the Negev Bedouin. The area as a whole is one of the most marginal on the territory occupied by the Israeli state in terms of demographics and economic activity, increasing the likelihood that the state will feel less pressure to assert itself. On the other side, the Cape Town residents were resisting their eviction in a coveted site that the municipal authorities, and even the national government, deemed strategic in anticipation of the World Cup and the international attention the country would receive, and as such may have felt it had no other choice. No middle ground could be found between eviction and the insurgents’ demand, due to the significance attributed by both sides to the space that was in contention. In the case of Santo Domingo Norte and Durban, meanwhile, it is not specified whether those areas had any particular importance to the state, which the authors would likely not have omitted if it had been the case. This may have contributed to the authorities allowing some freedom for the insurgents to organize. Once again, however, the women vigilantes’ struggle against patriarchal violence presents a distinct and very tough challenge. What we can see from the cases, in short, seems to indicate that, the bigger the political, economic or other interest the authorities have in controlling the space claimed by the insurgent community, the less likely it is that the authorities will give in to concessions and allow autonomous structures to emerge.

The picture emerging from this analysis is that the different factors at play in determining the successful outcome of insurgent planning are deeply intertwined and have varying levels of significance. Having a strong leadership and a certain depth of analysis in the movement seem to be related for example, while the state may be more likely to use force if the space under contention with the insurgent community is deemed of strategic interest. Also, it looks as though a successful insurgent community will need to bring
together elements from both categories, as the cases of the Los Platanitos residents and Negev Bedouin shows (see diagram below).

Table 3 Factors of success of insurgent planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case studies</th>
<th>Insurgent community</th>
<th>State vulnerability / cost-benefit analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong leadership</td>
<td>Depth of analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meir (2005)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miraftab (2009)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meth (2010)**</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sletto (2013)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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*In this case, state’s lack of legitimacy limited mostly to insurgent community
**“State” also includes other forms of power structure, i.e. male domination

Based on this framework, the hypothesis is that successful cases of insurgent planning will include favourable characteristics with regards to both the insurgent community and the state. These would comprise at least an element of leadership in the insurgent community and a degree of relative weakness on the part of the state.

INSURGENT PLANNING AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The hypothesis will be tested on two in-depth case studies. The selection of case studies raises an immediate question about where they are might be found. To find cases of insurgent planning the field of social movements can be explored which may contain rich examples of insurgent planning.

The importance of social movements to planning in general has already been argued by Beard and Basolo (2009), and the relationship of social movements to insurgent planning has already been raised in the discussion generated by Sweet and Chakars (2010). The description of the Buryat case as one of insurgent planning has been challenged by Alexander (2011). Initially suggesting that insurgent planning be “examined as a series of internal activities that challenges or responds to dominant outsiders and outside activities
that are carried out from a point of exile”, Sweet and Chakars in effect were broadening the scope of insurgent planning away from a struggle on a localised, time-constrained set of demands taken up by a whole community. Alexander (2011) suggested instead that the activities found in this case amounted to collective action, without the elements that he thought defined planning: “empirically observable and socially recognized planning”. To this Sweet (2011) retorted that her case does fit the definition of insurgent planning because it involves a “subordinate group proposing alternative planning practices to counter the official land use and governance structures that were aimed at eliminating their cultural identity and removing them from their homeland and communities”. While this does stand more in line with other cases of insurgent planning, it does not fully capture what was described in the article, which rather refers to a series of actions carried out by various Buryat groups over a century, without leaving behind alternate structures of governance. These various actions may well have constituted cases of insurgent planning on their own, but the broad scope employed by the authors provides neither local detail nor any indication of coordination between the different activities. It is useful to maintain a differentiation between insurgent planning and social movements, with the case of the Buryats corresponding more closely to a study of a social movement. Within the history of any social movement we can potentially find examples of insurgent planning. These can be characterized as more localized struggles, with a more specific set of demands and giving birth to alternate spaces of local governance for the oppressed community. Social movements of oppressed communities thus bear with them the potential to generate cases of insurgent planning. With this idea in mind, we can begin to look at social movements that have gained attention over the years and contain various elements of insurgent planning, such as the mobilization of oppressed communities, a “transgressive” discourse and a
reputation for having achieved concrete gains and/or a certain balance of power in their country.

For the purposes of this study two social movements based on the struggle for agrarian reform in Latin America were chosen. They are the Bolívar and Zamora Revolutionary Current (CRBZ), of Venezuela and the Landless Workers Movement of Brazil (MST). The methodology chapter explains why, upon preliminary examination, these two cases hold strong potential to provide examples of insurgent planning and to help test the hypothesis of the factors explaining insurgent planning success.
CHAPTER 2 - METHODOLOGY

The first step in my research was to select case studies to test the two hypotheses I derived from my literature review. The first hypothesis is that successful cases of insurgent planning will bring together a certain set of favourable conditions with regards to both the insurgent community and the state. The second hypothesis is that large social movements might contain within them episodes of insurgent planning. As such, I chose to look at two social movements as my case studies for evidence of insurgent planning based on my research framework. I describe below why I chose the CRBZ and the MST particularly as my case studies, although a larger analysis of their full relevance to insurgent planning will be found in their respective chapters.

THE CRBZ

My main case study is the CRBZ, a socio-political organization active in Venezuela. I chose the CRBZ as a focus of my field research, and in the course of it came across many elements pertaining to insurgent planning. What initially drew me to the CRBZ however was the political context, certainly the most widely known aspect about Venezuela for those who study political change. The so-called Bolivarian Revolution, launched by President Hugo Chávez who was first elected in 1998, transformed the country’s political arena, in the eyes of both detractors and sympathizers (Hetland, 2012; Hawkins, 2010; León and Smilde, 2009). While the most-discussed aspect of the process has been the notable increase in state intervention, through the introduction of new welfare programs and nationalization of enterprises across various industries, it has also led to the flourishing of social movements across different sectors of society. Peasant organizing, for example, has undergone a revival, notably as a result of the enactment of a new agrarian reform (further described in Chapter 3) set to redistribute millions of hectares to poor peasants and farm workers (Wilpert,
The implementation of the so-called Laws of People’s Power in 2009 were also set to open the doors to grassroots participation and are beginning to attract attention (Hetland, 2012; León and Smilde, 2009).

This is what brought me to study the changes in Venezuela. I began looking for a peasant association or another group of the sort that was involved in the land reform, and came across the CRBZ, upon reading about their first base organization, the Simón Bolívar Communal City in the state of Apure, which had gained a reputation in Venezuela as one of the most advanced cases of grassroots participation within the framework of the communes, as set forth in the Laws of People’s Power. In my field research, I also had the opportunity to visit other communities being organized by the CRBZ. I had the occasion to interview both cadres of the organization and average members who could be considered more passive beneficiaries.

At the same time, the CRBZ was operating in a political context which, while unquestionably favourable in comparison to other case studies of insurgent planning, was also challenging. The CRBZ had to navigate between confrontation with hostile elements still present in the state, and working with the sympathetic elements, which posed the danger of absorbing the social movement altogether. While the CRBZ as an organization is very much in support of the government’s policies, it also has its own vision of social change and its own mode of operation. It now helps organize communities like the one I visited in 20 out of 23 states in Venezuela, as well as in the federal capital, having attained a stature at the national level comparable to that of the MST in Brazil. As such, and in view of all the elements brought up so far, this makes the CRBZ an ideal candidate for a case study of insurgent planning.

FIELD RESEARCH IN VENEZUELA
My field research consisted principally of a six-week field study in the Ciudad Comunal Socialista Campesina Simón Bolívar (CCSCSB, or communal city) in Guasdualito municipality of the state of Apure (see map below), complemented with a one-week stay at another communal city coordinated by the CRBZ, the Ciudad Comunal Socialista Agroturística Juan Pablo Peñalosa (CCSAJPP), in the Uribante municipality of the state of Táchira and more casual meetings with CRBZ members in the cities of San Cristóbal, Táchira, and Caracas, the national capital. Alongside this, it included four non-CRBZ key informant interviews in the cities of Maracay and Caracas (Appendix B).

Map 1 The Communal City and its 8 communes, in Venezuela. Map used with permission from Communal City spokespersons.
THE COMMUNAL CITIES

The Communal Cities are administrative units set up recently through local initiatives and under a framework set forth by the national government. They function in parallel to existing, “formal” administrative units, although in practice they cover smaller areas than the lowest administrative unit, the parroquia. Communal cities are made up of different communes, which are themselves made up of different communal councils, the lowest administrative unit in the communal system. In the rural areas I observed that the latter tend to correspond to already existing communities, referred to as caseríos (hamlets). The whole communal system will be analysed more in detail in later chapters. It is important to note for now that this parallel administrative system was set up recently and unequally across the country, and does not count on the formal recognition, let alone participation, of every person living within its boundaries.

The CCSCSB is located in Guasdualito municipality of the state of Apure, more specifically in the region known as Upper Apure, in southwestern Venezuela, near the border with Colombia. This region is part of the grasslands geographic zone but is near the foot of the Andes. It is also situated right across the river from the state of Barinas, and not far from the state of Táchira. The communal city is made up of 8 communes and 39 communal councils. According to a document produced by its participants, the communal city has a population of 8,741, with 1,720 household units. It lies along a highway connecting the Andean city of San Cristóbal, capital of the state of Táchira, with San Fernando de Apure, capital of the state of Apure, to the east. San Cristóbal is the nearest big city, at approximately 3 hours drive. The state capital is approximately a 6-hour drive away, while Caracas, the national capital, is approximately a 10-hour drive away, to the north-east. Across the Uribante river lie the small towns of Santa Cruz de Guacas and El Cantón, in the state of Barinas.
The region is mostly rural and agricultural, dominated by cattle ranches. Within the communal city, the largest settlement is the small town of Guacas de Rivera, along the highway and on the south side of the Uribante river. The other two main settlements are Puerto Chorrosquero and Puerto La Gabarra, on the new Uribante river bed from Guacas de Rivera through dirt roads going south. Over 30 other small settlements, mostly hamlets, are scattered across the communal city, including a few across the river from Puerto Chorrosquero and Puerto La Gabarra, most conveniently accessible by boat. The San Camilo forest, a national reserve, makes up the rest of the territory, largely to the south.

The majority of people in the communal city appeared to be peasants, owning their own small parcels but also in some cases selling their labour power to larger landowners. A few large cattle ranches, some of them owned by absentee landlords, also occupy large swathes of the area. Cattle ranching is the dominant agricultural activity and is practiced alongside fish farming and cultivation of yucca, plantain, passion fruit, papaya and other less important fruit and vegetables.

In the communal city, I did 16 interviews with members of two communal councils, whom I recruited by visiting their house, usually accompanied by another interviewee (see Appendix C for interview guide). I also conducted 5 interviews with cadres, people who hold important responsibilities within the communal city structure, as well as 3 interviews with CRBZ in Táchira state and at the national level. Finally, I conducted participant observation of the daily activities of the communal city headquarters in Guacas and document analysis. I stayed mostly at the house of a person renting out a room in the neighbouring town of El Cantón. I spent most of my time at the communal city center in Guacas de Rivera and stayed at two communal councils to conduct interviews, and also visited other parts of the communal city.
I carried out the 16 interviews with participants from the communal councils of Jorge Eliécer Nieves and Los Picachos. All interviewees were peasants who owned a small plot of land and participated in various degrees in the communal institutions. The two communal councils in question are among the five, out of thirty-nine, that were carved out of large private landholdings dismantled as part of the land reform. As such, all the interviewees had settled on their current parcel no earlier than 2006, though five of them lived within the territory of the communal city already before that. I employed a survey instrument approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board (Ref # 12DC002), from which I asked questions about the history of the communal city and their communal council, the activities they took part in, the achievements, shortcomings and challenges they experienced and are currently experiencing, and the role of the CRBZ in the process. The interviews with campesinos lasted between 20 and 40 minutes, while the interviews with key informants lasted between an hour and a half and two hours.

I only succeeded in interviewing 2 women. I was pulled out of the field with no foreseeable possibility of return before I could adjust this situation, for reasons I will explain below. This failure to get a meaningful participation from women is due in part to a lack of effort to seek women participants at the outset. While I interviewed most participants in their home, women showed little interest in participating in the interviews when it was taking place in the same room. This shortcoming limits the scope of conclusions that can be drawn from the study with regards to gender.

I interviewed most participants in or just outside their home, which consisted of ranchos, small shacks located on their parcel. I interviewed a few other participants in the field during work breaks. I did not audio record any interviews, but rather took notes which I elaborated afterwards. Most participants were initially surprised to be interviewed about their life and asked about their opinion, especially by a white foreigner. I would explain,
upon reading to them the letter of consent that I was doing this research because what was happening in Venezuela in general and in the communal city in particular was drawing interest in my country and elsewhere. I stopped short however of expressing any political adherence or ideological preference. Though previous researchers have expressed the difficulty of carrying out research in other parts of Venezuela as North Americans due to the deep mistrust many Venezuelans, especially supporters of the government, harbour towards the US (Sintjago, 2006), I did not encounter this problem. Although it was never clear to me to what extent most people distinguished Canada from the US, they were flattered in many cases that the process their country and they personally were involved in was receiving attention in a faraway land and expressed curiosity about my homeland. While I stressed that all participants’ anonymity would be ensured, most respondents expressed having no problem in having their views reported.

I also interviewed in more detail four local cadres and two national cadres of the CRBZ. The relationship between the CRBZ and the communal city will be detailed further down. Along with some of the basic questions I asked the other participants, I asked them about the history leading up to the formation of communal councils in the region and the activities of the CRBZ, as well as its articulation with the national and other levels of government. More information on interviewees can be found in Appendix A.

All interviews were conducted in Spanish, without resorting to the help of a translator. I subsequently translated the interview notes myself in English.

Finally, I did some participant observation by simply being around and hanging out with different people in the area, including with people who were indifferent to or critical of the political process governing the country. I observed the daily activities at the headquarters of the communal city in Guacas de Rivera, although this was during a particularly frantic period due to the tense political situation with the death of the president.
and the onset of the electoral campaign. I observed a few meetings at communal council and communal city levels, did some agricultural work with the peasants and took part in other activities such as helping with the monthly distribution of subsidized food and transporting material across the communal city or participating in some of the community radio programs.

The exceptional political situation proved challenging for carrying out the research project initially planned. When I landed in the country in January 2013, President Hugo Chávez was being treated in Cuba, with next to no information being publically disclosed, leading to much speculation. He had just won re-election in October 2012, and there had been gubernatorial elections in all the states in December of that same year, so the atmosphere was still very politically-charged. When the president's death was announced on March 5, the country was thrown into political turmoil once again. I had just arrived in the communal city at that moment. Over the next few weeks, all meetings were suspended, and as new presidential elections were announced for April 14, the focus shifted to them. I was only able to visit two communities long enough to carry out interviews, undermining my initial plans of travelling across the communal city and doing interviews in at least four different communal councils. I was also unable to attend assembly meetings, as these were suspended and gave way to meetings centered on political strategy. I postponed my flight from April 18 to April 29, as I found the original date too close to the election date and to give me more time to carry out research. The political situation became even more intense immediately following the elections however, with violence in most of the country's cities and inter-city transportation being suspended for a few days. I was planning to further postpone my flight, but then, the continued political instability following the elections encouraged the CRBZ's national coordination to pull me out of the field, forcing me to return prematurely.
I first came into contact with people on the field through another researcher who had visited the communal city in 2009. He gave me the phone numbers of people there as well as national spokespersons of the CRBZ. I first met a CRBZ cadre in Caracas, and was then directed to San Cristóbal, in the state of Táchira, a city in the southwest, where I became acquainted with local CRBZ militants and learned more about the CRBZ administration. From there I was invited to visit another communal city, in the Uribante municipality of the same state, for a whole week. I familiarized myself with the communal institutions there and talked to CRBZ cadres as well as state officials involved in providing assistance to communal councils. I interviewed a CRBZ cadre there, and witnessed an official visit by the national Minister of Communes and the state Governor. After a week, I finally went to the communal city I initially wanted to visit, in the neighbouring state of Apure.

**KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

Before setting out to the communal city, I carried out three interviews with key informants, in Maracay, Caracas and Mérida. Two of these interviews were with university professors specialised in Venezuela’s agriculture. They commented to me on the old and current agrarian reforms in Venezuela, providing insight on the impacts and shortcomings of these policies. The third interview was with two lawyers working for the agrarian tribunal. They gave me some insight on the inner workings of the current agrarian reform. The information gathered from these interviews helped in the analysis of the political context in Venezuela, one of the key components of the insurgent planning process.

Despite the setbacks, I was still able to gather valuable information on the activities of the communal city and the achievements and shortcomings of the communal institutions there. I use information drawn from the interviews, participant observation and document analysis to provide a picture of what has been going on in the communal city, how it fits the
definition of insurgent planning and whether the hypothesized factors of success can be found.

THE MST

My second case study is based on a literature review of the Landless Workers Movement of Brazil, better known as the MST. The decision to add this component to my thesis was made in order to supplement the shortcomings of my field data collection, which I was unable to complete satisfactorily as explained above. The MST was suggested to me because it has been for years one of the most widely-studied social movements in the world, and as such I had access to a rich literature. It has attracted the attention of scholars in the field of sociology, anthropology and political science amongst others, and features prominently in the contemporary discussions of subjects such as participatory democracy and social movements. Among the reasons behind such popularity, the perception that the MST is one of the most dynamic social movements in Latin America stands out; its large membership and apparent success in achieving its goals and growing across Brazil are also mentioned often by researchers as well as its innovative structure and approach to organizing and mobilizing marginalized groups (Tarlau, 2012; Vergara-Camus, 2009b; Caldeira, 2008).

To illustrate its significance, researchers point to its responsibility over most land occupations that have taken place in Brazil since the 1980s. For example, according to Rosset et al., the "MST has [to date] organized 1.5 million landless workers in 23 of Brazil’s 27 states"¹, and since 1985 "has legalized 2,000 settlements housing 350,000 families", while “another 180,000 families are currently encamped awaiting land” (Rosset et al., 2011). Another source claims the MST can count on the membership of over 500,000

¹ To put things into perspective, Brazil’s population of landless peasants is estimated to be between 3.3 and 6.1 million, excluding however farm labourers and urban poor who also make up part of the MST’s base.
families, or an estimated 2 million people, while having a strong presence in 700 municipalities across the country (Welch, 2006).

Beyond the numbers, the MST is also noted for its holistic approach at organizing its members, expressed in the “creation of land-reform settlements, cooperatives, agro-industries, education and consciousness-raising” (Carter, 2010:209). Welch (2006) adds that the MST “runs some 500 farm coops in the areas of production, marketing, credit and technical assistance. It trains most of its own technicians, militants and leaders, [and] has succeeded in redirecting government funds to support its administration of 1,800 elementary schools with more than 160,000 students, teaching basic literacy to 30,000 teenagers and adults, and operating a college”. In the words of Tarlau (2012:7), “the goal of MST militants [...] is not only to lead land occupations and pressure the government to redistribute land to landless families, but also to garner consent for an alternative hegemonic project in these areas of agrarian reform”. The term “hegemonic project” refers to goal of building highly autonomous communities with a distinct MST, peasant culture and identity.

The context in which the MST operates is also important to note, as Brazil has undergone many changes since the MST emerged in the 1980s, particularly since the election in 1999 of a left-wing government with the Workers’ Party (PT) under the leadership of Lula da Silva. A new era of openness towards agrarian struggles was declared, and the MST began operating more freely, while having to adapt to dealing with a seemingly friendly government.

Finally, the MST has been studied closely by researchers interested in its political strategy, which carefully combines contentious practices with negotiation and coalition-building (Tarlau, 2012; Kröger, 2011; Vergara-Camus, 2009a). Its ability and methods of combining illegal and deeply controversial land occupations with making tactical alliances
with political parties and negotiating with state agencies have attracted the attention of
scholars looking for a model for fostering the inclusion of marginalized groups and building
spaces of participatory democracy and radical planning (Carter, 2010; Vergara-Camus,
2009a). In other words, its ability to navigate between the institutional and the extra-
institutional, in a challenging political, social and economic context like that of Brazil, is
perceived as potentially spearheading a new process of inclusion of marginalized groups
and shaking the boundaries of legitimacy of political practices.

All these characteristics make the MST an ideal case study for insurgent planning.
From a preliminary review of the literature on the movement, we can find hints of the
conditions for insurgent planning and even for factors of success. Our case study will go
through an in-depth literature review to attempt to find examples of insurgent planning and
evaluate them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Finally, the research is supported by a literature review which encompasses
insurgent planning, the ongoing political process in Venezuela and Brazil, and the MST.
Comparing cases in Venezuela and Brazil is appropriate for this study because both of these
countries have had left-leaning national governments for around fifteen years now and have
undergone a certain process of political change leading to greater wealth redistribution by
the state and greater space for civil society organizations to intervene in governance.
Information on the MST will be drawn mostly from the social movement literature, which
will provide insight on the activities of the MST and their outcomes, which I will then
attempt to frame in the light of insurgent planning. The next two chapters will be devoted to
the CRBZ and the MST respectively. In them, I will first attempt to answer the question
whether they provide examples of insurgent planning, by determining whether they fit the
criteria set out in my theoretical framework. I will then assess whether they present the
success factors for insurgent planning and support my hypotheses.
CHAPTER 3 - THE CRBZ AND INSURGENT PLANNING

THE CRBZ AS INSURGENT PLANNERS

This chapter discusses the work of the Corriente Revolucionaria Bolívar y Zamora (CRBZ) in the communal city. First the wider context in which the CRBZ emerged and is now operating is described then the CRBZ is examined to assess whether it meets the criteria of insurgent planning.

The current political, economic and social context in Venezuela has been undergoing major shifts for over a decade now, as part of a process called the Bolivarian Revolution. This in turn affects to a significant extent the conditions in which the CRBZ operates. The major trends defining this process are examined and a few key elements that are of particular significance to the CRBZ, namely the agrarian reform and the laws of people’s power are discussed. First however the origins of the process are briefly described.

Most analysts trace the origins of the Bolivarian process back to the unravelling of the Punto Fijo political system that more or less informally set the frame of governance in Venezuela for half a century, since parliamentary democracy was reinstated in 1958. The Punto Fijo system was based on the alternating rule of two liberal political parties, Acción Democrática and COPEI, through universal suffrage elections. This system was characterized by clientelistic relations between the political class and the wider population, largely fuelled by oil revenue (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013; Tarver and Hollis, 2005). The parties in power used the increasing oil revenues of the time to build constituencies among the population, while this particular form of governance and wealth distribution discouraged meaningful political participation.

This clientelistic system can be illustrated by taking a look at the implementation of the land reform from 1958 to 1990. The Law of Agrarian Reform was one of the key policies
early on in the new democratic government, and it would lead to the redistribution of over 8 million ha, with an annual redistribution rate of 1.25 percent of the national agricultural surface area in the 1958-1973 period. While the 1958 Agrarian Reform is generally understood to have been comparatively ambitious in terms of the quantity of land that was redistributed to poor peasants (Delahaye, 2007), it generally failed to deliver the technical and financial assistance that could have allowed beneficiaries to make a decent living from their parcels (Albertus, 2010). Albertus attributes this to the fact that this land reform was a typical clientelistic policy drawn up by the two dominant political parties to capture the support of the peasant constituency:

Both primary political parties had highly organized political machinery in the countryside during this period, which made it easier to deliver benefits to some groups over others. This is apparent in the distribution of inputs such as tractors and irrigation systems, which parties targeted at regions with high support among peasants living in established agricultural areas that had land at the time the reform began. But because of the peculiar nature of land as a distributive good, in that it is effectively finite in supply, its owner reaps future rewards from it through production, and that its productive value can be further increased through the provision of credits and technical assistance, land was targeted at regions with a greater presence of swing voters. Few of those who received land were provided significant rural inputs and services. (Albertus, 2010:4)

In this context, the 1960 agrarian reform failed to significantly improve the living standard of the peasantry. Though the sale of reform land was prohibited, and in fact most beneficiaries never received formal land titles, most of them ended up selling their parcels on the black market (Delahaye, 2001). The result is that, by the 1990s, the phenomenon of
land concentration was almost back to what it was in 1960. While in 1961, 1.3 percent of
landowners controlled 71.7 percent of agricultural land (Delahaye, 2001), in 1998 5 percent
of landowners controlled 75 percent of the land (Wilpert, 2007). The rural population
meanwhile had gone down from 35 percent of the total population to only 12 percent
(Wilpert, 2007).

As highlighted by Albertus (2010), this clientelistic policy was made possible thanks
to the large oil revenues of the time, which became even more important to the state
following nationalization in the late 1970s. Venezuela’s prosperity, and in effect, the
stability of the Punto Fijo system became tied to the world oil market. The oil shock of 1973
led to an unprecedented period of prosperity in the country as oil revenues soared and the
government stepped up its public infrastructure investments and set up the foundations of
a welfare state in Venezuela. The government also incurred a lot of debt over the same
period, and this would set the stage for the unravelling of the Punto Fijo system with the
world debt crisis of the 1980s, during which successive Venezuelan governments were
pressured by their foreign lenders to reduce public expenses and as a result the clientelistic
networks that had been built over the years were severely weakened (Ciccariello-Maher,
2013; Wilpert, 2007). Between 1979 and 1999, per capita income fell by 27 percent
(Wilpert, 2007: 13). This triggered mass discontent among the population, which could only
be met by the government with brutal repression, throwing the country into an escalation
of violence and instability. This culminated in 1989 with the Caracazo, in which the people
of Caracas, mainly the inhabitants of the slums, rose up to protest hikes in fuel prices. The
government responded with harsher than usual violence, leading to over 3,000 civilian
deaths, a massacre that irrevocably damaged the legitimacy of the main political parties
(Ciccariello-Maher, 2013).
From then on, the political system slowly unravelled, while in the aftermath of the Caracazo people began experimenting with neighbourhood assemblies to attend to the needs that the government was no longer willing or capable to take responsibility for (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013). Poverty meanwhile continued to spread, from 32.2 percent of the population in 1991 to 48.5 percent in 1999, while over the same period extreme poverty grew from 11.8 to 23.5 percent (World Bank, 2004). Two insurrection attempts in 1992 once again shook the country’s political establishment. The most important of these was led by Hugo Chávez, a colonel in the armed forces who had become disillusioned with the government in the 1980s and was determined to break the Punto Fijo system following the Caracazo. Despite the failure of the coup, Chávez became a popular figure among the lower classes, and following his amnesty after two years of imprisonment, he started building a political movement that would eventually win the 1998 elections on a radical platform of wealth redistribution, social investment and participatory democracy (Wilpert, 2007).

The Bolivarian process is generally divided into three phases: the beginning, marked by the election of a constituent assembly and the implementation of a new constitution (1999-2002); radicalization, occurring in the midst of destabilization attempts by the opposition from 2002 to 2004, in which Chávez severed links with the most moderate elements of his constituency and began taking aim at capitalism itself (2002-2006); and a phase of “deepening of the revolution”, marked by more ambitious policies such as the Laws of People’s Power, from 2007 to today (Wilpert, 2007).

During the first phase, a constituent assembly was elected to write a new constitution to set a framework for the ambitious reforms proposed by Chávez. This would establish the principles underlying the different policies that would be drafted in the following years to implement the change promised by the new government. Not all government policies would be set in the legal framework though (Olivier Delahaye,
Some of the earliest programs set up by the government were the “Bolivarian missions”, a series of programs aimed at redistributing the country's public oil wealth to the most needy while improving access to and quality of services such as education, health, maternity, credit provision, etc. Not explicitly provided for in the constitution, and covering a wide range of areas under the responsibility of different state ministries and agencies, they are actually steered from the president’s office, under a scheme specifically set up by the Chávez government. This scheme, criticized by the opposition for lacking transparency, was designed to circumvent a state bureaucracy which has been deemed hostile and unreliable by the government due to its loyalty to the previous regime (Harry Gutiérrez, Interview, 2013; Linton Page, 2011). To fund this scheme, another key policy of the new government was to overhaul the state petroleum company PdVSA, reversing the policy of maximizing production to instead maximizing revenue by limiting production, in conjunction with a more engaging diplomacy with fellow OPEC states (Wilpert, 2007). This policy, amongst others, was a direct disruption of the clientelistic network set up by the former regime, triggering an outburst of opposition from the former ruling elite and state bureaucrats who had traditionally used the oil revenues and the PdVSA as a job generator to cultivate their networks. This would lead to a failed coup attempt in 2002 and severe economic destabilization in 2004 through a strike by oil workers. After successfully surviving the turmoil with the help of popular mobilization, the Chávez government was able to assert itself and move towards more radical policies (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013; Wilpert, 2007).

Central to this new shift was the idea of “endogenous development” (McKay, 2012; Wilpert, 2007). The idea was to turn around the country’s structural weakness, using its oil revenues to fund the diversification of the economy, essentially through encouraging local industry and agriculture. This strategy would add another layer to the existing social
policies, such as the social missions and agrarian reform. For example, credit provision and the development of cooperatives also became instruments towards the achievement of this objective. Additionally, special emphasis was put on agriculture with a view to improving food security, a strategic objective of the Bolivarian government (McKay, 2012; Schiavoni and Camacaro, 2009). Finally, the international situation also played a big role in this shift. Soaring oil prices from 2003 onwards gave the state even more revenues, while the government shifted away from US influence and entered into partnerships with countries like Cuba, China, Russia, Belarus, Iran and Libya, all identified by the US as serious rivals or enemies. The partnership with China in particular brought a steady source of credit, with over $50 billion in the last decade, mostly in exchange for exclusive oil flows. These partnerships were also aimed at securing technical expertise central to the development industry, with agreements with Iran and Belarus for example serving to transfer agricultural equipment technology. At a more regional level meanwhile, Chávez spearheaded Latin American integration, securing close relations with countries like Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador, as well as building close economic ties to the Caribbean community of nations (CARICOM). This regional integration was first mostly aimed at building political unity to guard against US interference, although it has recently taken on a significant economic layer when Venezuela entered the MERCOSUR, a regional trade bloc made up of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay in effect tying Venezuela to a major free trade area.

**THE 2001 AGRARIAN REFORM**

It was in this period that the agrarian reform, one of the two policies central to our study, was enacted. The Law of Land and Agricultural Development (LTDA) was

promulgated in 2001, setting the framework for the implementation of the following objectives:

- planned and sustainable development;
- redistribution of land to those who want to work it;
- elimination of the latifundio, defined as large or underused estates;
- stimulation of production of middle and large landholdings and creation of an estate tax. (Delahaye, 2010)

Contrary to the 1958 land reform, the LTDA was explicitly directed at the large landholdings, referred to as “latifundio”. According to Olivier Delahaye, a professor in agrarian economy in Venezuela, this land reform also distinguishes itself from the previous one because of the fact that it is mostly taking place outside the legal framework. The LTDA indeed remained vague about the process of expropriation and redistribution of land, and in the attributes of the land titles to be distributed (Interview, 2013). A number of institutions were set up in order to carry out the reform. The National Land Institute (INTI) is tasked with investigating land tenancy and carrying out expropriations and redistribution; the National Rural Development Institute (INDER) provides technical assistance to beneficiaries and oversees infrastructure development; the Venezuelan Agricultural Corporation (CVA) provides marketing and distribution networks for beneficiaries; it operates the CVAL markets, which provides agricultural goods at accessible prices to urban consumers; and finally, the Socialist Agrarian Fund (FONDAS) provides cheap credit to small farmers (Suggett, 2010).

In effect, expropriations rest largely on the actions of local peasant groups, who could legitimately occupy agricultural land they deemed idle or unproductive, and petition the state for its redistribution. Expropriations could either be carried out through an outright stripping of property if ownership of land was found to be fraudulent, or through a settlement with compensation in most cases. The national agrarian court did overturn a
number of cases where the occupied parcels were deemed to be under legitimate ownership and productive use (Harry Gutiérrez, Interview, 2013). According to various sources, around 3 million hectares have been redistributed to peasants, benefitting over 1 million Venezuelans (McKay, 2012; Wilpert, 2007). Further, the INTI claims to now control nearly 75 percent of Venezuela’s arable land, leaving the rest to private owners (McKay, 2012). Expropriations have slowed down in the recent years, an indication that suggests most peasant demands in this regard have been met according to agrarian lawyer Harry Gutiérrez (Interview, 2013).

Most land parcels are redistributed under collective forms of ownership, primarily in the form of a carta agraria, or agrarian charter, awarded to an association formed by the beneficiaries. Originally, the state set up dozens of land reform settlements, called Fundos Zamoranos, but these were mostly abandoned as they had failed to take off and become autonomous from state support. According to Olivier Delahaye, not a single Fundo Zamorano has enjoyed success, whether it be measured in terms of production levels, sales or satisfaction of peasants (Interview, 2013). The few available case studies of Fundos Zamoranos also offer a critical view of their impact. Sintjago’s assessment of Fundo Zamorano Alejandro de Humboldt, located in the eastern oil-producing state of Monagas, paints the picture of a project successful in improving employment and living conditions through investment in people but ultimately limited by its top-down nature, management inefficiency and the lack of organic cooperative mentality among the beneficiaries (Sintjago, 2010). Linton Page (2010) came to similar conclusions in her study of Vuelta al Campo (VAC) settlements in the neighbouring, and also oil-producing, state of Anzoátegui. The VAC farms are organized similarly to Fundos Zamoranos but they are designed specifically to welcome participants from the Vuelta al Campo program, which aims to train unemployed or underemployed urban residents into agriculture and “repeasantize” Venezuela. The
program suffered from the same problems as the Fundos Zamoranos and was abandoned after a few years. Linton Page however found a highly contrasting case in the state of Yaracuy, a traditional agricultural state, where peasant movements had been active before the LTDA was enacted and the top-down nature of the reform was significantly moderated (Linton Page, 2012).

The literature on Venezuela’s agrarian reform seems to indicate more success when it is conducted at the initiative and in part under the responsibility of local peasant groups who already have experience struggling over access to land. A similar conclusion can be drawn from looking at the policies aimed at building local participatory democracy structures. The 1999 constitution contained a commitment to “participatory and protagonist democracy” (Article 62), while the discourse of Hugo Chávez and his allies was characterized by the call for grassroots structures to take over power and production to ensure truly equitable and sustainable growth (Irazábal and Foley, 2009). This was followed on concretely by the government through a number of laws supporting or sponsoring particular institutional structures, such as the Local Public Planning Councils (2002), the Communal Councils (2006) and finally the Communes (2009) (Hetland, 2012). The local planning councils largely failed and were abandoned due to the lack of participation from municipalities, which were supposed to steer them, and the fact that they did not spring from local initiatives (Irazábal and Foley, 2009). They were replaced in 2006 by the Communal Councils, which would consist essentially of a parallel network of local governance structures, receiving direct funding from the central state (Irazábal and Foley, 2009). They actually emerged from a dialectical process involving both the state and communities. Many urban and rural communities across the country had been experimenting with participatory mechanisms for some time and inspired this next initiative. The Law of Communal Councils, enacted in 2006, set out guidelines for those
councils that were springing up across the country. Among other things, communal councils are able to petition the state agency responsible for their development (FONDAS) with projects designed by local community members, for which they can receive state funding. The average funding for a project is equivalent to the paving of a street (Burbach & Piñeiro, 2007). This participatory democracy is also complemented by a “capacity-development” component that takes the shape of control over implementation of decision-making and decentralization of production (Riddell, 2008). According to Irazábal and Foley (2009:9), communal councils have the following basic characteristics:

 Councils should contain between 200 and 400 families in urban areas and upward of 20 families in rural areas. All persons over 15 years old are considered potential voters (in the election of representatives) or representatives. Once legally formed, these councils can obtain up to 30,000 bolivares (almost US$14,000) to finance small productive or service projects in the community (Rodríguez and Lerner, 2007).

Neighbouring communal councils can also consolidate themselves to take on bigger projects. Following the initiative of local communities, this avenue was provided for in the Law of Communes, enacted in 2010, which sets out guidelines for the consolidation of communal councils into larger entities. Article 60 of the Law lists six “systems of aggregation”: communes are an “instance of articulation of various communities organized in a determined territorial area”. Further up, they can expand, through popular initiative, into communal cities, of which there exist only three so far among rural communities. Communal cities can further consolidate themselves into Communal federations and Communal confederations, although the specific provisions regulating these entities will be clarified in future laws. As of 2009, there were over 35,000 communal councils across the country (Schiavoni and Camacaro, 2009).
León and Smilde (2009) refer to the introduction of communal councils initially signalling a stage of “sponsorship of participation”, following a previous period of harnessing in which the government unsuccessfully tried to orient already-existing civil society organizations in a direction it wanted. They point to their potential in stimulating the participation of excluded groups who traditionally had little influence in civil society, and also stress that people identified with the opposition to the government have used these institutions, in some cases leading to thriving participatory democratic processes in urban municipalities (León and Smilde, 2009). They warn however against the possibility of what they call caudillismo, meaning excessive control from the presidency over the network of communal institutions if these are unable to develop their own autonomy (León and Smilde, 2009). The key, according to them, lies in connecting participation in the self-government of local issues, which is generally high, to participation in state or national-level issues, such as policy-making, which on the other hand is more difficult to attain. If local populations are able to exert their influence on decision-making outside strictly local issues, this makes their participatory mechanisms less vulnerable to cooptation.

While the first communal councils sprung up in urban neighbourhoods, the model has also expanded into rural areas. Communal councils became another tool within the land reform process, allowing already existing peasant communities to organize themselves and directly interact with the state to get development projects moving. This is where it is necessary to bring up the role of the CRBZ in this development.

**History of the CRBZ**

According to AB³, a member of the CRBZ, the organization’s roots can be traced back to the massacre of El Amparo in 1988, when the national army killed 16 peasants and

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³ All the names of CRBZ members and communal council residents interviewed were modified to preserve anonymity.
fishermen in a town of the state of Apure, near the border with Colombia (Interview, 2013). This incident, taking place within the larger context of implementation of neoliberal policies and erosion of the Punto Fijo political system, motivated a group of young people with peasant roots in the area to begin campaigning for the human rights of peasants. AH, another CRBZ and resident of the communal city in Guacas, Apure, adds that over the years, this small group grew slowly and took part in a number of projects aimed at improving the livelihoods and political consciousness of the local peasantry, such as building schools and giving workshops on human rights (Interview, 2013). They were also joined in their efforts by left-leaning university students from elsewhere in the Llanos who were disillusioned with the political system and eager to join ordinary Venezuelans in their daily struggles, according to AE, another CRBZ member (Interview, 2013). In spite of their enthusiasm and growth, the group was powerless against the landlords who dominated Upper Apure both economically and politically and the various armed factions active in the border area. These included the ELN, a left-leaning Colombian guerrilla outfit, Colombian right-wing paramilitaries, as well as the Bolivarian Liberation Forces (FBL), a left-leaning Venezuelan guerrilla group active in Apure which today shares the broad objectives of the CRBZ and the national government while diverging with regards to tactics (AB, Interview, 2013). The group also faced repression from the local military garrisons, hired guns known as sicariatos and armed groups from Colombia who for a long time have been actively smuggling goods from this area (AH, Interview, 2013). The fortunes of the group, which by then was called the Committee for Human Rights (CODEHUM), would change upon the election of Hugo Chávez to the presidency in 1998.

According to AH, the group was initially distrustful of Chávez, seeing him as another power-hungry military official, but decided to support his project following a series of meetings held during his tour of the region ahead of his first presidential campaign.
(Interview, 2013). After all, they had begun to mobilize and organize initially during the same context and in reaction to the same policies and system, neoliberalism and Punto Fijo. The CODEHUM thus began supporting Chávez and his new government, including his effort to rewrite the constitution, but impacts were initially limited in the area, primarily because the central government has historically had limited control in the border region, and the social programs based on subsidized goods distribution had limited effect there due to smuggling, according to AI, a school teacher in Guacas (Interview, 2013). Even today, people in the area struggle to access the subsidized food, gas, construction materials and agricultural inputs that are made available by the government elsewhere in the country because Colombian armed groups, such as the leftwing ELN and the rightwing paramilitaries, smuggle them out to sell them in Colombia where such goods are much more expensive. It was also still difficult to organize peasants around land redistribution because of the absence of rule of law at the local level and the lack of institutional support from the national government. The agrarian reform, laid out under the LTDA in 2001, would finally give the CODEHUM the basis for intensified activities, mainly through land occupations.

The CODEHUM had found suitable ground near the northwestern corner of Upper Apure, near the states of Barinas and Táchira, in an area north of the San Camilo forest reserve, in a triangle marked by the small towns of Guacas de Rivera, Puerto Chorrosquero and Puerto La Gabarra. This forested area had traditionally been occupied by a few large cattle ranches, but in the last decades had been settled by groups of peasants from elsewhere in the Llanos and from Táchira who cleared their own small parcels from the forests, creating a number of hamlets. It was also populated by many Colombian immigrants in search of agricultural work on this side of the border. In 2002, a violent assault by the local military garrison against peasants in Chorrosquero led the group to transform into a more explicitly peasant-centered and political formation, called the Simón Bolívar National
Peasant Front (FNCSB), recalls BO, a local agricultural worker involved in the struggles since that period (Interview, 2013). In 2002, a first land occupation was launched, targeting a cattle ranch owned by the widow of former president Carlos Andrés Pérez (in power during the Caracazo in 1989). The peasant front held meetings with peasants and agricultural workers from across the region in preparation for the occupation, promising each participant their own parcel. In conjunction to the occupation, they began petitioning the INTI, the national land institute, and at the state level demanded an official inquiry into the productive activities of the estate, claiming it was being used more for speculative purposes than for agricultural production. It is thought that many landowners acquired their land in the San Camilo forest reserve, ostensibly for agricultural purposes, with the goal of pursuing illicit lumber extraction (AB, Interview, 2013). The process dragged on for a few years, and the inquiry proved inconclusive, leading the INTI to intervene directly, buy up parts of the property (over 3,000 ha) and hand it under a carta agraria title to the FNCSB. Subsequently, the land was divided up among participants who were given agrarian charters and set out to work their family parcels on their own.

This experience led to a split within the FNCSB. As the families who had received land began to disengage from the organization, and in some cases even became antagonistic, members of the organization began to reflect on ways to maintain and cultivate the active participation of peasants in the organization (AH, Interview, 2013). These members began advocating for collective ownership over redistributed land, leading to a split with those who continued to advocate private family farming (AH, Interview, 2013). The former won over the majority of members, and renamed the organization the Frente Nacional Campesino Ezequiel Zamora, leading to the birth of the FNCEZ. The new approach would be used in two new land occupations. The first took place in 2005, when the FNCEZ once again brought together local agricultural workers and peasants and workers from the wider
region to occupy an estate that was considered underproductive and mostly located in the forest (BO, Interview, 2013). Though the landowner attempted to stop the occupiers on a number of occasions by calling in the local military unit, who had some of the leaders arrested for short periods of time, the FNCEZ was successful, through the connections it was now cultivating in the INTI, to get half of the property expropriated and handed over through a *carta agraria* (1,223 ha) (BO, Interview, 2013). Each family that decided to stay after this, and each one that joined subsequently, was awarded 10ha for personal use, while the rest was left for collective work and benefit. In 2006, the settlers gave their new community the name of Los Picachos. In 2007, another land occupation was planned, targeting the remaining part of the cattle ranch that had been occupied years before. This time, people were invited from a wider region, encompassing much of the Llanos and other places where the FNCEZ had contacts, with the stated objective of founding a community based on collective ownership of land (BG, Interview, 2013). Once again, the INTI intervened and bought up 5,731ha, handing over a collective title to the FNCEZ, with each participating family being awarded 50ha for personal use. The newly-formed community took on the name of Jorge Eliécer Nieves, in memory of a member of the peasant front murdered by *sicariatos* years before. These two communities will be discussed further in this chapter.

It was around this time that the FNCEZ underwent another important development. In 2006, when the Law of Communal Councils came into effect, the FNCEZ already had experience organizing local communities into neighbourhood associations. In fact, this experience was brought up by FNCEZ members who took part in the consultation process that informed the new law, along with other similar experiences from elsewhere in the country, according to Roberto Vázquez, a member of the CRBZ in San Cristóbal (Interview, 2013). The FNCEZ thus began to merge its experience with the communal council
framework, and both the new land reform settlements and existing hamlets in the area began setting up their own communal councils, under the guidance of the FNCEZ. Their structure and dynamics will be described further on in this chapter. The FNCEZ also decided in 2007, to push this experience further with the idea of building the foundations for what it terms “People’s Power”, or more concretely, the alternate structure of power that it sees gradually taking over from the existing state to ensure democracy, socialism and popular sovereignty (FNCSB foundational document, 2007). This idea was formalized during an encounter organized by the FNCEZ in Caracas in February 2007 in which 762 communal council spokespersons, coming from 15 states, took part. It was there that the FNCEZ decided to set up a parallel organization, the Simón Bolívar National Communal Front (FNCSB) to coordinate the activities of all the communal councils it was helping organize⁴ (FNCSB foundational document, 2007). It was also at this time that the FNCEZ/FNCSB decided to expand geographically, with the vision of creating a nationwide network of communal institutions, while also committing to building wider regional communal institutions linking up the communal councils it was helping organize in Upper Apure. These two tasks – integration and expansion – would be accompanied by participation in the national policy-making process.

**Integration:** Shortly after the implementation of the Law of Communal Councils, the FNCEZ began not only to help set up those institutions but to link them up within the territory of Upper Apure where it was active. In March 2007, a month after the first national encounter of communal councils, a first local encounter was organized between the then 39 communal councils organized with the help of the FNCEZ/FNCSB in Upper Apure (CCSCSB historical document, 2011). Later that same year, a second encounter took place, during which the idea of a regional communal institution was first discussed. It was at the third such regional

⁴ This new FNCSB shares the same acronym as the previous peasant front, which by then was no longer in use. From here on in, FNCSB will exclusively refer to this new organization.
encounter, in August 2008, that the idea was formally adopted and the new organization given the name of Simón Bolívar Socialist Peasant Communal City, a.k.a. the communal city (CCSCSB). It was also decided subsequently to create an intermediate layer between communal councils and the communal city, called communes, with the 39 communal councils forming 7 communes. This model would be taken up in the FNCEZ/FNCSB’s expansion strategy.

**Expansion:** In 2008, the FNCEZ/FNCSB began sending some of its experienced members, or cadres, to other communities, primarily in Apure, Barinas and Táchira, as well as Portuguesa and Mérida, and eventually across the country, to help organize more communes and expand its network. While I was doing fieldwork, the CRBZ was working in over 100 communes, in 20 of 23 states of the country, including recent forays in the cities of Caracas, Barquisimeto and Barinas (AE, Interview, 2013).

**Policy-making:** Finally, the FNCEZ-FNCSB became more involved in the national policy-making process, eager to share and propagate its experience. It claims to have largely influenced the framework for the construction of People’s Power as outlined in the Laws of People’s Power, particularly the Law of Communes, enacted in 2010 following a series of consultations held with grassroots organizations (Various CRBZ members and Communal City residents, 2013, Interviews).

This latest round of expansion led the FNCEZ-FNCSB into its transformation into the CRBZ. In 2009, the CRBZ was set up as a supra-organization, coordinating the efforts of the FNCEZ and FNCSB at the national level. A third mass organization, the Workers’ Movement for Popular Power, the MPPO, was also launched with the objective of organizing people in their workplaces, particularly non-unionised workers (AB, Interview, 2013). MPPO organizers were also active in state agencies such as the INTI and Corpoelec, the national electricity administration body (AC, Interview, 2013). Finally, the CRBZ was complemented
with a Human Rights Defense Committee (CDH), used for investigation, and the Simón Rodríguez Center for Political Education and Social Studies (CEFES), located in San Carlos in the state of Cojedes, with the principal purpose of training its cadres (AB, Interview, 2013). This organization will now be referred to simply as the CRBZ.

In its declaration of principles, the CRBZ claims to be “more than anything, a current of revolutionaries who seek to create an encounter of all revolutionaries who are now dispersed across different forms of organizations, in order to bring about a great popular torrent that empowers the people and makes them the subject and object of the Bolivarian Revolution”. The CRBZ draws its ideological roots from Marxism-Leninism, Guevarism and the “three roots” of Bolivarianism: Simón Bolívar, Simón Rodríguez and Ezequiel Zamora (AB, Interview, 2013). More concretely, it identifies the current Bolivarian process as “revolutionary”, in that it has the potential to lead to a qualitative transformation of social relations.

Throughout the last 15 years, the CRBZ has maintained its support of the Chávez and Maduro governments, and it now considers itself a current within the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), the party founded by Chávez in 2007. CRBZ members hold membership individually, but the organization works as a bloc within the party and creates its own propaganda and material for political campaigns, while maintaining its own analysis and political lines. As such, it has kept a critical perspective on the political process and the government, denouncing for example the existence of a “bureaucratic” block within the PSUV that is only interested in increasing its own power through state prerogatives and represents an obstacle to the deepening of the revolutionary process (CRBZ, 2013). It draws a sharp distinction between leadership coming from the executive government and state institutions, including from state officials who were drawn from social movements, on the one hand, and “organic” leadership coming from the concrete struggles of the poor, which it
argues must be at the command of the political process (CRBZ, 2013). As such, it sees its role as helping these disparate social forces congregate to create a critical mass able to steer the Bolivarian process. Concretely, this means building what it calls a “Chavista Revolutionary Bloc”, a coalition that brings together other organizations and social movements that seek to deepen the process.

Concretely, what the CRBZ seeks to achieve through its active involvement in the “Bolivarian Revolution” is what it calls “Socialist People’s Power” (Poder Popular Socialista), a concept which it defines in the following manner:

(... a proposal for the construction of a Socialism based on a model of participatory and protagonist democracy, upon which the organization of a socialist state sustains itself; it is the transfer of political competences to the communities organized in communal councils, communes and socialist communal cities, where the highest decision-making body is a popular citizens’ assembly. (my translation, CRBZ, Poder Popular Socialista handbook)

In other words the CRBZ seeks to see alternative forms of governance centered on the communal system supersede the existing state structure. In the same document, it also discusses other organizational forms it supports, such as cooperatives in the economic sphere and people’s militias in the field of defense. These organizational forms as well as mechanisms to support them are also provided for in the constitution and laws enacted by the government, but at the local level they are the product of the work of autonomous organizations like the CRBZ.

This concludes the presentation of the CRBZ. Their actions in the communal city will now be examined to see whether they fit the criteria for insurgent planning, with regards to oppression, relationship to official planning, invented spaces and localism.
OPPRESSION OF THE PEASANTRY AND OTHER GROUPS IN VENEZUELA

Having originated as a peasant front, the CRBZ is still mostly identified with peasants in Venezuela. In the communal city interviews were conducted with beneficiaries of the land redistribution who identified as peasants. In fact, thirteen of the sixteen residents of the two communal councils visited said they were landless agricultural workers before joining the occupation, identifying as “workers” (obreros), in many cases working from one estate to another. Four of them were originally from Colombia and had spent years, if not decades working on farms in Venezuela, in search of a stable situation, while five came from the neighbouring state of Barinas and another five were from the Upper Apure region. In the case of Los Picachos, many had worked for the previous landowner. Most described their previous situation along a variation of “working for the rich man” (BJ, Interview, 2013) or being "a journeyman exploited by capitalism" (BL, Interview, 2013). One of them specified he had been working “for the oligarchy, like Chávez said” (BM, Interview, 2013). With regards to their material situation, without going into details, many mentioned “not having anything, not even where to put a small house (casita)” or a variation of this (BN, Interview, 2013). Beyond their personal situation, many respondents also brought up the inadequate living conditions in the area arising from isolation and marginalization in general. For example, BA stressed that the area was “purely livestock, nothing for education” (Interview, 2013), while the peasants from the border area were traditionally seen by the central government as “guerrillas” and treated as such by the local military units (BC, Interview, 2013). Criminalization in fact is one of the biggest issues faced by people. The emergence of the CRBZ had after all originally been prompted by a massacre of peasants committed by the army, and this criminalization is still felt by peasants in the area today. It is evidenced for example in the extra-legal attempt by the local military garrison to repress the Los Picachos occupation, in which it intervened three times in the...
course of three years, briefly arresting a peasant leader on one occasion, and one visiting member of a peasant delegation from Brazil on another, while threatening to arrest others on the charge of being guerrilla members (BO, Interview, 2013). Finally, peasants in the border area have long complained about their exclusion from government support programs, such as access to subsidized agricultural inputs and construction materials for infrastructure, which in the border area gets smuggled out by Colombian groups with the help of corrupt military and state officials (AI, Interview, 2013).

Many of these grievances are also found at the national level. A spokesperson for the FNCP from a northern state, said that in the past, peasants who attempted land occupations would immediately get arrested and face imprisonment, while the existing peasant federation (FCV) was largely under the control of the ruling parties (Interview, 2013). The LTDA, while providing a legal framework for land occupation, also triggered more violence against organized peasants. Over 200 of them have been murdered in land conflicts following the enactment of the law (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013). More broadly, Olivier Delahaye says the lack of investment in rural areas, which has led to inadequate accessibility of education and health services among others, continues to drive peasants away from the countryside, threatening the long term continuity of the peasantry as a social class (Interview, 2013).

**Official Planning and the CRBZ**

The Land Reform Law (LTDA), Law of Communal Councils and Laws of People’s Power have already been described as laying out the broader framework in which the CRBZ engages the government. These will be discussed in more detail here.

As explained earlier, the LTDA lays out the basic framework to carry out land expropriation in favour of all those who wish to work the land. Its implementation however is based on the balance of forces on the ground, and more specifically on the local
organization of peasants. Petitions must be brought to the INTI by groups willing to work the land and able to prove it, and in many cases, in the absence of strong local organization and experience, the process may fall through (Linton Page, 2012). Landowners still hold a lot of sway with local administration, courts and security forces, and in areas where the central government is still weak, such as the Western border, this can be enough to ensure a favourable outcome for them (Harry Gutiérrez, Interview, 2013). In effect, to support local peasant groups like the CRBZ the government often directly buys out the property for the peasant group (AF, Interview, 2013). And the government, the INTI specifically, is more likely to act where personal connections are made between the peasant groups and state officials (Linton Page, 2013). In the communal city, the CRBZ started the process by looking for and recruiting participants for the land occupation, and then facilitated the land transfer by establishing connections with INTI (AB, Interview, 2013).

The Laws of People’s Power, including the Law of Communal Councils, are the second set of policies through which the CRBZ has engaged the government. As explained earlier, they outline a framework for building a communal system of power set to replace the old state structure. The Law of Communes, among other things, provides for a number of steps and organizations structuring the communal institutions. The first is the promoting commission (Article 10), which is a group that is tasked with formulating the proposal for the registration of a communal council or commune as well as determining its geographical limits and coordinating with the electoral commissions and other committees of existing communal councils. The Foundational Charter (Carta Fundacional, Articles 4, 12) is also a responsibility of the commission, and covers key characteristics of the commune such as its location, geographical delimitation, the commune’s name, a declaration of principles, a census of its population, a study with socio-economic and other data on the problems and needs of the community and a list of existing capabilities, as well as a strategic program on
the way forward for the commune. In addition to this, the Law of Communes provides for a number of other committees which may be set up within the communes, such as the communal bank, communal economy, communal planning, communal justice, social audit and management of specific issues such as land, gender equality, health, education, sports and human rights (Articles 31, 35, 37, 44, 45 and 57). A Law of the Communal Economic System, a Law on Social Audit and a Law on Popular Public Planning are also part of the Laws on People's Power to provide further guidelines for these institutions. At the center of the communal structure is the communal parliament, which is deemed the “leading instance of self-government of the Commune” (Article 21). It is made up by one spokesperson elected from each communal council, three spokespersons elected from each socio-productive organization (i.e. cooperatives or social production units) and one spokesperson representing the communal bank (Article 23). The communal parliament in turn elects an executive council to carry out its decisions, made up of two spokespersons chosen by the parliament and one spokesperson chosen by the representatives of the socio-productive organizations (Article 27). The communal parliament is also responsible for designating the members of the different committees (Article 31). The particular set up of each commune and communal council is subject to variation however from one region to another, and once again depends on the existence of strong local organization for the different communal institutions to be effective rather than empty shells.

The Bolivarian plan to introduce socialist relations and participatory mechanisms relies in large part on organization at the base, after the failure of initial plans that relied on top-to-bottom organization development. To make up for its lack of capacity and inexperience, the state has drafted a number of frameworks, or guidelines, for popular organization, while setting up a network of funding possibilities through different institutions tied to specific social goals, such as food security for the nation, ultimately tied
up to the country’s oil revenues as well as the recognition of these grassroots efforts by the national government. This is the political environment within which the CRBZ has been active for over a decade now.

**THE CRBZ’S STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS**

The CRBZ has used a wide repertoire of actions over the years to support its cause. As a peasant front, its strategy was of course centered on land occupations, but it has supplemented these with other actions to make them more effective, while more recently undertaking a wider diversity of actions as it seeks to organize larger communities.

The three land occupations it has organized in the communal city began with a word-of-mouth campaign to recruit potential participants. Details were gathered about the second occupation at the cattle ranch and the occupation at Los Picachos. In the latter, the participants, many of whom worked for the landowner at the time, began holding meetings secretly and, on February 18, 2005, they built a shack in the forested part of the property, beginning their occupation (BO, Interview, 2013). The landowner learnt about it afterwards and had the local military unit intervene and harass the occupiers a few times, but they were never forced out. They stayed and started building shacks for every family and clearing the land for cultivation, working collectively for a number of years until they were officially awarded the land (1223 ha) in 2008. By then, due to the hardships and the requirement put on by the CRBZ to work collectively, only 7 of the initial 38 families were left (BI, Interview, 2013). The occupation was supported by pressure both outside the INTI, and inside by CRBZ members working there, as well as marches to Guasdualito, the municipal seat, on the two occasions when participants were arrested by the military (BP, Interview, 2013). Since 2008, there has been little conflict with the landowner, who still owns the other half of the property, save for one occasion where he had his cattle herd ruin a collective cornfield (BO, Interview, 2013). The focus has been on making the land
collective and attracting more families, who numbered 21 at the time the fieldwork was conducted.

The second occupation of the cattle ranch meanwhile was started in 2007. This was a more concerted effort from the CRBZ to establish a new community based on collective agriculture (BG, Interview, 2013). The CRBZ, when recruiting participants, made clear the requirement of a three-month trial period during which participants would have to live and work collectively, and the participants ended up living collectively for over a year in fact, until each family received its own small plot and they had collectively built small houses for everyone (BD, Interview, 2013). Over a period of three years, over 200 families went through the camp, but most left, reportedly unable to adapt to the collective lifestyle, and in the end 21 families were left (BF, Interview, 2013). This occupation proved less troublesome than the one in Los Picachos, due to the owners’ absence from the region and relative lack of interest in their operation. A few months after the official land redistribution, the new community set up a communal council called Jorge Eliécer Nieves.

Following the success of land redistribution, the CRBZ turned its efforts towards helping the settlers make their land productive and build a sustainable community. This involved trying to tap the many existing government support programs, which until then had had little reach in the area due to its remoteness and the impact of smuggling, as explained earlier. To overcome the weakness of the local communities and to break out of this isolation, the CRBZ began to organize the local communities in communal councils and to unite those together into what would become the communal city. The two communal councils arising from the more recent land occupations, due to their proximity to the CRBZ leadership and their experience, would be among the leading communal councils in this endeavour. Some of the most important meetings were held in Los Picachos, in a meeting space built for this specific purpose by the members of the communal council (BL,
Interview, 2013). These communal councils were also among the first to become officially
registered, as early as 2006, with some of their committees having been set up during the
occupation. They immediately began to petition the government with their projects, in the
name of the communal council but with the objective of benefitting the whole communal
city then under construction. Together, these two communal councils, along with the one in
Guacas succeeded in getting a set of machinery for agricultural work and road-building,
funding and technical support for a small health clinic, two small material-processing
factories and a storage facility for agricultural inputs (all under construction in April 2013)
as well as a community radio which was fully functioning at the time. The Jorge Eliécer
Nieves communal council was also able to secure initial funding to sow 25 ha of rice and
buy 65 heifers to regenerate the herd left at the estate, although it hasn’t received more
credits for production for a few years now (BE, Interview, 2013).

Lack of recognition from the local and Apure state authorities was until the last
couple of years a major hurdle for the communal councils. Local officials were reluctant to
see their responsibilities and resources shifted away to these communities, and prevented
information about this organizing effort from reaching the ears of President Chávez. The
CRBZ thought the president, unlike many state officials, would be sympathetic to their
project and that, upon learning of their efforts, would force the recognition of their
communal councils and open up the flow of resources. Unable to reach out to him through
official circles, they hatched a plan to take advantage of a visit he was planning in 2008 in
San Fernando de Apure, the state capital. They began to train a small number of locals who
were sympathetic to the communal councils but had participated little at that point, hoping
that they would be able to approach the president unnoticed and, upon gaining his
attention, deliver a rehearsed speech about the communal city and the challenges they were
facing. Three women from the area were thus able to approach the president on the
occasion, and made such an impression on him that he promised to deliver funding to the communal councils and began publically questioning his ministers and other officials regarding the lack of transparency, accountability and results in their management of the communal councils (AE, Interview, 2013). It was after this that the communal councils began receiving assistance, but most of the promised funding never found its way to them, and the local authorities remained hostile. The CRBZ next began to pressure the PSUV at the national level to act against the local municipal mayor, the son of a prominent national security official, and after raising a lot of questions about his management and commitment to the values of the PSUV, were successful in getting him kicked out of the PSUV, weakening his re-election prospects (AE, Interview, 2013). While I was visiting the communal city being organized in Juan Pablo Peñalosa, in the state of Táchira, a similar campaign was also initiated against a local PSUV councillor who had been opposing their efforts from the beginning.

To put pressure on the national and state governments, the CRBZ also began to participate in and organize its own rallies in Caracas, San Fernando de Apure and other cities. All the participants interviewed mentioned having taken part in such rallies, which take up a significant part of the CRBZ’s budget (AF, Interview, 2013). They typically go to such demonstrations wearing CRBZ shirts, peasant straw hats and waving the yellow and red CRBZ flag, standing out from the standard Chavista supporters. As a result of their expansion across the country, they are now visible in most pro-government rallies that take place, sending busloads of people from different states to the capital for every significant rally. Their participation at the rallies following the death of Hugo Chávez, rallies in support of his successor Nicolás Maduro as presidential candidate in San Fernando de Apure and Elorza, in the state of Apure, as well as both Maduro’s inauguration and a rally organized by

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5 Nevertheless, the mayor was re-elected in December 2013, running as an “independent Chavista”. Shortly after his re-election, he officially aligned himself with an opposition party.
grassroots movements in Caracas following the election (personal observation). At the latter rally, the CRBZ was the most visible organization and claimed to have brought around half of the nearly 10,000 people present, from across the country, including three busloads from the communal city in Upper Apure alone. To increase their visibility, the CRBZ also uses its own logos, posters, flags and other art forms as part of its propaganda. CRBZ posters and wall paintings can be seen everywhere in places like El Cantón, Guacas and San Fernando de Apure, for example.

The remainder of their activities in the communal city consists of organizing political education and cultural activities to cement the community. Numerous participants mentioned taking part in workshops organized either in the communal city or elsewhere, such as Caracas or San Carlos where the Simón Rodríguez School for Cadres (CEFES) is located. There, they are taught basic political theory as well as management skills, and many peasants who took part in the land occupations went on to receive training as cadres at the CEFES, learning about the CRBZ’s mass work methods and ideology (BF, Interview, 2013). Two such workshops were held in Los Picachos, attracting around 60 people each time from different communal councils (personal observation). The first was to discuss the political situation following the death of Hugo Chávez and in anticipation of the next electoral campaign, while the second was to discuss communal development, with discussions around the legal framework and functions of the different communal institutions, such as the communal banks and the communal parliament. Alongside these, the CRBZ, now through the communal city as it becomes functional, organizes yearly cultural events showcasing llanera music as well as soccer tournaments with teams from each of the communes. These sorts of events did not exist before, and have contributed in making people from the different hamlets and villages speak more to one another, according to AF, an old resident of the area and CRBZ cadre (Interview, 2013).
With regards to stimulating production, the CRBZ has encouraged the development of cooperatives. In Jorge Eliécer Nieves, the settlers have organized themselves into one to manage the collective land, and more specifically the cattle herd which they inherited from the old estate. At the time of my visit, this model was also going to be used for the management of the material-processing units and the storage facility under construction, as well as for the yucca-processing unit for which funding had just been secured. Also on the economic front, in September 2013, the CRBZ organized the occupation of a gas station in Santa Cruz de Guacas, in the state of Barinas across the river from Guacas de Rivera, claiming it was being used for smuggling, to the detriment of the local population, and taking it over indefinitely. It has also often resorted to highway blockades, including in La Pedrera, at the crossroads of the highways linking up San Cristóbal, San Fernando de Apure and Barinas, to highlight the problem of smuggling and corrupt local politicians (AH, Interview, 2013).

Finally, the CRBZ engages electoral politics through an alliance with the PSUV and its wider left-wing coalition. In the communal city, CRBZ members run the local PSUV office and managed the elections in March and April 2013. While supporting the government, the CRBZ also pushes for the creation of a coalition of grassroots revolutionary movements, hoping to build a critical mass able to steer the direction of the Bolivarian process. The rally organized following President Maduro’s election, mentioned earlier, was called by the CRBZ and a few other organizations with the explicit goal of showcasing the strength of those organizations which claim their autonomy from the ruling party.

**LOCALIZED STRUGGLE**

The creation of the communal city is undoubtedly focused on the local level, with the CRBZ undertaking land occupations and linking these up with the organization of communal councils and communes, building on the experience of the neighbourhood
associations they had been working with for years. Rather than attempt to undertake change through the national government and down, the CRBZ worked to empower base communities and link those up in a network. Their efforts are thus centered on transforming power dynamics at the local levels, while remaining cognizant of the possibilities and challenges offered by the national and global situation.

This can be seen in the approach taken to reproduce the example of the communal city, as in Juan Pablo Peñalosa, in the Uribante municipality of Táchira. In 2009, a CRBZ cadre from the communal city was sent to settle in the area and investigate its social reality to uncover potential for organizing communities. There he found that certain communities already had communal councils, but that these were being used exclusively by local political economic elites to get state funding (AE, Interview, 2013). There similar tactics to the ones used in Upper Apure were used, centering on holding discussions with people about resolving local issues. The development of this communal city received a boost during my stay there with the visit of the Minister of Communes to deliver official recognition, and appears on its way to following the model of the communal city in Upper Apure.

**Discussion**

The CRBZ appears to provide clear examples of insurgent planning. Originally, it based itself on the mobilization of a clearly identifiable group, the peasantry, or even the peasants of the border in practice. At the outset, the CRBZ was in a clearly antagonistic relationship with the state, including more specifically with the local ruling elites, notably the landowners and the military unit. This began to change substantially following the election of Hugo Chávez, who promulgated a number of laws favourable to the peasants and the broader poor masses, notably the agrarian reform allowing for land occupations and redistribution of idle estates. This, along with the communal institutions and cooperative associations provided for in a series of laws enacted by the Chávez administration, can be
considered purely invited spaces on the surface, as the participants are only required to follow the model set forth by the state. In practice however, the CRBZ and other organizations played a role in bringing these laws forward, by drawing on their long experience of struggle and local organizing, and putting these laws in practice, in the border area, also meant directly confronting powerful interest groups that held more sway than the central government. As the example of the conflicts with local PSUV politicians illustrates, the CRBZ had to resort to a number of imaginative and extra-legal actions, from rallies and blockades to the carefully-rehearsed speech delivered to Chávez, to impose their legitimacy as an actor in the political scene. Even still, the CRBZ faces political violence, as evidenced by the murder of two militants last November in Guasdualito and the murder of four in San Camilo in November 2011. In some cases, such as the occupation of a gas station, the CRBZ also went beyond the framework set by the government. To further distinguish itself from the ruling party, the CRBZ displays its own logos, posters, flags and murals, clearly demarcating its territory within the communes it organizes. As such, it can be argued that the CRBZ uses both invited and invented spaces to carry out its planning. Finally, its activities are centered on local matters, through a territorially-based organizational structure and a mobilization strategy centered on tackling local issues, from infrastructure construction to land redistribution. We can thus say that the CRBZ practiced insurgent planning to set up the communal city. We will now determine how it measures in terms of success.

THE IMPACT OF THE CRBZ

The theoretical framework suggests that the success of the CRBZ’s outcomes can be assessed on two criteria: 1) the establishment of an alternative institutional arrangement, and 2) the extent to which initial demands were met and/or other concrete improvements
brought to the insurgent community. Success will be determined relative to the previous case studies of insurgent planning.

**Alternative Institutional Arrangement**

An alternative institutional arrangement can be found clearly in the communal system of power established by the CRBZ in Upper Apure and elsewhere in Venezuela, with the stated intent of developing a power structure that will replace the existing state. In the communal city, this system is rooted in institutions that pre-date the Chávez government, the neighbourhood associations, founded in La Gabarra and Chorrosquero by the predecessor of the CRBZ. As stated previously, the communal city in Upper Apure is a network of 8 communes, which between themselves contain 39 hamlets.

It was difficult to measure to what extent the communal institutions were functional, as during fieldwork, many meetings were cancelled following the death of Hugo Chávez, and subsequently all energies were focused on the elections. Many interviewees from both communal councils commented that there had been much fewer meetings than in the years before, and that this was due in part to a decline of participation linked to the achievement of material gains. There was hope however that participation would rise again with the arrival of more funding for projects. The communal city had come to a catch-22 type of situation, where the success of participation had brought concrete improvements, which in turn reduced participation, threatening the long term sustainability of those achievements. Nevertheless, most interviewees expressed that they felt the communal councils still had much more to offer.

Aside from the communal system, the CRBZ has also worked on the development of other structures. These include the cooperatives, and the Bolivarian militias, though they are also both supported by the government. They are seen in the long term as foundational
for the defense and sustenance of the communal institutions. This analysis will focus solely on the latter however.

**DEMANDS MET AND CONCRETE GAINS**

The gains achieved in the two communal councils visited will be discussed here. First, the original goal of redistributing land was met with success, as 5,731 ha and 1,223 ha were redistributed respectively in Jorge Eliécer Nieves (JEN) and Los Picachos (LP). Families received 50 ha each in JEN and 10 ha each in LP, the difference due to the higher quality of land in LP. Most of the interviewees were satisfied with this outcome, pointing out this was the first time in their life they had their own piece of land. Each family visited had a small house, some pasture and crops, as well as poultry, pigs and dual-purpose cows. In JEN, most families also had one or two fish ponds. There were 10 collectively-owned fish ponds in JEN, along with approximately 100 dual-purpose cows and agricultural machinery, although most of it was in no state of use as the machines built in Venezuela under technology transfer partnerships made with Iran and Belarus were not made for the particularly warm climate of the Llanos.

Not all of the initial demands on this front were met however, as the land beneficiaries expressed much disappointment with regards to the lack of credits to support agricultural production. As mentioned earlier, in JEN, credit was only awarded in the first few years and to buy 65 heifers and sow 25 ha of rice, which in the words of one of those beneficiaries amounts to nothing (BF, Interview, 2013). Because of this, the beneficiaries have had to focus on their family plots for the most part, with only 13 members working in the coop, for now (BG, Interview, 2013). In the absence of public credits, the coop has made a deal with a local ranch owner to take care of his 1,200+ cattle herd and use their collective land as pasture. This isn’t what they had envisioned at the beginning, but it is an improvement from their previous situation as employees or day labourers, as they reap 50
percent of the benefits. They have made a similar deal to work on the collective fish ponds, where a local businessman provides the inputs and they provide the work and the land, dividing up the benefits 50/50.

In LP, the beneficiaries expressed more disappointment as they received no agricultural credits so far and have had to focus almost entirely on their family plots. The only collective arrangement going on at this communal council is a deal made between five of the beneficiaries and a businessman from San Cristóbal to produce yucca in part of the collective property. All the beneficiaries also devote 5 ha of the collective property for the cultivation of lemon trees for personal consumption. This still leaves most of the collective land unused. The disappointment of the members of LP is exacerbated by the lack of electricity, despite promises made by the state government to fund the installation of lines to the community. This is the only communal council in the whole communal city without electricity, even though it is located almost right in the middle and is one of the most politically active. Lack of electricity is highly inconvenient for different reasons, among others because it forces them to eat only salted meat. The disappointment is somewhat attenuated by the construction of roads with the machinery received by the communal city, which has made the communal council accessible by motorcycles and even cars during the dry season, whereas it used to be accessible only by foot or horse (BO, Interview, 2013). Nevertheless, they are still relatively far from the highway and because of this find it troublesome to get to the nearest school and the nearest health clinic. With this, the agricultural credits, electricity and a few other things, they still have a long list of demands.

In comparison, the beneficiaries at JEN appeared much more satisfied. Despite the lack of credits, they had more to begin with as they took over an already existing operation, and their parcels are located right next to a highway, which one beneficiary commented was the one reason why he decided to stay. They also have an elementary school operating out
of the former estate, teachers who finally receive their salaries regularly, and school materials distributed to children, as well as access to a medic (BA, Interview, 2013). For them, the main problem, besides the lack of credits, is the lack of “consciousness”, by which they mean the lack of a collective consciousness, impeding their ability to make the most out of their resources. They mention having taken part in a number of workshops, which deal with subjects from political theory to collective work, but still find it a challenge, having never experimented with collective agriculture before in their lives (BC, Interview, 2013).

Many beneficiaries from both communal councils expressed hope that the development of the communal councils and the communes would bring more in the future, with most believing that the approach had not reaped most of its fruits yet. In JEN for example, they would like to have 80 fish ponds, produce rice and improve the genetics of their cattle herd (BC, Interview, 2013).

It can be concluded that the CRBZ has succeeded in meeting demands for the distribution of land in several places, and achieved a number of other gains in terms of access to education, health, and infrastructure development. There were other improvements brought to the community as a whole, such as the community radio station, sports and cultural events, and the introduction of the long-awaited Mercal, a subsidized food program that now comes to the area once a month. Despite some of the higher priority needs not being met, there were significant improvements according to most interviewees.

**DISCUSSION**

The establishment of a clearly laid-out and seemingly functional alternate structure of governance, based on the strength of mobilization at the base, coupled to a number of concrete improvements to the lives of people in the communal city, demonstrates that the CRBZ has stimulated a successful case of insurgent planning. Its communal councils have so far lasted at least as long as all the examples described in the literature, and it is one of the
few examples to have achieved its original demands and some additional gains. The example of the CRBZ is somewhat distinct from the other cases however, particularly with regards to the relationship between the insurgent community and the state. Does the example fit the criteria for insurgent planning success?

**THE CRBZ AND THE FACTORS OF SUCCESS OF INSURGENT PLANNING**

In our theoretical framework, the factors of success of insurgent planning fall into two categories, with one concerning the insurgent community and the other concerning the state. The insurgent community category contains two components, with regards to its leadership and to its depth of analysis of the situation, while the state is characterized according to its use of force, its legitimacy and its strategic interest.

**INSURGENT COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

The literature review suggested that the more successful cases had been able to count on explicit leadership, including “interlocutors”, or outsiders who came willing to stimulate the empowerment of the community. From the beginning, the CRBZ provided political leadership to the communal organizing process. Many of the CRBZ’s cadres became active in the area in the period before Chávez came to power. All the participants interviewed in JEN and LP distinguished the CRBZ as playing a leading role by their side, through the encouragement of the idea of collective agriculture, the communal councils, as well as organizing workshops, building connections with key state agencies, and helping bring in state-sponsored programs:

“They are the vanguard of this process, they were the leading force behind all of this.” (BF)

“They came to help and channeled [our demands] to INTI, they went to look for help outside. They helped bring things like the Mercalito.” (BL)
“Yes, they organize discussions, workshops, marches (...) They look for resources outside.” (BB)

At the same time, most participants also mentioned the role of the government and many specifically thanked Hugo Chávez. There seemed to be variations between the perceptions with regards to the CRBZ, with a majority referring to it as playing a specific role in the process, and others identifying with the corriente, saying it and the communal council are “almost as one”.

The CRBZ also cultivates “organic” leadership, by giving workshops and sending people from the area to its cadre school. One participant commented that, upon joining the occupation, he was a “young man starting to work”, and that now he had become “something better in life”, with “a knowledge of politics and an understanding of things like capitalism, socialism and international politics” (BF, Interview, 2013). According to another interviewee, the “training schools mold you, they teach you how to lead a community” (BO, Interview, 2013). The CRBZ also brought specialists, already supportive of the Bolivarian process, from outside, to help organize the different communities according to specific needs and move them from one communal council to another to provide leadership when it is needed (BG, Interview, 2013).

**DEPTH OF ANALYSIS**

The second characteristic of the insurgent community is the depth of analysis found in their organization, with regards to the political, economic and social conditions in which the community is operating. As mentioned earlier, the CRBZ has its own ideology and political analysis informing activities in the communal city. This has led them for example to support the socialist government, but at the same time push for the establishment of the communal state and the transfer of resources to it from the existing state, putting themselves in confrontation with politicians and bureaucrats of all stripes, whom it
identifies as obstacle to the deepening of the revolutionary process in spite of their self-identification to it. As mentioned earlier, this has included confronting locally both landowners and politicians belonging to the socialist party. The local elite they made up has no interest in seeing labourers gain more control over the land and state resources.

The death of President Chávez was an opportunity the CRBZ to present its political analysis. At a workshop, communal city leaders spoke of their vision of the political-social history of Venezuela, recalling the independence struggle of the 19th century and the guerrilla warfare of the 1960s and 1970s. They highlighted that, in the absence of Chávez, it “now falls upon us to assume the vanguard role of this revolutionary process”. They also pointed out that they could not rely on the new PSUV leadership completely, having never seen them in the absence of Chávez. With that said, the alliance with the PSUV was still unquestioned, and they would go on to campaign for it in the upcoming election. For all the participants interviewed, the communal organizing and the land reform would be unimaginable if the opposition came to power, and several of them imagined a civil war scenario if it were to happen.

While the CRBZ is clearly rooted in the peasantry, it has since extended the scope of its analysis and its activities in an effort to mobilize and organize the poor majority of the country, the CRBZ refers to workers, students, housewives, homosexuals, artists, youth, sportsmen and women and peasants as constituting its membership, in effect broadening its vision to representing all those who see themselves as oppressed (CRBZ Declaration of Principles, 2009). They seek in fact to re-center their struggle on what they call the “historical subject”, meaning the social grouping that is the most interested in and apt at transforming society (AB, Interview, 2013). This historical subject corresponds broadly to the historically poor majority, the same people Chávez and his successors claim to represent and who have been at the center of political debate for over a decade now.
(Ciccariello-Maher, 2013; Wilpert, 2007). They are the barrio dwellers of the major cities who live through the informal economy, the precarious workers, public workers who struggle to get their pay, and other impoverished sectors of the population that fall outside the traditional networks of clientelism, which are still prevalent in Venezuela (CRBZ, 2013).

It is this analysis that led the CRBZ to go beyond working for land reform and to help build communal institutions. There is thus a degree of depth in the CRBZ’s political analysis that is helping inform the insurgent planning process in the communal city, and which is not as clearly described in the insurgent planning cases found in the literature.

**STATE USE OF FORCE**

Moving on to the state, it is necessary to analyse now the extent to which the state has been willing to use force to crush the insurgent movement. The unwillingness, or inability, of the state to do so generally gives the insurgent planners an advantage, according to the case studies. While it was the state’s indiscriminate use of force on peasants in the region that prompted the formation of the CRBZ in the beginning, for a long time now it has enjoyed a somewhat friendly relationship with the government and has been able to act out in the open without the fear of state repression. Nevertheless, in the border area it still has to contend with political violence from sicariatos and criminal bands, as well as corrupt sectors of the army, and militants of the CRBZ live with the threat of assassination, as evidenced by the murders they have faced over the years. The local military unit has also intervened a number of times against the land occupation at Los Picachos, though ultimately it hasn’t moved to stop the process.

In comparison to previous cases of insurgent planning, over the course of the last 15 years, and especially since the CRBZ constituted itself formally, it has been faced with little state repression. It has even partnered with the government more recently to set up Bolivarian militias, providing weapon training to dozens of residents in the communal city.
**State Legitimacy**

The legitimacy of the central government is an interesting question in the border area. As explained previously, the ascent of Chávez is in large part due to a major loss of legitimacy of the two-party political system in Venezuela, which was reflected in the region, following the massacre of El Amparo, by the emergence of the predecessors of the CRBZ as well as the FBL guerrilla group. This loss of legitimacy was exacerbated by the central government’s historical lack of capacity in the area.

This situation seems to have been turned on its head however, as today the CRBZ supports the socialist government, has worked to bring in a number of government-sponsored programs and the land reform beneficiaries express strong appreciation of it. But while on the one hand the CRBZ works hand-in-hand with the government and contributes to expanding its reach, it is also at the vanguard of building the communal state, which it seeks to replace the existing state with. It is a complicated process, and from the interviews it wasn’t clear to what extent most people differentiate between the emerging communal state and the existing state which is providing resources for this project. It is also clear that all this would crumble, in the eyes of the land reform beneficiaries and CRBZ cadres, if the political opposition were to return to power, throwing in question again the legitimacy of the state, with a number of interviewees stating civil war would be inevitable. In this context, it can be concluded that for now, the central state’s legitimacy is more solid than before, but still rests on fragile grounds due to political polarization. The CRBZ holds the key to the central state’s legitimacy, and as such it occupies a relatively strong position.

**State’s Strategic Interest**

Finally, it is necessary to look at whether the actions of the CRBZ were threatening the strategic interests of the state. Upper Apure is mostly considered a backwater rural area
and as such is of little strategic interest to the Venezuelan state or to Venezuela’s economic elite. The Llanos are a relatively low-populated, mostly agricultural region that pales in importance compared to the more densely-populated and urbanized Andean states and the oil-producing and industrialized coastal cities. As highlighted earlier, the border region has for a long time escaped the control of the central state, leaving a lot of space for groups like the CRBZ to step in.

At the same time, the socialist government has grown more interested in this region as asserting national sovereignty constitutes one of the pillars of its political agenda, and it identifies Colombian paramilitary groups as a dangerous threat to the Bolivarian process. So far however, this seems to have played favourably in the hands of the CRBZ, as its alliance with the government has allowed the latter to gain influence where it was lacking before, in comparison to other areas which are under the influence of Colombian groups. In other words, this means the state’s strategic interest in this case is being served by the CRBZ. This makes this case different from previous insurgent planning cases. On the one hand, it makes the favourable outcome of insurgent planning more likely, but on the other hand it throws into question the insurrectionary nature of the process, or at least severely attenuates it. This question will be analysed in the next chapter.

**Summary**

The case of the CRBZ can be summarized in the following manner. It constitutes a case of insurgent planning, in so much as it is based, or was based initially, on clearly-defined and oppressed social constituency, the Venezuelan landless agricultural workers; it operates in the context of an official government plan that seeks to change the situation but for a number of reasons appears insufficient in and of itself; it has a repertoire of actions containing both legal and transgressive tactics that made it clash with the government; and it is focused on the local level. It has also been relatively successful, having caused the
break-up of large landholdings and their redistribution to dozens of poor peasants, while having brought to the region a number of government programs designed to improve access to health, education, food, along with road construction and other infrastructure improvements. Finally, the first two conditions of the success of insurgent planning with regards to the insurgent community were found, but the conditions relating to the state are more ambiguous, as all three also stand out as being favourable to insurgent planning, on the one hand, but in such a way that warrants further analysis with regards to the relationship between the central state and the CRBZ. These questions will be taken up in the final chapter.
CHAPTER 4 - THE MST AND INSURGENT PLANNING

THE MST AS INSURGENT PLANNERS

To assess whether the MST offers examples of insurgent planning, the following four elements will be examined: 1) dynamics of oppression towards the peasantry in Brazil and the emergence of a collective peasant identity under the MST; 2) the plan or set of policies towards land reform and agricultural development in general being implemented in Brazil; 3) the MST's use of invented spaces within its repertoire of actions and strategies; and 4) the local dimension of planning undertaken by the MST. Before this however, to provide background a brief history of the MST will be presented.

In the early 80s, peasant mobilization was nothing new in Brazil, a country traditionally known not only for highly skewed distribution of land, but also for its organized resistance, in the form notably of free former slave communities in the colonial era and Catholic clergy-inspired peasant leagues in the 1950s and 1960 (Welch, 2006). These efforts found little political influence and the military government of the 1960 and 1970s was effective in repressing these movements, alongside the radical urban movements that were also active at the time. As such, the small peasant organizations that came together to form the MST in 1984 had formed only recently (Welch, 2006). The local Catholic clergy, influenced by liberation theology, a current inspired by Vatican II and not yet prohibited by the Church, had been instrumental in bringing together these groups in Southern Brazil and providing some organizational support, along with the Workers’ Party (PT) which was beginning to gain strength in the same period. The creation of the MST in 1984 was also around the time the military dictatorship came to an end and more political freedom was granted.
In the 1980s the balance of forces was still leaning heavily against peasants in Brazil’s countryside. Peasant occupations rarely led to redistributions of land, and the agrarian reform law, provided under the Land Statute of 1964, was largely ineffective due to government disinterest and the prohibitive fees attached to the institutional procedures, indicative of the larger government lack of interest in the question (Pestano Barros et al., 2013). Moreover, the still-powerful landowners used their influence over the local judiciary and police forces to violently repress peasant movements, often through the use of paramilitary forces. As a result, the achievements of the MST were relatively limited over its initial period, but eventually, the level of violence reached a breaking point which triggered intense indignation among the Brazilian peasantry, on which the MST was able to capitalize to step up its mobilization significantly. The turning point came in 1997, following heavily-publicized massacres of peasants and the organization of peasant marches from all over the country to the capital, Brasilia. The MST played an instrumental role in organizing these and saw its recruitment soar, while the government, under a center-right president at the time, began to accept the need for appeasement and dialogue. This created a more favourable context for the strategy of the MST, which stepped up the number of land occupations and was able to obtain more settlements from the state. It gained recognition at the national level from peasants and both rural and urban poor in general for its ability to defend the right of peasants and win battles for them (Baer and Filizzola, 2010; Carter, 2010). It rapidly grew since then to become active in over a thousand encampments across the country, counting on the support of tens of thousands of cadres.

Another phase began after the year 2000 when the PT began winning elections around the country. The PT captured the country’s presidency under Lula in 2002 for two four-year terms and Lula’s PT successor Dilma Roussef has won the latest presidential election. The string of PT victories in many, but certainly not all, key states and
municipalities across the country, has profoundly affected the way the MST has operated since 2000 (Kröger, 2011; Vergara-Camus, 2009b). Although the average number of occupations and settlements has actually remained stable since the mid-1990s, the MST began to receive more support and funding for some of its other activities, allowing it to deepen its mobilization and reach within the rural population, notably by establishing its own network of public rural education (Tarlau, 2012). Today, the MST has established itself as an influential organization for Brazilian farmers and farm workers and as a key player in the Brazilian countryside.

**OPPRESSION OF THE PEASANTRY**

As stated previously, the MST is widely known as a peasant movement, that is, a movement arising from and struggling for the defense of the interests of the peasantry. Its stated goal is the emancipation of the peasantry, notably through land distribution, education and empowerment. This movement has emerged from a situation of increasing marginalization and oppression of peasants and agricultural workers in Brazil. The prime indicator of this is the deeply unequal nature of wealth and land distribution in rural Brazil (Baer and Filizzola, 2010; Rosset at al., 2002). It is estimated that in Brazil, three and a half percent of landowners control over half of the country’s arable land, making it easily one of the world’s most unequal societies (Vergara-Camus, 2009a). As can be seen in the tables below, this inequality in land distribution has been prevalent over the course of the existence of the MST, since the mid-1980s, and continues to the present. Farms encompassing over 1,000 ha made up only 1.13 percent of the total in 1980 while concentrating over 45 percent of the farmland, while in 2000 these farms, making up no more than 1.6 percent of farms, still held up nearly 44 percent of the total farmland. Farms under 10 ha meanwhile made up over 50 percent of total farms in 1980 but held only 2.47 percent of the farmland, while in 2000, their share of the total number of farms declined to
31.8 percent and their share of the total farmland went down to 1.8 percent. Farms holding between 10 and 50 ha rose correspondingly over that period, but their share of the total farmland stagnated around 10.2 percent. This poor access to land leaves peasants in a state of poverty, forcing thousands of them to migrate to the cities every year in search of better income sources, feeding the favelas of state capitals and mega-cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. It is estimated that over 39 million people migrated from the countryside to the cities between 1970 and 2000, such that 85 percent of the Brazilian population is now urban (Navarro, 2010).

Table 4 Concentration of property by percentage of farm units

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10 ha.</td>
<td>50.35%</td>
<td>52.83%</td>
<td>49.43%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 10 to 50 ha.</td>
<td>31.49%</td>
<td>29.68%</td>
<td>31.12%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>From 51 to 100 ha.</td>
<td>7.58%</td>
<td>7.55%</td>
<td>8.24%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>From 101 to 500 ha.</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>7.89%</td>
<td>8.47%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 501 to 1,000 ha.</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1,000 ha.</td>
<td>1.13%</td>
<td>1.02%</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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Source: Baer and Filizzola 2010, data originally from IBGE; INCRA

Table 5 Concentration of property by percent of farmland

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<tr>
<td>Less than 10 ha.</td>
<td>2.47%</td>
<td>2.66%</td>
<td>2.23%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 10 to 50 ha.</td>
<td>10.18%</td>
<td>10.52%</td>
<td>9.97%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 51 to 100 ha.</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>8.04%</td>
<td>7.76%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 101 to 500 ha.</td>
<td>23.74%</td>
<td>24.13%</td>
<td>23.57%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 501 to 1,000 ha</td>
<td>11.01%</td>
<td>10.92%</td>
<td>11.36%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
This economic marginalization is accompanied by the violent repression of peasant groups who speak out about this issue and try to organize resistance. MST militants have been among the primary victims. Violence sponsored by large landowners has led to the murder of over 1,440 peasant militants between 1985 and 2006, and this continues to be a threat faced by peasants involved in occupations in many parts of the country, particularly on the agricultural frontier where central power has little reach (Hammond, 2009). This violence continues to be fed by a negative depiction of the movement in mainstream media and criminalization tactics used by some state governments (Hammond, 2009; Carter, 2010). This marginalization of peasants in Brazil is in turn heavily tied to the policies regulating agricultural development that have been prevailing in the country for over two decades.

**AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND LAND REFORM**

Brazil as a whole in the 1980s has taken a sharp turn towards neoliberalism, away from import substitution industrialization (ISI), as is characteristic of countries throughout the region. This has largely determined agricultural development policy, which has been marked by a shift to support export-oriented, capital heavy plantations at the expense of small-scale, more subsistence-oriented production. Going back to the 1960s the Brazilian government and private capital, both domestic and foreign, began to combine their efforts to invest in and modernize Brazil’s agricultural sector, leading to the mechanization and consolidation of these large, capital-heavy plantations (Baer and Filizzola, 2010). In this respect, Wolford (2003) recounts for example that:
“The government poured millions of dollars of subsidized credit into the hands of private producers. Rural credit increased five times in real terms between 1968 and 1978. During years of high inflation, such credit carried a negative rate of interest and financed the soybean and wheat boom in the southern and central-West states.”

This has made Brazil into an agro-industrial powerhouse. Baer and Filizzola (2010) note that Brazil is now “the world’s largest producer of coffee, sugar, alcohol and fruit juices; (...) the second world producer of soybeans; (...) the third largest producer of corn; (and) among the world’s largest producers of beef, poultry, leather and shoes and on its way to be one of the main producers of cotton and bio-fuel made of sugar cane and vegetable oils”. In turn, this boom has made the agricultural and agro-processing sectors the most important in Brazil’s economic structure. Baer and Filizzola (2010) show that the portion of agribusiness within the GDP grew from under 20 percent in 1950 to over 30 percent in 2003, while most other sectors, including services, stagnated or experienced a drop. It is important to note that the category of agribusiness used here includes the complete agricultural value-chain, from input production to processing and marketing. Its share in national employment meanwhile reached over 26 percent (Baer and Filizzola, 2010). In short, the agro-industrial sector has become the main motor of the Brazilian economy and a significant social and political factor, with agriculture itself playing an essential role within that value-chain.

According to Carter (2010), it was “government subsidies and technical support to large commercial farmers, instituted after the mid-1960s (which) fueled the rise of an intense process of capitalist modernization in agriculture”. Baer and Filizzola (2010) show that the “growth of the Brazilian agribusiness sector has not resulted in a more equitable distribution of income” (see Tables 1 and 2 above), which they attribute to the policy incentives that underpinned this growth, such as increased credit provision and research
investment, which were directed towards large commercial producers. The capital-intensive nature of Brazil’s agro-industrial growth also prevented peasant workers from benefitting significantly and as a result the unprecedented modernization was accompanied by an impoverishment of masses of peasants (Baer and Filizzola, 2010). In the words of João Pedro Stedile, the MST’s main strategist, “commercial agriculture only benefits the 100 thousand farms whose size is 500 hectares or more... In the last years, the expansion of commercial agriculture destroyed more than 600,000 rural jobs” (quoted in Baer and Filizzola, 2010). The ruin of millions of peasants amid a context of spectacular prosperity would be a strong driver behind the emergence of the MST in the 1980s.

Alongside these policies, several efforts at land reform were put forward by the government over the years, including during the time of the military governments, which found the use of repression insufficient to stymie the surge in peasant militancy. A policy of colonization was promoted that “involved settling 200,000 families in the sparsely populated savannahs of the Centre-West and the Amazon Basin” (Wolford, 2003). This plan was seen by the military as a way to both satisfy to some degree the demand for land while securing the Northwest border (Wolford, 2003). While the impact in terms of land redistribution remained limited in view of the total demand for land, the plan left behind a key institution that is still at the heart of the struggle for land reform in Brazil: the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) (Simmons et al., 2009). Following the end of military rule and the return to parliamentary democracy, a new impetus was given to land reform with the 1985 National Agrarian Reform Plan (PNRA), which contrary to the previous policy “established land expropriation as the principal instrument of agrarian change” (Simmons et al., 2007). It was further supported by article 186 of the 1988 Constitution, which “reiterated the requirement that land must meet its social function to ensure title” (Simmons et al., 2007). The strength of this provision was somewhat weakened
by article 185 however, which exempted “productive” properties from expropriation for agrarian reform ends (Simmons et al., 2007). With both the terms “productive” and “social function” being vaguely defined, this opened the door for the current contention between the different actors of land reform struggle in Brazil. The MST, and other similar social movements, began promoting a “multi-dimensional” definition of land’s social function, encompassing the provision of decent livelihoods for families and the production of food for society, and attempted to legitimize their actions with this argument (Simmons et al., 2007).

In addition to these different provisions, the 1988 Constitution also recognized an individual right to claim unused public land, with a clear demonstration of occupation and productive use for over a year. In summing up the constitutional and legislative mechanisms framing land reform, Simmons et al. (2007) conclude that these have “created institutional ambiguity in the very definition of property rights and the manner in which such rights can be obtained”, further stating that this “has opened an institutional space that, if not sanctioning violence, has nevertheless allowed individuals a great deal of leeway in their contentious performances”.

For the first decade or so following democratization in 1985, these new constitutional provisions were complemented by a market-led agrarian reform, intended to calm down the growing unrest in the countryside spurred by peasant occupations (Simmons et al., 2009). Based on a market mechanism of loans to facilitate transactions between buyers and sellers, the policy failed however as land invasions continued to rise during the 1990s (Simmons et al., 2009). Upon the election of the Workers’ Party in 1999 at the national level with its presidential candidate Lula da Silva, this policy was replaced by a number of programs aimed at supporting land reform settlements, including those on occupied properties.
In addition to the institutional framework, it is important also to understand how the state actors actually interpret and carry out their stated responsibilities. Upon its foundation under the military government INCRA became the central agency responsible for implementing agrarian reform policy. Over the last decades, its responsibilities expanded, and it is now primarily responsible for conducting investigation over landed properties and carrying out expropriations, while under Lula it has also been tasked with handing out support to land reform settlements. At the same time as it received those responsibilities however, the agency was never appropriately funded and staffed so as to be able to effectively live up to those responsibilities (Wolford, 2010). For example, over 70 percent of its workforce is over the legal retirement age (Wolford, 2010). As a result of these conditions, the institution has come to rely increasingly on the social movements themselves, primarily the MST, to carry out a large part of its responsibilities. INCRA staff and MST militants, at both the national and local levels, have built complementary relationships over time, which has resulted in what Wolford (2010) calls the “institutionalization of transgression”. That is, the land occupations, which technically are illegal, became institutionalized because they filled the gap between INCRA’s legal mandate and its capabilities, and gained a degree of legitimacy as such.

“Land occupations are technically illegal, but in practice they are supported by state officials who have come to see the occupations as either a ‘necessary evil’ or a normal part of the process, replete with forms to be filled out and people designated to negotiate with the offenders.” (Wolford, 2010:98)

It has even been claimed that INCRA has been “colonized” by the MST, as part of a concerted strategy to use the institution to make it more amenable to MST actions and ensure the flow of resources to MST settlements (Navarro, 2010). Whatever push the MST might have within the institution, it is moderated to some extent by its chronic
underfunding and understaffing, and the overall subordination of the institution to the federal government. The lack of effective capacity of the state to implement land reform policy further opens up the field to social movement organizations and other contentious actors.

THE MST’S STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

At its most basic level, the strategic approach of the MST has often been summed up in one of its main slogans: “Occupy, Resist, Produce”. This encapsulates the three phases of a typical MST operation: they begin with the occupation of agricultural land which the MST has identified as having potential for expropriation under the national Agrarian Reform regulation, and on which the occupiers immediately set up an encampment and send a demand to the local office of the Land Reform Agency. Depending on the level of repression they face from local landowners and authorities, they go through a more or less intense phase of resistance, in which they appeal for state protection sometimes and in which they also try to start production. This phase is also key for the establishment of a human community, which is at the heart of the MST project. The occupiers usually come from diverse backgrounds and areas, and so must make an effort to work together to make the occupation work. The MST views this as a trial period through which the encampment will select the families and individuals who will obtain land at the end of the process. In principle, it is a correct attitude and commitment to the collective which must play in favour of selection, as opposed to personal connections and wealth, which traditionally drive individual advancement in Brazilian society (Tarlau, 2012; Wolford, 2010). During this phase, other tactics are used to put pressure on the government as negotiation unfolds, such as road blockades and protests in the cities. Though these tactics are technically illegal, just as the occupation itself, they have more or less fallen into the realm of legitimacy, and the staff at the Land Reform offices have established a standard procedure to deal with land
occupations and negotiate for swift resolution (Wolford, 2010). It could even be argued that the MST fulfills some of the INCRA’s legal responsibilities by scoping out land parcels and occupying them, which the agency to this day has never been able to accomplish due to budget and staff constraints.

These land occupations represent the basic strategy of the MST to pursue its objectives, but it doesn’t limit itself to occupying and settling agricultural land. It has developed a more sophisticated strategic layer in support of this to build a more favourable political climate. Once again, this strategy is two-fold, involving protest tactics and negotiations. The MST, often alongside other social movements, both rural and urban, has spearheaded a number of protest marches aimed at changing the political direction of the country, including the widely-publicized one mentioned earlier that took place in 1997. These demonstrations are more general in nature than the protests and barricades set up in support of specific occupations. Alongside these, the MST has worked to build political alliances and carefully negotiate with local political forces in a pragmatic manner. Contrary to most other social movements in Brazil, the MST has always been wary of entering into close political alliances, even with the PT, though some of its leaders and rank-and-file members hold party membership individually. The MST’s approach has been to make tactical alliances based on concrete situations. Since the 2000s, it has supported the PT at the national level and in most states, but kept a critical posture while continuing to use its more contentious tactics in the context of land occupations (Pestana Barros et al., 2013; Carter, 2010; Vergara-Camus 2009b). Its flexibility can be seen better at the local level however, where it decides on individual candidates to support election-to-election, based on a concrete analysis of the local situation. This has led it, in certain contexts, like in areas where political parties are divided more along family lines than ideological ones, to remain as neutral as possible or to give its support to more conservative parties (Tarlau, 2012).
The final aspect of insurgent planning is the local dimension. It is easy to see the MST as a coordination of local land struggles spread out across the country, having originally started out from the experience of a single occupation by landless peasants in a community of the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. Every land reform settlement or land occupation has its own organization and is in turn connected to the wider movement through regional, state and national assemblies to which they send elected delegates.

Simmons et al. (2009) describe the typical local-level MST strategy centered on land occupation as occurring in three main phases: the first involves establishing a contact center in a municipal seat and/or other towns and initiating “advertising campaigns via posted fliers, radio announcements, and even by loud speakers atop cars, cruising targeted neighborhoods”. The objective is to mobilize participants for land occupation, and this phase can last for months, up to a year, during which “leadership emerges and committees essential to settlement implementation and governance are formed”. This mobilization is generally carried out by MST cadres from already-established settlements (Vergara-Camus, 2009b). The second phase begins with the selection of a local target for occupation, a process led by the frente de massa, a “key committee including local day labor and farm hands aware of the lay of the land”, and often supported by “sympathizers from government agencies such as INCRA [who] provide intelligence about local properties vulnerable to constitutionally stipulated expropriation” (Simmons et al., 2009). Next, the occupation is launched, with participants usually setting out in the early morning and assembling in large enough numbers so as to deter a violent confrontation with public and/or private security forces. To the same ends, the press is usually notified, while local INCRA officials are also contacted. Following the occupation, the third phase begins, consisting of attempting to gain recognition of the settlement. This phase can take years and is contingent on a number of
factors, such as the capacity of the local INCRA agency, the validity of the claim made about social function, and the resistance of landowners (Simmons et al., 2009). During this phase, occupiers build the *acampamento*, a makeshift camp in which they attempt to cultivate the land and build a new community, under the inspiration of the MST *mystique*. Depending on the conditions of the land, the camp may even be built outside the property in contention, on a strategic location like the side of a road or even in and around a government building (Simmons et al., 2009). While this is going on, the INCRA conducts its investigation, although, due to factors such as capacity and political will, it can take several occupations before an investigation is launched. This is where they attempt to determine the “productivity” and “social function” of the land under contention, which as stated earlier is open to wide interpretation under Brazilian legal framework. The results of this investigation can then be taken to court by either side, which can drag the process out again for years (Simmons et al., 2009).

In the event of a successful conclusion for the occupiers, formal development of the settlement can then begin. A title of ownership over the land is awarded, as provided for in the law, to an association set up by the participants, who are also required to draft a Plan for the Development of the Settlement, which details how they intend to make productive use of the land (Simmons et al., 2009). Approval of this plan by the INCRA then gives access to assistance in the form of infrastructure development and food subsistence, notably. It is important to note that for the MST, mobilization does not end there. Even at the level of a small land reform settlement, the organization promotes a socialist agenda which it implements in a number of ways, such as organizing production in family farms and, wherever possible, collectively; setting up schools running under the MST’s own curriculum; and taking part in the organizational life of the wider organization, by sending participants to the MST’s cadre school and electing delegates to higher-level assemblies. The
local governance structures set up during the initial phase are also further developed, with the creation of a number of committees responsible for areas such as health care and security, which can also send delegates to higher-level assemblies created for those specific purposes (Vergara-Camus, 2009b).

**DISCUSSION**

It seems clear from this review that the MST tactics bring together all the elements of insurgent planning. It rests on the mobilization and collective consciousness of a clearly identifiable community, the landless workers and peasants, and wages a struggle taking place partly within a planning framework set by the state, that of the agrarian reform and the numerous legislative provisions. The antagonism with the state is obvious in view of the harsh repression faced by MST militants over the years, and although a much more friendly relation has been established with the PT government at the national level, the dynamics of repression still go on locally, whether they are carried out by private security forces, state or municipal governments, or even conservative elements from within the national state bureaucracy. These contradictions within the state apparatus ultimately led to an ambiguous institutional framework for agrarian reform, and created a breach for social movements like the MST to act and establish their own way of doing things. It challenged the ineffective tools and space brought forth by the state with its own invented spaces. This can be seen clearly enough in the land occupations and supporting actions, where militants take control of a space on which they subsequently invite the authorities to negotiate, on their own terms of engagement. Rather than simply posting an application and waiting for INCRA or the state in general to carry out its responsibilities, the MST moves in and puts the authorities in front of a *fait accompli* that re-equilibrates power relations. Finally, all of this takes place at the local level. The MST is in large part a nebula of settlements created from such direct actions and power struggles with the state. Each settlement goes through the
same process of initial marginalization, organizing and transgressing the law, and then facing repression while negotiating with the authorities for a resolution of their demands. The MST is thus engaged in numerous examples of insurgent planning. How does it measure in terms of success?

THE IMPACTS OF THE MST

The success of the MST's outcomes will be assessed under two criteria: 1) the establishment of an alternative institutional arrangement, and 2) the extent to which initial demands were met and/or other concrete improvements brought to the insurgent community. Success will be determined relative to the previous case studies of insurgent planning.

ALTERNATIVE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT

An alternative institutional arrangement, or governance structure, can be found in the organizational structure of the MST itself. At the most basic level, the committees organizing life on the acampamentos represent structures that operate in parallel to the state and the local government. While the association formed by participants to receive the land title collectively is provided for under the official agrarian reform, it is only an element within the wider MST structure. The committees and the higher-level assemblies governing life inside the MST community have no formal ties to the Brazilian state, and yet they claim authority and legitimacy over territories under Brazilian state jurisdiction.

Alongside political institutions, the MST's other main priority is to stimulate production and set up a network connecting all settlements, with each one constituting its own Agricultural Production Cooperative (CPA), which is in turn connected to a regional and state network, and then finally to the National Confederation of Agrarian Reform Cooperatives of Brazil, CONCRAB. It must be noted that, due to local variations and unequal
development across the network, not all MST settlements have been able to set up their own cooperative, and in most cases family production predominates over cooperative production. Nevertheless, according to the MST, since 1985 it has established 400 cooperatives active in production, commercialization or service provision (MST, 2014). It has also set up 4 credit cooperatives, or rural banks, and 140 small or medium rural processing facilities to help support production (MST, 2014). While it operates these structures on its own, it has also engaged with structures from the state and the formal economy to find markets for its settlements’ production. For example, in 2013 it reached an agreement with the state, through the National Program for School Meals and the Food Catering Plan, providing that food for consumption under these programs will be sourced from agrarian reform settlements (MST, 2014).

In addition, the MST also moves to take over key responsibilities of the state, among which we find education. Education is central to the MST strategy, and in that respect it has created its own network of public education, meaning it more or less controls the curriculum and hires staff in public schools located within its settlements (Tarlau, 2012). Not only that, but it has developed its own curriculum, called educação do campo, for countryside education, which is adapted to the rural, agricultural reality of its communities and educates children with both manual and intellectual skills to prepare them for collective farming work as well as for the pursuit of post-secondary education. This curriculum is heavily influenced by the famous Brazilian “pedagogue of the oppressed”, Paulo Freire, as well as by Soviet pedagogues from the 1920s and 1930s. Depending on local political dynamics, because education is a prerogative shared by the states and municipalities, the MST has been able to control the hiring of teachers and principals, and even in some cases extend the use of educação do campo to rural schools outside its own settlements (Tarlau, 2012). On top of the schools found in each settlement and which usually cover primary and
secondary education, the MST has set up a network in colleges, which brings post-secondary education to the rural areas and is inspired by a similar curriculum. Access to these institutions is free to MST families, thanks to subsidies the MST is able to obtain from the state (Tarlau, 2012). It must be stressed here that the schools in which the MST has influence are not part of the alternative structure of governance; they are considered by the state as an integral part of the formal education system. What the MST has set up however in parallel to that, notably the ability to select teachers in their settlements, can be considered as part of an informal, alternative institutional arrangement.

**DEMANDS MET AND CONCRETE GAINS**

The primary and initially lone demand of the MST has been the redistribution of land. Alongside this, it has been able to secure access to education, subsistence food deliveries and other forms of benefits from the state. These will be considered below.

The figure of over 20 million acres of land redistributed to around 230,000 families, or around 1.5 million people, in more than 1,200 settlements is commonly cited in the literature, with the number of occupations and formal settlement attributions peaking in the period between 1997 and 2006 (Tarlau, 2012, Navarro 2010). A steady decline in land redistribution has been noted since then, with the year 2013 seeing the lowest number of families settled – 159 – since the last year of the military government in 1985. As highlighted in a previous section, ownership or simple access to land has long been a demand of rural workers in Brazil, fuelling the rise and expansion of the MST and other social movement organizations, and the MST’s achievements in this regard are undeniable, even among its critics (Navarro, 2010). This impact has been illustrated in a number of

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ways in the literature. For example, Wolford (2003) studied two MST settlements, in the Northeastern and Southern regions of the country, to see how exactly local peasants were attracted to participate and remain active in the movement. In the northeastern settlement, in the state of Pernambuco, only thirteen of the forty-six beneficiary families had joined the MST prior to the redistribution. The remaining thirty-six were working on the sugar cane plantation that was expropriated by the government, and were subsequently awarded land and joined the MST. In that area, most landless peasants were workers on plantations, and would tend to join an organization like the MST only in circumstances when work was hard to find on the plantations (Wolford, 2003). In the southern region meanwhile, in the state of Santa Catarina, Wolford found a settlement populated in vast majority by small farmers, who, previous to joining the MST, had spent a lot of time moving around the countryside of western Santa Catarina looking for available land, in a context of concentration of land ownership and land degradation that was making life increasingly harder for small farmers. Young people had to move out of their home communities to look for land, and most would eventually end up taking part in a rural exodus in the 1980s. The few who remained committed to finding their own land eventually joined the MST, which began organizing occupations in the area in the 1980s. In the settlement studied by Wolford, 82 of the 99 settled families had spent years taking part in the occupation as part of the MST, while the remaining were former workers from the plantation (Wolford, 2003). In this context, the MST was helping local small farming communities ensure their survival by creating access to land, which had become too difficult to attain through traditional means. The MST settlements were in large part offshoots of already-existing small farming communities (Wolford, 2003).

As in other cases of agrarian reform however, it has been argued that access to land is insufficient in the absence of financial and technical assistance from the government to
allow settlements to take off and become economically and socially viable. This is why the MST has focused a lot of effort organizationally and politically to secure funding mechanisms and markets for the production of its settlements, as highlighted earlier. While the impacts of the cooperative structure haven’t been studied to the same extent as the tactics and strategy of the MST prior to formal settlement, some of them can be found in the literature. Eid and Bueno Pimentel (2001) bring up the example of the Sarandi settlement in Rio Grande do Sul, where the MST originated, and where, between 1988 and 2000, the population had risen from 55 to 1,226. Where previously there was nothing, the agricultural settlement now had “a cold storage plant, 144 farming tools, 35 tractors, 7 harvesters, 15 trucks, 7 pigpens, 13 stables, 163 storage sheds, 4 warehouses, 4 hothouses, 56 dams, 10 artesian wells, 6 dam barriers, 21 thousand fowl, 2 thousand head of cattle, and 3 thousand swine, for the diversified breeding and production of vegetables, fruit, beef/pork/fowl and dairy cows, honey, and reforestation, among others” (Farid and Bueno Pimentel, 2001:6). In a settlement in the state of São Paulo meanwhile, they note that productivity rates are between 19 and 64 percent higher than the state average for basic crops like corn, beans and wheat (Eid and Bueno Pimentel, 2001). These are only fragmentary results of the overall network of production under MST coordination, and the literature also alludes to examples of cooperatives folding as a result of mistrust among settlers (Navarro, 2010). Eid and Bueno Pimentel (2001) point to the main factors of success in land reform settlements as being the state in which they are located, the presence of infrastructure, the availability of credit and technical assistance, and the level of political organization. The MST can only directly influence the latter, and through this it can then help stimulate the other factors (Eid and Bueno Pimentel, 2001).

The MST also achieved notable gains in the education sector in terms of both expanding access to school for rural children and implementing a curriculum designed for
the rural reality, as mentioned earlier. Between 2002 and today, the number of schools on its settlements has increased from 1,200 to 2,000 and the number of children attending them has likewise gone up from approximately 150,000 to 200,000 (MST, 2013; Brantford and Rocha, 2002). Its adult literacy program has taught 50,000 adults since its inception in 1993, and it has also trained over 3,900 of its own teachers through partnerships with high schools and higher institutions, while more recently it has developed partnerships with 13 universities in Brazil to provide degrees in education, history and agronomy (MST, 2014; Tarlau, 2012). In addition to this, the MST operates the Florestan Fernandes National School, located in the state of São Paulo, where it trains thousands of its leaders and activists every year in themes related to politics, sociology and history among other things (MST, 2014).

Finally, the MST attempts to bring to its settlement an alternative, environment-friendly type of development, notably through the promotion of organic agriculture. One of the main concrete impacts of this has been the turn away from the monoculture of GM soybean and other industrial production in the MST settlements, to make way for a more diversified and subsistence-based production of crops like beans, corn, rice, wheat and others, along with experiments to secure niche markets for products like organic yerba mate (Eid and Pimentel, 2001). It has been asserted however that GMOs are used in MST settlements, notably in the production of soybeans, despite the anti-GMO rhetoric of the organization at the national level (Navarro, 2010). Due to the decentralized nature of production in the MST network, it is quite possible that such unequal development and contradictions can be found, with many other factors determining the productive strategy of each settlement. Nevertheless, the literature points to steps being taken in the direction of organic agriculture within MST settlements, which go against the general direction of the agricultural industry in Brazil.
**DISCUSSION**

To evaluate the relative success of these impacts, they can be compared with the results of the other cases of insurgent planning. Going back to the discussion in the literature review, the cases of the Negev Bedouin and the residents of Los Platanitos in the Dominican Republic were the most successful, because they set up and received tacit or explicit recognition of their alternative structures of governance, and they had also won significant material gains for their community, notably in terms of improved public services. In contrast, the two less successful cases of the Cape Town and Durban residents had failed to achieve public recognition of their alternative structures and won little in the way of their demands or any material gains for the community. In relation to these cases, the MST appears not only successful, but also in a relatively good position compared to the other two cases. The alternate structure of power it has set up enjoys tacit, if not explicit recognition from the Brazilian state, which in some cases has found a more or less formal way of working with it to fulfill its own responsibilities. While this recognition does not extend to every state institution in the country, and can in fact come up against strong resistance from certain state governments (Tarlau, 2012), its sustained expansion over a long period and relatively close ties with the PT administration at the national and many local levels for over a decade now suggest a certain degree of balance in the relationship between the two parallel structures. As for meeting the demands of the community and achieving concrete gains overall, this has been a clear hallmark of the MST and the reason why hundreds of thousands of peasants have joined it, according to the literature. It has been able to multiply instances of insurgent planning across the country and to sustain them over a period of nearly 30 years.

This is what largely sets the MST cases apart from other insurgent planning cases. The MST has perhaps achieved what other insurgent planning communities could hope to
do if their efforts were sustained over a long period and they had the potential to expand across their country's population. Each MST settlement and occupation consists of one case of insurgent planning, all connected and originating from the original occupation in Rio Grande do Sul which gave birth to the movement. It is possible to assess now the extent to which the MST has brought together the factors explaining the success for insurgent planning.

**THE MST AND THE FACTORS OF SUCCESS OF INSURGENT PLANNING**

The factors explaining the success of insurgent planning fall into two categories as discussed in the literature review, with one concerning the insurgent community and the other concerning the state. The insurgent community category contains two components, with regards to its leadership and to its depth of analysis of the situation, while the state is characterized according to its use of force, its legitimacy and its strategic interest.

**INSURGENT COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

The literature review suggested that the more successful cases of insurgent planning had been able to count on explicit leadership, including “interlocutors”, or outsiders who came willing to stimulate the empowerment of the community. In the case of the MST, an analysis of the first occupation that led to the movement’s birth might allow identification of key moments where leadership was exercised to help lead it forward.

Carter's account of the Natalino occupation in the early 80s describes the movement as emerging from the encounter between two groups of people: landless peasants from Rio Grande do Sul wandering the land after being thrown on the roads, and a loose group of allies interested in their situation, centered on a local Catholic priest and also including staff from the state INCRA office (2003). During this period, landless peasants in the area and elsewhere in the country had started organizing bolder occupations of idle land, in the face
of state repression that had brutally repressed peasant insurrections in the 1960s. These actions were still dispersed and loosely organized however. At the same time, the Catholic Church in the country had initiated a strategy of drawing itself closer to rural populations by building ecclesiastical base communities, where priests lived close to the communities and encouraged popular participation. Many priests began taking up a keen interest in those communities’ core issues, chief of which was the question of land. Those priests began advocating for agrarian reform and even helped landless peasants organize occupations, as would be the case with the Natalino episode. This occupation, which took place in the wake of earlier, more spontaneous attempts that had failed, was this time carefully planned in advance by a group made up of landless families, Catholic priests and sympathetic staff from the state INCRA office, including João Pedro Stedile who would later become the MST's principal strategist. While the way the occupation occurred appeared spontaneous, in fact its location and gradual settlement of families had been carefully set up in advance by those strategists. This mode of operation would be taken up by the MST as the broad model for all its occupations.

Following the occupation, the external supporters continued to play a role by acting as mediators between the state officials, including the military, sent to deal with the situation. They also provided information and helped maintain morale and confidence among the peasants to ensure the continuity of the occupation and its eventual success. They were successful for example in convincing the majority of them not to take up the government’s offer to resettle in the Amazon region, an old tactic of the military regime.

What indicates the role played by leadership more strongly however is that it was the result of a strategy to “unleash” the agrarian reform process in Brazil, in the face of the stalemate at the time. The small group of peasant leaders and external supporters that began meeting at the time came to the conclusion that they needed to provoke a
breakthrough in the protracted struggle for land reform, by building a critical mass while leaving on the surface the impression of a spontaneous movement. They were thus able to launch the biggest land occupation in years, with 500 families joining the occupation in four months, forcing the government to take the situation very seriously. The strategy proved successful in initiating a breakthrough in the state’s dealings with land occupations and triggered a new wave of peasant militancy in Brazil. The leaders of the Natalino occupation took part in a meeting a few years later with representatives from similar occupations in other states and pushed for the creation of the MST, under the vision of bringing together the experience of all those struggles and coordinating efforts and strategy for a stronger peasant movement. Gradually, some of the initial leaders began taking a supporting role as the MST developed its own leaders through the experience of occupation and through setting up its own internal education mechanisms.

Today, leadership in the MST can be seen in the mediation role it plays between the peasant movement and the state. The case of the biofuels development policy provides an example, where MST leadership at the national level produced guidelines to orient the decision of local MST chapters. These lines were based on a global overview of the situation, which a local community-based group would have difficulty to adopt. Leadership was also exercised at the state level in this case, with some state chapters choosing to take part in the government partnership and negotiating their own terms of agreement with the government agency in charge.

**Depth of Analysis**

The second characteristic of the insurgent community is the depth of analysis found in their organization, with regards to the political, economic and social conditions in which the community is operating. Here it is necessary to analyse the ideology of the MST.
As stated earlier, the MST originally emerged partly under the impulse of a group of organizers from various backgrounds, chief of which were Catholic priests adhering to liberation theology and land reform activists and officials influenced by Marxism-Leninism. This would greatly influence the nascent MST ideology, infusing it with ideas of class struggle and redistribution of wealth. These influences also came on top of the experience of previous peasant movements, like the Peasant Leagues of the 1960s, whose failure was attributed by MST leaders to their purely local nature and isolation (Cadji, 2000). Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of the MST ideology is the emphasis on the peasant, alternately referred to as landless worker, identity (Wolford, 2003). This identification is made in reference to the landowners, whether the traditional, semi-feudal plantation owners, or the big capitalist farmers. More concretely, the MST enumerates a number of threats to the peasantry: these include transitional agribusiness companies, such as Cargill and Monsanto, over their control over agricultural inputs, production and trade; slave-labour; privatization of public assets; and the logging of native forests for plantation expansions (MST, 2009). Beyond these specific threats, the MST identifies neoliberalism as a political economic trend that is irreconcilable with its project, in so much as it seeks to make the market the predominant force in society, paving the way to powerful and wealthy forces that can take advantage to concentrate ownership over capital and land in their hands (Vergara-Camus, 2009a). Based on the experience of small peasant families in the south and agricultural workers in the north, the MST sees no hope for social equality and justice under this scheme. Finally, they identify imperialism, in the form of foreign political and economic influence over Brazil, as another threat to landless workers (MST, 2009).

The historical outlook from previous land struggles, the class consciousness put forward at the outset and the identification of clear opponents or threats, have helped guard the MST from being co-opted by the government or from settling for purely local objectives.
and gains that could not have been sustained over the long term. Analysing the failures of past experiences for example, coupled to identifying the threats of neoliberalism and expanding agribusiness, were certainly key in prompting the MST's founders to seek out coordination and eventually organization-building with peasant groups across the country. These also led it to seek out alliances with progressive groups, including the Workers' Party in numerous contexts (Vergara-Camus, 2009b). Nevertheless, the MST’s analysis of imperialism and neoliberalism has allowed to differentiate the state from the PT and to remain critical of the government, anticipating that the even the PT would turn increasingly towards the interests of agribusinesses (Levy, 2012).

**State Use of Force**

Moving on to the state, it is necessary to analyse the extent to which it has been willing to use force to crush the insurgent movement. The unwillingness, or inability, of the state to do so generally gives the insurgent planners an advantage, according to the case studies. Looking at the original occupation of Natalino, which gave birth to the MST, it stands out that, exceptionally in those circumstances, the state opted against the use of force after initially displaying signs that it would treat the occupation the same way it had dealt with previous peasant uprisings. The military detachment that was sent, headed by a veteran of the counter-insurrectionary repression, used a combination of promises and intimidation tactics to break up the occupation, but ultimately decided not to use force as it was evaluated that it would be counter-productive in terms of public image (Carter, 2003). This was considered a breakthrough for land occupations at the time, and it triggered a new wave of occupations and the emergence of the MST.

The MST still suffered violent repression over the years, with hundreds of its militants murdered over three decades, including during highly-publicised encounters with police forces, but those were always the work of local forces, whether police or
paramilitary, rather than systematic repression of the MST on a national scale, and as such the repression was not severe enough to threaten the existence of the organization. It has been observed that violence against land reform activists has been concentrated in certain areas of Brazil, notably the South of Pará, due to a mix of social, political and economic conditions more favourable to political violence in those areas (Simmons et al., 2007). Nevertheless, federal and state governments have been denounced for failing to act effectively against this political violence and for the impunity enjoyed by most of its perpetrators (Carter, 2010; Simmons et al., 2007). In short, while the MST suffered and continues to suffer violent repression from sectors of the state and paramilitaries, it hasn’t faced the systematic repression that has effectively neutralized or wiped away other Brazilian insurgent movements in the past. This has cleared the way for the expansion of the insurgency into a nationwide social movement.

**STATE LEGITIMACY**

The question of state legitimacy brings us to look at the perceptions of the Brazilian state. The literature does not directly discuss this question, but we can clearly draw from it that the MST itself does not question the legitimacy of the Brazilian state. It encourages its members to participate in every election and takes part in a number of state programs, while accepting state funding (Tarlau, 2012; Vergara-Camus, 2009b). They also commonly refer to articles of the constitution to support their claims to the land. Neither in the original occupations, nor today do MST members advocate a radical overthrow of the state or put in question the legitimacy of its control over the territory.

With that said, while the state’s legitimacy was never openly questioned during the course of land occupations, in practice it was challenged implicitly during the first occupation. The occupiers resisted the domination of the military by sneaking in visitors and by resisting in large numbers their offers of resettlement in the Amazon (Carter, 2003).
Their cohesion and resiliency, alongside their distrust of promises from a government that had failed them already, made it impossible in the end for the military to drive a wedge between them, while the fact that they were peasants like a good part of the population, and supported and led in part by Catholic priests, made it also more difficult to isolate them from the wider population (Carter, 2003). As such, while the state’s legitimacy was never directly questioned, the extent of its authority was challenged and it collided with an imagined community that had its own legitimacy in the eyes of its members (Carter, 2003).

With regards to political change at the national level of the state, this has triggered little modification of the state’s legitimacy, both during democratization in 1985 and the election of Lula in 1999. Compared to the election of Chávez in Venezuela, these changes did not represent a rupture in terms of Brazil’s political economy, with all governments throughout that period pledging continued support to agribusiness. With the main social contradiction being, according the MST, that between the peasantry and agribusiness, this meant that the party changes in power did not affect legitimacy in their eyes.

**State’s Strategic Interest**

Finally, it is necessary to look at whether the actions of the MST were threatening the strategic interests of the state. While it is clear that those actions certainly went against the interests of the landowning class and agribusiness in some instances and these groups have a determining influence over what the state deems strategic, what must be examined is whether the MST prevented or threatened to prevent the normal order of things as planned by the state. In the previous cases of insurgent planning, only the residents of Cape Town were doing this by interfering with the plans for the World Cup (Miraftab, 2009). All the other cases, while considered troublesome by authorities, took place in peripheral areas where ultimately the state could afford to allow some degree of mild alternate power. In the case of the MST, it is clear that the actions of the MST did not amount to a significant threat
for the strategic interests of the state, which with regards to the countryside has to this date been associated with agribusiness development (Baer and Filizzola, 2010). The MST always focused on occupying idle or underproductive estates, largely avoiding direct confrontation with agribusiness operations (Carter, 2010). As a result, while the MST was able to occupy and settle a lot of land across the country, agribusiness also continued to develop unabashed. Many organs of the state, especially under PT rule, came to see the MST as effective intermediaries between landless peasants and the government (Tarlau, 2012; Carter, 2010). In short, throughout its history the MST has not significantly threatened the strategic interests of the state in terms of pursuing extensive agribusiness development in the Brazilian countryside, remaining for the most part active on the more peripheral areas occupied by idle or underproductive plantations.

SUMMARY

First, episodes of insurgent planning can be found in each occupation organized by the MST, in as much as they are centered on an oppressed community, the landless peasantry; engage the official land reform policies and institutions; and are carried out through a mix of legal and transgressive actions, while each being focused on local changes to land use. The MST’s insurgent planning has been relatively successful, as they have both met initial demands for land distribution while securing access to public services coupled with funding, and also set up an alternative governance structure which survives to this day. Finally, the MST appears to bring together all five factors for success, more so than any of the previous case studies. At the level of the insurgent community, it has grown in part through the exercise of a strong leadership which looked beyond the immediate impacts of a single land occupation and had imagined the steps toward building a mass-based land reform movement, while having a depth of analysis that allowed it to maintain a class-based
peasant identity while exercising a certain flexibility to be able to achieve concrete gains through agreements with state institutions. At the level of the state, it was able to avoid systematic violent repression and steered clear of challenging core strategic interests. The aspect of state legitimacy appears moot, as it was never directly challenged but brought in competition with the MST's own peasant-centred community, forcing the state to struggle to live up to its stated responsibilities. The case of the MST in part confirms the validity of the theoretical framework, but also brings another level of depth to the study of insurgent planning which invites some reassessment of the framework developed in the first chapter.
CHAPTER 5 – ANALYSIS & CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter responds to the two research questions formulated in Chapter 1. First are there episodes of insurgent planning provided by social movements? Second, does the theoretical framework appear valid in the light of the studies of the CRBZ and MST?

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND INSURGENT PLANNING

The two cases demonstrate the existence of episodes of insurgent planning within larger social movements both in the case of the MST, one of the world’s largest social movements, and the CRBZ (Table 1).

Table 6 Criteria of Insurgent Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case studies</th>
<th>Collective consciousness</th>
<th>Response to formal plan or policy</th>
<th>Use of invented spaces</th>
<th>Locally-based insurgency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meir (2005)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miraftab (2009)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meth (2010)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet and Chakars</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2010)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sletto (2013)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRBZ</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MST</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case studies reveal much more than this in fact. It was found in the case of the MST for example that insurgent planning lay at the foundation of the social movement. What became the MST was at its origin a creative land invasion that had been carried out with the intention of breaking from both the official land reform policy and the small and isolated land occupations. Based on this experience and its success, the insurgent leaders went on to link up with representatives of other land occupations and to join into an organization that began to formally apply more widely the insurgent tactics used in the original land
occupation. It appears as though successful insurgent planning can lead to the establishment of an influential social movement, as illustrated by the case of the MST.

In the case of the CRBZ, it is harder to determine whether it has attained a similar size and influence as a social movement organization because it hasn’t been the subject of research at all, let alone to the same level as the MST. However, it seems to have undergone a significant expansion in the last few years across the country and seems to have reached a certain degree of influence on the national government, having for example influenced the Laws on People’s Power and attained influence over certain individual ministers such as Isis Ochoa and Juan Carlos Loyo. It has also taken a leadership role in building a coalition of autonomous grassroots organizations in support of the Bolivarian process, a strategy similar to that of the alliance built by the MST with urban movements.

Uncovering the trajectory from an isolated episode of insurgent planning to the emergence and growth of a viable social movement provides answers to some of Beard and Basolo’s questions regarding “how [social] movements intersect with and relate to covert, radical and insurgent planning” (2009). It appears as though insurgent planning cases can lead to the take off of wider social movements that in turn have the power of multiplying episodes of insurgent planning and bringing about society-wide social transformation. The theoretical framework suggested a way to identify success along with a set of factors that can be expected in relatively successful cases.
The outcomes from the cases reviewed are summarized in the table below:

**Table 7 Outcomes of Insurgent Planning cases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case studies</th>
<th>Alternate Structure(s) of Governance*</th>
<th>Demands met and/or other gains/concessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meir (2005)</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miraftab (2009)</td>
<td>Set up</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meth (2010)</td>
<td>Set up</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sletto (2013)</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRBZ</td>
<td>Recognized and encouraged</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MST</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Alternate structure can be effectively set up by community, but not recognized by state and continually repressed

One notable difference between the CRBZ case and the cases found in the literature is related to the fact that in Venezuela, the alternate structure of governance set up by the CRBZ was not only recognized by the government, but officially supported, by both law and concrete assistance mechanisms. This presents the question whether the communal organs of power in Venezuela can still be considered alternate structures of governance? In the literature review alternative structures were defined as “institutional arrangements set up by insurgent planners to carry out planning on their own terms”, or in other terms, “outside the framework set by the official authorities”. In view of this, strictly speaking, the communal system of power appears to be at least in part an appendage of the state, reminiscent of the NGOs which Miraftab sees as “depoliticiz[ing] communities’ struggles and extend[ing] state control within the society” (2009). In the specific case of the communal councils, Smilde and León are thus right to warn about the “threat that the state will make participatory organizations into clientelistic appendages or, worse, use them to gain a totalitarian reach into society” (2009). The findings however illustrate that the communal councils are emanations of grassroots organizations such as the CRBZ, and that they challenge state power not only in words but in practice.
Many participants interviewed claimed that the CRBZ was at least influential in bringing about the Laws of People’s Power, having laid the foundations for them through its neighbourhood associations in La Gabarra and Chorrosquero and participating actively in the consultation process leading up to the drafting of the laws. While the literature on the topic of the communal councils makes no mention of the role of the CRBZ, it does highlight various grassroots experiments that may have inspired the communal framework (Burbach and Piñeiro, 2007). There is also ample mention of neighbourhood councils dating from the aftermath of the Caracazo in 1989 which have persisted up to this day (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013). As such, while it is not clear to what extent the government has based its framework for communal organizing on the example set by the CRBZ in the communal city of Upper Apure, it does appear that these institutions were initially developed independently from the government, and that the framework later established in the Laws of People’s Paper was the result of a common effort by both the government and grassroots organizations. As such, they are not entirely a creation of the government.

Second, it is also important to examine the concrete dynamics between these institutions and the government. As it appears, in the case of the communal city in Upper Apure, the relations with local governments, even under Socialist administrations, have been all but harmonious. The local governments have so far refused to transfer resources to the communal city and the state government and federal state agencies have only begun providing assistance following a specific command of the president after he was made aware of the challenges of the communal city. Most of the promised aid has also yet to materialize. In consideration of all this it is reasonable to conclude that the communal system set up by the CRBZ fits the definition of alternative institutional arrangements.

Yet, it carries with it a notable distinction from all the other cases, including that of the MST since it is embraced officially as a key objective of the government. This creates an
inevitable tension in the relation between the communal institutions and the state, resulting in what Ciccariello-Maher refers to with the Leninist concept of dual-power (2013; 2007). Power is shared in this tense relationship between the communal institutions and the state, under the assumption that the state will gradually leave it to the communes and allow itself to become extinguished. This is the vision expressed by the CRBZ and the participants of the communal councils in the communal city as well as the stated goal of the government through the Laws of People’s Power. The existence of this strategy shared between the insurgent planners and the government appears to bring it further than any other cases of insurgent planning on the way towards fully realizing local social transformation. A complete theoretical framework of insurgent planning must account for this prospect and conceptualize its underlying elements. The findings concerning the factors explaining the success of insurgent planning suggest further novelties.

**The Factors of Success of Insurgent Planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case studies</th>
<th>Insurgent community</th>
<th>State vulnerability / cost-benefit analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong leadership</td>
<td>Depth of analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meir (2005)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miraftab (2009)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meth (2010)**</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sletto (2013)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRBZ</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MST</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In this case, state’s lack of legitimacy limited mostly to insurgent community
***“State” also includes other forms of power structure, i.e. male domination
***With the exception of municipal states in certain cases; use of force not systematic in other words

With respect to the characteristics of the insurgent community the findings appear to confirm the validity of the factors of leadership and depth of analysis. Both the CRBZ and MST were found to have provided strong leadership. In both cases, the seemingly
spontaneous actions that led to the emergence of the insurgent planning process were in fact carefully planned in advance by a group of leaders, and in both cases too with a long term vision of class struggle. In the previous case studies, only the one concerning the Los Platanitos residents accounts for a similar trajectory (Sletto, 2012). As for the level of analysis exhibited by both organizations, it was also found to be on par with or deeper than the most successful cases from the literature. The MST exhibits a class analysis of Brazilian society that places the peasantry within a complex and challenging political economy in which it is systematically disempowered and marginalized, which leads the organization to chart out an autonomous path for its development. At the same time, it recognizes the differences between the various power-holding groups in Brazilian society and as such attempts to build different types of relationships with them, including most notably an alliance with the Workers’ Party. It stops short however of fully joining this party and reserves to itself the right to support different parties according to circumstances, including variations in local dynamics. The CRBZ comes to similar conclusions regarding relations with the PSUV and the peasantry, however it has the originality of having developed an additional layer in its analysis by extending it to the wider population and identifying the construction of the alternative communal state as its central course of action. It also identifies a political economy system that offers no hope to the peasantry nor to the majority of the urban population. The CBRZ charts out a path to build communes centered on participatory democracy and local production, linked up to one another to create an endogenous economy, in stark contrast to the existing oil export-dependent system. One common factor shared by the CRBZ and the MST that appears to distinguish them from the previous cases is the ideological background of at least a part of the leadership, which draws from a rich intellectual tradition of political analysis. In the MST we found both strong Marxist and liberation theology influences, while the CRBZ aligns itself along the
Marxist-Leninist tradition while also drawing from Venezuelan political figures such as Bolívar and Zamora. Based on this finding the presence of an ideological tradition within the insurgent community can serve as an indicator of its depth of analysis.

With regards to the state, a number of elements stand out in tension with the initial theoretical framework. These do not concern the use of force by the state, which in the case of both the MST and CRBZ, during their initial land occupations and throughout, proved to be relatively mild compared to previous cases. The concepts of state legitimacy and strategic interest however bring up some questions.

State legitimacy in the case of the MST played out similarly to the cases of Los Platanitos, Cape Town and Durban, where the residents never questioned their belonging to the state, but had sufficient grievances towards it that they saw no problem with joining an initiative going against the terms set by it. They were quick to accept the legitimacy of their own community institutions in preference to state institutions, without going so far as to challenge the continued existence of the state. This type of legitimacy was favourable to insurgency but especially if it could be extended to a wide sector of the population. In this, the MST found a possibly even more favourable situation than the shantytown residents of Santo Domingo, Cape Town and Durban, because the conditions of the peasantry across the country presented many similarities. The challenge for the MST now lies in how it can effectively engage the urban population.

The case of the CRBZ presents itself differently, however, with the state gaining more legitimacy as a result of the insurgency. While initially legitimacy could be deemed low in comparison to other cases due to the lack of government control in the area, the government was able to gain direct support from local residents through the introduction of long-awaited programs, infrastructure development and distribution of subsidized goods. Support towards the government was evidenced by the popularity of Chávez among
interviewees. CRBZ cadres themselves recognized that the area went from being in a power vacuum to an area of noticeably heightened government influence. They saw evidence of this in the decline of participation in the communal assemblies by many beneficiaries of government support. Thus, while the insurgency may have initially been propelled by the power vacuum, its success appears to be slowing it down and possibly making it more vulnerable to cooptation by the state. It appears to be at an impasse where on the one hand, the benefits of autonomous organizing are more tangible than ever, while on the other hand this leads many people to become more passive, weakening the insurgency and threatening its autonomy. As made clear by various interviewees in the communal city, there was a dire need to work on people’s consciousness, but at the same time this needs to be achieved in a way that keeps the communal assemblies in command.

In light of this, the concept of state legitimacy may not be entirely appropriate explanatory factor, since it can be restored over the course of the insurgency through its partnership with the state. As such, while it appears that the absence of state legitimacy is a favourable condition for insurgent planning at its outset, it may be modified by it over time and so dual-power, as laid out by Ciccariello-Maher in the case of Venezuela may become a more appropriate concept to assess the situation when the insurgent planning is sustained over a relatively long period. Drawing from Lenin and his analysis of the relationship between Soviets and parliamentary power in the aftermath of the February Revolution of 1917 in Russia, Ciccariello-Maher characterizes dual-power as a situation where power comes from “the direct initiative of the people from below, and not on a law enacted by a centralized state power” (2007).

Finally, findings on the state’s strategic interest also reveal diverging results. While it was found in the literature review that insurgent planning success was more likely in a situation where the central state has little stake at the site of insurgency, this was found to
be true in the case of the MST but not the CRBZ. The MST built its success on occupying under-used landholdings in the historical agricultural areas of the country, including the now largely-abandoned plantations of the North-East, while agribusiness development is mostly taking place in the Central and Amazon regions. As such, the MST’s actions were not threatening to the core sectors of the Brazilian economy, putting less pressure on the state to intervene against them.

In contrast, the CRBZ have always operated in the hotly-contested border area next to Colombia, a place where drug trafficking and contraband generate high stakes for political actors. The findings suggest that the official government support given to land reform and communal organizations, though inconsistent, provided the tools for the CRBZ to establish itself firmly in their corner, while helping the government reassert itself as well in this troubled region. This question is thus heavily tied to the issue of state legitimacy.

The strategic interest in play here is different from the case of Cape Town where the state had an immediate interest in clearing out a township from view in preparation for the FIFA World Cup. Here, the state had more power to operate in full force. This highlights the fact that the different factors interplay with one another, and what played in favour of the CRBZ was the remoteness of the contentious area, forcing the central state to rely on a proxy. The CRBZ took on that role to serve its own purpose, and now its challenge lies in maintaining its autonomy and avoiding absorption into the existing state structure.

One of the areas where the relationship with the state could be assessed is in relation to the political economy of communal councils. One of the major challenges of the Bolivarian Revolution discussed in the literature is the dependence of Venezuela on oil export revenues, which have the effect of tying revenue distribution to global capitalist relations. During the first ten years of the Chávez presidency, oil prices rose tenfold, and in 2008 accounted for 50 percent of the national budget (Purcell, 2011; Karl, 1997). This
makes even grassroots-based efforts such as the communal councils vulnerable to external shock and ultimately ties them to the notoriously unstable Venezuelan economy. To guard against this, the CRBZ views regional productive networks as a solution, and to achieve this it promotes through communal councils the redistribution of oil funds to build local productive capacity, while using local mass mobilization to pressure existing production facilities to source themselves locally.

In contrast to the CRBZ, the MST has so far avoided spaces created by the government and maintained its focus on organizing rural settlements and guarding its autonomy. It is now calling for a more confrontational posture towards the government, just as protests and acts of civil disobedience in Brazilian society in general are flaring up in the wake of the "June events" of 2013 and gearing up for the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016. The MST have made their disappointment with the PT government and its continuing support to the expansion of agribusiness increasingly vocal, pointing to an escalation of tactics and possibly a strategic shift in the near future. At the same time, with the number of agreements made with the national, state and local governments helping support MST settlements and encampments, it may have much to lose from pushing confrontation too far.

In light of these results, a partial reworking of the framework might be in order before undertaking another case study. For example, an analysis of the political economy of the state might better account for its interest in a given area or sector of the economy, while decentring analysis from the central state may also allow for more flexibility, as we have seen that the actions and objectives of different levels of government may be at odds with one another with regards to the insurgency, and local government play an important role in the dynamics of insurgent planning.
To improve the framework, it will be helpful to delve further into the social movement literature to find inspiration, more specifically in the concept of political opportunity structures. In Kitschelt’s definition (1986), these are “comprised of specific configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilization, which facilitate the development of protest movements in some instances and constrain them in others.” This approach takes a look at the wider context under which protest movements evolve, relying on a number of variables developed through different case studies to build flexible frameworks adapted to specific contexts. Kitschelt (1986) for example investigates the openness and capacity of different national states in addressing the anti-nuclear movements to explain their outcome. Since examples of insurgent planning can be found within social movements the social movement literature should provide additions to the insurgent planning theoretical framework.

**FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study has demonstrated the potential for social movements to provide examples of insurgent planning, while contributing to an understanding of the development and success of insurgent planning movements. Building on the case studies of the existing literature on insurgent planning, the cases of the CRBZ and MST illustrated the importance of both leadership in planning the insurgency and depth of analysis in terms of identifying power dynamics and charting an imaginative creative alternative. With regards to the characteristics of the state however, the results were more ambiguous, with the MST following somewhat closely the theoretical framework while the CRBZ case partly stood in contradiction. What the CRBZ case showed was that it was possible for an insurgent planning process to take place in an area of strategic interest for the state, where this state lacks any sort of legitimacy or control, and that, if its political vision coincides with that of
the state, it may use this opportunity to expand and enter into a concrete agreement with
the state laying the path for its replacement by the new society envisioned by the
insurgents. This opening up to the state however also brings with it the threat of cooptation.

Further research in a number of areas may shed more light on these questions. For
one the hypothesis could be tested on the previous cases studied under insurgent planning,
while at the same time following up with the state of the insurgency in those cases.

Next, it may be worthwhile to study the CRBZ and MST further in terms of the
implementation of projects. This could lead to a comparative analysis of the projects that
make it and the ones that don’t, shedding insight on the question of autonomy of the
insurgency. In the case of the MST, it would be interesting to look at some of the settlements
that have been studied in the past, including the original one.

Finally, there is the opportunity to draw more case studies from the vast social
movement literature to further test and improve this hypothesis and build a more solid
body of case studies of insurgent planning. Among the cases in the literature, it would be
useful to look specifically at cases where the state authorities were not only challenged, but
eventually defeated and replaced by the alternative structures set up by insurgents.
REFERENCES

Albertus, M. (2010). *Sowing the land and harvesting votes: The distributive politics of land reform in Venezuela*, Department of Political Science, Stanford University


## APPENDICES

### Appendix A – Interview Participant Chart

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<th>Name</th>
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**Communal City members**

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### Appendix B – Key Informant Interviews Chart

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<td>Olivier Delahaye*</td>
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<td>Universidad Central de Venezuela, Maracay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harry Gutiérrez*</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Peasant Association Leader</td>
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*Names used with permission*
Appendix C - Interview guide

Questions for land reform beneficiaries in the Communal City

1 – Can you tell me about your communal council?

2 – Why did you get involved in the communal council?

3 – What was your situation like before joining?

4 – What has the communal council brought you?

5 – What activities are organized through your communal council?

6 – What projects have been discussed or brought through the communal assemblies?

7 – What is/was the role of the CRBZ in the communal institutions?

8 – What are the current challenges for the communal councils?

9 – What is your vision for the future of the communal councils?